How to Have Massive Faith

ADAM HOUGE

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experiencing the life-changing power of faith

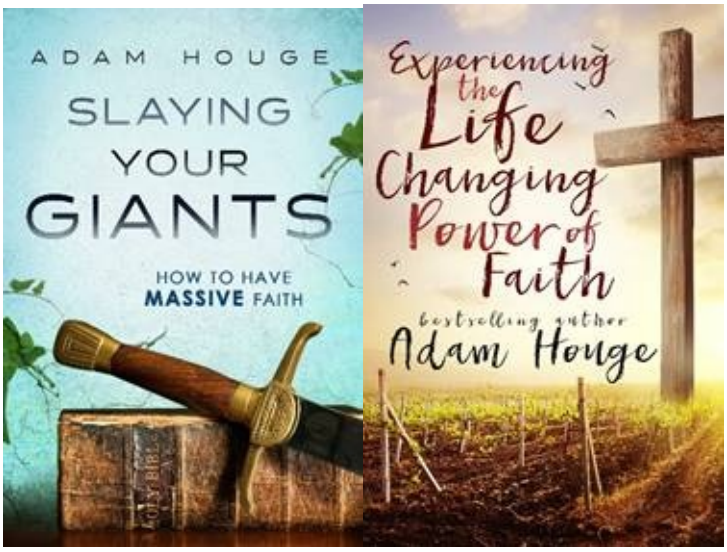
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Slaying Your Giants: How to Have Massive Faith

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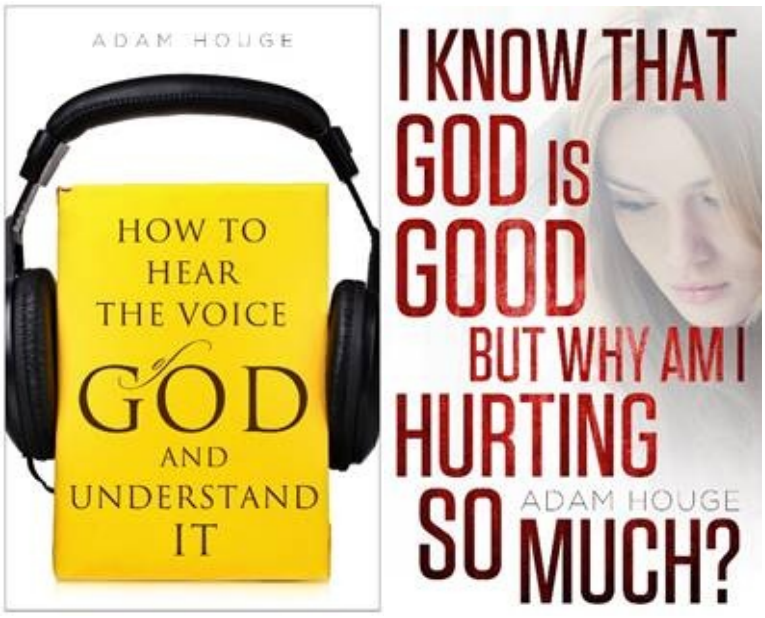


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Slaying Your Giants: How To Have Massive Faith

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How To Hear The Voice Of God And Understand It

I Know That God Is Good But Why Am I Hurting So Much?

Slaying Your Giants: How to Have Massive Faith™

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Table of Contents

The Giant Slayer

Victory Is Realized Through Small Steps

Beginning Faith with the End in Mind

Total Surrender

Total Release

Facing Your Giants

I'd Love to Hear from You!

Also by Adam Houge

About the Author

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The 7 Habits That Will Change Your Life Forever

Slaying Your Giants: How to Have Massive Faith

How To Memorize the Bible Fast and Easy

The Giant Slayer

The thunder clapped overhead as the storm approached. The clouds were hanging ominously over the field as David drew near to the scene. A bear was dragging a sheep away from the fold in the distance, and the lamb in its jaws was screaming in pain and terror.

A streak of lightning flashed again, causing him to flinch from the brightness. Then he watched as the sheep managed to get away from the bear for a moment. But its departure was followed by an earth-shaking roar from the terrifying beast. David was mortified by the creature. But the Lord spoke into his heart, reassuring him that he needed to leave the flock to save the one that was lost.

David gritted his teeth and pressed forward. This animal wasn't about to get in between him and the will of God. Faith overtook him until fear no longer had a hiding place. Then he gripped the steely hilt of his blade as he prepared to strike. A downpour of rain burst across the field as he pushed forward in determination.

Then the animal took the sheep in its mouth again and headed for the woods as it ignored David's presence. His small stature could hardly pose a threat, it thought.

But as it fled from the rain David drew back his sword and hamstrung the bear with a mighty blow. A screeching bellow was heard from the creature before it turned on David. It locked its jaws on the boy's staff, narrowly missing his arm. But David grabbed it by the fur on its cheek and grimaced into its eyes as he thrust the blade through its throat.

The bear bellowed with a gurgle, then died at David's feet.

Suddenly, David was awakened from his memory by a gentle tap on the shoulder.

"Are you sure you want to do this?" said the voice. "He's been a warrior from his youth, and you're nothing but a youth!"

"Yes, your majesty," David replied. "I used to tend the flocks for my father, and when a lion or bear stole a sheep from the flock, I arose, struck it, and killed it. And if it turned to attack me, I'd grab it by the beard and thrust it through. The Lord, who saved me from the paws of animals, will save me from the hand of this man. I have killed both lion and bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine will be no different because he has defied the armies of the living God."

Saul was astonished. “Where could he have learned this faith?” he thought to himself. He remained speechless for a moment as he marveled at the young boy. But when he saw his confidence and the manner of Spirit who was upon him, he knew it was God’s will and sent the boy forward.

Roaring laughter was heard from the giant. Goliath immediately took to mocking the boy who was approaching him. But when David wouldn’t stop, Goliath knew that he intended to fight. He looked down at the youth in the distance.

“He’s nothing but a boy!” he thought to himself. Then he hated David because he thought Israel was mocking him by sending a boy.

So Goliath howled at David, “Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?” Then he cursed David by his gods and said, “Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!”

This he said hoping to scare the boy off. He was in no mood to play along with Israel’s game. But David gritted his teeth as he gripped the leathery sling in his hand.

“You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. Then all this assembly shall know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD’s, and He will give you into our hands.”

Goliath’s mouth was hanging open at this point. He couldn’t believe the boy’s boldness. Then hate gripped his heart as he gnashed his teeth furiously. “I’ve had enough of your insolence, boy!” the towering warrior growled. Then charged at David in a rage.

But David reached into his pouch calmly, pulled out a smooth stone, and prepared his sling. The man approached quickly and prepared to swing, but David waited patiently for the perfect moment to strike. Then he prayed, “Lord, guide this stone to the weak spot in his armor!” And he slung the stone and struck the Philistine in his forehead. The stone hit him with such a force that it sank into his forehead, causing him to fall face-down on the ground.

Goliath lay there motionless while David approached. But the boy didn’t take any chances; he drew Goliath’s own sword and cut off the giant’s head.

Victory Is Realized Through Small Steps

Consider sitting in David's shoes as the man approached to kill him. Can you imagine the fear that would have taken hold of you while you waited for the perfect moment to strike? As death approached you, one pounding step after another, how would you have felt, needing to wait?

But David didn't so much as flinch. Faith overtook him like a waterfall, and he killed the man as if he had been slaying giants his whole life.

God prepared him for this day and hour during his quiet moments with the Lord while he tended the flock. Likewise, God is preparing you for your own personal giants in life—circumstances that have yet to happen.

During these trials, God may tell you to wait. You'll watch disaster approach you one pounding step after another, but still God says, "Hold on… Be patient…" If you try to jump out of harm's way without God's approval, you will not be taking a leap of faith. Rather, you'll create an unforgettably worse trial.

Trust in God and wait for His saving power. He has appointed the giants in your life for you to overcome them and grow from them. Knowing, then, that God has determined to use His power to overcome your giants, why should you fear at all?

Beginning Faith with the End in Mind

In order to grow in faith, first we must understand the foundation of faith. Then, from the foundation up, we will build ourselves in Christ.

So what is faith?

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Hebrews 11:1

Faith is evidence. Evidence suggests that it must be tangible. So we must have tangible works that prove our intangible faith.

But where does faith come from, and when should we have it?

“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Romans 10:17

This is where some Christians stumble. There are some who are taught to believe that if they believe anything hard enough, it will happen for them. If they believe with all their heart that God will pluck out the tree in their backyard and plant it in the sea, God will do it in fulfillment of the Scriptures.

But they are missing one key point: That faith must be in the words God says to you. Notice that Romans doesn’t say, “Faith comes by reading.” Rather, it says, “Faith comes by hearing.” I’m not saying that we shouldn’t have faith in the Scriptures. It is the word of God after all. But how Scripture is properly applied is spoken to us by the Holy Spirit on a moment by moment basis. When it is time to apply the Scripture, such as commanding a tree to be removed, the Holy Spirit will communicate that to us.

Ecclesiastes tells us that a time and a place exist for every activity under the sun. This holds true with faith. There is a time to have faith and a time not to have any. Do not trust in anything that God has not specifically said will happen. Jesus did say,

“…If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.” Luke 17:6

However, this Scripture wasn’t spoken directly to you but to the disciples sitting nearby. So it isn’t going to happen for you if the Holy Spirit hasn’t confirmed that you should tell your tree or mountain to move. It isn’t a question of the

measure of your faith but of its accuracy. You can have all the faith in the world, but if it is not accurately placed in the words of the Spirit, nothing will happen.

Another example would be that of a man I knew of named Jeremy whose vehicle broke down while on his way to work. He prayed over his car, then told it in name of the Lord to start. After four attempts, it didn't start. Then he came to the conclusion that there was something wrong with his faith. He just needed to have more faith; then it would happen! So he prayed again and had all faith that God would do it. Then he closed his eyes, put the key in the ignition and said, "In the name of Jesus, I command you to work!" Without an ounce of doubt, he turned the key—but the car didn't start. In the end, he was late for work that day.

After everything was over, he decided, "It must not be God's will." But if he had started with the will of God and worked backward, he would not have had to waste his time yelling at his car and praying for things that weren't in God's will.

So the question is, "How is the will of God communicated to us?" Through the voice of the Holy Spirit. Hence, true faith comes by hearing the word of God. Whenever our faith lines up with the will of God, the Lord answers.

God's word can be split into two categories. There is the written word, upon which all Christianity is founded. Then there is the oral word, which is the voice of the Spirit, who explains to you in plain words how to apply the written word on a daily basis. By this we know that the oral word is as essential as the written word.

But it's interesting how some say, "It didn't happen because I must not have had enough faith." Jesus said that all it takes is a little mustard-seed-sized faith for miracles like these to happen—not mountain-sized faith. It doesn't take a mountain of faith to move a mountain. As the Sciptures tell us,

"So Jesus said to them, 'Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, "Move from here to there," and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.'" Matthew 17:20

In another scripture, Jesus calls a mustard seed the "smallest seed." So it only takes a little faith for great things to happen. Although God requires us to have great faith, He was making clear through this scripture that if you have even a little faith, nothing will be impossible for you. So the issue isn't always about the size of faith so much as what you're choosing to put your faith in.

"Well, I was putting my faith in Jesus that He would start my car," Jeremy said.

“Did Jesus say He would start your car?” his pastor asked.

“Well, no.”

“So then, how did you know whether God was willing or not to start your car?”

“I didn’t. … I just trusted Him. I thought if I had faith, it would happen.”

“How can you have faith unless God tells you what He intends to do?”

Every time God speaks, our natural response must be with faith. If God hasn’t spoken, then what are we trusting in? In ourselves and our personal hopes. But our faith must always be in His will. While we can pray for things and see large miracles happen, we cannot command the tree to uproot or the mountain to move unless God tells us to do so first.

Faith is meant to be about God. But it’s funny how we make it about ourselves. “Well, if I only had a little more faith, then this or that would have happened!” Such a statement neglects the fact that God may not have been willing for the given thing to happen. It isn’t about how much faith we have so much as it is about how faithful God is.

“I trust God won’t let that happen to me” is a common sentiment I’ve heard. This is what a person may say when he or she is about to take a leap of faith, such as making a financial sacrifice, and is asked, “What will you do when it doesn’t work out for you and you lose everything?”

“I trust God won’t let that happen to me,” he or she says. “He’s faithful. He’ll keep it from happening.”

But how did God specifically tell you He wouldn’t let it happen? How did God specifically tell you to make a sacrifice or take that leap of faith? If He didn’t tell you, then you are hoping God will help, but you are not having faith. Faith comes by hearing, and God never told you to sacrifice or that He would help you if you did.

If you take a leap of faith without God telling you to do so, then you are jumping presumptuously in self-will. God will not bless that type of faith. If you want to take a leap of faith, then pray before doing anything and wait for the Lord’s answer to determine if it is in His desire for you to make that leap in the first place. As it is written,

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God…” Philippians 4:6

So the first step to having massive faith is that we must have accurate faith. Our faith must be in the will of God, and in order for it to be in His will, we must become better listeners. The more you understand God's voice, the more effective your faith will be.

So take the time to grow in discernment, that His voice may be easier for you to hear. If you give God a thirty-minute daily devotion but then ignore Him for the rest of the day, how do you expect to hear Him with clarity when you need to hear His voice most? Hearing God is like exercising a muscle. The more you practice listening, the better you will hear and understand. But if you listen less often, it will be difficult to hear and understand the Lord when you need to most.

Knowing this, pay attention to the Spirit of the Lord throughout the day and not merely in a devotion. We are supposed to have devotions to recharge our batteries, but if we don't carry the charge with us, our ember will fade. Take the lesson of the devotion with you. Continue to pay attention to the presence of the Spirit when you step out of the secret place. Don't stop praying, but be faithful to pray continuously. As it is written,

"Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving…" Colossians 4:2

Commit to a life of habitual prayer. Converse with God often, that you can be both attuned to His presence and sensitive to His voice. Put away the things that distract you from God so that you can be closer to Him.

Abstain from idleness. If it doesn't pertain to the Lord or edify you, then why are you partaking in that particular activity? That activity doesn't need to be blatant sin for it to be wrong. If it takes your focus off God, then it is a distraction. Every idol begins as a distraction. So if you're being distracted from God by something, then you have an idol.

You should be able both to meditate on the Spirit and to accomplish any activity you do, whether work or entertainment. This is especially so during entertainment, which is a time when your mind is resting and able to focus more easily. So if your entertainment is distracting you from God, then start looking for things that fill you with the Spirit and edify you.

By continuing to abide in the Spirit, you will hear God with greater clarity and apply your faith effectively. So take it to heart to worship and pray continually. Then, when you understand the will of God, you'll be able to overcome any obstacle. You'll enter trials with confidence, continue in them with joyful

patience, and exit them with the same.

One of the most important steps to increasing your faith is to increase the time you spend growing in the Scriptures. If at all possible, set aside an hour every day to study. While this isn't always possible, the key is to take as much time as you can to spend growing in the word.

Some Christians have a habit of dedicating thirty minutes to reading; then, when the thirty minutes are over, they close their Bible and walk away. More often than not, the Scriptures were speaking out to them. If they are, then keep reading past thirty minutes and don't stop until they stop speaking to you. When the words pop out at you, this is the Holy Spirit speaking to you through the pages. When He does this, give Him as much time as He requires of you to sit and listen to Him.

How do you know how much time He requires? When you feel the words popping out at you from the scripture, He is speaking and requires you to listen. When they stop popping out at you, then stop reading. You will learn that you get more out of the Scriptures by memorizing and meditating on the pages that pop out at you than by focusing on the ones that don't.

Why is this? Because students get more from a course book as they follow along with the teacher. If they flip ahead and ignore his voice, then they learn nothing of significance. There is never a time for us to be self-taught in the Scriptures. Rather, we must all be God-taught. Even as Jesus said,

"It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me." John 6:45

Knowing this, give more thoughtful attention to the scriptures that speak to you because the Lord Himself is actively teaching you through them in that moment.

A wise idea would be to write down everything you feel God is saying to you while you read. If the scriptures seem to come alive and other scriptures come to mind, know that God is teaching you and comparing each verse with others to provide you the whole teaching on the subject. As it is written,

"These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual." 1 Corinthians 2:13

The Spirit will compare each spiritual lesson with each spiritual scripture. So take the time to write down everything He says. Do not write your own thoughts

but discipline yourself only to write the things God says. Doing so will train you to understand the voice of God more clearly and help you to decipher between the words from your own heart and those from God's. The end result will be an ability to discern between your own will and God's, that you can submit to His will.

Taking it to heart to study your Bible will help your faith. Firstly, studying your Bible will help you understand the will of God; secondly, it will help you understand the nature of God; and thirdly, it will help you to understand His heart. When you understand His heart and nature, you'll understand when to apply faith properly and how to overcome every situation with confidence.

Whenever you need faith, always begin with the things that help you to understand what God is doing through the situation, what God requires of you, what He is telling you to do, and what His will is.

Total Surrender

Massive faith is on full display through total surrender to God's will. So take the plunge into a Spirit-directed life, laying your future completely in God's hands—the future of both your life that now is and that which is to come. Let Him decide what is best and what direction you should take. Let Him have full authority over you.

In order to live by perfect faith, first you must understand that God has plans for your life, plans that will give you a future and a hope if you follow them. But if you don't follow them, then you are not living for Christ. Christian literally means "follower of Christ." So in order to be Christian, first we must allow Jesus to take the lead through His Spirit. That God has plans for you is evident. For it is written,

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope." Jeremiah 29:11

The original Hebrew word for 'thoughts' in this verse is 'machăshâbâh.' This word literally means "thoughts, intentions, purpose, or plan." Hence, some versions of the Bible translate this verse as saying, "I know the plans I have for you."

God has plans for you. He has a future in mind—a future of peace both in this life and in the next. All you have to do is believe. He also has specific works He wants you to do, including both occasional, great works and daily, small works. If you're not circumspect in your walk, paying attention to the soft voice of the Spirit, then you'll never know what those works are or when they need to be accomplished. In order to walk in righteousness, we must walk in faith. In order to walk in faith, we must walk in the Spirit while obeying His voice. Therefore, it is required of us to work in the Spirit, that the Lord may operate through us. And as it is written,

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:10

In order to live out the works God has for us, we must be led by His Spirit. In order to be led by the Spirit, first we must hear His voice and obey. So sensitize yourself to the Spirit, and surrender. Let go of your own heart and let Him dictate your life, not only in the major plans of life but even in the little day-to-day tasks as well. You'll find that He will have you love, serve, pray, and

worship daily while beckoning you to rest in Him frequently throughout the day.

It's easy to become distracted by the scores of things around us. There are many needful tasks that call for our attention. But rather than accomplishing the task and determining to seek the Lord afterward, seek Him while you accomplish the task. Pray and abide during every activity. If during anything you do, you cannot abide at the same time, then God doesn't want you devoting your attention to that activity today.

But if there is any activity that you can accomplish while praying at the same time, then He wants you doing that activity. Surrender your desires to do something else, and continue to do the things God is calling you to do, whether work, serving, taking care of children, or resting and praying.

You'll find over time that it will be difficult to abide while you do a certain activity. This is God telling you to take a break, pull away from the distractions around you, and be recharged in the Spirit.

So, for example, if a mother were to wash the dishes for her children, at first she may be able to abide and focus on the Spirit through prayer and worship. But then, after finishing them, she proceeds to wash the counter and sweep the floor, only to notice that it has become difficult to focus on God. At this point, she has to ask herself which is more important: her relationship with God or scrubbing the floor.

Don't be tempted to finish the task at hand. Take a fifteen-minute break to be alone with God; then pick up where you left off.

This, particularly, is an issue for stay-at-home mothers. Those who work can find the rest they need during scheduled breaks. During those times, rather than talking idly, it would be better to pray or worship silently, spending time in the presence of God to be recharged. But stay-at-home mothers never seem to take breaks.

If this describes you, take the time to consider: Would you take breaks at work? Then why not at home? You need it! Your job is extremely important and can be very taxing on the body, spirit, and emotions—especially if you have multiple young children or toddlers.

The problem a mother has is that God has given her a servant's heart. She tends never to think of herself or her own needs, which isn't wrong. However, she needs to realize that spending time to recharge her spirit, while not a need like eating or sleeping, is nonetheless God's command for her—if she is to love the

Lord above all else.

Since the day her babies were born, she has been having sleepless nights, tending to her children's every beck and call. But now she needs to remember that God comes first.

Remember that we are commanded to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, but our neighbor as ourselves. So love your children as yourself and put God first. Take breaks and rest in the Spirit. Fifteen minutes' rest never hurt anybody!

No matter who you are or what you're doing— whether at work or entertaining yourself—you need to take breaks to continue in the Spirit. Examine yourself in this: Are you pushing yourself too hard? Do you strive to accomplish what you think needs to be done or what God is telling you to do? Do you allow God to direct and lead your day so that you accomplish what He wants you to do in His timeframe?

Living for His will in every little activity will change your life! That we should be led by God is evident. For it is written,

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." Romans 8:14

And also,

"But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law." Galatians 5:18

If you are led by the Spirit, then God is operating through you. When Jesus works through you, you become like Jesus, who is above the law. Therefore, they who are led by the Spirit are justified. But if you are never led by the Spirit and instead live according to your will, then you are not justified. Even as it is written,

"And you have done worse than your fathers, for behold, each one follows the dictates of his own evil heart, so that no one listens to Me." Jeremiah 16:12

And also,

"…so that there may not be among you man or woman or family or tribe, whose heart turns away today from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations, and that there may not be among you a root bearing bitterness or wormwood; and so it may not happen, when he hears the words of this curse, that he blesses himself in his heart, saying, 'I shall have peace, even though I follow the dictates of my heart'—as though the drunkard could be included with

the sober.” Deuteronomy 29:18–19

The gods of this nation are self-actualization and wealth. In trying to further yourself, pave your own future, and plan your own destiny, you have become your own god. These are His responsibilities, however, and if you don’t trust Him with them, then you are not walking by faith. If we are only justified by faith yet refuse to walk in it, are we therefore saved? How can we claim to be saved and be our own god at the same time? A walk with Jesus isn’t about applying what we think is the Bible is telling us to apply. Rather, it is about obeying the Holy Spirit, who teaches us daily how to walk in Christ and apply the Bible. If we do not listen to His voice, then we are not walking in faith.

We operate in the Spirit when we listen to His voice, believe, and obey. Thus, these are the works of faith that justify us. As we read,

“But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” James 2:20–26

Perfect faith requires action. If you truly believe something, then you need to act on it. You need to do something with your faith if you want it to be real and tangible.

Therefore, Beloved, surrender to the Spirit and obey His voice. For in so doing, you will be walking in the faith that justifies and saves. Remember, we said faith is the evidence of unseen things. In order for it to be evident, we must have tangible works to prove our intangible faith. These are not the works of the law, which do not justify. The works of the law are on display in Christians who read their Bible and try to apply it the way they think is best. They study hard; then, when they know what a passage means, they press hard to apply it in their life rather than allowing the Holy Spirit to teach them when and how to do it on a daily basis.

But the works of faith are on full display in those who are led by the Spirit, being vigilant to His voice and swift to obey. Faith, not our own opinions on how the Bible should be applied, justifies us. So those who apply the Scriptures the way

they feel is best are not pursuing a deeper relationship with the Lord, nor are they exhibiting the faith that saves. But those who abide in the Spirit daily, and apply the Scriptures in the way He plainly tells them to do, grow more intimate with Him. They walk in the faith that is perfect.

So surrender everything you are to God. Lay your entire future in His hands. Learn to be led by His Spirit—it will change your life. The more you listen to God, the more opportunity you'll have to exercise faith. The more you exercise faith, the more you'll grow in it. Therefore, the more you are led by the Spirit, the more faith you will have, and the more you'll experience both the love and the power of God in your life.

Total Release

Stop worrying! There is a statistic that one out of every four Americans dies from a stress-related illness before the age of sixty.

Consider the size of your church. Take the number of members under sixty years old and divide by four. You can't include any who are over sixty years because they've already made it past the statistical age. Your answer represents how many people will die before sixty because of stress.

Jesus says that you can't turn a single hair on your head white or black, and He says you can't add a cubit to your stature. The Scriptures also say, "…Do not fret —it only causes harm" (Psalm 37:8). Fretting really does cause a lot of harm. It causes harm mentally because you're dwelling on negativity. It causes harm physically because it puts stress on the body, and stress kills. It also causes harm spiritually because, rather than being built up and edified by faith, you're dwelling on fear.

Never fear a situation but always persist in faith. God is your salvation in everything; believe that He will deliver you. Remember also that the Scriptures say,

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us." 1 John 4:18–19

God gives you everything out of love. If you're fearing, then you're not being made perfect in love. Remember that we love Him because He first loved us. So press onward in your faith and do not give power to doubt!

There's a difference between knowing and believing something. Just because you know God loves you doesn't mean it always feels as if He does. But if you believe and persist in faith, you'll find a change taking place in your heart.

When difficult circumstances lead you to feel as if God doesn't love you, you need to believe that He does and that He is still good. For God gives us trials to grow us in Christ and increase our faith. Salvation, in turn, comes by faith. As we read,

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." Ephesians 2:8

Therefore, Beloved, know that when trials and tribulation come your way, God is securing your salvation through love. Not everything God gives us will be

pleasurable. Our flesh is contrary to God, and God is contrary to our flesh, after all. He will give us what we need to edify us in the Spirit. Even if that requires some suffering in the flesh, He will give us what is best for our current spiritual need. He will teach you through your trial, that you may walk with wisdom and in the path of eternal life.

Our fathers have disciplined us to walk uprightly. They teach us how to be responsible so we can have food on our table, good relationships, and less suffering in life. Yet it all begins with something that isn't desirable: discipline.

Discipline is never fun but, rather, always painful one way or another, whether emotionally or physically. Yet these things are given to us that we may have growth and find life. If we were not trained how to live responsibly, we'd end up constantly suffering brokenness until we figured life out through the school of hard knocks.

God also disciplines us. His chastisement can be painful for a time, but the benefit is eternal. Because He cares for us and loves us, He gives us what we need for growth whether we like it or not. So no matter what, believe that God loves you.

During the hardest moments in life, Satan loves to tempt a believer to think that God doesn't love him or her. But the way to resist the devil is through steadfast faith. Do not give way to the enemy or let doubt linger in your mind. Rather, dwell on the love of God and believe that, no matter what, He gives you all things out of love.

Consider also that it is written,

"So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD." Deuteronomy 8:3

God allows you to go through circumstances of suffering so you can learn to live by His word. Notice that it doesn't just say "written word." Instead, it says that you may live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord. This includes both the written words and the words that His Spirit speaks to you daily.

Remember also that we are justified by faith, and faith comes from every word that He speaks. Therefore, God is telling you through this scripture that He allows you to suffer so you can learn to be led by the Spirit and justified in everything you do.

This we have also seen in Jesus' life. For it is written,

"…who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered." Hebrews 5:7–8

Likewise, we learn obedience to His voice through the things we suffer. There are many who tell you that God will never give you more than you can bear. Then they recite the scripture that says,

"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." 1 Corinthians 10:13

But notice that this verse says He never allow you to be *tempted* beyond what you're able to bear. This scripture suggests that God will never allow you to be tempted into sin without providing a way out. That way, you're free will can be perfect rather than being forced into one decision or another.

But in regard to trials and the giants of life, nowhere does it say God will not give you more than you can bear. On the contrary, you'll find that God gives you far more than you could ever imagine bearing in your trials. That way, you'll learn to surrender your circumstances to Him, so He can bear them up on His shoulders.

God will always give you more than you can bear on your own. Why? Because He is your way of escape. Then, by relying on Him, you realize that you can bear the burden because Jesus is doing it through you. So God will allow you to suffer, but only so you can learn to rest in and be strengthened by Him.

In every trial, God intends to do good to you. Even as we read,

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

Job suffered a devastating loss. Financially, he was bankrupt. His children died, and his wife despised him for it, blaming him as the cause. His friends reviled him to the point of tears. He was left broken and alone in an ash heap, waiting and begging for the faithfulness of God. In the end, the Lord revealed Himself to Job. As it is written,

"Then the LORD answered Job out of the <u>whirlwind</u>, and said…" Job 38:1

The Hebrew word for ‘whirlwind’ literally means ‘storm’ or ‘tornado.’ So much as in Job’s case, God is there in the midst of the storms of your life to teach you and comfort you through it all. He is in the middle of the disaster, at the very heart of it, to comfort you. But He will not end the storm until He has stripped away everything that is necessary for you to grow in Him as you ought. While this may be painful, remember the scripture that says,

“Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.” John 15:2

Sometimes it seems as if every time we step out in faith, something goes wrong. After taking to heart the responsibility of honoring God, we get slapped with a trial. Why? Because God sees our fruit and wants us to bear more. So He will teach us through suffering to be obedient, even as He did with Jesus.

But God does these things for the sake of your eternal life. With careful consideration and much forethought, He permits the trials of life in order to prune us, to grow us, and ultimately to bless us. By this we can see He cherishes us.

When we understand that God intends good for us through our trials, they become easier to bear. Therefore, Beloved, endure with patience, knowing that God doesn’t permit your trials to save you from them but to bless you far beyond them. As it is written,

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory…” 2 Corinthians 4:17

And also,

“Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.” James 5:11

Since you know that God intends good through your heartbreak, surrender to Him happily. Learn to rejoice in your trials through faith. Worship Him even as Job did. As we read,

“Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said: ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.’ In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.” Job 1:20–22

God calls us to rejoice always and in everything. Rejoicing in trials is a tremendous act of faith because, in so doing, you are proclaiming both that you believe God is good in everything He does and that He will save you from the situation. But that we should rejoice in every situation is evident. For it is written,

“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” Philippians 4:4

And also,

“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” James 1:2–4

Endure all things with joy, knowing that God intends not only to save you from suffering but also to bless you in your trials. God would never give you a trial or an unsurmountable mountain in life unless He intended to be your strength to overcome—and to give you something better in the end. That blessing may not be physical, however; it may be eternal wisdom gained from your circumstances. But God would never give you any trial if there weren’t something better to be had through it. The blessing in the end will always be greater than the means to get there.

So release your life to God instead of worrying about tomorrow. Let Him plan it for you; then everything will work together for good because you love Him.

Facing Your Giants

Everyone has experienced a moment when faith seems impossible—one of those David and Goliath moments. It's easy to be intimidated by the size of your foe. But if God has called you to the battle, then assuredly He will fight for you, that He may be glorified.

God doesn't just permit these difficult situations in life but appoints them for your sake so you can learn from them and grow thereby. He appoints them to test you and refine your faith, that through your circumstances you will learn to rest in Christ at all times. When you do this, He can work through you continually. He doesn't give you these difficult situations for you to learn that He'll only be your strength when everything falls apart. Rather, He would have you learn that He has always been your strength, so you would learn to rely on Him more.

It is a continual Sabbath to which He calls you—a rest from the works of the flesh and from operating in your own strength, that God can work for you and be glorified. He, like any loving father, is compelled to provide for you. So let Him provide hope and salvation as He does the work while you rest softly and gently in His presence.

In David's situation, God raised up Goliath to be in the position he was in, and to have the stature he had, that God would be glorified through his destruction by the hand of David. This situation was foreordained so that David could rise to power. This concept can also be seen in an earlier scripture. As it is written,

"For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.' Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens." Romans 9:17–18

The Lord raised up Pharaoh to oppose Moses and Israel. That way He could be glorified when He saved His children by His might. Likewise, God has appointed the giants of your life with the intention of overcoming them for you and teaching you to rely on Him through them. He allows these circumstances so that He can be glorified through them. As we read,

"Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' Jesus answered, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him.'" John 9:1–3

Afterward, Jesus healed the man of his blindness, and He was glorified as a result. Similarly, God will permit certain circumstances in your life that will glorify Him. Others will look at you and know that there is no way you could overcome them by yourself. Then, when you do overcome them, they know that it was God who worked through you. This is a good witness for the unbeliever, enabling them to see the power of Jesus alive and at work in you. Because when the living power of God delivers you from your circumstances, it gives testimony to the truth that Jesus is alive, risen, and Lord over all.

As it is written,

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you.” 2 Corinthians 4:7–12

When the life of Christ is operating in us to overcome obstacles the world cannot, they are compelled to stand in awe. It makes them pause for a moment as they absorb the fact that Jesus just saved you—and that He can save them, too. So your giants were appointed, like Jesus’ cross. Bear your cross so that you can be the example of Christ and bring life to others, who will believe in Christ through watching you overcome your trials.

When you look up at the mountains of your life, they may seem insurmountable. And that’s because they are! You can’t possibly climb them or overcome them—not under your own strength, at least.

But the Lord appointed them so that the only way out of your circumstances is through Him. That way, you may learn to rely on Him so that He may be glorified and others may see the testimony of Jesus as they watch Him save you mightily.

Goliath was raised up for David’s faith to wipe him out. Even so, God is preparing your faith now and anticipating that it will wipe out your giants in life. So take it to heart to grow constantly in faith. Draw near to the Lord and pray and abide without ceasing.

If you pray that God would increase your faith, He will. But be aware that He

will increase it by giving you opportunities for faith. Some will be good situations, and others will be bad. Expect trials when you pray for more faith. But as you learn from each trial, they will become less necessary and will taper off.

So take each teaching to heart, that you don’t have to relearn old lessons. Many trials can be avoided by continually practicing the things that the Lord teaches you. Some trials may even end sooner if you learn the lesson more quickly.

Ultimately, if you know your giants have been appointed by God for you to overcome them, why would you fear them? Be bold in your faith and take heart. For the Lord intends to save you from your giants and bless you with something greater.

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About the Author

Adam is a preacher, teacher, and #1 internationally bestselling author of over 60 books on the Christian faith. He is a devoted husband and father of three boys. Through his travels, he’s seen the need for a new awakening and a new revival—a revival of the heart. Come join Adam on this journey of redemption, and experience God like never before!

EXPERIENCING THE LIFE-CHANGING POWER OF FAITH

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Table of Contents

Open Yourself to Believe That God Can Do All Things

Open Yourself to Pray in a Big Way

Search for the Vision God Is Giving You for Your Life

Distinguish Between Your Vision and God's, Then Believe God

Put God's Vision in Front of You

Keep a Prayer Journal

Why Let Downs Happen

God's Visions and Plans Don't Happen Overnight

Please God, Not People

If You Want to Hear God More Clearly, You Must Abide and Walk in the Spirit

Stress Makes You Forget God's Faithfulness

Set Up Monuments to God's Faithfulness

Choose to Be Happy with Today

Understanding Why Bad Things Happen Helps Stimulate Faith.

Negativity and Fear Are Satan's Tools

There Are No Plateaus in Christ—Never Stop Growing

Embrace Adversity—It Stimulates Faith and Creativity

Learn to Thank God in All Things

Become the Image of Christ in All You Do—Be the Outward Reflection of Him

Don't Question Underlying Feelings That Something Could Be Wrong

I'd Love to Hear from You!

Want Free Books?

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About the Author

Open Yourself to Believe That God Can Do All Things

We all know God can do all things, but when faced with difficult situations, we don't all believe it like we should. I knew a man whose roof started on fire during a Bible study. He lived out in the country, where it would take at least thirty to forty-five minutes for the fire department to arrive. By the time they would arrive, his house would burn down.

So he tried to climb to the top of his two-story home, but couldn't do it. He looked for a way through the attic but there was none. "If only I can get a bucket up there or my hose I could put the fire out!" he said.

Despite all his efforts, there was nothing he could do. It was in God's hands, though he refused to accept it.

"Why don't we pray for rain?" I asked him.

"Why would God do that?" he mocked.

"Why wouldn't God do that? Even if you call the fire department right now you'll lose your home. But if God answers before they arrive, you'd keep your home."

He mocked my response and ran inside to grab the phone. So I prayed for him and immediately it started raining. He didn't even have time to dial 911 before the fire was out.

"See that," I said to him. "God answers our prayers if you'll have faith."

He looked up at the house while a group stood around. Then someone from within the group said, "I saw it in the forecast."

Then they all groaned, mocked me, and walked away. Now, firstly I'd like to say that I'm not special. God answers everyone's prayers. And if you open yourself up to pray in a big way, He *will* answer you. I know that He answered my prayer that day to increase my friend's faith. So it had nothing to do with me and my prayer, but with the work God was doing in the hearts of the people around me. But the group had so little faith they mocked it!

It wasn't forecast that at the moment "amen" was said, it would rain—but it did. The weatherman suggested the possibility of rain. So because the possibility was there, it wasn't the answer of God to have rain when my friend needed it most? Does a situation truly have to be hopeless for it to be a work of God?

No wonder why few people see the works of God in their lives. Not because He isn't working, but because they blind themselves to His hand moving around them. If God wants you to see Him, and if you blind yourself to God unless you're at rock bottom, might God allow you to go through some difficult experiences to open your eyes? Might He allow you to hit rock bottom to see Him and increase your faith? A lack of faith can certainly create a multitude of problems for anyone.

Maybe God in His foreknowledge prepared the weather to save this man's house. Then, as the weather changed in preparation of my friend's hour of need, the weatherman saw it. Just because you can discern that future doesn't mean God isn't working through the circumstances of your life.

Like the weatherman, you can see the fruits of God's hand in your life and discern the future through them. You can't say with certainty, but you can guess fairly accurately what God might do. Remember that Jesus likened the fruits of the time to the face of the sky. The Pharisees knew how to tell the weather, but they couldn't tell the signs of the Messiah.

What might your fruits look like? If God has laid it in your heart to go on a mission trip, and after praying to go on one, your boss comes to you and mentions that you have a lot of vacation time and should use it—and then the church says, "Hey, we're having a mission trip. Who wants to come?"— what are the fruits saying? I know I could guess your future in such a situation, and I'm no prophet.

God's hand does prepare things before it's time, moving all the planets in place until they align. As you watch the planets align, you can get a rough idea of what He will call you to do.

When they are aligned, you'll be able to look back and see how you could have known the will of God through fruit before it happened. Use this knowledge to grow in discernment. But in all things pray that He would confirm His will before you make any decisions to do anything.

Pray always and in everything. Believe He can do anything and open your heart up to faith. If you want to experience God in a big way, then prepare yourself to pray big prayers of faith.

If you want to see more of God in your life, all you have to do is open your eyes to His works around you. Pray for open eyes and choose to have faith. Don't say, "Why would God do that for me?" or "God doesn't work that way."

Let Him decide that. Have an open mind to believe God can do anything. Then let your prayers reflect your new-found faith as you pray to see His hand working more clearly in your life. Pray for miracles—and don’t wait until you need a breakthrough to pray for one!

Open Yourself to Pray Bigger Prayers of Faith

Don’t give power to doubt. “God won’t do that!” some say. It’s what my friend with the burning roof said: “God doesn’t work like that.” How do you know what God will and won’t do? Are you God, to decide that for Him? If you don’t have enough faith to ***ask*** for a miracle, then a miracle will never happen for you.

If you don’t feel worthy of it, then stop thinking like that. None of us are worthy of God’s kindness. But if He is willing to give His own Son’s life to save you, I’m pretty sure He cherishes your prayers. Don’t only pray for the small things. Say, “God if you’re willing at all, please help me with this big thing. I don’t know if you’re willing, but if you are, I believe without a doubt.”

If you want to see how big God is, then you need to pray big prayers: “Lord, please, if you’re willing, send the rain I so desperately need,” rather than “God, please make the fire department come faster. And may the damage to my roof be minimal, by a miracle.”

Oh, and by the way, my friend had no damage to his roof either. Which no one prayed for. God just knew what he needed and gave it to him anyway.

Let God decide what He will give you. Then, when He answers, be content with His reply. Maybe He will say “no” to the big prayer. So what if He does? At least you asked.

Hasn’t Jesus said, “Ask and you will receive”” Beloved, trust in God, but believe nothing until His word comes to you. For faith must come by the word of God. So if you ask for a miracle, have faith that He can, but be prepared to hear otherwise from God. “You expect this miracle but I have prepared another way out for you, just wait with patience for My hand to work.”

And what if He says “yes”? If you never asked, you never would have received.

Believing, “God will do this miracle for me” with all your heart won’t change whether that miracle will happen for you or not. It’s funny sometimes how we make faith to be about ourselves: “If I just had more faith, it would have happened!” Sometimes we just need to accept that not everything we pray for is God’s will. Having faith He will do something, when He hasn’t said He would, isn’t faith at all. Nor does it change whether He will do it or not. For we read,

“…faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Romans 10:17)

If God hasn’t spoken it, and His word hasn’t come, then why are you believing

it? Abraham was righteous for believing in what God said—not in something he hoped for, but in the direct word of God. Let us all do likewise, remembering that fervent and persistent prayer do pay off.

Remember also what Jesus taught us:

“Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, saying: “There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, ‘Get justice for me from my adversary.’ And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, ‘Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.’ ” Then the Lord said, “Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?”” (Luke 18:1–8)

If the unjust judge answered her pleas for help, won’t the God of Justice answer you? Maybe the justice you need is a little money for rent. Maybe it’s food, or maybe you’ve been praying for a baby. Justice doesn’t always have to be about the law. Every trial is unfair. And that unfairness needs the justice of God to cover it.

Earlier in Luke, Jesus also exhorted us to pray fervently and continuously. As we read,

“And He said to them, ‘Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, “Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him”; and he will answer from within and say, “Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you”? I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs. ‘So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!’” (Luke 11:5–13)

This He said to encourage you to have pernicious prayers. Be persistent and never give up. If God says “no” and that “no” means “no,” then His word is final. But sometimes He will give you what you pray for if your heart is earnest. As it is also written,

“The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.” (James 5:17–18)

What exactly did Elijah pray, and how did it look?

“Then Elijah said to Ahab, ‘Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of abundance of rain.’ So Ahab went up to eat and drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; then he bowed down on the ground, and put his face between his knees, and said to his servant, ‘Go up now, look toward the sea.’ So he went up and looked, and said, ‘There is nothing.’ And seven times he said, ‘Go again.’ Then it came to pass the seventh time, that he said, ‘There is a cloud, as small as a man’s hand, rising out of the sea!’ So he said, ‘Go up, say to Ahab, “Prepare your chariot, and go down before the rain stops you.”’” (1 Kings 18:41–44)

Elijah put his head between his knees and bore down in passionate prayer. This was a less than dignified thing to do, but you don’t need to fold your hands and make it look pretty. Just share your heart. If your heart is burdened, then release it onto God’s shoulder.

Notice also that the rain didn’t return until Elijah bowed down and prayed seven times. What if he gave up and only prayed six? Be fervent in your prayers!

I have heard a lot of people say, “God doesn’t change His mind.”

No, he doesn’t, but He will change your destiny if you pray. What I mean to say is that He will relent and deliver. But if you don’t pray, He will allow your circumstances to happen. God told Hezekiah that it was time for him to die. Hezekiah prayed and asked God to remember Him. Then the Lord healed him and gave him life. Afterward, He made a miracle wherein the sundial went backward.

As it is written,

“In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, went to him and said to him, ‘Thus says the LORD: “Set your house in order, for you shall die, and not live.”’ Then he turned his face toward the wall,

and prayed to the LORD, saying, ‘Remember now, O LORD, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done what was good in Your sight.’ And Hezekiah wept bitterly. And it happened, before Isaiah had gone out into the middle court, that the word of the LORD came to him, saying, ‘Return and tell Hezekiah the leader of My people, “Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: ‘I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the LORD. And I will add to your days fifteen years. I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for My own sake, and for the sake of My servant David.’”’ Then Isaiah said, ‘Take a lump of figs.’ So they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered. And Hezekiah said to Isaiah, ‘What is the sign that the LORD will heal me, and that I shall go up to the house of the LORD the third day?’ Then Isaiah said, ‘This is the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing which He has spoken: shall the shadow go forward ten degrees or go backward ten degrees?’ And Hezekiah answered, ‘It is an easy thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees; no, but let the shadow go backward ten degrees.’ So Isaiah the prophet cried out to the LORD, and He brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down on the sundial of Ahaz.” (2 Kings 20:1–11)

God didn’t lie. Assuredly he would have died if he hadn’t prayed.

Also, God told Ahab he would be cursed for his crime against Naboth. Then Ahab fell to his knees in sackcloth. And you know what God did? He relented, declaring that the curse would happen to his son. As it is written,

“So it was, when Ahab heard those words, that he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his body, and fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went about mourning. And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, ‘See how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the calamity in his days. In the days of his son I will bring the calamity on his house.’” (1 Kings 21:27–29)

If God would answer Ahab’s prayer—*Ahab, of all people!*—why wouldn’t He answer yours?

God even changed Israel’s destiny through the prayer of Moses. As it is written,

“‘Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation.’ Then Moses pleaded with the LORD his God, and said: ‘LORD, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great

power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, “He brought them out to harm them, to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth”? Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, “I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.”’ So the LORD relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people.” (Exodus 32:10–14)

God was going to have wrath, but because Moses prayed, He relented. What would have happened if Moses didn’t pray? What would happen if you stop praying? What would happen if you start praying bigger, with more faith?

Even David knew God changes the outcome when we pray, for which reason he begged for the life of his child, whom God had said He would kill. As it is written,

“Then Nathan departed to his house. And the LORD struck the child that Uriah’s wife bore to David, and it became ill. David therefore pleaded with God for the child, and David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. So the elders of his house arose and went to him, to raise him up from the ground. But he would not, nor did he eat food with them. Then on the seventh day it came to pass that the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead. For they said, ‘Indeed, while the child was alive, we spoke to him, and he would not heed our voice. How can we tell him that the child is dead? He may do some harm!’ When David saw that his servants were whispering, David perceived that the child was dead. Therefore David said to his servants, ‘Is the child dead?’ And they said, ‘He is dead.’ So David arose from the ground, washed and anointed himself, and changed his clothes; and he went into the house of the LORD and worshiped. Then he went to his own house; and when he requested, they set food before him, and he ate. Then his servants said to him, ‘What is this that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive, but when the child died, you arose and ate food.’ And he said, ‘While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, “Who can tell whether the LORD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?” But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.’” (2 Samuel 12:15–23)

If Elijah hadn’t prayed for rain, would it have rained? If Moses hadn’t prayed that God would relent, would He have? Some may say, “Well, God knew these righteous men would pray and gave them a nudge in the right direction.” But

then how do you explain the unrighteous Ahab? We are all given free will. Ahab prayed and God relented the curse on Ahab, giving it to his unrighteous son instead.

If you had never given your life to Christ, where would you be going? To heaven or to hell? Why has your fate changed? Why has God relented and made you His friend? Because you repented and prayed for forgiveness. Prayer is powerful, and when God answers it, the result of prayer is eternal life.

Beloved, I can never express it enough: Pray! God will move the immovable, commit to the impossible, and bless you in ways you could never imagine if only you'd pour out your heart and ask through faith.

Search for the Vision God Is Giving You for Your Life

You need to be intentional about drawing near to God. Some may say, “I do! I spend thirty minutes a day in a devotion before going to work.”

Beloved, Jesus Christ was not crucified to have thirty minutes of your day. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, belong to Him. Give Him what He deserves by continual affection through ongoing prayer and worship.

Pray in between phone calls. Worship inwardly at your desk. Keep your eyes on His presence, that you may walk in the Spirit. Walking in the Spirit only happens when you pay attention to the Spirit, hear Him, and obey. It’s easy to be distracted by work or by taking care of children or the house, but rather than ignoring God’s presence while you focus on the task at hand, pay attention to His presence and let Him work through you.

If you can’t do both, then something is wrong. Maybe you need a break to recharge.

You can’t receive His vision or plans for your life by accident. God answers those who pray. He speaks to those who open a conversation with Him. He is humble and gentle in spirit, willing to allow us to approach Him and enter His throne room. Although He may hop off His throne and come get our attention from time to time, this isn’t how our relationship with Him should exist. We should be willing to reach back to Him constantly, as He is always reaching for us. If you want to hear Him, you need to turn your ear His way.

He has a plan for your life, and if you don’t live according to it, you’ll never experience the fullness of the blessings He desires to give to you.

So constantly ask Him for direction. From the moment you wake up, pray, “God, what would you have me do today? Is there anyone you want me to serve? Open my eyes to see Your will and guiding hand.”

Distinguish Between Your Vision and God's, Then Believe God

It's easy to confuse what you want with what God wants. We've all done it at some point. This is why we must lay everything down in prayer. Don't prepare to move your life, your work, your business, or anything else God has given you into a new area unless He has confirmed that it is His will for you. He has a vision for your life and where you should be sewn into the body of Christ.

How can you distinguish? Merely by prayer and waiting for His answer. Sometimes when we see the fruit moving and the planets line up, we preempt God, assuming we know His will. We pray about it and then dive headfirst into what we think His will is. But we should take the time to wait for an answer first.

Test yourself in this. If you have made a recent move in your family, workplace, or business, ask yourself if God has made that move or if you've seen the fruit and jumped into it. If there has been a major move, has God confirmed His will to you before you made the leap? Or did you just step forward because it made the most sense? If God has not directly told you to take that step, then maybe you should consider praying and repenting.

Confirm His will. Know His plan each step of the way before you make any move in life. Give God the authority to decide what steps you should take, even in the little day-to-day tasks.

If you're being led by God in everything and He is working through you, aren't you one hundred percent justified in your works? Can you say with all confidence that He's worked through you one hundred percent in the things you've been doing lately? If you don't know for certain, by declaring "He has!" and having faith in it, you may be setting yourself up for disappointment. We are not called to have faith in some grey area when it comes to works. His word will be clear, and our obedience should be sincere.

Put God’s Vision in Front of You

Remember daily what He has said. Let this reminder inspire your faith to believe God in a big way so that what He has promised to do He will accomplish.

Write down any plans He has revealed to you, no matter how vague. If you’ve had it confirmed by God, then these things will come to pass. Set them in front of you, on your desk, and let them remind you daily of what God intends for you. When He reveals a new detail, add it to your list.

“But Adam—you’re wrong! God hasn’t done what He told me He would. I wrote it on the list and waited a year and it still hasn’t happened!”

Two things could be the matter:

1) God’s perfect timing hasn’t come yet.
2) You were mistaken and God didn’t actually say those things.

Because whatever God says will happen *will* happen. His word does not return to Him void.

Keep a Prayer Journal

If you think God is calling you to something in life, write it down. Then pull out a journal and start praying circles around that situation. Everything the Lord lays in your heart while praying, pray. Then write down your prayers.

Go back to the journal months in the future, or a year in the future, and see how He has blessed you. Likely there will be prayers you've forgotten about that He answered.

What a wonderful opportunity to worship Him in gratitude; and seeing His answers to forgotten prayers increases your faith.

Why Let Downs Happen

If you do not distinguish between your heart and what God has said, you will have a lot of let-downs—because God will not accomplish your desires, just His. But if you conform your heart to His, then you'll start seeing more of your desires taking place. Why? Because God is placing His desires and visions for your future in your heart and He cannot deny Himself. But if you are self-willed or self-seeking, you will not be blessed by Him. You can still receive what you desire, but it just means you have blessed yourself and God has not blessed you.

I have known many millionaires who have had wild visions for their companies and drove their finances forward through faith in themselves. Then they turned around and said, "God has blessed me." More than obviously, their own heart has blessed them and they have served their own heart as a god. So their "god" has blessed them, but the Lord whom we serve has not. What shall be the end of them when they are judged? What has Paul said?

"Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:12–16)

If you want to please God, then diligently seek His word and will for your life. And diligently seek the truth of His word—both what is written and what He speaks to you. Your heart may deceive you, and Satan will prod it on so that you may think you have heard from God when you have only experienced a vision of your own desires. This is why it is written,

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6–7)

Let God show you His will. Confirm everything through prayer. Become a prayer warrior and surround your life and those around you with prayers that never cease to flow. For it is written,

"Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving

preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, *continuing steadfastly in prayer*…" (Romans 12:10–12)

And also,

"…pray without ceasing," (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

Furthermore, it is written,

"Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." (James 5:16)

Why would it say this? Because prayer makes a difference. Immerse yourself in continual prayer. Have you ever done this? Commit yourself to it now and for the rest of your life, to be more in tune with the Spirit of God through prayer.

There are too many troubles in this world, and we lack God's vision for our lives. Sell yourself to the Lord's will. Dive headfirst into it and He will bless you. You may need to go through the valley before you can experience the blessing, but just remember this: if you have followed God, He will guide you to peace.

All you have to do is make sure that you are lined up with His will and everything will work out in the end.

God’s Visions and Plans Don’t Happen Overnight

It’s human nature to desire instant results. Our society is so fast-paced that people get impatient with a microwave.

Maybe you’ve been pressured at work to produce, produce, produce. Everyone’s experienced this somewhere or at sometime of their lives. Better quality! Better customer service! Faster results! Your employer cries. But that’s because he knows he only has twenty-four hours in a day. If he can squeeze another dollar per minute out of you, he can make a killing. All while killing you with stress in the process.

But it’s the pressure of living in a fast-paced society where everyone demands more. Whenever someone raises the bar, it becomes the new standard. Consider that before places like McDonald’s, no one got their food fast. Nowadays people get mad at the McDonald’s employees for taking five minutes instead of one.

The problem is, with all this pressure on our shoulders, it can force us to be impatient people—impatient with our children, impatient with our spouse, impatient with our friends and coworkers, and worst of all, impatient with God.

“Why haven’t you saved me yet like You said?” or “Why haven’t You given me what you promised?”

Satan loves to fill our heads with the doubt that impatience brings. But give God the time to position you for a blessing. First He must work on your heart and then, when He decides that you’re ready for it, He will give it to you.

Think of it like feeding a child. “You need to eat your peas before you get your dessert!” the parent will say.

This is what God is saying to you: “You need to understand that values and lesson these trials bring before you’re ready to experience the blessings I have prepared for you.”

If you understand that the trials you experience are merely teaching grounds and not obstacles to overcome, they won’t seem so hard. Many teach that trials are obstacles to overcome and grow through, but why do I say it a little differently? Because your battles are unnecessary. Go with the flow and learn from the experiences God gives you.

Beloved, your battle is over. The war was won at the cross. So let God fight for you, and learn the proper steps through which He desires to take you—so that

He may also fight *through* you. Paul said,

“To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.” (Colossians 1:29)

Let God overcome the obstacle for you and through you. Yes, you will have steps to take. Yes, you will have to scale this mountain. Yes, you will have a mile to walk on this water. But just remember that if you are walking on water, it is Christ doing it through you by faith. So keep your eyes on His words. Remember them and encourage yourself through them, for whatever He says will come to pass. If He said that you will be fine and He will show you the way out of the valley, then do more than believe: take the steps of faith to which He is calling you. Because true faith is doing something you do because you believe, not sitting on the sidelines while waiting for a future.

But if God tells you to sit and wait, then you are sitting in faith. If He says to rise to your feet or move ahead and fight the good fight to end your trials, then do it. Because whatever God tells you to do will produce fruit, for His words do not return to Him void.

All you have to do is recognize when God is speaking, discern exactly what He is saying, meditate on that, and obey it.

Please God, Not People

People will have a vision for your life. They will explain to you how to achieve your goals and get out of trials. Everyone has an answer for everything, but God's word is all that matters. Learn to please God, not people. Jesus didn't take the time to make his own mother and brothers happy.

He refused to conform to their mold:

"And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother."" (Matthew 12:49–50)

They have to conform to God's mold, not yours or mine. And you have to conform to God's mold, not mine or theirs. Do what God is calling you to do. All you have to do is verify that the Lord has given you the vision you have. If the Lord has, and He says it will come to pass, then it will.

But this doesn't mean to listen to no one but yourself. God gave you brothers in the Lord and pastors for wise council. They may be able to interpret what the Lord is telling you to do a little better than you can, through experiences you may not have. So be willing to recognize the Holy Spirit through your brethren. When God speaks to you through them, obey that word. Why? Because it isn't your brother speaking, but the Lord. And if you disrespect it or your brother, then you disrespect the Lord who spoke through the man, not the man himself.

Thus, if God has called you to something, people around you can give you clarity. But if they rub against what you know God has said, then obey the Lord and don't seek to please men. It is human nature to desire to make others happy, but the Lord requires us to focus on pleasing Him.

So how can we please Him? Walking firstly in His Spirit and also in His love. The first fruit of the Spirit is love, so if we are not reflecting love, we are not walking in Him.

Therefore, it isn't about making others happy or unhappy but about being a family and body in Christ. If your earthly family is not saved, then why are you seeking advice or direction from them? God knows better than they, and you've been enlightened to the truth through the Holy Spirit whereas they haven't. The mind of Christ, which you have, is greater than the world's. Moreover, the Lord has said,

“Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” (James 4:4)

“Therefore ‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.’” (2 Corinthians 6:17)

Have you been leading your family to Christ? Or are you just befriending them and pleasing them? God is not pleased by man-pleasing, and you’re endangering their souls. Beloved, have godly concern for their souls and reflect true love. If you don’t preach the gospel to them, they cannot be saved. For it is written,

“How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Romans 10:14)

Be among them but not of them. When you die, you’ll be somewhere else than they will be. Your family in Christ will be your true family, and your earthly family will not. So be diligent to lead them to Christ—because if you aren’t, then what are you doing?

You need to keep fellowship with those who press you forward in Christ, not with the world that drags you back to honor the gods it serves.

So watch whom and what you surround yourself with and make sure it’s the Lord’s will for you. You’re in your unsaved family for a reason, but if they utterly reject Christ and never will receive Him, then pray about what the Lord would have you do—whether to leave them behind or not as you continue your pilgrimage.

Furthermore, if you surround yourself with idle things, you’ll form idols. Too much entertainment and distraction will make you lose focus on the Lord. You’ll keep the vision and the faith but lose the faithfulness in the little steps. How can you follow God through the little steps of the day if you can’t hear Him?

One might ask, “Why would God punish me if I can’t hear Him?”

But God might ask, “Why don’t you take it to heart to listen better?”

It’s like trying to build a house without nails. You can pound the boards of wood as much as you want with a hammer, but without something to hold them together, they’ll fall apart.

And as it is written,

“Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.” (Psalm 127:1)

God builds the house through His words. His words are the nails, and your actions are the hammer. If you don’t obey His words one little nail at a time, the whole structure will fall apart. This is why Jesus said,

“He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.” (Luke 16:10)

So be found faithful in the little things. Be faithful to seek His voice, growing intimately closer to Him, and to obey. Then you will see through time the fruit of your labor, which is the fruit of God in your life.

If You Want to Hear God More Clearly, You Must Abide and Walk in the Spirit

Whenever God speaks, our natural response must always be with faith. The more you hear God the more opportunity you'll get for faith. The more opportunity you have for faith the more you'll grow in it.

The more you grow in faith and the more clearly you hear God, the more it will propel you forward into the life God has planned for you.

So now the question remains, "How can we hear God more clearly?"

I'd begin with your Bible. The closer you are to your Bible, the closer you'll be to understanding God's heart. While it's good to read it don't merely read, but study it diligently.

Every time the pages come alive, this is the Holy Spirit talking. Become familiar with His voice. Write down everything He says. Not your own thoughts or words, but only what He is telling you. This will train you to hear God rather than your own heart, making His voice easier to discern.

Also we get clarity by abiding. Or that is to say by focusing and meditation on the Spirit's presence. We focus through continuous on going prayer, and worship.

True worship isn't singing about God, but rather signing to His face. Sing praise like you're talking to Him and you'll feel God more powerfully. Why? Because He is an intimate God, and when your worship is intimately cultivating a relationship with Him, He will be nearer. Enough people sing about "the God in the sky" whom they don't know. "God is good—He is wonderful. Thank Him that He is out there somewhere and watching" is the basic idea of how some churches worship.

But it is better to say intimately to His face and presence:

"Jesus, You are good to me. You are wonderful. Thank You that You are next to me, holding me, watching me, and caring for my needs."

As I've said many times in other books: you'll feel God more powerfully by singing, "Holy are you, Lord. You are holy!" versus "Holy is the Lord. He is holy."

You can't increase any relationship in heaven and earth without communication.

Communicate your affection directly to His face and sing about how you feel about Him. Change the words of the worship songs if you have to and you'll experience Him in a deeper and more intimate way.

Would you rather have someone say, "The person reading this book right now is an inspiration to me," or would you rather have someone say to your face, "You inspire me"?

God would like you to do the same. He made your heart, after all. He made you to have the feeling He has so that you can connect with Him, and He with you.

So worship from your heart and focus on His presence. Put on the attitude of gratitude and thank Him no matter what may be going on in your life. If you've found something to thank Him for, then you've found what He may be doing in your life—and something in which to have faith.

Pray constantly, whether you're washing the dishes, taking phone calls, fixing a machine, driving to the store, or taking care of the kids. Learn to pray always, and keep your line of communication open with God at all times. This allows Him the space He desires to speak to you when you need to hear Him. Sometimes you need to hear Him and don't even know it because everything seems fine in life. But if you're carrying a distracted mind, through idle thoughts or overly focusing on the work at hand you'll drown out His voice all together.

Lastly, we walk in the Spirit when abide in Him, do the things He wants us to do, hear Him speak, and obey. Beloved, have you been walking in the Spirit lately? Do you know for certain? Did you know *exactly* what it means to walk in the Spirit before this book? If not take it to heart to grow your understanding of what it means to walk in the Spirit. If you aren't walking in the Spirit then you are walking according to the desires of the flesh, even though you may not know it.

"I do walk in the Spirit!" a person may say. "I study my Bible and try to apply what I read later."

That's good! But is the Holy Spirit teaching you His word? Are you hearing His voice constantly throughout the day? He's always speaking to you, but are you always listening? Take it to heart to do so because He is the one who explains to us how to apply our Bibles. If we can't hear Him, then we likely are not applying our Bibles in the correct manner He desires.

Stress Makes You Forget God's Faithfulness

Our mind has a funny way of dumping memories when faced with stress. The worst part of all is that it makes us forget how faithful God is. If you're going through something stressful or through a trial, by focusing on the negativities you'll forget all that God is doing in your life. This will lead to doubt, and doubt always leads to disaster.

Keep calm and keep God's peace in your heart by resting in Him continually. That way you can remember His faithfulness and what He is calling you to do.

Jesus said,

"Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?" (Matthew 6:25)

And as it is also written,

"Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret—it only causes harm." (Psalm 37:8)

Notice how God's word points out the negative emotions? Don't dwell on them or it gives the enemy an opportunity to harm you. To harm your marriage, friendships, children, your walk and integrity in Christ, and even your health.

How has wrath helped your relationships lately? Has fretting and fear blessed you? Is anger a listed fruit of the Spirit? There isn't anything wrong with being righteously angry. There is a time and a place for it. But there is something wrong with continually dwelling upon our anger and the thoughts that stir up wrath. How is God in any of these things? Let's walk in love so that we can portray the integrity of Christ.

And why do we worry? Does it help us at all, or does it cause harm? One out of every four Americans dies before the age of sixty due to stress-related illnesses. Stress can lead to strokes, heart attacks, premature aging, wrinkles, and grey hair.

No wonder Jesus tells you to stop worrying! Trust God and meditate on both His presence and His faithfulness. Don't let Satan afflict you with worrying thoughts, but keep your mind steadfastly fixated on the Holy Spirit. If He is saying everything will be fine, then believe Him. The only time you should be concerned is if He is saying it won't be fine. He will say this to alert you to the

need to do a work that will deliver you from the bad thing you're worried about: "If you don't apply for a job at xyz company, you will lose financially, because it's My will for you to work there and you are about to lose the opportunity."

One thing that can assist your faith is to reflect back on everything He has said to you about your current season of life. Then make a list of those things. Pray for more information. Then trust everything He says. Reflect on His words. Take them to heart.

If anything you are planning to do doesn't line up with what He has told you, then you should reconsider your current path in life. Lay it down and pray for direction. Let Him truly guide you in everything and each step.

Keep His words bound to your heart and keep your peace through faith. It's okay to relax when trials abound. Practice relaxing in Christ as you focus on His presence. This will strengthen your faith. Especially when you see that everything works out in the end. God will speak when it's time and you'll obey, won't you? So what is there to fear?

I've spent much of my life worrying. I've been through more hardships than most. Sickness, heart problems (my heart has actually stopped), true medical anxiety, life-stopping panic attacks, homelessness, starvation (I weighed 100 pounds and was all ribs, as a man), loss of loved ones, the near loss of two of my children, and the list goes on and on. I've been through many hardships, and the Lord has delivered me out of them all.

I have found that if I rest in His words, trusting them implicitly, it does end well after all. Whether I trust or worry, it ends well because God is faithful. So maybe we should spend more of our time at peace, trusting Jesus. Because He loves us and His love never fails.

So remember His faithfulness and let His peace set your heart free to praise Him. Learn to worship no matter what. Not only because He deserves it, but because it increases your faith, and releases your heart to have His joy. Remember also that His joy gives you strength. Strength to do more than endure, but also to conquer. Strength to do more than conquer, but also to inspire others to fall in love with the Lord.

Set Up Monuments to God's Faithfulness

I've personally gone through some really difficult hardships. There was a time in my life when I struggled financially and, as a result, lost everything. I had to live in my car with my wife and baby, scared to death every day that I was going to lose my child because I couldn't provide a roof over his head. I had a job, but because it was cold all the homeless shelters were full. Through the process of time, God used some really ugly circumstances—worse than we were experiencing—to save my family from the cold. We almost lost each other and our children, but the Lord held us together. Then one day at the homeless shelter, we decided to dedicate a day to God, remembering how He had saved us.

Every year we celebrate it, taking some time to reflect on all that the Lord has done, is doing, and will do. Then we chose to proceed forward the next year in faith. Because if God has been faithful before, He will be faithful again.

Also, the Lord said to Joshua the son of Nun,

"And it came to pass, when all the people had completely crossed over the Jordan, that the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying: 'Take for yourselves twelve men from the people, one man from every tribe, and command them, saying, "Take for yourselves twelve stones from here, out of the midst of the Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet stood firm. You shall carry them over with you and leave them in the lodging place where you lodge tonight."' Then Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the children of Israel, one man from every tribe; and Joshua said to them: 'Cross over before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of the Jordan, and each one of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, that this may be a sign among you when your children ask in time to come, saying, "What do these stones mean to you?" Then you shall answer them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. And these stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever.'" (Joshua 4:1–7)

Joshua set up memorial stones for their children and children's children because the Lord commanded it. This isn't necessarily a commandment for us—so I'm not saying to do this as a commandment. But it is helpful for yourself and your family to set up memorials to God in your heart and head to thank Him and preach His faithfulness.

How would this monument look to you? Maybe it's a physical object from that trying circumstance. I still have the stick I used to poke the fires I'd make in the park grills to cook our food over. Every time I walk into my barn, I see it sitting there. I am reminded of my humility, and then when I look up at my barn, I'm reminded of God's faithfulness—not only of how He saved me, but of how He blessed me much later in life.

Every time I see that stick, I worship God, thanking Him for everything He has done. And because those were some of the hardest moments I have ever experienced in my life, when I remember them, whatever trials I may be going through pale in comparison. Suddenly faith becomes easy if I've been struggling.

Your monument might be a day you set apart. Or maybe it's just holding onto the memory itself. Whatever you choose to do, leave something in your life to remind yourself of how God has saved you.

Put a sticky note on your desk and take some time to reflect. But if it is at all possible, I found that it helps to have a physical object that you can tie to your previous circumstances. It seems more alive and powerful when you can handle it with your hands. Remember that if He has been faithful before, He will be faithful again. This will help stir you up to explosive faith when you need it most.

When my children see my stick I cherish, they're compelled to ask, "Why do you have that?" and this gives me an opportunity to glorify God and build my children's faith.

Choose to Be Happy with Today

It is written,

“Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’” (Hebrews 13:5)

Covetousness can be most easily defined as desiring more than what God is willing to give you. This leads you to lust for things which are not yours, taking your focus off the heart of Christ and onto your own heart. Thus you will be led by desire, and not the Spirit of God. And all sin begins with desire. As it is written,

“Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.” (James 1:15)

So yes, we must be without covetousness. And yes, we must be content. But being content doesn’t just mean to tolerate the fact that you don’t have what you want in life. It means to display gratitude with a cheerful heart for all God has given you. Be thankful and carry the joy of the Lord in your heart. If you can’t be happy until you move up in life, you’ll never be happy. I’m not saying you won’t move up, but when you do move up, your desire for more blessings will increase and you’ll never be satisfied. The flesh is never satisfied with increase, even as a fire is never satisfied with wood. Remember that when the bar is raised, it becomes the new standard. If luxury is your new standard, you’ll still demand more.

Stop having standards for God, let Him out of the box, and be happy with what He gives you.

Is it wrong to desire? No. You need something to lay down in prayer. But just remember that not every good desire is right, either. If you want to feed orphans, but God has called you to something else in His kingdom, then you will do wrong. Not that it is wrong to feed orphans—obviously, it is good to do so. But refusing to do the will He has laid out for you is sin, for which reason Paul expressed a desire to “be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith…” (Philippians 3:9).

Do not seek your own righteousness. True righteousness is obedience to the Holy Spirit’s voice. Discern His voice and make certain you are lined up with it.

As it is written,

“To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.” (Colossians 1:29)

Follow the work God has laid out for you and strive to please Him in doing so. God desires an obedient servant, not one who goes around trying to apply His words how they assume is best. Make certain you understand the Lord, and then obey Him through faith accordingly.

Understanding Why Bad Things Happen Helps Stimulate Faith.

Bad things can be due to missteps, or they can be due to growth. All you have to do is determine which is happening in your circumstance. Be humble and willing to hear that you're wrong. Let God correct your situation. If you've made a mistake, then simply admitting as much and doing God's will things will turn around for the better. If you realize your situation is for growth, then take growth seriously while not taking the trial personally. Keep reminding yourself that after you have learned the lessons, God will carry you out of the valley and set you up on the mountain. In the meantime, learn to be grateful. When you can find something to be grateful for, then you've found what God is doing in your life and why.

Now one might argue, "I don't think God let my daughter die so I can grow or because I did something wrong."

Such a person is right. If you've lost a loved one, this hasn't happened to stimulate change in you. However, you should use such a circumstance to draw closer to the Lord. You need His comfort, and He can use it to shape your heart. Although there is nothing good about losing someone you love, God is powerful enough to make good happen in the midst of your pain. Let Him.

Negativity and Fear Are Satan's Tools

Have faith and don't let anything convince you that God is wrong. Our understanding of God's word can be wrong, but the Lord is never wrong. When our understanding lines up with God's truth, what do we have to fear?

Choosing to be positive doesn't mean choosing to be happy with the bad things that happen in life. It just means that you won't let yourself be discouraged by them. Keep the faith; keep walking in Christ. Let His presence be a comfort to you. The more you hurt, the more time you should spend in the secret place, soaking your floor in the tears of your prayers. For God will bottle those tears and remember them. He will answer your prayers, and the more prayers you have, the more you'll see His hand moving and working in your life. So take the time to connect with God. Then, after the trials have left and blessings have come, keep meeting with God in the secret place.

Don't let the nearness you've learned through trials turn into numbness through blessings. If you seek God more in pain than in pleasure, which might He give you more of?

God knows it's best for you to draw near because your eternal life and your relationship with Him hang in the balance. But He doesn't like to see you suffer. So when we have the mindset of seeking God only when it hurts, we are causing ourselves to suffer. Seek the Lord more fervently always because with all He has done to love you, He deserves such devotion from you.

Some teach that if you have a positive mind, nothing will be impossible for you: "I can do all things through Christ! I will pass this high school exam. I will do awesome!"

This they say, only to be astonished when they get a bad grade. You can preach positivity all you want, but if you don't study for the exam, you'll fail. The same goes for walking in the Lord. If you don't study His word, you'll never understand His heart or the things He is calling you to do.

You can't begin to understand the faith without a strong understanding of your Bible. And you can't begin to apply the faith without the ability to hear the Holy Spirit. He teaches you how to apply the lessons, bringing the Scriptures you memorized to mind when you need them most.

Have you ever encountered a circumstance that brought a scripture to memory, but you couldn't quote it? This could be the Holy Spirit bringing it to mind,

while reminding you of the importance of memorizing His word.

How ineffective is it to say, “I think the Bible says (insert poorly quoted rough idea of what scripture says here)”—only to have the other person ask, “Where does the Bible say *that*?”

Then the quoting theologian stands like a deer in the headlights.

Although a truth was spoken, the impact was nullified because God’s word was not memorized. By not memorizing His word, we give others the impression that His word is not important. Led God’s word mean much to you. Write it on your heart for later practice, that you may be an inspiration.

There Are No Plateaus in Christ—Never Stop Growing

God is always teaching you, so you should always keep learning. Never stop seeking, but always draw nearer. Doesn’t the Lord deserve this?

Open your Bible and spend as much time studying it as you possibly can. Don’t just read, but rather absorb the meaning through diligent study. Let the Holy Spirit teach you from the pages. Anytime the Scriptures come alive and apply to your current situation, this is the Spirit speaking to you. Take His words to heart, memorize the scriptures He speaks to you, and apply them daily.

Don’t let your work, your having children, or anything else distract you from Him. You can do all these things through Christ while still drawing close to the One who has always loved you most.

Embrace Adversity—It Stimulates Faith and Creativity

Without an obstacle to overcome, how will you grow? Sometimes God gives you hardship to awaken you to new possibilities. As it was for Elijah at the brook,

"So he went and did according to the word of the LORD, for he went and stayed by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the brook. And it happened after a while that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land. Then the word of the LORD came to him…" (1 Kings 17:5–8)

His river dried up first, before he was given a new direction. Why might God do this to you? Not to harm you, but to prepare your heart to cling no longer to the current circumstances and to move you forward.

If your river is drying up, then the Lord may be leading you to a new source of providence. Imagine your life as a sail boat. If the winds that blow upon your sails change, then maybe the direction God wants you going is now a new one. This is not always the case. Sometimes the unfavorable winds come through disobedience. Like a loving Father, He disciplines us. For this reason it is always best to pray and ask the Lord if you have been lined up with His will. Either way, whether you've sinned or He has a new direction, He will make you aware of what you must do.

He has goals for us, and once we have achieved them, He steps us up for our new purpose in life. That purpose may be new to you, but is part of the plan He has always held for you.

So let adversity open your eyes to possibility. Don't shut them in fear of what else may strike, but open them to His faithfulness. Open them to the many possibilities that surround you, that way you would have an open mind to do the will of God. If you've lost your job, open your mind to any direction He may take you. If you're accustomed to doing call centers, and that's what you're comfortable with, it will likely be the first thing you look for. But what if God doesn't want you going in that direction? I guarantee you that by pursuing it you'll end up with heartbreak from a string of failures. Maybe your new direction is to work a factory job, or be a secretary, or even own a business.

How can you know God's will if you act on fear while remaining in your comfort zone? When bad things happen, don't try to figure out what to do and

push for the way out. Instead, kneel down and pray. Then, when God answers, you'll find your way. Sometimes you'll find that your assumptions were right and God is telling you to move in the direction you thought you should. But don't let the enemy use the fact that you were right to convince you that it is no longer necessary to pray for direction, as if you'll always know the right path. Besides, no prayer is a wasted prayer. God cherishes them all.

Learn to Thank God in All Things

Look for something to thank God for in adversity and you'll find something in which to have faith. No matter the circumstance, carry the attitude of gratitude. If He tells you to wait in your storm a little while longer, thank Him and rest with peace. It's hardest when He says to wait. But if you do so, your heart will be tempered with His strength.

Thank Him also for the opportunity for blind faith. If God is showing you a way out, take a moment to thank Him before He saves you and say, "God, thank You for this opportunity for blind faith. It's really hard for me right now, but I believe that just as You have told me, I will be saved from my circumstances."

Then meditate in faith on His promise to deliver you.

Become the Image of Christ in All You Do—Be the Outward Reflection of Him

Love like no tomorrow. Everyone knows to do this, but not everyone applies it as they should. Have you ever encountered a situation in which you were hurting and needed comfort, and then shared your situation with a friend at church who didn't respond kindly to it? Perhaps the person patted your back and replied, "Hey, brother, I'm sorry that's going on in your life. I'll be in prayer for you." Then the person walked away and forget even to pray. Or because the person feels bad for forgetting all the time, he or she may grab your shoulder and pray on the spot, then walk away without asking God what to do personally for you.

Don't be that other person. Be the one who searches for solutions to others' problems. Bring your ideas to God: "Lord, how can I bless this person? Don't let them pass by me without a chance to show them Your love."

Don't be a window through which others can see the blessings of God. Rather, be a door through which they can enter and experience His blessings. And as it is written,

"And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful." (Titus 3:14)

I have seen many churches who are good with outreaches and teach their congregants to reach out individually to the people around them who need Christ. So they show love to the unsaved and bless them fervently. But the one issue that seems to trend among many if not most churches is the need for an "in-reach." They reach out to the broken who are outside the church but don't take the time to reach in to the members within their church who are hurting or in need.

Beloved, God calls you to help the saints above all. As it is written,

"And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, *especially to those who are of the household of faith*." (Galatians 6:9–10)

How have you been loving on the church lately? And not just on your friends and the people you know, but how have you been making the stranger feel loved and welcome?

Pray for open eyes to see the needs of others and have an open hand and willing

heart to give them whatever they need. Maybe it’s an open ear. Maybe it’s comforting words. Or maybe they need rent money, even if it’s more than you’re used to coughing up for others. Wouldn’t perfect love be proven by its works? Love them perfectly, as Christ would love them. If Jesus were here, would He not get the homeless brother an apartment, the starving brother food, and the broken sister an open ear and comforting pair of arms? Don’t just ask yourself what Jesus would do. Have an open heart to ask Jesus what He is calling you to do.

I have heard some people say, “I don’t hear God telling me to help.” But sometimes we can’t hear God because the help others need isn’t something we feel comfortable doing or giving, so we shut our ears.

Wouldn’t it be right and good to save the suffering in the church? Don’t let them pass by you without experiencing a blessing. And don’t merely brush the need, but cover it as Jesus would do. As it is written,

“Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.” (James 4:17)

Don’t Question Underlying Feelings That Something Could Be Wrong

Even when all is right, if something feels spiritually wrong, go inquire of the Lord. Maybe something is on the horizon and, rather than giving you a trial to change direction, He is just reaching out to your heart. But if you don’t listen, you might suffer a trial. He has to get ahold of you somehow.

Almost two decades ago, when I was a teenager, I experienced one of these moments that changed my life.

I was a Christian who had recently dedicated himself to the Lord. I went to church; I had a relationship with God; I sought Him daily and felt Him in the sermons. But something felt a little wrong, like I needed something more with Him. I didn’t know what it was, but I felt like there was something there and I was supposed to have something more. So I prayed and asked God to speak to me through the pastor at church.

A couple of Sundays later, God answered that prayer. The pastor had a woman come on stage and share her testimony. She shared how she had a newness when she received His Spirit and how it made her feel alive for the first time. She could feel God with her, and everything around her was alive and had a newness. Then the pastor took over and explained what I needed to do to receive the same. I knew immediately that this was what God had laid in my heart.

I thought I was saved, and I had done everything I was supposed to do. But the quiet inclination that God had laid in my heart expressed that something was missing. It told me that the puzzle was finished except for one piece.

Years later, I experienced numerous miracles that most people wouldn’t believe. I would pray and watch God work in mighty ways.

Yet I’m not anything special compared to anyone else. We’re all the same and are all loved in God’s eyes. I simply learned to pray big and not limit God. I stopped putting His abilities or what I thought He would tell me in a box, and I let Him out to be who He is and do whatever He does.

During that time of my life, God laid it on my heart to go on a mission trip. I couldn’t because my job was in the way. I grieved and prayed that God would open the door. Suddenly, I lost my job and was able to go.

When I was there, I had to sleep on a church floor, in a room with a young man named Brandon. We had met there for the first time and quickly became friends.

One night when we were supposed to be sleeping, we laid in our sleeping bags and whispered to each other about things God was doing on the trip. This led me to talk about the miracles I had seen, and in the middle of our conversation Brandon erupted,

“Wow! I wish I had that kind of nearness to God.”

“You can,” I said. “God favors no one. All you have to do is ask Him for it.”

“But I have asked for miracles and don’t see any.”

I scratched my head, trying to lay my finger on what could be the matter. “Have you ever asked for His Holy Spirit?” I asked.

“No,” he said, “but I know I have Him. I said the sinner’s prayer as a child with my mom. I was born in a Christian home.”

“Okay … but saying a prayer doesn’t mean you have received Him. It depends on your heart at the time. Why don’t you ask for Him now? You want God and to be nearer to Him, right?”

“Yes,” he said, “but I have Him already.”

“Well, if you want to be nearer to Him, ask anyway.”

Brandon turned over within his sleeping bag and prayed out loud to receive the Holy Spirit. Instantly, a smile swept across his face as tears streamed helplessly from his eyes.

“I feel like I’m on fire,” he wept. “I feel God’s love burning inside of me. And I feel like I took my first breath of air, like I never breathed once before this.”

He continued his tears of joy and then, after a few moments, he wiped them away. “Why did that happen to me?” he asked. “Am I weird for saying I never felt like I breathed before? Is that weird?”

“No,” I explained. “You never received the Holy Spirit before this. That’s what it’s like to have Him rush inside you.”

“I thought I had received Him.”

“Well, it doesn’t make a difference now whether you did or didn’t, because now you have received Him, and before this moment you weren’t even saved.”

His eyes widened.

“The Bible tells us,” I continued, “that if anyone doesn’t have the Spirit of Christ, he doesn’t belong to God.”

Our conversation continued, and after that day everything changed for him. He saw God’s hand working, and that feeling of a new life never left him. He understood God’s voice and experienced those intimate miracles in his own life.

This is what John the Baptist meant when he said Jesus would baptize us in Spirit and fire. As it is written,

“Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.” (Romans 8:9)

Have you received the Holy Spirit? Do you know this for certain? If not, would you like to? Put this book down immediately and pray for Him. Recommit your life to Christ right here right now, repenting of all sin. Rededicate yourself to Christ and ask for His Holy Spirit.

For those of you who have received the Spirit, don’t deny His voice. Search for it and listen carefully to Him. He teaches you everything, and if you’re not attuned to Him, you’re not learning what you should for your walk. Why? Because no one can walk in Christ without walking in the Spirit. And as it is written,

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” (Romans 8:14)

And the Scriptures also exhort us,

“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” (Galatians 5:25)

Now, a few of you may wonder why I felt it necessary to say these things, but I include them to explain to Christians the need to receive the Spirit. It’s for the same reason a pastor preaches the need to accept Christ at church. Quite frankly, Brandon—like many others to whom I have preached—was among the church and had accepted Christ as Savior, but like Apollos had never received the Spirit and needed further education. Such believers accept that Jesus is Lord but haven’t received Jesus as their personal Lord and savior.

And there are many who wander likewise among the church, thinking they are saved and living like Christians, but not having the Spirit. Keep your eyes open for such people in your own church and be moved with compassion to share with them what they don’t have.

A few times I have received emails from my readers explaining that they tried everything in my books to hear God but still couldn't. After further inquiry, I realized the need to explain that sometimes you can't hear the Spirit because you haven't received the Spirit. And if you want to live an empowered, Spirit-filled life, you first need to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Ultimately, when God speaks to you about anything, you must listen. Those underlying feelings of something being wrong, or of a piece missing, are likely from God. Don't deny them or write them off. Go investigate them thoroughly in prayer. If God directly answers and says nothing is wrong, then believe Him. If someone around you speaks for God and says nothing is wrong, however, don't be convinced until God speaks for Himself.

I continue with this subject because the Lord reaches to you before trials arise in order to prepare you.

Every time a financial trial is about to strike, God tells me months in advance to conserve my money and save every dime. I have no reason to believe a financial trial is on the horizon, but I know without fail that when He lays this on my heart, something is coming. It's the underlying feeling that something is wrong when nothing seems wrong at all.

And when I feel it, I pinch my pennies. A few months later a tragedy strikes, or some other uncontrollable circumstance hits and takes my income away. I live off of savings and coast through the trial mostly unaffected. Then God saves me before my money runs out.

If you don't listen, you will suffer the consequences. There were times I didn't understand. But looking back now, I know God was warning me, and I shrugged it off because everything seemed fine.

Don't wait for trials to happen before you follow God's turn. He will likely be taking a turn in your walk long before anything bad ever happens. He likes to prepare you for difficult times to help you through them, while giving you the free will to trust Him or not.

This is the opposite of a trial. We are supposed to learn to trust God, have peace, and listen to Him when a storm is raging around us. But even when everything is peaceful, if we get a stirring in our heart that something bad is coming, we should obey His voice, have peace, and trust Him.

I’d Love to Hear from You!

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Adam is a preacher, teacher and #1 internationally bestselling author of over 100 books on the Christian faith. He is a devoted husband and father of four boys. Through his travels, he’s seen the need for a new awakening and a new revival: a revival of the heart. Come join Adam on this journey of redemption and experience God like never before!

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Contents

Introduction

Understanding His Voice Through Conviction

Conforming Our Hearts to His

Tugging at Our Hearts

The Unrealized Influence of God

Having Passion for Christ

I’d Love To Hear From You!

Also By Adam Houge

About The Author

Introduction

God speaks to us in many ways: through the circumstances of life, through the issues of the heart, through His Holy Spirit, and in His word. When we understand how the inward voice of God works, it is easier to understand His will and His outward voice. The outward voice of God is a leading of the Lord through open and closed doors, circumstances, and various fruits of life. It can be difficult to discern His leading and His will for us if we don’t know how to discern the inward speech of the Holy Spirit.

Understanding His Voice Through Conviction

We are creatures of the flesh. Weak, we came from a background of sin and struggle with temptation. God gave us His Holy Spirit to establish us in the foundation of Jesus Christ that through Christ, we may no longer know sin but walk in righteousness. Due to our sinful nature, conviction is the most widely known voice of the Holy Spirit.

Every Christian has conviction, but not every Christian always obeys conviction. If we always obeyed conviction, we would never have sin. Sometimes the issue of sin can be in regard to recognizing conviction when we're caught up in the heat of the tempting moment. The desire of the flesh plagues us like an evil thing. It tears at us with a gnawing fury. But the Holy Spirit was sent to us to deliver us from the slavery of sin through the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

If we do not listen to the Holy Spirit but walk in a pattern of sin, we will continue to be slaves to sin. But if we obey the conviction of the Spirit, His conviction will become easier to understand and clearer to hear. His voice will be easier to obey because He strengthens us to overcome temptation. When He sees our heart, after having tested us, He strengthens us through His power to overcome. If we allow our bodies to rule over us and do not overcome them, we will be trapped by sin and left with a broken relationship between us and the Lord.

If we do not obey conviction, then it becomes more difficult to hear the Spirit. This happens because we allow our flesh to have the louder voice. But if we silence our flesh through meditating on the presence of the Spirit, the voice of God becomes louder and easier to obey. Conviction comes as a still small voice. Rather than being heavy, many times a light conviction is given for the sake of testing.

If we were always heavily convicted, we would not obey sin. But through light conviction, it gives opportunity for free will. God is a God of free will. He's given us the ability to make our own decisions in life and has given us the freedom to think. But if we misuse this freedom, it leads to death. If we put freedom to the test, we will be made slaves to sin. But if we submit to freedom by obedience to the Holy Spirit, freedom will be stronger and will lead to life.

In Christ, we have two natures. We have the nature of the flesh, which is the old creation, and the nature of the Spirit, which is a new creation. In Christ Jesus, we

are a new creation, yet we have the old man to deal with in regard to desire, sin, and temptation. Consider these two creations like two separate creatures. One is a harmless child, and the other is a ruthless beast. If we do not tame the beast of the flesh, it will tear apart the young child of Christ in us. If we do not bring our own bodies under subjection, we will not find the freedom being a child of God brings.

Whichever nature you feed the most will become the strongest. If you had the choice between feeding a ruthless beast or your child, which one would you feed? Your own child no doubt. That way your child may grow strong while the beast withers so that it won't harm your child. But if you feed the beast, it will grow strong, and in between feedings, its appetite will grow larger.

If you feed the flesh, the flesh will become a terrifying beast that will overtake you. But if you feed the new creation of Christ in you, it will grow strong while the flesh will grow weak. This is why some struggle with bondage, while others walk in freedom. It's not that some men are stronger in Christ than others, but rather, they know and confess their weaknesses while seeking God for strength. They feed their inner spiritual creation rather than the flesh and thus become more spiritual.

The more you feed the flesh with its desires and act in the flesh to sin, the more its appetite will grow between feedings. Its appetite is temptation, and the more you feed it, the bigger its "stomach" becomes. As a result, the appetite of temptation will grow stronger, and conviction will grow weaker.

If you want more conviction in life, then sit in the presence of the Spirit more, and do not obey the flesh. When you're faithful to listen to Him, you will feel His conviction more frequently and stronger. Why would this be? Because God speaks more frequently to those who listen and obey.

Think about it: who would you rather talk to—someone who doesn't listen to you or care about what you're saying or someone who is all ears, a person who always wants to listen to everything you say and is absorbed in your every word? You'd rather speak to someone who cares about you no doubt! Likewise, God speaks more frequently to those who listen and less to those who turn a deaf ear to Him.

God commands us to listen to and obey His voice. Faith comes by hearing the word of God, and salvation comes through faith. We are saved by His word, and hence we read that we find His mercy when we incline our ears. As it is written,

“Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you— The sure mercies of David.” Isaiah 55:3

But that we are commanded to obey His voice is evident. For it is written,

“You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him.” Deuteronomy 13:4

We must obey the inward voice of the Holy Spirit. We must obey His convictions if we love the Lord. Love fulfills the law. It’s not that we need to practice the law, but by walking in love, we will automatically fulfill the law. If you love someone, you will listen to them and care about their words. If you love the Lord, you will listen to Him and care about His words. Knowing that He is your master, you will be careful to apply His words.

Walk in conviction, and the more you listen to it, the more you’ll have it. When conviction is stronger, it is easier to overcome sin and bondage. Sometimes it can be difficult to recognize conviction, especially in the heat of a tempting moment. Most of the time, it’s because we are closing our ears to God rather than opening them.

Learn to tune your ears inwardly and listen intently for the words of the Spirit. When we intently listen inwardly for His words, we are caring about what He has to say. When we care about what He has to say, we will hear more loudly, more powerfully, and more frequently. In this, conviction will be very strong, by which we will walk in love, faith, and purity.

Conforming Our Hearts to His

God calls us to be conformed to His image. It is how we were originally created and what we must do. But in order to be His eternal image, first we must conform to His internal image. That is to say, we must conform to the image of the Father conveyed to us through the Holy Spirit, who abides in the inward person.

There are two different types of desires: evil desires and good desires. Evil desires are of the flesh, whereas good desire is of the Spirit. Temptation is born when desire has been conceived. Just as it is written,

“But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.

Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.” James 1:14–15

Therefore we must be careful what we desire and choose not to follow our own hearts. In following our hearts, we are following a pattern of sin. But in following the heart of Christ, we are following a pattern of righteousness. Not all desire leads to temptation, but all desire can be used for temptation. Even desire for godliness can be used for temptation. For example, if you desire to be a pastor, you desire good work. But if you haven’t been called by God to become a pastor yet step out to do so, your desire is not good. Why? Because your desire is of your own heart and not that of the Holy Spirit. You desire a godly thing yet haven’t been called to that work.

The work you desire is good, but the desire is not good. You’re desiring godliness, but because you are not called by God, and it is not your spiritual gift, your work is not godly. You shouldn’t become a pastor without being led, seeing that it is a gift of the Holy Spirit. As it is written,

“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” Ephesians 4:11–12

Let God give it to you, and do not try to take from the hand of God. Remember that “He Himself gives.” This goes the same for many circumstances in life. We must be led by the Lord in all things, following the tugs of the Holy Spirit on our heart.

But if we allow God to change our desires and conform them to His, we will

continually work out godliness. Why? Because everything we will desire will be godly. When God leads us, He conforms our heart to His, our will to His, and hence His desires will become our desires.

The closer we are to Him in a relationship, the closer our hearts will be to Him. But seeking Him is more than reading His word and growing in it. It is practicing His word, meditating on it, and memorizing it while also meditating on the leading and presence of the Spirit.

When we grow in understanding, the word we will be closer to Him. Yet when we practice His word, we become like Him. Therefore it is important not only to know the word and the exact meaning of Christ's doctrine but also how to appropriately apply it.

The only way to appropriately apply the doctrine of Christ is through the operation of the Holy Spirit. As the Spirit operates in us and works through us, we work out the gospel by faith. God is always working, and He cannot sin nor does He contradict Himself. Therefore if we let God work through us, we shall not contradict Him nor shall we sin.

Now the question remains, "How can we have Him work through us more?" Simple. By seeking the Spirit and sitting in His presence, we are able to hear Him more clearly. When we hear Him more clearly, we will have opportunity for working out faith, and hence He will work through us.

But when we hear His voice, we need to be diligent to obey immediately. When He pulls at our hearts, we must always obey every time. When we give earnest heed to obeying Him, He will conform our desires to His and our hearts to His. Then with our desire being like His, He can lead us through the desires of His heart.

For example, if you see someone in the church who is poor and struggling, there are two kinds of responses one may have. The first response is "I care about this person, but if I help them, either my family or I will suffer. I need to take care of my family too." Then the second response is "I don't know how, but I need to do something for this person."

Whether you can afford it or not is irrelevant. If you seek something hard enough, you'll find it. Doesn't Jesus exhort us to ask, seek, and knock? How much more will He answer you if you are seeking to provide for someone else? What will God give to you if you ask Him for the help you need to help someone else? If someone needs a home and you don't have a way to provide it, what will

God do for you if you ask Him to help you help them? Will He abandon your request? Or will He see your heart and be pleased to work through you?

Don't you believe that He will use you as a tool to deliver someone from their suffering without denting you? But even if you are dented to help another, won't God help you? If God is calling you to sacrifice, He will provide. Even as we read,

"And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, 'In the Mount of the LORD it shall be provided.'" Genesis 22:14

The original Hebrew name for "The-LORD-Will-Provide" is "Jehovah Jireh." He was called this by Abraham because He provided a sacrifice to spare the life of Isaac. Similarly, God will spare you and your family if He has called you to sacrifice to save your brethren. He is only asking you to sacrifice that He may test your faith. Then when you have been faithful, He will deliver you also. If we step out without being called directly by God to do so, He may not provide. But if the Lord has spoken, He will make good on promises.

If He is not providing you directly with what you need, then perhaps He's calling you to use a different means to save this person. Perhaps He wants you to search the church directory of phone numbers and bring together the hands that can restore this person.

For those of you who are parents, imagine two of your children when they were younger. Consider now from the parent's perspective: if one child was sad and crying and the other one wanted to have compassion on them and came to you and told you they wanted to comfort them, then if they explained that they didn't have what they needed to do so and they asked you for something to bless their brokenhearted sibling, what would you do? Would you tell them no, or would you encourage the bond of kinship between the two of them by providing what they needed to love one another perfectly?

Even so, God will provide when we ask Him for providence. But we should also pray that He would provide for others, not only through our hands but His as well. We should pray that He will provide for our churches, for ministries, for others' families, for brothers and sisters in Christ, and for ourselves. God will give us what we need to give to others, and He gives us what we need to be taken care of ourselves.

Therefore we should always walk by faith. One desire is the desire of the flesh: "I should help but don't have the resources, so I won't." And the other desire is

of the Spirit: “I should help, and I know that God has the resources. I will seek the Lord for providence, and I will give to them from God, to God.”

We receive from the Lord to sacrifice to the Lord even as Abraham did. He provides for everything we have, and all that we have is His. Therefore have the heart that from God it came and to God it shall return.

In this, the Lord is glorified. Be sensitive to these desires that He lays in your heart and be obedient to them. The desires He lays in your heart require an act of faith. Be ready to step out in faith, but never step out in haste. Pray before anything, and give God an opportunity to confirm His will to you. Not every desire we have is from God, even when it seems good. But as it is written,

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.” Philippians 4:6

Pray first, and when God confirms His will to you, step out in faith. Step outside of your comfort zone into the place that doesn’t make sense and into the place of the difficult seas. If Jesus has called you into the seas, then you will walk on the water. If Jesus has not called you into the seas, you will not walk on water. Remember that before Peter walked on water, first God commanded him to come out on the waves.

Therefore it is good to discern between the Lord’s heart and our own desire. God will always tell you what you should do, yet sometimes He doesn’t tell you until you ask Him first. Sometimes a needy person is laid at your feet and you hear nothing from God. But this situation is fruit from God for you to work, then after you have prayed, He reveals not only His will to you but the most effective way to help this person.

When we know His will, we ought to be obedient to it. When we obey the Lord, He conforms our heart to His that His desires will become our desires and thus we become more like God. Then in certain circumstances of life, He will lead us by the desires *He* lays in our heart through the Holy Spirit. Yet all things should be confirmed through prayer. Even if you think the desire is laid on your heart from God, you must never be hasty but pray first. If God has laid something in your heart, after you inquire of the Lord, He will show you exactly what He wants you to do and how to do it. But if it doesn’t come to fruition, then God never laid it on your heart.

The Holy Spirit will also tug at your heart to lead you, and sometimes He lays a desire on your heart. For example, He presses the desire in your heart to grow in

the word. He also presses the desire in your heart to become more involved in church or in fellowship. These are similar to the tugs He gives us on our heart, and they go hand in hand. But it is good to note there are two types of tugs: one that represents the compelling speech of the Spirit and one that is His desire laid on our hearts. The former can always be followed without prayer, but the latter requires prayer first. Why doesn't the speech of the Spirit need prayer? Because He has already spoken, and faith comes by His word. Why do desires require prayer? Because desire is not the word of God, and faith comes by hearing the word of God.

Therefore, beloved, be diligent to lay all things before the Lord in regard to desire. Yet God does press His desire in our hearts to augment His active leading that we should be more willing to obey.

An example of my own life would be in regard to my marriage. When I was younger in the Lord, I considered being single for the Lord. As time went on, He began to press the desire in my heart for a companion. When the desire was first pressed in my heart, it wasn't specific about marriage. It was only a desire for a companion, which could have meant anything. So because I didn't understand, I often prayed for a brother or a friend who would never leave but would always be a part of my life.

Ultimately, that's what he laid in my heart: to have a friend who never left my side. The reality of life is that friends move away or move on with life. Eventually we move away or are called to a different church or ministry, and thus we continue to be grafted to a new part of the body.

As time went on, God increased this desire for a companion and made it more specific: someone who I could continually share the Lord with, edifying in Christ and being edified by. Then shortly before I met my wife, He pressed it in my heart to have a family and be married. I surrendered to Him at this point: "Lord, if it is your desire for me to be married, I lay it at Your feet. I will not seek it, but I pray that you will lead me to it. Father, if this is what you are telling me that you want me to do, then I pray that you will give me one of your daughters' hands in marriage." A few short months after I prayed that prayer, I met my wife. I never dated, never kissed, never did anything with a woman nor did I intend to for my whole life. I was dedicated to the Lord, but He had different plans for me.

Now, I'm not claiming that my circumstance is how He will lead everyone to their spouse. So for those of you still seeking, I do exhort that you pray, and God

will lead you in His own way. Yet the point to this example is to discuss the specific nature of desire laid in our hearts by the Lord. I wasn't led by desire, as I chose not to seek a spouse. Rather, the desire He lays in our hearts augments His leading. He does this to help us make righteous decisions.

For example, if you enjoy and desire sin, how will you be broken by the cross? But God breaks us just before we receive Christ as Savior. Thus when we're broken properly, we find conviction, and through conviction, we hate sin. By the hatred of sin and the desire for a new life, we find repentance and a relationship with Christ.

God leads us through our heart cords. Sometimes He tugs on them as we mentioned earlier, and sometimes He plants the seed of His desire to augment that tug. As we continually sit in the presence of the Spirit and practice His word, He changes our desires to conform them to His.

Now let me make something clear: DO NOT BE LED BY DESIRE! I am not teaching that you should be led by desire but merely explaining how God changes our hearts to communicate His will to us. Anytime a desire enters your heart, bring it to God before you do anything. Lay it at His feet and be anxious for nothing, but wait for His answer.

Be objective to His will. When you lay your desires at His feet, let go of them. If you're desiring the wrong thing, it may be difficult to hear the right thing coming from God's mouth. This can happen when you're led by desire or swallowed up in it. Yet the Lord doesn't call us to be swallowed up with desire but to overcome desire through surrendering to Him. In surrender, He can conform our heart to His then, by desire, He may augment the communication of His will to us.

In this, God leads us through desire. Although desire is the beginning of temptation, there is a difference between holy desire and evil desire. Holy, godly desire is the desire of the Holy Spirit at work in your heart. Evil desire is the desire of the flesh at work in your heart.

By making this distinction and pursuing spiritual desire, we can become more pleasing to the Lord. Desire is a method God uses to augment His leading, but it is not a method we can depend upon to be led by. And why? Because of our own hearts. Our own hearts tend to get in the way, and there are times that it can be difficult to make the distinction between our heart and God's heart. If we follow our own heart, we follow the will of the flesh and work out sin. And as it is written,

“The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?” Jeremiah 17:9

Therefore, seeing that the heart can get in the way and that it is wicked, we should not act upon desire.

When desire enters your heart and you believe it to be godly, this is not a time to act, because the heart is deceitful above all things. Your heart may deceive you with a seemingly godly thing to fulfill your own will.

Rather than acting upon desire, even though it may appear godly, when you receive desire, it is time to pray. Every time you have a desire to do something godly, you should always lay it before the Lord. God will tell you if that is His desire for you or if it is *your* desire for you.

There is nothing we can do to please God except obey Him. Only His works can attain to all that He expects from us. Therefore let Him work through you by obedience to the Spirit, and He will be well pleased in what you do. And why? Because it is God working through you and not you yourself. God is not pleased by the works of the flesh but of the Holy Spirit.

If then you have godly desire and you desire a good thing, do not just do it, but pray. If it has already been confirmed to you that it’s God’s desire, that is a different situation, seeing that you are not led by desire but by confirmation. Yet it is another thing to have desire and not know for certain the heart of God.

I have had people say to me, “If it’s a good thing, why should I pray? I should just do it!” But what we think is good is not always what God knows is best. It goes without saying that if we see someone starving on the street, we should just feed them. But if it’s in our heart to pursue a certain path in life, we should lay it before the Lord.

Sometimes people like to use the example of delivering a suffering person to justify always walking by “godly” desire. Yet if we always know what was best at all times, then why do we still grow in the Lord? We grow because we have weakness and incomplete knowledge.

If you have any sin in your life, even just once a month, you still need growth. You know that it’s wrong but don’t know how to overcome it or else you wouldn’t have it. We grow until we come to a full stature, being a complete and perfect creation of God. If then we are not perfect in our understanding, we should not be so quick to follow our own desires, even if they may appear godly. We should be faithful, however, to lay all things before the Lord while waiting

for His answer to live by His word.

Yet when we use the example of delivering a starving person on a street to justify walking in whatever path of life we want, then there is something wrong with our hearts. If a person can't make a distinction between meeting earnest needs and choosing a path of life, then there is something wrong. But I'd rather believe it to be a sore excuse to justify a person's own desire.

We must inquire of the Lord to live by His desire and not our own. He is our master and our Lord. We must live our lives for the Lord that He may work through us. It is not what we can do for Him but what He does through us.

He doesn't need us; He never did and never will. He's been doing big things before He made this world. So why would He need our works at all? He doesn't *need* us, He *wants* us. He wants us because He loves us.

An artist doesn't need his three-year-old son to help him make a masterpiece. But an artist may *want* his three-year-old to help him make a masterpiece that he can teach his boy and have quality bonding time with him. Likewise, God wants quality bonding time with us through an intimate relationship with Him. We should submit to that by walking in the Spirit. God always knows better than us, and when we submit to Him, we please Him.

Therefore if we have desire, we must always lay it before Him first, never being anxious to do anything. Even as we said before,

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:6–7

Be anxious for nothing but let God lead you in everything. When the Scriptures exhort us to not "be anxious," they are suggesting that whenever desire enters your heart, you should pray first and let your requests be made known to God. Afterward, His peace that surpasses all understanding will guard our hearts and minds. And why? Because when we are led by God, He is able to work through us as we wait for His word. When He works through us, we have peace in knowing that we are justified before Him.

A relationship with God requires a two-way communication. When we pray, we need to wait for Him to answer before we do anything. Prayer is a two-way radio sending messages and receiving them. We need God to communicate His message into our hearts that we may walk by obedience and faith.

Therefore guard your heart in regard to desire, and do not to step out in the flesh. Rather, wait for the Lord to answer you in order to know whether or not *He* has laid it in your heart to do a work. A good work is not always God's best work.

Therefore if it is in your heart to pursue any path of life—whether Bible college, becoming a pastor or teacher, getting married and having children, a career move, or any path you pursue in life—first lay it before God. Why shouldn't you? Anyone who says they shouldn't is afraid of God's answer. Is He not your Lord and Master? Then let *Him* dictate your life while you learn submission to His will. And if you really think He's calling you to a certain path in life, what's wrong with confirmation? Do you really think He will say no? How can you be so certain of God's will for your life if He hasn't directly spoken it to you?

Take the time to pray first. By prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known to God. Do not be anxious for anything, but wait for Him to answer that He may lead you according to His heart. His voice is a method He uses to lead us. It is through faith in His words and His voice that we find salvation.

As it is written,

"…faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Romans 10:17

and also,

"For by grace you have been saved through faith…" Ephesians 2:8

We are saved by the faith that comes from hearing His voice. Therefore take the voice of the Holy Spirit seriously. Wait for His answer in everything, and do not step out unless you step out in faith. You are not stepping out in faith unless God told you to do it. Faith comes by hearing His word and obeying it, not by thinking of a good thing to do then trying to do it without God's immediate direction.

This is an issue that plagues the church today. There are many people that seem to think that when a good work comes to mind, they should step out in faith and do it. But the Lord commands us to be anxious for nothing but to pray and wait for His word. Faith comes by His word, both oral and written. We must wait for God to confirm His will through the Holy Spirit before we do anything, not only when it is confirmed in the pages of the Bible but also by the Holy Spirit Himself. As it is written,

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." Romans 8:14

Everything we do must be confirmed in the pages of the Bible. But it also must be confirmed through the Holy Spirit, who leads us in a daily walk with Christ, even as we read. And who do the Scriptures call the sons of God? Those who are led by the Spirit of God.

We are not even considered a son of God unless we are led by the Spirit of God. To be Christian literally means “follower of Christ.” Christ leads us daily through His Spirit, and if we are not following Him, we are not following Christ. Therefore we are not Christian nor are we a son of God unless we are led by the Holy Spirit of God.

Wait for God in everything and do not be led by desire, but know what the will of the Lord is. He lays His desire in your heart that you may pray and seek His leading. Then He will speak to you, and His word shall go forth. When He has spoken to confirm His will, your faith shall come because of His word. When faith comes because His word was sent forth, it will produce the fruit of God’s righteousness in you. Even as it is written,

“For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater,

So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.” Isaiah 55:10–11

Let the word of God prosper in you by obedience. Wait for it that you may walk by faith. When you hear the Holy Spirit, obey Him. He may guide your heart through desires He lays on your heart. But at this point, He only wants you to pray so that you may be led by His word.

Tugging at Our Hearts

One method God uses to communicate with us is through inward tugs, as we briefly mentioned before. This is the Holy Spirit who is compelling us and tugging at our heart. With these “tugs,” He leads and guides us throughout the day. This method, however, is more than just conviction. It is a continual leading through the day, whether in regard to situations that lead to sin or not. This tugging is His voice communicating to us through a spiritual tongue. It is by this method that He leads us in a daily walk with Christ. As we previously mentioned,

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” Romans 8:14

In this, we learn that we must be led daily in everything we do. Only those that are led by God are considered the sons of God. A Christian is a “follower of Christ.” Therefore we must take earnest heed to our walks with Him. We need to keep a focused mind on God, paying attention always to His inward “tugs.” If we’re not willing to be led by Him, then we cannot even be called His sons. (Or at the very least, we are not acting like His sons when we know to do better.)

He is our Lord and Master. When we came to Christ, we surrendered our life to Him that He should rule over us. Therefore we must take His leading seriously and permit Him Lordship over us. We cannot be saved by following the dictates of our own heart. Everything in the Scriptures speak against it.

But only by following the lead of the Spirit daily can we find salvation. And why? Because righteousness is faith in motion. This tug is another form of God’s word, and righteousness is the application of the word of God. He is telling you through His voice (the inward pull of the Holy Spirit) what you should do, where you should go, and what you should say. And as it is written,

“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Romans 10:17

And again,

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.” Ephesians 2:8

We are saved by faith, which comes from His word. Therefore we are saved by

believing in His word and obeying it. And as it is also written,

“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” James 1:22

“But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.” James 1:25

This is how we walk in the Spirit: by following the leading of the Lord. Beloved, I’d like to encourage you to become acquainted with the inward voice of the Holy Spirit. It is by His voice that He leads us, and if we want to be a Christian, then we must follow Him. You are not walking in the Spirit unless you are following Him and obeying His voice. When we walk in the Spirit, we are justified and no longer working in the flesh. As it is written,

“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” Galatians 5:16

When we follow the Spirit daily in all things, conviction becomes easier to obey. By doing this, we are permitting God to be our strength to overcome our weaknesses.

These tugs God gives us can most easily be discerned when we sit down and put away the distractions around us. When we sit in the presence of the Lord and listen quietly, we can hear the Spirit tugging at our hearts.

Be listening to these tugs. Discern when it is the Lord, and listen to it. Even if it doesn’t make sense, just follow the Lord. If you know that it’s God, then why question Him? Take the time to sit in His presence to hear from Him. Obey Him, and follow His leading. It is through these tugs that He leads us daily in all things we should do.

So follow Him according to His leading. Whether you understand or not shouldn’t matter. When you know that the Lord has spoken, then just obey. He knows what He’s doing and has had everything planned out since before time began. He has works that are preplanned for us, and we are called to walk in them. Even as it is written,

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:10

Discern His will for you. If you don’t know what God wants you to be doing

throughout the day, then pray for discernment and wisdom. Seek Him in prayer, and He will answer you. He will not leave you in doubt, seeing that His word saves you. It is in His heart to save you; therefore, beloved, He will always give you His word. If you're struggling with whether God will speak or not in regard to a situation, then have faith. Wait until He speaks, and do nothing until He does.

But be discerning because He may have already communicated to you what you should do in another way. Wait for His word, and when He has communicated His will to you, obey immediately. Do not wait.

When you obey immediately, you're training your heart to understand the voice of God. It gives you an opportunity to watch His words happen because of how quickly you stepped from hearing His word into fulfilling it. When you see His word fulfilled, then it increases your understanding of His voice. So take His word seriously, and walk by the Spirit.

You are saved by following His word; if you have difficulty understanding His word, He will give you the wisdom you need if you seek it. Yet remember that He is a relational God. Although He can give you what you need without your seeking it, He wants you to reach to Him first. You must seek Him for wisdom and pray for it. Then when you have extended your hand to God, He will reach back to you. Even as it is written,

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him." James 1:5

Step forward in earnest prayer, and God will answer you. Seek His wisdom, and He will bless you!

When He has answered you, be submissive to His leading. If you're not continually submissive, you'll grow a callous in your heart. His voice will be difficult to hear because you chose not to listen in the first place. It's like letting a muscle go unused. What happens when you do that? It becomes weak and difficult to use. Likewise, it is difficult to use your spiritual heart muscles for following God when they go unused.

The best way to understand His leading is to practice following Him. If then you want to have a perfect walk, remember that practice makes perfect. Practice listening to God and obeying Him. The more you do this, the more you will understand Him. In order to perfect your understanding of His voice, you need to practice obeying it continually.

But when we choose to walk in the flesh and not obey His voice, it builds wax in our spiritual ears. We need to clean our ears through sitting and abiding in the Spirit. If you continuously obey Him, it will become easier for you to discern His will for you. Sometimes His will can be murky and cloudy. This usually happens under two circumstances: either when we need to grow in discernment or when we've been walking in the flesh.

If we seek to grow in understanding, God will give us what we need. If we've been walking in the flesh, then we need to repent and humble ourselves before the Lord. Then we need to sit in the secret place with the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to purify and minster to our hearts, then His voice will become easier to hear and discern.

It can be easier to hear these tugs at our hearts when we take the time to sit and abide in His presence. You need to come out from the distractions around you and sit in the secret place of the Lord. Focus on His presence, and it will be easier to hear Him. When you can hear God's voice clearly, it is easier to understand His will for you.

Make a habit of doing this daily. Also, focus on His presence throughout the day, wherever you are. When you do this with a vigilant mind, open ears, and eyes fixed on Christ, you will be able to fully understand His leading when He speaks to you.

There will always be times when it will be difficult to determine God's will. Whenever it happens, focus on the presence of the Lord by prayer and worship and with fasting if necessary. Take the time to make yourself aware of His continual presence by praying and focusing on Him throughout the day. When you feel Him with you, then begin listening to Him. At this time, His voice will be easier to discern and understand

Be diligent to follow His lead and obey Him always. Let Him lead you to where you should go, and be willing to follow Him. In order to hear the tugs of God, you need to listen carefully, inwardly. These tugs are like small, quiet whispers. We know that God comes as a still small voice. Seeing that it is the case, we must come out from the distractions, both external and internal. Release the issues of the day to God then stop focusing on them. They can distract you from His Spirit. Focus on the presence of the Lord instead, leaving the issues of your heart behind lest your own heart should distract you from the Lord.

Hearing His small voice requires much attention, much focus, and much care. Sit

forward and incline your spiritual ear to the Lord. The more you sit in His presence, the more you will understand His will for you. The more you focus on these tugs, the more you understand what you should do, what you should say, where you should go, and how you should obey.

Therefore pay earnest attention to the Lord, follow Him everywhere He leads, and obey Him in everything He calls you to do. You will be well pleasing to God, and you will understand His will for you always.

The Unrealized Influence of God

Sometimes God leads us without our even knowing it. Throughout our lives, He guides us with His hand, setting up circumstances to guide our decision-making process. He does this so that we may draw nearer to Him and grope after Him in all things. He does this through circumstances in our life and through conforming our desires to His as we discussed previously.

When we have a heart like His, we tend to be led by Him without even thinking. It becomes second nature to us by the leading and guiding of the Spirit. As we grow in Him, God conforms our will to His, and by nature, we walk in His Spirit. We walk in His path and walk in His way, following Him as a force of habit.

When we continue in the Spirit, He gives us His heart. As it is written,

“Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh,

that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God.” Ezekiel 11:19–20

When we have His heart, rather than making decisions in our flesh according to our own heart, we seek to be pleasing to Him in all things. As it is written,

“Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.” 2 Corinthians 5:9

The second way He leads us without realizing it is through the circumstances of life. Sometimes God brings things upon us to direct our thinking and decision-making, hence He is able to lead us. As it is written,

“The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, Like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.” Proverbs 21:1

Similarly, this is why we are called to pray for our leaders. As we read in the Scriptures,

“Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men,

for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.” 1 Timothy 2:1–2

Our leaders make decisions that will affect the world all the way up to the days of the antichrist. All nations will we put in a place like cards on the table. God is dealing His hand and leading those with authority to set up the redemption of the world.

The Scriptures testify that Israel will be rebuilt as well as the temple. In World War II, God took control of the hearts of the Jewish people and the minds of the world leaders. Then with one accord, He reestablished the nation of Israel as He promised and prophesied.

Currently, the side of Jerusalem that has the temple is occupied by the Palestinians. It is not God's timing for the temple to be rebuilt at this moment, but when it is, God will deal His hand, and something new will happen. We don't know exactly what that will look like. But we know that God is influencing the minds of the world leaders to keep the temple from being rebuilt prematurely. If God wanted it rebuild it, He would force the events to happen. But for the time being, God is relenting for His own purpose. Nevertheless, we see, even in current events, the hand of God working to establish the nations.

In order for the temple to be rebuilt, God will guide the hearts of leaders again. Whether through the unfortunate activity of war or through a change of political climate, God will reestablish the temple as He promised, yet only when His perfect timing has come. Throughout the course of history, it is evident that God must have control in the hearts of men. That way, with one accord, they may fulfill what He has prophesied.

Likewise, God influences us through the circumstances of life to set us in the perfect place for finding Him. He leads us to where we shall live, when we shall have children, where and when they shall be born, where we work, and maybe even things such as where we shop for groceries. He gives us everything we need to encounter salvation.

For example: If you, who are a believer, are working at a grocery store, God may lead unbelievers to the store that they may encounter you. That way you may share the gospel in those particular circumstances for their sake. But that God leads us to draw nearer to Him is evident. As it is written,

"…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." Act 17:26–27

God leads us that we may find Him as Savior. After we have come to know Him as Savior, He still uses the circumstances of life to lead us in the way of His will. An example of my own life would again refer to when I met my wife.

I had moved in with a friend who didn't have a computer. Several of my bills I had to be paid online. So whenever I wanted to pay these bills, I had to go to a different friend's house. One day, very late at night, I was driving around town. I was driving aimlessly with an acquaintance when it dawned on me that I was about to be late on a bill and had to pay it that night. As I was contemplating using my friend's computer, my acquaintance coincidentally asked me, "Do you know where there's a computer I could use? I need to email someone."

So we went to the friend's house who had the computer, and there was a girl there whom I had briefly known in the past. While I waited for my turn to use the Internet, she and I began talking, and I shared my testimony with her. The Lord spoke to her in it, and she was deeply affected. We decided to get coffee together that weekend then, before a week went by, we were together.

Had I not used the computer that night, I wouldn't have married her. There was little else that would have caused us to cross paths in life. God created the circumstances of my life to meet her. I prayed specifically that He would appoint it, and the Lord set up the circumstances for me.

God also set up her circumstances as well. There was an older gentleman in need in the church who recently had moved in with my friend. He was a personal friend of hers, and she was there to visit him. Had he not recently moved in with that particular friend, she wouldn't have been there. Had he not been in need, he wouldn't have moved there. But God used the circumstances to lead us in His will. As I stated in an earlier chapter, I had recently surrendered my singleness to the Lord. I prayed for one of His daughters' hand in marriage, and He set up the circumstances to lead me to that person. It was the Lord who set it up and used the various circumstances and has continued to do so throughout our marriage.

I didn't realize God was speaking to me through the circumstances of life at that time. I didn't know it was He who was inspiring me to pay that bill that night. I never forget my bills, but somehow it slipped my mind until the last minute. I was in a rush and didn't really have a choice.

Had I not made so much as one of those decisions back then, I probably would not have my three children and my beautiful wife. So if there's anything that I've learned from that situation, it is that it is good to wait until the last minute to pay a bill.

I’m joking of course.

But whatever the case, God will always try to lead us whether we are aware of it or not. Yet we must be submissive to His guiding hand. We cannot rely on being led without knowing it, as we are called to consciously follow Him. We are called to respond to His leading and follow after Him with a willing heart.

The times that He leads us in an unbeknownst way are few and far between. This type of leading exists, but is not one that should be depended upon for a daily walk in Christ. In a daily walk, we are called to be submissive to His leading by hearing His voice and obeying it.

But there are times when God will lead you behind the scenes without your even realizing it. Seeing that we are discussing how to hear His voice and understand His leading, it is necessary to mention every method that He uses to lead us.

When He speaks to us, He communicates His will and His desire to us. But there are times when He may communicate with us without our realizing it. He will do this to guide our hearts, like the channels do the rivers of water. But nevertheless, we must open our eyes to see His guiding hand. If we pray for open eyes, God will help us see all the ways He’s speaking to us and the directions He is trying to lead us.

When we don’t hear God speaking, it is usually due to a lack of understanding or an issue of sin. God speaks to us in so many ways that it can be difficult to understand what He’s saying if we only know one or two of the methods He uses. But if we pray for open eyes and pray for wisdom, God will grant it to us that we may understand how He is communicating to us through the course of life.

We are called to have open ears and incline them to Him that we may walk in His salvation.

As it is written,

“Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you— The sure mercies of David.” Isaiah 55:3

Knowing then that God calls us to incline our ears to Him, we ought also to grow in understanding His voice. His voice must be obeyed at all times. Rather than depending on being led in an unbeknownst way, we should have the heart to follow Him willfully and passionately at all times.

If we don’t willfully follow the Lord, then we’re walking in sin. We cannot live according to our own hearts or according to our flesh. We must walk in the Spirit, and the only way to walk in the Spirit is through hearing His voice and obeying. Beloved, therefore obey Him. Take your walk seriously, and the more you grow in understanding His leading, the more clearly you will hear His voice.

Open your ears to Him, and if you’re having a difficult time hearing or understanding His voice, then pray for wisdom. Pursue it with your whole heart, and pray continuously. Wisdom must be a continuous pursuit. As the Lord has exhorted us through Solomon in Proverbs:

“My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, so that you incline your ear to wisdom, And apply your heart to understanding;

Yes, if you cry out for discernment, And lift up your voice for understanding, If you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures;

Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, And find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding.” Proverbs 2:1–6

Do not be settled with a complacent life. Don’t expect God to drop everything on your lap. In a relationship, two people are required to pursue one another. God has been pursuing you in His passion since before He created you. He set up the events in others’ lives to lead them in finding Christ. Then He set up the events that your parents should meet and that He might form you in your mother’s womb. Then He caused you to cross paths with those who shared the gospel with you. He has been pursuing you since before He made you, and you also are called to pursue God.

We came to salvation because God has been reaching for us first. Yet we are called to always be reaching back throughout our relationship with Him. We should always be reaching for Him and walking in His Spirit.

Although God may conform our desires to His that we may have a heart like His, we must not be led by desire. We still have the nature of the flesh, and we’re not always perfect. Seeing then that we don’t perfectly walk in the Spirit as we ought, we should not trust the desires we have. Rather, we should seek the Lord and pray whenever we have desire.

Although God may use desire to lead us in an unbeknownst way, we should not depend on it. Desire is the beginning of temptation, and our flesh often gets in the way of our relationship with Him. If we trust our heart and desires, we will

walk in the flesh and not the Spirit. And that we shouldn’t follow our own heart is evident. As it is written,

“The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?” Jeremiah 17:9

Therefore do not make any decisions without Him, but be anxious for nothing. Open your eyes to His leading and pray for understanding, and He will grant it to you. But in all things, we must pray first that we may live according to the word of God. And as we stated before,

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:6–7

Do not be led by desire but by His Holy Spirit. Grow in understanding, and the Lord will lead you in an obvious way rather than unknowingly. It is not right that we should walk with the Lord unknowingly. Rather, we should walk with Him in full consciousness, being vigilant of mind and sincere in heart.

Having Passion for Christ

In order to hear the voice of God more effectively we need to take affirmative actions in our walk. We must to take a walk with Him seriously, listening to His Spirit and obeying Him continuously. If we do not continuously obey we are not going to hear Him as well. If we choose to walk in sin, and ignore conviction, conviction may stop altogether until we repent.

If you're plugging your fingers in your spiritual ears, then you're not going to hear God. There are some who do this, purposefully ignoring God while they walk according to their own heart, justifying it. But if you willfully submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit, you will be able to hear Him clearly and effectively. The more you practice this, the better you'll hear Him.

If you want to grow in understanding the voice the Lord, the best way is through prayer and alone time spent with God. In order to gain understanding, we must have fervent hearts for growth. We must ask God to increase our knowledge of Him, and He will answer us. As it is written,

"…Yet you do not have because you do not ask." James 4:2

Some people feel that if they only ask, they will receive. Yet we must also seek, stepping forward to receive it. In this, God sees your heart and will give you what you approach by faith. Asking itself isn't seeking; taking affirmative actions is seeking.

Some of these actions are: passionately pursuing Him on a daily basis, seeking to grow in a walk with Him, praying for understanding, growing in the knowledge of the Word, and being still and listening intently to the Spirit then obeying Him immediately.

If we love the Lord, we'll show Him our passion through a walk with Him. But how can we know to rightly walk unless we know how to rightly divide His word? As it is written,

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:15

All things the Holy Spirit actively speaks to you can be backed up by Scripture. God never contradicts Himself. We must be diligent to present ourselves approved to God and to please Him. But how do the Scriptures say that we are found approved by Him? Through knowing how to rightly divide the word of truth.

When you grow in the Scriptures, you will grow in understanding the voice of God. If you think that God has spoken to you, you should compare it to the Scriptures. Everything God speaks will line up with His word. Seeing that this is the case, the more you understand the Scriptures and the perfect truth of the doctrine, the more you will understand the voice of God.

Spend more time with Him, having more than a devotion with Him. It's good to have a devotion, but do more than this and dive deep in the Scriptures. Come to understand your Bible. Many Christians believe that they do understand the perfect one true doctrine, but then the question remains, "Why are there so many different beliefs on any one given topic?"

We as Christians are too focused on our own opinions. Beloved, I would like to encourage you to let go of your own opinion and seek the heart of God. Examine your own heart at this time, and ask yourself honestly, "Am I opinionated with my beliefs?" or "Am I seeking the opinions of others rather than seeking the opinion of God?"

God’s opinion is perfect truth. We need to stop asking one another, “What’s your take on this scripture?” or “What do you make of this scripture? What’s your opinion?” Beloved, God’s opinion is all that matters. He will judge us according to His opinion. The judgment we receive from God will be based from His own heart. If we want to be pleasing Him in regard to His judgment, then we must consider His opinion and not that of others or our own.

Therefore take it seriously, and seek God’s opinion and not that of others. Seek His perfect truth, and His Holy Spirit will guide you to it. If you have an open mind with God, you’ll have open spiritual ears. We need to have an open mind when asking God to reveal the meaning behind the Scriptures to us because He may say something that we do not expect. Yet His word is perfect truth and perfect doctrine.

There is only one doctrine and one truth. Yet many believe different things about the same subject. We are called by the Lord to be of the same mind and of the same judgment. Why? Because there is only one God, one way of salvation, one truth, one Name by which we are saved, and only one Savior.

Knowing this to be true, we must take our walks seriously and seek the Lord in truth, being careful to abstain from the opinions of men. Yes, there are some who may understand the doctrine whose teachings can be listened to, and God will speak through them. However, in regard to seeking opinions, we ought to abstain from the interpretations of men and instead ask God to interpret His own word.

We must take our walks seriously. We must take the doctrine seriously. Do not be complacent, but be passionate.

As it is written,

“For the turning away of the simple will slay them, And the complacency of fools will destroy them;

But whoever listens to me will dwell safely, and will be secure, without fear of evil.” Proverbs 1:32–33

And that we should be diligent to obey His voice is evident. For it is written,

“…Today, if you will hear His voice: Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion…” Psalm 95:7–8

But that paying attention to doctrine and abiding in the one truth saves us is evident. For it is written,

“Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.” 1 Timothy 4:16

And that improper doctrine leads astray and kills is evident. For it is written,

“You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?

This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump.” Galatians 5:7–9

And also,

“Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back,

let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.” James 5:19–20

Do you understand what this scripture in James is declaring? That if anyone doesn’t walk in truth, their soul abides in death! Beloved, take it as a most serious thing. God’s word cannot be taught any other way! It

says what it says, and the word of God must be believed and obeyed! We can't just pick and choose what we like in the Scriptures. Yet some take certain scriptures to justify their standpoint then throw out the rest. When they're rebuked with other scriptures that stand against their beliefs, they say, "God didn't really mean that," or, "The scriptures aren't really saying that; they're saying if you could abide in death." They always use the statement "If this or that could happen." But read the scripture in James! It doesn't say, "If you could" anywhere in that verse. Their statement is an interpretation of men added to the gospel according to their opinion. Our faith must be in what is written, not in what men interpret. It must be in what God speaks and interprets to us through His Holy Spirit, who enlightens our understanding of the word. It is the Lord who opens our understanding of His word and His gospel. As it is written,

"And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures." Luke 24:45

God teaches us His doctrine through His Holy Spirit. His Spirit may speak through others that you may know His doctrine, as each one has received a gift from God. Some men have received from the Lord to be a pastor or preacher and speak through the Holy Spirit. When you learn how to discern the voice of God, you will feel God speaking through them, even if it's not something you previously knew. In this, God has established teachers of His doctrine in His church that you may walk by the truth. Therefore, beloved, become acquainted with the voice of God, and take it as a most serious thing. His Holy Spirit leads us to all perfect truth. As we read,

"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth…" John 16:13

If then we seek the truth, we also seek the Lord Jesus. For it is written,

"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'" John 14:6

Jesus is the truth, and to walk in Him and the way of His truth is to walk in life. Those who do not follow after the Lord in truth cannot be saved. For He is the truth and the life, and if we do not walk in His truth, we do not walk in the way of life.

We can't walk however we think is best or however we feel and still believe that we have the salvation God gives. His salvation comes through His one and only Gospel. If we believe in anything else, faith does not save us. And why? Because our faith is no longer in the word of God but in the words and opinions of men, and men do not save. Only by Jesus Christ are we saved, and only by His name are we delivered. But what happens to those that teach a different doctrine and are complacent in preaching truth? As we read,

"I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed." Galatians 1:6–9

We must take His word seriously in reverence of the Lord. We must fear and love the Lord. We can't walk in any pattern we think is best and expect grace. We must walk according to the pattern delivered to us from the Lord in the Scriptures. We must take the word of God seriously. We are led by His word, both written and orally spoke by the Spirit, who wrote the Scriptures. But if we don't follow the word in truth, then we don't follow Christ in truth, and Christian literally means "follower of Christ." If we don't understand His doctrine, we won't understand His voice when He speaks.

Although we may be able to understand His voice from time to time, we will not be able to perfectly

understand it until we perfectly understand His doctrine. His word shows us how He leads us and speaks to us. When we come to know His word, it is easier to understand His leading. If then you want a perfect walk with Him, walk in love and pure doctrine. Seek the truth, and live according to it. Take it seriously, and He will bless you with a deeper, more fulfilling, and more enriching relationship with Him.

Spend more time with Him. Sit in His presence throughout the day, turning your ears inwardly at all times. Constantly listen to the Holy Spirit. When you grow in the word and continually practice obeying God, His voice will become clearer to you and easier to understand. When you understand His voice, it's easier to follow Him.

There are many things that will distract you. For example, the duties of your workplace may distract you from the Lord. However, you can focus on the presence of the Spirit and the necessities of the day at the same time. As you practice this, you will grow in it. The more you grow in it, the easier it will be to do throughout the day. It's like exercising a muscle. The more you exercise it, the more it is able to overcome difficult things.

Beloved, be diligent to seek the Lord. The more you seek Him, the greater your relationship with Him will be. If you want to hear His voice more clearly, then hold Him more dearly. Get closer to Him, and you will hear His still, small voice better.

Be passionate in all that you do, and be diligent to obey. Follow through with love, and continue in His word. In doing these things, you will not only please Him but understand Him better. When you understand His voice, you can hear Him more clearly, being able to more accurately discern when He has spoken. When you hear His voice more clearly, you can understand how to obey it more effectively. These go hand in hand, but you can only grow in them through growing in a relationship with Him and being diligent to obey immediately. Obey everything God speaks to you, whether conviction, compelling, leading, or things He teaches you through the Scriptures for a daily walk.

Be closer to Him in the word, and you will be closer to Him in the end. His Bible is His private journal. When you understand His journal, you will understand the heart of the Person who wrote it. While you're reading the Bible, God will speak to you in the Scriptures. When the words of the pages pop out to you, this is the Lord speaking to you. Write down what He teaches you, and memorize the scriptures He points out to you. When you write down what He teaches you, you're practicing listening to the voice of God. Every time you hear God when you read, write what He says. In this, you have an opportunity to practice listening to and hearing God. Remember that practice makes perfect! If you practice listening, you will perfect your understanding of His voice. By doing this, it will help you grow in understanding His voice. It will, in fact, help you in every area of life and not reading only.

Have passion for the Lord. Be diligent to seek Him. Read His word, and write what He teaches you. Memorize the Scriptures that speak out to you, for the Lord wants you to do so, having pointed them out to you. Love Him by obedience. In doing these things, His voice will be easier to understand, and you'll hear Him more clearly.

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As an author I regard the feedback of my readers highly. When considering a book many people weigh reviews in the balance.

If you enjoyed this book please consider helping others make an informed decision. Leaving a review can help spread the message of the gospel, increase other’s faith through these books, and would be a great way to support this ministry for free!

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About The Author

Adam is a preacher, teacher and Christian author. He is a devoted husband and father of 3 boys. Through His travels he’s seen the need for a new awakening and a new revival: A revival of the heart. Come join Adam on this journey of redemption and experience God like never before!

I Know That God Is Good, But Why Am I Hurting So Much?™

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Table of Contents

Introduction

God Created You to Love You

God Holds You Through It All

God Does All Things Out of Love

Responding Rightly to His Love

Remaining Faithful and Being Strengthened by Him

I'd Love to Hear from You!

Want Free Books?

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About the Author

Introduction

This book was written for Christians who deeply love the Lord. It was not written for those who have never committed themselves to Him in an intimate relationship, but for those who have devoted their life to Him.

It was written for those Christian who are struggling with trials or have had tragic circumstances overtake their life—circumstances that would leave a person wondering, “God, how could You let this happen?”

We will explain God’s intentions as we explore the depths of His love, grace, and sovereignty.

God Created You to Love You

You are a special and precious creation of God. You are treasured and cherished by your Maker. Thousands of years before you were formed in your mother's womb, He formed you in the thoughts of His heart. Before creation ever existed, He entertained His mind with you. He imagined what life would be like to be with you and how He would interact with you.

He thought of who you would be, what you would look like, what your personality would be like, how you would respond to life, and how life would respond to you. He took great pleasure in the thought of you, so He set out to create heaven and earth as places to meet with His special friend—you.

You are loved more than you could ever imagine, and you have been loved since before God created time! God created you to be His special child, and you have meant everything to Him. For your sake, He has changed the seasons and the times for thousands of years since Creation. He has raised nation upon nation, king upon king, to create the perfect circumstances for you to find Him as Savior.

He has caused all of the households and dwelling places to be in the places they are. He has moved the hearts of the people so that they would make the decisions they have made, to live where they live and do what they do in life. That way, each person may have the greatest chance of groping after Him and finding salvation. Even as it is written,

"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…" Act 17:26–27

In this, God moved His pawns in place; He has been moving these pieces of the world for thousands of years to prepare the day of your birth. Then, since you were born, He has been preparing all things around you, having imagined how life would respond to you so that He could give you exactly what you need to respond to the life that is found in Jesus Christ.

In this, you have found the love of God. In His love, you have found a beautiful relationship. But in this relationship, God is more than your Beloved; He has also become your Father.

When parents decide to have a child, they are deciding to bring someone into their life with whom to have a relationship. God decided that He wanted a relationship with you and, thus, made you His precious baby.

Although circumstances of life may not always be favorable toward us, God uses all things for the greater good. Because He is always good, there is nothing that will come upon your life that God won't turn into good. Even if you don't think good can come from it, God will turn every bad situation into something greater than you can imagine—if you let Him. Even as it is written,

"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think…" Ephesians 3:20

God's love is faithful, and He ***will*** do exceedingly, abundantly above everything you can imagine to save you and to bless you because He loves you exceedingly, abundantly above anything you can comprehend. You are worth everything to Him, and there's nothing He wouldn't give for you.

He proved this when He stepped down from His Lordly and heavenly throne and came down as a man to be rejected, hated, and homeless, living in the hills and the high country, starving and thirsty, hiding in the deserted places, preaching love and healing others, all while He waited to be betrayed in the day of His death.

He suffered the loss of all things long before the cross. He was hated, rejected, persecuted, hungry, and homeless for years. Even at His birth—as a young, innocent baby—He was hunted by Herod. But because of His passionate zeal for you, He would rather suffer homelessness on this earth, letting the rain cover His head at night, so that you could have a home with Him forever. Think about it: Do you honestly believe He was able to find a place to sleep every night? Even Jesus said,

"Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." Matthew 8:20

He chose to come down to this world knowing that He would suffer homelessness, rejection, and the loss of all things. He lived in the wilderness when traveling from city to city to preach His abundant love, all while He was rejected by His family and lost His friends—and some of His disciples. Even as the Scriptures say,

"From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more." John 6:66

And that His family rejected Him is evident. As it is written,

"For even His brothers did not believe in Him." John 7:5

With much forethought, He knew that if He came into this world, He would suffer the loss of all things. He knew that He would be hated, despised, and rejected by His friends, His nation, and His family. He knew that coming to this earth would create many enemies and that it would lead to Him being crucified.

Yet He counted you as someone worth suffering for. You were worth it to Him, so He came and suffered for years for you. Not days, weeks, or months, but years. He knew this would happen, but He still counted you as someone worth suffering for just to love you, save you, and have a relationship with you.

Then, after He suffered for three years during His ministry, He went on to be rejected and murdered by His own people. By His sacrifice He has shown you that He would rather be mocked, hated, homeless, spit on, beat in the face, whipped, scourged, completely humiliated, stripped naked, and murdered on a cross than spend another moment in eternity without you.

You have meant so much to Him! He can't abide the thought of being without you! He has loved you with an eternal love, and there is nothing in heaven and earth that could ever separate you from it. He would pass through heaven and earth, leap the highest mountain, plunge the deepest depth, fight the mightiest of beasts, risk His life, and die just to save you.

Beloved, why then would we question the goodness of God just because *we* suffer? He came to save you from the sufferings of this present life, to redeem you and restore you in the heavenly places. In the meantime, while we wait for His redemption with patience, we must suffer the things of this life with long forbearance, knowing and believing that God is good.

He allows bad things to happen for good reasons—reasons that build your character and restore your heart and soul, though the circumstances may hurt. He is good, and His love abounds forever. But to prove His love, He has suffered for you. Is it too much to ask that you should do the same for Him, to prove your love for Him? Beloved, lay down this present life to pick up an eternally peaceful life with Christ.

He counted you as someone worth suffering for, and you also should count Him as One worth suffering for. We don't always suffer due to persecution, but when bad things happen because we're following Him, we're suffering for Him. Sometimes we have to follow God into the valley. Knowing, then, that you're following Him, consider that He has gone into the place of brokenness before you. He knows in advance what you will suffer because He has gone before you in it.

He has known everything that you would go through and has long known how He would save you, restore you, and comfort you. You were in His mind before He came down, and you were in His heart while He

was here. Even now you are His passionate focus as He sits at the right hand of God, intervening for you.

Everything that God brings on you, He brings on you for your good and not for harm. Although some things may hurt, He has promised to restore you with an eternal life of peace. He will restore you both in this life and in the next.

Remember that after Jesus suffered death, He was raised immortal. Remember that after Job lost everything, He was given double. Consider that after Elijah suffered loneliness in persecution, he cried out to God in his brokenness, saying, “I alone am left, and they seek to take my life!”

Remember that immediately after this, God gave Him Elisha as a permanent companion until the day he ascended into heaven. Remember that when he ascended, he was no longer alone, for fifty sons of the prophets followed him and witnessed his ascension.

God has always refreshed, healed, and restored His servants. Yet there will be a time and a place for us to go home to the Lord. We will no longer be healed in this life at that time, because God intends to heal us forever and will take us home in peace. Even as it is written,

“The righteous perishes, and no man takes it to heart; merciful men are taken away, while no one considers that the righteous is taken away from evil. He shall enter into peace; they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.” Isaiah 57:1–2

Beloved, God will deliver you in this life and abundantly bless you in the next. Although you suffer now, God will lift up your face and wipe every tear from your eyes. Even as He has promised,

“Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, streaming to the goodness of the Lord for wheat and new wine and oil, for the young of the flock and the herd; their souls shall be like a well-watered garden, and they shall sorrow no more at all. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old, together; for I will turn their mourning to joy, will comfort them, and make them rejoice rather than sorrow.” Jeremiah 31:12–13

“And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” Revelation 21:4

God has promised to comfort you. Be alone with the Lord in the secret place, and He will comfort you now. When you’re hurting, run into your Daddy’s arms, not away from them. Remember that He will allow your sufferings to continue for your growth, which is a greater good than redeeming you immediately. Although trials may hurt, when God brings them upon you, it’s for your growth. Now, God doesn’t bring every trial on you, but with those He does, He is seeking to grow you. There are some trials that we receive from circumstances outside of growth. Sometimes bad things happen to good people. Consider Job: He neither committed sin nor did anything deserving of his situation, but he suffered nonetheless.

Sometimes we suffer because of wicked people. God gives us perfectly free will, that we may choose either choose to love Him or not. But some people choose to use their free will for the wrong things. People will persecute you, take advantage of you, or hurt you without regard for your life. But God’s love is above all these things, and He will restore your heart. It’s not His fault that people are wicked. Although He can stop all things, He has permitted men to do good or evil during this era. Then, when He returns, He has promised peace for those who have loved the Lord.

In that time He ***will*** stop wicked people from doing hurtful things. He ***will*** restore what has been lost, build up what’s been broken down, and heal what has been hurt. Even now, God intends to restore you in His love. But don’t blame Him when evil people do hurtful things. It’s their fault, and they —not God—should be blamed.

Yet remember that you also were once wicked to the Lord, and His Son was crucified because of you. Yet He loved you and forgave you. If anyone has hurt you, go and do likewise. Forgive the unforgivable and love the unlovable. In this, you may find the impossible happening: A sinner may repent and find Jesus Christ, being broken by His loving-kindness at work in you. For it is the loving-kindness of Christ that has led us to repentance. Go show your enemies the same and you'll be blessed.

But no matter your circumstances, God will use them for good. He is so powerful, so good, and so loving that He can turn any circumstance into an opportunity for good. He will use everything that happens to you for your good and for your growth. So keep your heart open to Him when you're suffering, and pray for wisdom. He will use the situation for good, to show you something you've never known and to restore you.

However, there are times when God will ***give*** us trials for our growth. He will humble us through circumstances, that we may learn obedience from the things we suffer—even as Jesus learned obedience from the things He suffered. As we read,

"…though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered." Hebrews 5:8

Pruning isn't pleasant to a plant. If it had any sense of feeling, getting its limbs cut off would be excruciating. But in the end it bears much more fruit and is a far more profitable plant. Not all discipline is given to us because we've done something wrong. Sometimes discipline is given to us merely for growth, that we may bear the fruit of righteousness. It's given to us so that we would learn and understand how to be self-disciplined. Nevertheless, whether due to sin or to the need for growth, no chastisement seems joyful, but rather painful. Yet remember that in His discipline, God is preparing you for eternal redemption. Even as it is written,

"Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." Hebrews 12:11

God doesn't bring anything on us for our harm, but for our good. We learn through suffering to depend on Jesus and to be strengthened by Him. It causes us to draw nearer to Him and, thus, increases our relationship with Him. It is through the bonds of love that we overcome the burdens of life. God, through love, shall rescue us from every burden of life. But in the meantime we are called to lean on Him for strength as He holds us through it all.

When life presses you down, remember that you weren't created for adversity; you were created for love. You were created for an eternally peaceful relationship with Jesus Christ. Remember this and walk in love toward your Savior. When life is hard, don't question God and don't blame Him. Press into Jesus and He will comfort you. Satan would have you sit alone in brokenness, but God would have you climb into His arms and be held.

God Holds You Through It All

No matter what, God is always there for you. He hasn't gone through what He has gone through just to abandon you in the midst of your needs. God takes care of all of your daily needs, even as you are called to pray for your "daily bread."

Love is as necessary for the heart as food and water are for the body. When trials are difficult, we often become discouraged and broken. In this time, love and encouragement are necessities. Without them it's hard to go on day after day.

God knows this and never forsakes us. He always loves us and will cherish us in our brokenness. God is always there, even when we don't feel Him. He is there constantly, holding us through it all.

But love doesn't always look like we want it to. Sometimes we suffer trials not for growth, but for sin. When people walk in sin, God gives them what is necessary to turn their lives back around.

Always examine your own heart. If you're suffering a trial, come before the Lord and ask if there's anything you've done wrong. Think of any sins you may have been walking in lately; and if there are any, consider that God may be disciplining you for the sake of repentance. When God's children walk in a pattern of sin, He chastises them for repentance. In this case He doesn't hold us through our suffering until we first repent. But He gives us the suffering so that we may learn repentance and to walk according to a pattern of righteousness. Then, when we repent, God is waiting eagerly by our side to hold us again.

Consider Jonah. He didn't want to go to Nineveh, but instead resisted God. So God sent a heavy storm on him while he sought to flee the Lord. It was at that point that he threw himself in the sea to deliver the people in the vessel. Then God caused him to be swallowed up by a fish, where he suffered for three days.

Then, ***after*** he repented, God commanded the fish to spit him out on dry land. It wasn't until he repented that he was relieved from his suffering. He knew to follow the Lord, but he chose his own heart and was rebuked by God. Even as Jonah himself said,

"Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest is because of me." Jonah 1:12

But that God has mercy after repentance is evident, for after Jonah prayed, God relented in His wrath. As we read,

"Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the fish's belly. And he said:

"'I cried out to the Lord because of my affliction, and He answered me.

"'Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and You heard my voice. For You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the floods surrounded me; all Your billows and Your waves passed over me. Then I said, "I have been cast out of Your sight; yet I will look again toward Your holy temple." The waters surrounded me, even to my soul; the deep closed around me; weeds were wrapped around my head. I went down to the moorings of the mountains; the earth with its bars closed behind me forever; yet You have brought up my life from the pit, O Lord, my God.

"'When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord; and my prayer went up to You, into Your holy temple.

"'Those who regard worthless idols forsake their own Mercy. But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord.'

“So the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.” Jonah 2:1–10

After he repented, God forgave him. But in this forgiveness, God commanded Jonah to follow through with faithfulness. True repentance suggests that we won’t only sorry for what we’ve done, but will also make the necessary effort to do rightly again. Jonah still had to do what he formerly did not want to do.

Therefore, Beloved, it is better to do the right thing from the beginning. Take it to heart and always examine yourself to know whether you’re walking uprightly or not. If we don’t humble ourselves to admit our faults, God will rebuke us for the sake of repentance. Yet God does all these things out of love, for mercy’s sake.

Look also at Nineveh itself. They worshipped foreign gods and were wicked before the Lord. As they were under the threat of destruction, God sent Jonah for their salvation. When Jonah warned them to repent, they did, and God forgave them and relented from harm. If they had not repented, God assuredly would have destroyed them as He had said. God cannot lie, and He said would have destroyed them.

Therefore, Beloved, when something bad comes upon you, search your heart first. God is a God of mercy and brings these things for mercy’s sake. But if you don’t repent, God will follow through with His word. We read that He chastises us, and the Lord will not relent unless we repent.

So when a trial comes, first pray and ask the Lord if there is anything you have done wrong. Pray that He will open your eyes and reveal truth to you. Then, if something comes to mind, repent immediately. But if not, then realize that sometimes bad things happen to good people. Yet even then, God uses these things to grow His children.

No matter what happens, God will hold you through it all. But if you’re being disciplined for sin, He won’t hold you unless you repent. If you search your heart before God and have a clean conscience, however, then know that the Lord will use this situation for a greater good.

He will hold you through everything if you’re willing to run to Him. If you don’t run to Him, how can your Daddy embrace you in His arms? Take time to spend with Him. Be alone with Him and rest in His arms. Let His love cover you, and His Spirit release you.

Be alone with God and release the issues of your heart to Him. He loves you and cares for you, so share your heart with Him. Let Him lift you up and give you joy in the most impossible moments. He is able to do this if you’re willing to let Him.

But unless you seek Him, He can’t hold you. You have to let Him hold you, for receiving His comfort is a choice of your heart. He is a relational God and calls you to seek Him. He has already stretched His hand out to you; now you need to stretch yours back toward Him.

Seek Him and be blessed in His love. No matter how much it feels as if He isn’t there, He has never left you. Rather, He has been waiting right by your side. Beloved, do not weep alone, but instead let God hold you. He is standing next to you—so throw yourself in His arms! Cry in them, and He will comfort you. But if you refuse to seek Him, then you’re in sin. We are called to seek the Lord always, in everything. Even as it is written,

“Seek the Lord and His strength; seek His face evermore!” Psalm 105:4

Always seek God. When life is good, seek God and rejoice in Him! When life is bad, seek God and rejoice in Him! His Spirit will comfort you, and His joy will strengthen you.

God cares about everything you go through. Before time began He knew what would happen to you. He knew every circumstance that would come on your life. He knew how you would respond to life and how it would respond to you. He has been waiting for thousands of years, since Creation, for these things to happen. He has known what would happen and has patiently waited to hold you through it all.

It’s been in His heart to comfort you all this time. He has been waiting for thousands of years to love you, cherish you, comfort you, and embrace you. He loves you with an unrelenting, passionate, and eternal love. His love is the rock we stand on. Remember that when darkness covers you and makes your vision fade, His love is the fire that lights your way. When you’re broken, turn to God, and His love will be a river of joy flowing from your heart.

God will always cherish you, and nothing will ever change His heart for you. Nothing will ever separate you from His love. God would pass through heaven and earth, forcing all things out of His way, just for a moment with you.

He loves you and will never stop pursuing you. He is head over heels for you! You’re His precious little baby and His special treasure. He will always hold you; He will never turn you away! Sometimes God will snatch you up in His arms to comfort you, and sometimes you need to seek Him and give Him your heart. But in all things, learn to trust in Him.

Lean on Him and trust in His mighty hand. God will give you strength and will deliver you from everything that comes your way. When you received Him as your Lord and Savior, you did not receive Him to save you only once, at Judgment. When Christ became your Savior, He became your salvation in ***everything***.

God has promised to deliver you from the hardest circumstances and to raise you up from the murkiest pits. There is nothing too difficult for Him, and He can bring salvation to you in a day. Therefore, put your trust in Him and lay your heart to rest in Him.

If salvation doesn’t come in a day, God has His reasons for it—reasons that could include your growth. But no matter what, believe He is good, and be mindful of any lessons He may be trying to teach you through the circumstances. Let Him comfort and hold you. Run to Him and seek Him, that He may grow you, treasure you, and deliver you from everything that comes your way.

God Does All Things Out of Love

Now the question is: Why does God allow bad things to happen in the first place? What's His plan? What is He trying to do?

God does all things out of love, and there is nothing that He brings on you that hasn't been built within the framework of love. Now, not every trial is God's desire for you. Sometimes people do evil things to each other. Yet if we are good to follow His Holy Spirit rather than pave our own path in life, we will abide under the protection of His wing. Nevertheless, sometimes people are wicked. In this, God will save you if you continue earnestly in His Spirit.

God, with careful consideration and much forethought, decided to permit bad circumstances for a greater good. For those who don't have Christ, there is no greater good that comes out of the bad things in life. If they don't find Christ, there's nothing eternally good that comes from it; they only suffer.

But for those who are the children of God, everything has purpose for greater good. Even as it is written,

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

We know this, but it can be a hard thing to realize during a painful experience. What good could come from cancer? What good could possibly come from the loss of a loved one? What good could come from the loss of a young child? The loss itself isn't good, but what God chooses to do with the circumstance is good.

Yet remember that God will restore you when you stand before Him. Remember that He lost His Son to gain you. Then, in the end, He raised His Son and likewise will raise you. He gained you and received back His Firstborn, whom He lost.

I once knew of a family who lost their son to a drunk driver. Rather than be mad at God or at the young man who killed their child, they chose to forgive him and love him. Both the mother and father met with this young man on a consistent basis and ministered to him in prison. They poured out the love of God on him, and eventually he broke down and gave his life to Christ. He ended up becoming like family to them, and by the time he left prison, the young man who had killed their son had become their son.

This situation is the same as what the Father endured. His Son was murdered on a cross because of your sin, but in exchange for His Son, He received you as His child. Beloved, this is the power of the love of God: forgiveness. No one can imagine how good can come from evil, but nothing is impossible for God.

It is impossible to imagine what kind of good could ever come out of losing your child. Under normal circumstances, there is nothing good that can come from it. But God is so powerful, so wonderful, and so loving that He is willing and able to work it together for good.

Job experienced the loss of everything. He lost his livelihood, his wealth, all of his children in a day, and even his own wife in some respects. Although the Scriptures do not say that he lost his wife, she cursed him and turned against him in his most painful moment of life. Rather than hold him, she became bitter and blamed him, wishing he would die. So in a manner of speaking, he lost her also, because he lost her love.

Even his friends turned against him and accused him of sin, even though they couldn't figure out what his sin was. Rather than being comforted, he was tormented. For all his torment, rather than comfort him, his friends tortured him. Instead of love, he received cursing and deeper brokenness. It was as if, when he asked for a refreshing drink, someone gave him gall to drink. Like Jesus on the cross, who said, "I thirst," but received a sponge full of vinegar.

In the end of all of Job's suffering, God gave him everything back, twice over, and he received a child for every child he had lost. Then he went on to live so long that he saw four generations of his offspring. Remember that His children were already old enough to live on their own when he lost them. He called himself one of the "aged" and one of the "elders" as he sat among his friends who ridiculed him. Yet God gave him so much life that he saw his great-great grandbabies!

Indeed, God blessed Job. As the Scriptures recount,

"And the Lord restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before." Job 42:10

And through Job's situation, we see that God is compassionate. As we also read,

"Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful." James 5:11

God restored Job after he prayed for those who persecuted him in the worst moments of his life. When Job ask God to forgive them, and after he sacrificed for their sins, God restored Job. Job acted like Jesus in that he not only forgave his persecutors but also sought forgiveness for them and sacrificed for them.

When you choose to give God the glory, and love and forgive all of those who hurt you bitterly in the midst of your deepest, most horrible moments, God refreshes you. It is refreshing to forgive others, no matter how horrible they've been to you. No matter what ***you've*** done or where in life ***you*** have come from, God has loved you and forgiven you, and He has also suffered for your sin.

When you can come to terms with forgiveness, righteousness, love, and faith in a God who is always good, you'll find yourself being strengthened by Him in the most difficult moments of life. God doesn't allow bad things to happen in order to hurt you, but He does use them for good—to give you eternal life and grow you.

I once knew of a woman who suffered an unthinkable tragedy. She was pregnant with a baby who was a few months from being born. The doctors took an ultrasound and found that the baby was not forming properly in her womb. The doctor pulled her aside, and because they didn't know how else to explain it to her, he told her bluntly, "I want you to take a picture of yourself with your belly because this is the last time you're going to see your baby alive." She was astonished, but the doctor continued, "Your baby is forming in your womb without a brain."

The child only had a brain stem as it was forming in her womb. It is impossible for anyone to live with only that portion of the brain. At most, an infant with a brain stem lives for a couple months outside the womb and then dies. But even that's rare because such infants usually pass away at birth.

In the end she gave birth to a baby girl and asked God for a miracle. God answered her because that girl lived for nine years before she finally passed away. It was a miracle the doctors couldn't explain. The child should have died at a few months of age but managed to live for years.

Her girl lived, had joy, loved, and was a blessing to her mother. But in the ninth year, she deteriorated and passed away. It had been impossible for her to live past a few months old, but with God all things are possible. Her mother had hoped her daughter would live a full life since God had created this miracle for her, but in the end she lost her child. However, rather than being mad at God for the whole situation—watching her baby suffer for nine years, then losing her—she chose to rejoice.

She felt so blessed to have had her daughter that long, whereas most parents would be grieved that they had lost a child. As her child lay on her deathbed, with tears in her eyes the woman said, "I believe my baby girl came into this world for the sake of love. Having her and serving her helped me understand love and the

nature of it. God made my baby live for nine years. It was a miracle! God created my baby for love."

This woman didn't only have to deal with the death of her child. She suffered from the time of her pregnancy and for nine years after her baby's birth. She had to deal with the painful thought of her child dying in the womb. Then, when the baby was born, she had to deal with the worry that at any moment her child would die. She held onto hope, but her hope wasn't strong because it was impossible for her child to live.

While her girl was an infant, she would hold the baby, look into her eyes, and say in her heart, "This is my last day with my baby." But those days turned into weeks, and the weeks turned into years. God blessed her, yet she still suffered.

She had to serve her child day after day. Her baby lived and had basic functions, and even limited communicated. Nonetheless, she had to suffer watching her child struggle through life and with mental disabilities.

Then, when she had hope that her child would live against all odds, she had to watch her baby deteriorate back into the mental state in which she was born. What little she had with her daughter slipped from her fingers a little more, day after day.

This woman didn't have to suffer losing her child once in death; she had to suffer losing her child every day. She thought she had lost her in the womb. She thought she would lose her every day after her birth. Then, when she had hope that her daughter would live, she lost her again when her mind deteriorated beyond being able to communicate at all. She lost her little by little, day after day, until her own baby couldn't remember her anymore. Then she finally lost her when her daughter passed away.

But this woman didn't curse God. Instead she said, "God gave me this baby so that I would understand the nature of God's love." She was glad she had gotten the chance to love her baby, and she was glad that God had taught her such a valuable lesson through having this child. She lost her beautiful girl, but she had the joy of knowing where her baby was going. From God she came; to God she returned. The woman was also comforted knowing that one day she'd be with her baby again.

This woman had the right heart. God didn't have to give her the baby in the first place. It could have passed away in her womb. But God gave her this child, and in the end she didn't curse God for her situation. She blessed Him and thanked Him.

We likewise ought to worship God on our knees through our most horrible trials. No matter how hard it is, no matter how difficult it is, we should never curse God. Even Job fell on his face and worshipped the Lord after losing his children. God is always good, no matter what, and He gives us all things for love's sake. He does all things out of love, even when it doesn't make sense.

Even when it seems as if nothing good at all can come from the situation, God is still able to make good come from evil. Remember that God spoke into the darkness and created light. What would make you think He couldn't do the same for your circumstances in life?

God created the light in this dark world, and He created light in our evil hearts, giving us salvation. His love can illuminate the darkness of any situation that overshadows you.

There is nothing too difficult or too hard for Him. He makes good come out of every trial. He turns every heartbreak, every tear, every broken moment, and every shattered life into beauty.

He works everything together for good even when it seems impossible to do so. So in the end, life isn't really about what happens to us but, rather, about how we take what comes our way. Are we trusting in the Lord or wavering in our faith in His promises? Are we dwelling on the negativity of life or releasing our

hearts to God? Are we sitting in His presence and abiding in His Spirit to be comforted by Him, or are we hiding in a corner and ignoring God while we lick our wounds? Beloved, life is ten percent what happens to you and ninety percent how you take it.

I once met a man who was an airline paramedic. His job was to attend to every emergency situation on the aircraft. Once a woman brought her baby with her on a vacation and was on the flight back when, out of nowhere, her baby's face turned blue. The child was unresponsive, and there was no apparent reason for the situation. It wasn't choking on anything; it just turned blue. When this man inspected the child, he found that its heart had stopped.

He spent forty-five minutes crying out to God, trying to resuscitate the baby before he had to give up. Afterward he had to hand this broken woman her dead child and explain to her why he couldn't make her baby live.

Later that day he needed to go to the DMV. He was in a rush and didn't have time to change, so he was still wearing his paramedic's uniform. And as he was standing in line, the woman serving at the counter was demonstrating a horrible attitude. She was snappy with everyone and had a short temper.

When he finally came up to her, she snapped at him for no reason. He asked a simple question, and she blew up and yelled at him. So he calmly said to her, "Ma'am, I'm a paramedic for the airline industry. I just got done trying to resuscitate a baby no more than ten months old. Then, after forty-five minutes of my struggling, and begging God to make it live, it died. No matter how much I wanted to make this baby live, there was nothing I could do. Then I had to be the one to explain to its mother why I couldn't make her baby live. So how bad could your day really be? Come on, tell me: How bad could it really be? Do you really need to be treating people like this?"

This woman stared at him in awe, with tears streaming down her face. She didn't even say a word, and from that moment forward she was a lot nicer to everyone.

Life really is ten percent what happens to you and ninety percent how you take it. There are some things that change us, like the loss of a limb. That would be the ten percent. But how we use that to rest in God and glorify Him is the ninety percent.

Sometimes when bad things happen, we let them get the best of us and we take it out on others. But when we do this, it's like throwing pebbles in a still pond. Think about it for a moment: When the stone hits the water, it makes a ripple. Well, that ripple is the negativity you exhibit toward one person, who will give it to countless others around him or her. Like a stone thrown in a pond, the negativity will spread continuously outward, beginning with you who threw the first stone. In the end you didn't hurt the one person on whom you took out your frustrations, but countless people.

But if you choose love and kindness even when you're hurting, the ripple will lead them to Christ. It will begin with you sharing the love of Christ and then spread continuously outward. So, what kind of a person do you want to be? One who grieves and takes his or her pain out on others? Or one who rests in Christ, is comforted by His love, and goes forward to share that love with others?

Yet we tend to justify our unloving behaviors because we're broken. But love should lead us in everything! God brings everything upon us out of love, with careful forethought for our growth. Therefore, be careful to be the example of Christ no matter what's happening to you. Love others unconditionally and thank God for your circumstances because they mean eternal life for you.

Thank Him also that these events will have their end and God will restore you completely when you stand before Him. Pray for wisdom and understanding, that you may grow in what God gives you. Everything God gives you, He gives you so that you may learn to trust in Him and lean on Him. Even as it is written,

“And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.” Deuteronomy 8:2–3

Beloved, your life and substance are wrapped up in the words of God’s mouth. He is God—who are we to question Him? If He says you must be poor, it will happen. If He says you’ll be rich, it will happen. Whatever proceeds from His mouth happens.

Remember that when He created the heavens and the earth, He spoke to them and they formed whatever He desired. His power is in His word, and remember that from the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. His word proceeds from His love, and there is no power like His love.

For by His love He has overturned the grave and changed the hearts of evil men. He has made their crooked ways straight and changed a heart of stone into a heart of flesh. Therefore, Beloved, remember that you are God’s and your life consists of everything God says. Even as Jesus proclaimed,

“Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, ‘If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.’

“But He answered and said, ‘It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but be every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”’” Matthew 4:3–4

Jesus was starving yet didn’t seek to create His own miracle. Rather, He waited on the Father, to live according to His will. Whenever you fall into need, whenever something hard happens, God does these things so that you would know you live according to every word that proceeds from His mouth.

It’s not your choice to have what you want; it’s His choice to give you everything you have and to lead you to become everything you will become. When you suffer and see God’s hand save you, then you’ll understand that you have no power to save yourself but, rather, you are saved by the word and love of God, in which you have faith.

The lives of those around you are taken away because that is what God decided. Our lives are wrapped up in His word whether He is our Lord or not. God chooses when we shall live, be born, and die. But that God has always had power over death is evident, for we read,

“Then to Adam He said, ‘Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, “You shall not eat of it”:

“‘Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.’” Genesis 3:17–19

God gave us eternal life from the beginning, but due to sin He took that away. It was always in His power to give life and take it away, and He chose to take it. Indeed, God requires our souls, as we also read:

“But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’” Luke 12:20

One day God will speak and your life will be over. “Come home,” He will say, and it will happen. Your very life exists because He spoke. Everything you have is given to you because God says it should be. Whatever providence you have came first from the mouth of God, and it was sent forth by Him to give you joy.

Remember also that God appoints our pains for our growth and edification. He uses them for His glory and brings a greater good from them, even when we think it's impossible. God allows your sufferings so that you would know that you will live by every word of God. You live by God's providence, and all that you have is from Him.

If you're struggling financially and feel that you need money, you're wrong. You don't need money, but for God to provide for your needs. Beloved, seek the Lord and He will save you; do not seek to save yourself with the things of this world. God will show you what you should do, that you may find the perfect circumstance to save you. If you need money and a job, God will lead you to the job. Stop sending out a bunch of applications, and instead surrender the matter to God. Pray that He will lead you to the job He intended for you.

God has your life planned, and it's best if you humble yourself by surrendering to His plan. But poverty leads us to fear, and those who fear aren't walking by faith. From where does faith come? From His word! So seek His word, that you may live by faith and have victory over your trials. As it is written,

"For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith." 1 John 5:4

Remember that if God had not spoken, you wouldn't have life. As water and food are necessary for the body, even so the word of God is necessary for the soul. We must live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God and honor Him in every action we take. We must be obedient to His every word and express His love in everything we do. Faith comes by His word, and righteousness is faith in motion. True righteousness is obedience to His word.

God gives us these things in order to teach us to live according to His word. He gives us these things for the sake of eternal life, that He may bring about a greater good for us. God does all things out of love. In the framework of love, He built you. And with love in mind, He allows your heart to be sweetly and gently broken.

When a bone is broken, it heals stronger. God allows your heart to be broken at its weak points so that when it heals, it may be stronger. God permits your heart to break so that in these weak places you'll learn to make Christ your strength. Then you'll never break again.

Therefore, Beloved, rejoice in the love of God. Everything He does is for love's sake. Learn to rejoice in the midst of your trials. Suffering has its place, but in every circumstance we should put on the joy of the Lord. Beloved, turn your hurting into rejoicing. Overcome pain with praise. Worship God and His Spirit will heal your heart.

Remember this and walk in it. Remember that He loves you and learn to respond rightly to His love.

Responding Rightly to His Love

We understand that God loves us, but we don't always understand what His love looks like. In the Scriptures we read that God doesn't withhold any good thing from those who love Him. But what we consider to be good and what God considers good are different. If we always know what is best, then why would we need a Counselor called the Holy Spirit?

Sometimes good can be hidden in the shadow of bad. Sometimes the trials of this life are blessings in disguise. God is willing to give us the hurt for a greater healing. If a trial weren't to produce something greater, then God wouldn't give it. He is only interested in giving what's best for the growth of His children.

It takes this understanding to respond properly to His love. Since His love may be disguised by a trial, it can be difficult to respond to it appropriately. When something difficult happens, we tend to become broken, grieved, or angry. But as we discussed earlier, we should rather rejoice, knowing that hardship produces the fruits of the Spirit in us. These fruits are the first-fruits of eternal life. Therefore, we should rejoice greatly, knowing that His love is at work in us to save us.

When you lose a loved one, it may not seem as if the love of God is working in your life. But we, as naturally self-centered creatures, only think about God's works from our narrow perspective. Since when has it been all about ourselves? Can't God show love to those around us as well? He is showing the one who died His love, through giving them peace. Is He not showing love to a good person when he or she dies? The Lord says "yes!"—that it is a good thing. As it is written,

"The righteous perishes, and no man takes it to heart; merciful men are taken away, while no one considers that the righteous is taken away from evil. He shall enter into peace; they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness." Isaiah 57:1–2

Hence, we have the saying "Rest In Peace." Everything God does is done love. Even when He takes us home, He is showing us love and delivering us from the evil of this world. He does it for peace, and we should have joy for others around us who have found that peace.

Since God has given peace to the deceased, we should have the heart to let them go. Yes, we should be grieved; but Beloved, let's grieve in God's arms. When hardship or pain comes rushing in, rather than blame God, we should run straight into His arms.

Even when the circumstances of life look terrible to us, God still uses all things for good. If there weren't a greater good to be had through it, He wouldn't allow it to happen to His children. There is no good in the suffering itself, but there is good to be brought about from it that is greater than the means to get there.

Therefore, we should have a heart that is not only willing to suffer in Christ but is also joyful in the sufferings of life. Rejoice in the Lord and know that He is good. His love endures forever, and His kindness to all generations.

He shall fill your heart with plenty and cover you with joy. Peace shall be in your house, and the Lord shall walk in your midst. In due time you'll see Him face to face, and His glory will shine for all generations and forevermore.

Therefore, Beloved, be patient and wait for the faithfulness of the Lord. He will bring it in His due and proper time, and you will see it with your eyes and handle it with your hands. Be faithful to follow God in everything, but have patience with Him as you wait for your salvation.

Respond rightly to His love and recognize His love at work in and around you. Pray for wisdom to recognize His love and He will give you what you desire. Ask Him to open your eyes to see His love

working around you and He will do it. This will build your faith and bless your heart as you begin to realize how much your Father adores you.

There is nothing God wouldn't give for you. Consider what He gave at the cross! Beloved, there is nothing He hasn't already given for you. Therefore, be submissive to Him and allow His hands to form you. Though His fingers may sweetly break you, His hands will gentle caress you and hold you through it all. He will comfort you as you grow in Him.

Then, when you have grown, you'll find that some trials won't repeat themselves. When you grow in the lessons God is teaching you, there will be no more reason for those lessons to happen. As a result, you'll see trials less often and peace will begin to abound. Beloved, Jesus didn't give His life to give you turmoil; rather, He gave His life to save you and give you peace.

So give to Him what He gave for you: Give Him your life. Though there are sufferings in this life, He has promised us eternal peace when we're at home with Him. Even as nothing in heaven or earth can separate us from His love, nothing shall separate us from the peace He will give us. Have faith and He will strengthen your heart.

Never be angry with Him, but be patient with Him and wait for His timing. In everything, God has determined good for you. Some trials we won't be saved from in this life, such as the loss of a loved one. Yet God will comfort us, and in time to come He will turn these trials into rejoicing.

Remember this and know that you're cherished, treasured, and set free by the love of God. He will save you from everything that comes your way. Simply run now into your Daddy's arms and let Him hold you through it all. Let Him embrace you. Sit quietly in His presence as He comforts you softly in His love.

When you sit in His presence and His Spirit is upon you, His peace will overshadow you. His joy shall overtake you, and your heart, which dripped brokenness, will become a fountain of rejoicing.

For the Holy Spirit is our fountain of joy, and His love is our encouragement. Surrender to Him and submit to Him. He knows what's best and only gives you what is best, even though it doesn't always look that way. He knows better than we do.

His eyes are above all things, searching the good and evil. His gaze pierces through flesh and bone, through steel and stone. There is nothing He cannot see; whether past, present, or future, God knows and sees all things. Therefore, Beloved, He understands what you need and what those around you need. He will not withhold it from you, but will give to you according to what is most important.

If you've ever suffered in poverty, know then that God was enriching your spirit. In such circumstances you must lean upon the Lord for strength. Do not run from God, and Beloved, do not fret—it only causes harm. Rather, walk in faith, and the Lord your God shall save you even as He has promised. He will lead you to what you need. Listen carefully for His word and His Spirit will direct your steps.

But remember that His timing is almost never our timing; for His understanding is always above ours, and He will give you perfectly what you need. Not only for the here and now, but also for tomorrow and forever.

God counts your soul as more important than your flesh. Take this to heart and know that He is giving you eternal life. Though things may be hard, God speaks in love. Though life may be difficult, God will be there to comfort you.

God has known everything that would happen to you. He always knew what would hurt you and has been waiting all this time by your side to comfort you. So just turn around and He will be there, ready to love you and comfort you.

When something unexpectedly bad happens, do not hide from Him and do not sit in fear. Rather, Beloved,

rise up. Yes, lift up your face, for your salvation draws near.

If we don't respond rightly to His love, we'll never gain the lesson He's teaching us. We must lean on Him through every trial, for it is through these trials that we learn to make God our strength.

In your weakness He is your strength, and your trials are your weaknesses. When He is your strength, His glory rests upon you. He is glorified when you are humbled. He is honored when your life is humiliated. But He will lift up your face, for God honors those who honor Him. And if your life honors Him, then what shall He give to you? A reward, no doubt. Therefore, continue in faith and wait on His faithfulness.

When trials come, have faith that He will save you. Then walk in love toward Him and pray for wisdom in every circumstance. Pray that God will reveal His will in the situation. Pray that He will show you how to glorify Him in your pain. Pray that He will reveal any lessons He may be trying to show you through the situation.

Though pruning is not pleasant, but rather painful, it's the best method for producing the most fruit. Remember that God also prunes you so that you may produce the fruit of eternal life through your tribulations. As the Scriptures say,

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh." 2 Corinthians 4:7–8

The life of God is manifested in you when you're walking through a trial. Before Israel entered the Promised Land, first they had a desert experience during which they questioned God. But we should respond rightly to His love, knowing that everything is done for the sake of the greater good. Believe this and learn from the hand of God. He is having mercy on you even when you feel broken.

God will break you sweetly, but His hands will never crush you. His hands are for caressing, cherishing, and holding you. God will refine you through fire, but He has promised that you'll never be burned. When the tribulation fire heats up, the life of Christ is manifested in you.

The trials Christians go through lead them to life. But the trials encountered by people who are of the world leave them with nothing but brokenness. Their trials are worthless and meaningless. For they never grow in Christ or find eternal life through these trials because they don't have God. But you have God, and He is your strength to live in death. Therefore, when *you* are afflicted, the glory of Christ is revealed. His life and the power of salvation are manifested through your hardships—and the world sees this and stands in awe of God.

There have been times when I've gone through many trials. Yet God called me to rejoice in Him during those times. When others, who were of the world, saw me rejoicing, they asked me how I could possibly have joy. This opened the door for sharing Christ, and they were given the gospel. When the life of Christ is manifested in us, it brings the hope of salvation to others. Jesus Christ was crucified, and it led to life for all who would believe in Him.

When we carry around the cross of Christ, others are convicted and are drawn to the love of God. In carrying our cross, we shouldn't mope about in sorrow but, instead, rejoice exceedingly. That way, when they see the joy of God upon us, they may wonder what we have that's so different—and then find salvation as well.

Pray for wisdom in your circumstances. Pray for an open heart, that God would teach you. Learn from the circumstances of life and carry the lessons with you always, that you may not have to relearn old lessons.

If we don’t learn the lessons from the trials at hand, we may have to go through a similar trial again until we learn what God is teaching us. Therefore, be diligent to learn it now that the days of rejoicing may come sooner.

Keep all things in prayer and find support from your brethren. Sometimes we need the physical touch of Jesus. This we can find through our brethren as they portray the Lord in their actions.

God will work physically through your brethren, to comfort you, encourage you, and take care of you. You don’t ever have to go through anything alone. You have God, and you have your family in Christ. You are loved!

Seek the Lord and let Him lift you up. Submit to His love even when it hurts. Love Him back unconditionally and worship Him in the midst of suffering. He will cause you to rejoice again. Just wait on the Lord and wait for His faithfulness.

Remaining Faithful and Being Strengthened by Him

God has always loved you. He has always remained faithful for you. In everything you have ever gone through, He has always been there, not only to hold you but also to carry you through it all. No matter what you're going through, God is still good. Can you believe this? Can you still practice it? Will you be like Job, who fell on his knees and worshipped God, accepting the bad with the good?

God has always been faithful and has never stop loving us. Everything He does is done through love. Knowing this, we should also remain faithful. God has always loved us and deserves our devotion.

During hardship, Satan steps in to tempt us against the Lord. He tempts us to be angry with God—to be impatient with Him. Rather than learning the lesson at hand, we are tempted to forsake Him or to bring harm on ourselves or others. Satan tempts us to be divided from our brethren so that when we're secluded in our wrath and brokenness, he may tempt us into deeper sin. But Beloved, do not take your frustrations out on God or your brethren; rather, remain unified in His Spirit and glorify Him in your conduct.

It can be difficult to find a place of peace in the middle of a storm. It can be hard to have rational thought in deep brokenness. When it's difficult to think rationally, we're more likely to hurt ourselves or others in the heat of the moment.

Yet brokenness is the perfect time to draw near to the Lord. When we can no longer think rationally because of deep hurt, this opens a door to let God do the thinking for us. He should always be doing the thinking for us, anyway, because we should always be living according to the mind of Christ.

However, the only way to do this is to remain faithful to follow Him and lean on His love. Let Him comfort you and cherish you. Meet with Him in the secret place, constantly, while you suffer. You need to be with Him in the secret place because your heart is distracted with sorrow. It is so much easier to be distracted by other things around you when you're distracted in your heart. The outward distractions have more strength to keep us from meditating on Christ when the inward distractions are screaming so loudly.

So find a place of peace and sit in His love. Remove the distractions from around you and go to the One who loves you most. He will comfort you, cherish you, and nurture your heart back to joy. He is always good and will carry you through every storm of life. When things get hard, life can feel as if we're floating on a raft in raging sea. But when the waves are tossing, you remember this saying:

"God is my ship in a raging sea; He calms the storms inside of me. He carries me when I can't see. This is what it's like to be loved by His Majesty.

"He'll hold me in His arms, and He'll hold me tight. He'll be my light through the darkest night. When I'm hurt, there's nothing left to fear because the love of Christ is drawing near."

God has always loved you and has always remained faithful to you. So remain faithful to Him. In trials and hardship our hearts are tested before God. Remember that we're called have unconditional love toward everyone. For some reason, sometimes, people forget that this unconditional love also needs to be toward God.

Just because the winds of life aren't blowing favorably upon you doesn't mean that God stopped loving you and doesn't mean that we should stop loving God. When we question God, we're not loving Him. He has never done anything wrong, and to question Him is to accuse Him in our hearts. Our love for Him must remain unconditional, and our faith must remain unwavering.

God never stops loving you. Continue in your faith and He'll deliver you. His timing is not the same as ours. After we have suffered a while, that our faith may be proven to be more precious than gold refined by

the fire, He restores us and delivers us according to His faithfulness and loving-kindness. Remember this and walk in faith, and in the meantime pray for wisdom.

In particular, pray that God will make sense of your trials. If there is anything that He wants you to learn through them, it would be good to ask Him to convey that message to you. It would be good to pray for understanding so that you can grow and remain pleasing to Him.

We must love Him unconditionally. True unconditional love suggests that no matter what we go through, we'll remain faithful to Him—similar to the marriage vows: "for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, while forsaking all others until death makes you closer." No matter what, keep loving God and let nothing change your heart for Him. Keep believing and pray for strength. Pray for wisdom because trials are for our growth. Even as Peter said,

"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ…" 1 Peter 1:6–7

And also,

"Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy." 1 Peter 4:12–13

James also exhorts us that we should be patient in all things. But when we're in a trial, who is our patience with, ultimately? With God.

When things don't go our way, we need to learn to be patient with God. We are His servants, and He bought us at a price. Our lives are not our own, and we ought to remain faithful to our Lord and Master.

He does cherish you, and He will give you what you need even when you feel as if you don't need it. Not always, but sometimes, we need a trial to grow. Sometimes we need a trial for someone else around us to find Christ. Remember that Jesus suffered the trial of the cross and, through it, you were saved. In this we are becoming like Christ as we learn to carry our own crosses.

It hurts Him to watch you hurt, so it ***is*** a sacrifice for Him to watch you suffer. Yet He gives you what is best for your growth because He is always faithful to love you and give you the things that make for eternal life.

He will give you what you need to grow in Him, to secure and continually cement your salvation. He will give you peace in time to come, but only when it is most appropriate for your faith. Learn whatever lesson He has to give so you can move on from this trial and into the place of peace.

But in the meantime, while you suffer, lean on Christ. Let Him hold you and strengthen you. Not everything is in our control, although we would like it to be. Yet everything is in His control, and He always knows what's best. God will carry you through it, but pray for strength while you're in the midst of it.

Don't only pray for strength to make it through the trial, however; pray for strength to rejoice in the midst of it. Pray for strength to rejoice in Him and to glorify His name—for He is deserving of this.

Furthermore, Beloved, He has gone before you to suffer all things for your sake. Therefore, as you partake in the cross with your Savior, remain faithful to Him and let Him strengthen you in His love. He knows what you're going through! He suffered it two thousand years ago. He knows your pain and understands it perfectly. Yet He does call you to rejoice in Him.

This is why is written to "count it all joy" when we fall into trials. That is so much easier said than done; but as we grow in Him, His Spirit will lift up our hearts and we'll rejoice even in the most impossible

situations.

Jesus likewise counted it as joy to face the cross. He despised the shame but knew that what He would gain from the cross was greater than the cross itself. And what did He gain? You. He counted you to be greater than His suffering. How much more should we count Him worth suffering for?

It's obvious that He didn't want to go through it—hence His prayer in the garden of Gethsemane. Who would *want* to suffer? The very thought of it made Him sweat blood, but He persisted in faithfulness. It wasn't that He wanted to suffer; rather, He desired the gift of God that came after it. We likewise receive a reward when we suffer. Through suffering we find comfort in the midst of it and a better relationship with the Lord in the end.

But that Jesus had joy when approaching the cross was evident. As it is written,

"…looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, *who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross*, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

"For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons:

"'My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by him, for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.'

"If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons." Hebrews 12:2–8

Yet is every trial for chastening? Yes and no. As we discussed before, not all discipline is laid upon us because we sinned, but instead it may be for the sake of growth. In this we learn to be self-disciplined, by submitting to the discipline of the Father. Likewise, Jesus didn't commit any sin when He endured the cross.

Yet the scripture to which we referred goes on to discuss chastening. Why would Jesus be chastened over sin if He didn't commit any? But for the sake of all, He found the discipline of the cross. Likewise, it is for the sake of love that God calls you to carry your cross.

Yet remember that not every trial is God's discipline for you. Sometimes bad things happen to good people. Look at Job! There was no reason for his suffering. Rather, Satan inquired of the Lord, and God allowed Job's suffering to test him. God also restored double to Job and gave him children—one child for each he had lost. He gave him long life as well, that he should see all these children to the fourth generation. Yet Job didn't do anything deserving of a trial in the first place.

That's where Job's friends were wrong: They thought bad things only happen to bad people, but such is not the truth. They attacked Job in his innocence, condemning a man who needed tender loving-kindness and comfort.

Suffering exists in this world because of sin. It's not due to each individual's sin that he or she suffers, but as a result of the fact that sin exists, period. Yet remember: Although God disciplines us for sin, we don't always receive what we deserve.

For our sin we deserve wrath, but instead we have mercy. That's actually unfair! We deserve condemnation, but received love and a blessing. And that's the beauty of grace: It makes life unfair. This type of unfairness leads us to rejoice because through His grace we find salvation.

We were given an opportunity for repentance, an opportunity we didn't deserve. Christians are always

getting what they don’t deserve: God’s grace. Why then would we be so upset that we receive some bad things we don’t deserve? Doesn’t good triumph over evil? Won’t good overcome hardship? Beloved, in due time it will, for your Lord will comfort you.

Remember that while sin exists in this world, God cannot be where sin is. The two collide, resulting in the death of the sin. When Jesus walked the dust of the streets, He healed everyone who touched Him. He restored anyone who asked for it. He loved us and built us up in truth.

But since He departed, where has the healing gone? Some who ask for it receive it, but not everyone. If everyone did, then why do some Christians still die of cancer? When God is here, this world is blessed, and He restores this world. But when He leaves, brokenness ensues and takes over.

The Spirit of God is here on this earth, but God’s throne is not yet with men. When it is, He will destroy every worker of iniquity who has not sought out His mercy. When He returns, God will collide with sin, resulting in its death.

His blood will cover those who sought it, but those who haven’t will find His wrath. Yet those who’ve loved Him will be healed.

He will restore the broken, who have covered themselves with the blood of Christ, and He will comfort them. He will wipe their tears away and bless them with an abundance of peace—a peace that shall never be taken away, just as assuredly as His love shall never be taken away.

Remain faithful to Him, carry your cross, and let Him strengthen you in His love. He has gone before you, and He will hold you through it all. Sit in His love and you will be strengthened by His Spirit.

Take the time to come out from among the distractions around you and release your heart to God in the secret place. He will strengthen you during these times. If you feel as if you need more strength to make it through, then seek Him more frequently in the secret place. You will find that God will give you exceedingly and abundantly above what you ask or think. He will not just give you strength to make it through, but also strength to rejoice in Him and in His faithfulness.

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Adam is a preacher, teacher and #1 internationally bestselling author of over 100 books on the Christian faith. He is a devoted husband and father of three boys. Through his travels, he’s seen the need for a new awakening and a new revival: a revival of the heart. Come join Adam on this journey of redemption and experience God like never before!

Table of Contents

Slaying Your Giants: How To Have Massive Faith
Experiencing The Life Changing Power Of Faith
How To Hear The Voice Of God And Understand It
I Know That God Is Good But Why Am I Hurting So Much?
The Giant Slayer
Victory Is Realized Through Small Steps
Beginning Faith with the End in Mind
Total Surrender
Total Release
Facing Your Giants
I'd Love to Hear from You!
Also by Adam Houge
About the Author
Open Yourself to Believe That God Can Do All Things
Open Yourself to Pray in a Big Way
Search for the Vision God Is Giving You for Your Life
Distinguish Between Your Vision and God's, Then Believe God
Put God's Vision in Front of You
Keep a Prayer Journal
Why Let Downs Happen
God's Visions and Plans Don't Happen Overnight
Please God, Not People
If You Want to Hear God More Clearly, You Must Abide and Walk in the Spirit
Stress Makes You Forget God's Faithfulness
Set Up Monuments to God's Faithfulness
Choose to Be Happy with Today
Understanding Why Bad Things Happen Helps Stimulate Faith.
Negativity and Fear Are Satan's Tools
There Are No Plateaus in Christ—Never Stop Growing
Embrace Adversity—It Stimulates Faith and Creativity
Learn to Thank God in All Things
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