



*A Good  
Life*

*A Daily Walk In God's Presence*

**SUZANNE D WILLIAMS**

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**Suzanne D. Williams**

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by Suzanne D. Williams

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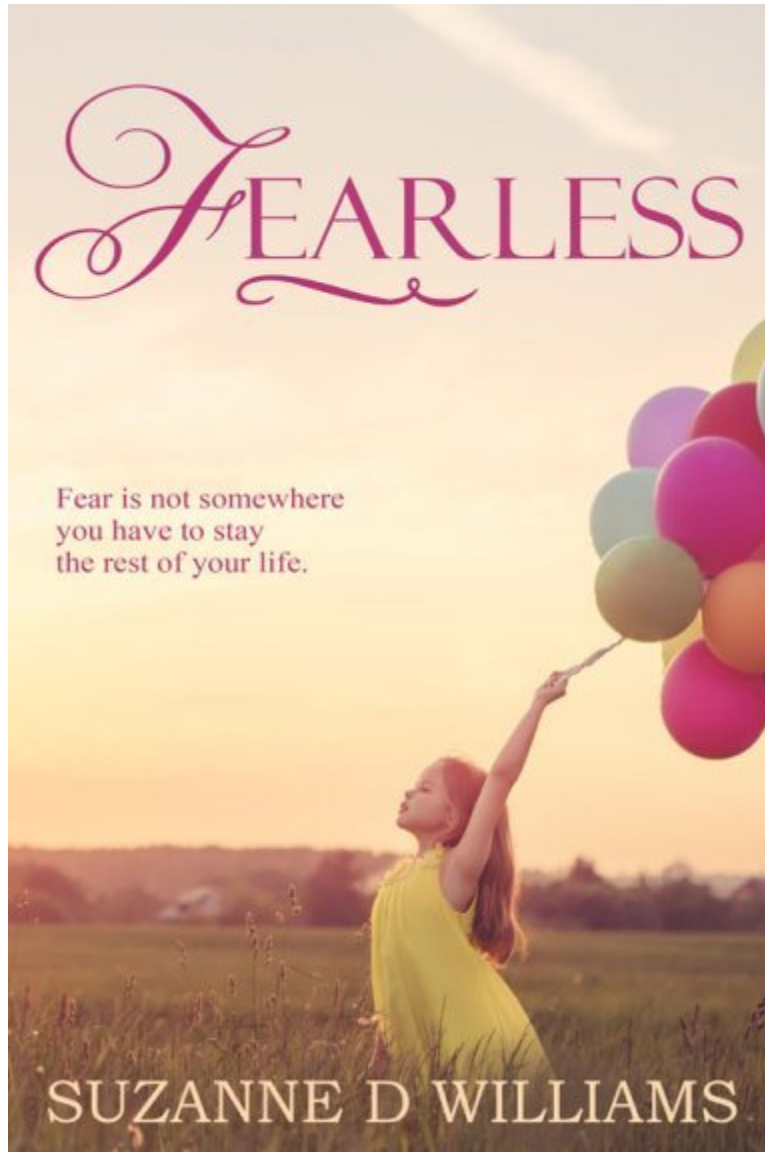
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What does it mean to be fearless? And how do I get there? Where is the way out from hopelessness and despair?

Crippled by fear, Suzanne Williams found herself unable to leave home. In her testimonial book, *Fearless*, she shares her personal walk out of the darkness and bondage of fear into the health, peace, freedom and hope promised in God's Word.

*My soul overflows with satisfaction, as when I feast on foods rich in marrow and fat; with excitement in my heart and joy on my lips, I offer You praise. Often at night I lie in bed and remember You, meditating on Your greatness till morning smiles through my window. (Psalm 63:5-6 VOICE)*

# Foreword

*“This is a good life—my heart is glad, my soul is full of joy, and my body is at rest. Who could want for more?” (Psalm 16:9 VOICE)*

It is uncertain when King David penned this psalm, yet a study of his life shows both celebrations and mourning, great sin and sincere repentance. He defeated a giant, but also ran from King Saul. He fought valiantly in battle but had a man killed to take his wife for his own. He mourned the death of two of his sons. He dedicated another as king. His life was no smooth path.

Yet, viewing it, he called it good.

The apostle Paul did the same and referred to the hardships he’d suffered, as well as the advantages he’d been given, as “dung” and “loss,” then said, *“But I have all, and abound: I am full.”* (Php 3:7-8; Php 4:18)

These thoughts stir in me a comparison of my own. I had occasion recently to see my life anew and realized, particularly in the last 12 years, how much my perspective has changed. I saw a pattern of growth from where I’d been, miserable and full of fear, to where I am today. There is no pride in that statement, but instead that I focus now on the strength God has formed in me through steps of obedience.

Obedience is the heart of this book, but don’t let that scare you away.

We have had a negative view of obedience. We’ve seen it as a chore, a list of things we don’t want to do and will probably dislike. However, the Word of God reveals that freedom, blessing, and peace come only through faithful obedience. Even greater, our obedience to the things of God brings us closer to Him. We hear Him speaking and recognize His voice. We listen, and He teaches us who He is, what His character is like, that He is good and merciful and abundant in blessing. Hearing Him, we know “how” and “where” to walk each day. Our intimate relationship with Him increases our faith in His promises. We hunger to obey. We desire it and strong in the Lord, we can face, with victory, whatever comes.

I don't know what you've lost, what's hurt you, or what you've struggled with. I don't know your personality, your physical or mental strengths and weaknesses, but I know who God is. He has shown Himself to me in His Word and in His rescue, and I can state without hesitation, He desires amazing, wonderful things for us.

He wishes for you and me to have peace, hope, and a blessed future. (Jer 29:11 KJV, NIV)

A good life. A beautiful life. One filled with the joy of His amazing salvation. (Is 12:3)

Pause here and pray for Him to show Himself to you in these pages, then as you read, take the time to mediate on the truths and listen. He is speaking. Can you hear Him?

*“You direct me on the path that leads to a beautiful life. As I walk with You, the pleasures are never-ending, and I know true joy and contentment.”*  
(Psalm 16:11 VOICE)



# Chapter 1

## God is Relationship

The hymn written by C. Austin Miles in 1912 sings its moving words in my soul: “*And He walks with me, and He talks with me / And He tells me I am His own / And the joy we share as we tarry there / None other has ever known.*” (“I Come To The Garden Alone”)

How amazing that image is. The Lord and I strolling together through a bountiful garden, sharing our thoughts. I tell Him what’s on my heart, and He tells me what’s on His, the two of us bonded by His *agape* love for mankind. (G25)

That sounds far-fetched, but to walk with God is the deepest wish of the heart of every sincere believer. We long to hear from Him throughout the day and know the direction of our path. Most believe that is impossible to attain, either through guilt over personal faults, an incorrect view of our relationship with God, or an erroneous image of who God is.

But open your vision of Him and gaze with me at the magnificent portrait given in His Word. Allow the truths He’s provided to push you deeper and to seek Him more.

He has promised those who seek Him will find Him. (Mt 7:7-8)

And I promise that what you discover about Him will alter your life forever. You cannot spend time in His presence and be the same. He’s infectious. We all know people like that, who make us feel better simply by being around them. I can think of several people who affect me in this manner.

How much more should our heavenly Father influence us? (Mt 7:11)

In Him is safety and strength. (Ps 28:7; Ps 91:2)

In Him is hope. (Lam 3:24; 1Pe 1:21)

In Him is “*fulness of joy*” and “*pleasures for evermore.*” (Ps 16:11)

In Him is a “*well of water springing up into everlasting life.*” (Jn 4:14)

In Him, we have righteousness (Php 3:9) and a firm foundation. (Col 2:7)

“*As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, SO WALK YE IN HIM.*” (Colossians 2:6)

Walking implies forward motion. Therefore, walking as we have received Christ is a forward walk of faith. It is no casual stroll to be forgotten but a journey of eternal proportion.

The Voice Translation gives this verse a more personal perspective: “*Now that you have welcomed the Anointed One, Jesus the Lord, into your lives, continue to journey with Him and ALLOW HIM TO SHAPE YOUR LIVES.*”

How moving that is. But if He is to shape our lives, if He is to be a part of our journey, to guide us and form His image in us, then we must know Him on a personal level.

1 Peter 1:18 in the Message Bible says, “*Your life is a journey you must travel with a DEEP CONSCIOUSNESS of God.*”

Here it is plainly stated. We must become aware of God in everything we do. There, in that place, in the shadow of His wings (Ps 9:1), we will find everything we seek – peace, prosperity, success, clarity, wisdom, and joy. Safety, protection, defense. Hope, faith, patience, kindness. Grace. In unity with Him, the Source of all things, we will find complete satisfaction. Renewal. Healing. Forgiveness.

It isn't enough to simply live day-to-day. He isn't a rule book we consult to be sure we haven't stepped out of line. No, He would alight in us a desire for Him, a longing, a hunger that cannot be satisfied. His words are our delight (Ps 1:2), and who we delight in we will seek opportunities to serve. Greater, we will tell everyone else how marvelous they are.

This should be our relationship with God. His magnificence fills the heavens, His praises fill our soul. We shout, “Come, look, at Him who has changed me. Come look at what God will do.”

*“Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.”* (Psalm 103:2-5)

## **A walk with God**

Something in our human mind balks at the thought of walking with God as more than a subservient, fawning creature. We picture ourselves bent over, staring at our feet, but this is not who God wants us to be.

*“For the LORD shall be thy confidence,”* it says in Proverbs 3:26.

Then in the New Testament we read, *“Let us therefore COME BOLDLY unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”* (Heb 4:16) Our confidence in God enables us to come to Him with our needs, our chin up and steps assured.

In fact, Ephesians 6 describes the man and woman of God as a soldier armed for battle and ready to be victorious. This is no weak-willed, namby-pamby Christian, but believers armed and standing strong against the devil's forces. (Eph 6:14) As such believers, we can walk confidently with God into a place of victory. We can know Him personally.

We have many examples of this in other believers throughout God's Word.

Genesis 5:24 says, *“And Enoch WALKED WITH GOD: and he was not; for God took him.”* His is the most startling example, but the Word of God also says in Genesis 6:9, *“Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah WALKED WITH GOD.”*

Fast forward now to Moses. In Exodus 33, we read a dialogue he had with God. Verse 11 says, *“And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh UNTO HIS FRIEND.”* Then in verse 17, it says, *“For thou hast found grace in my sight, and I KNOW THEE BY NAME.”*

Wow. That is an incredible thought—God knew Moses by name. If we reverse a few verses in this passage, we discover the depth of their



relationship. Verse 9 says, “*The LORD TALKED with Moses.*” They talked together, Moses to God and God to Moses. As friends.

God made this same statement to Aaron the Levite and Aaron’s sister, Miriam, at a later date. He said, “*With him [Moses] I communicate FACE-TO-FACE. We speak DIRECTLY and without riddles. He can EVEN SEE THE VERY FORM OF THE ETERNAL.*” (Num 12:7 VOICE)

This last remark refers to an incident recorded back in Exodus 33. Moses made a request of God. He asked for a physical sighting. We can’t miss God’s response.

*“And the LORD said, Behold, THERE IS A PLACE BY ME, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.”* (Exodus 33:21-23)

“Stand here beside me,” the Lord said, “and I will reveal myself to you.”

This was no small thing.

God said, “*Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.*” (Ex 33:20)

Not in judgment. We have to shake this idea that every word from God is meant to put us in our place. We must approach God with fear and reverence, yes. (1Pe 2:17) But God covered Moses to protect him because His glory, the light of His presence, is that magnificent. The physical body can’t handle it, and Moses was His friend. He mattered to God.

But let’s not let the idea of friendship put God in small terms. We cannot afford to picture Him as weak and powerless. Or uncaring and unkind. We cannot be nonchalant about our relationship with our heavenly Father, either as unimportant to us or on an equal status.

No, we must create a new image in our heart.

The prophet Samuel sought Israel’s new king to replace Saul, and God sent him to the house of Jesse. Samuel, in his human mind, picked Eliab. He

looked like a king.

*“But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but THE LORD LOOKETH ON THE HEART.”* (1 Samuel 16:7)

God saw Eliab’s heart and similarly, He saw David’s.

God says of David, through the voice of the apostle Paul, *“I have found David the son of Jesse, A MAN AFTER MINE OWN HEART, which shall fulfil all my will.”* (Acts 13:22)

What about David caused God to make such an incredible statement?

David wasn’t a perfect man. He made mistakes. Instead, it was that he was a willing man who placed his confidence in God. (1Sa 17:26) He loved God with his entire being and was submitted to God. David never went into battle without calling on God first, except at the moment of his greatest sin. (2Sa 11:15) And even then, He had great repentance. (2Sa 12:13)

God’s love for David was so great that He forever protected his ancestral line, over thousands of years, to keep His promise that the Savior would be of David’s lineage. (Jer 33:17; Lk 2:4)

Now, consider Abraham. In three places, he is called a *“friend of God.”* (2 Chr 20:7; Is 41:8; Jas 2:23) Here again, this seems unfathomable to us.

What does it mean to be God’s friend? How could we ever attain such an appellation if it were possible? But here is the truth—We already have.

Read Jesus’ own words.

*“YE ARE MY FRIENDS, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: BUT I HAVE CALLED YOU FRIENDS; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.”* (John 15:14-15)

We have a friendship with God, but notice, it based on our obedience. We do His will, and He reveals His plans to us.

Let's read Jesus' words again, this time in the Voice translation.

*"I don't call you servants any longer; servants don't know what the master is doing, but I have told you EVERYTHING the Father has said to Me. I CALL YOU FRIENDS."* (John 15:15 VOICE)

I tell my best friend things I don't tell others. We have a relationship based on trust. She knows she can rely on me, and I know I can rely on her. This is how it should be with Almighty God. He sees in us a willing heart of obedience, so He shares with us, deep, inner truths. We have proven we can be trusted.

Lest you still have doubts, Jesus spoke of Himself as the Vine, drawing an image of those who believe in Him as branches united to the Vine for sustenance. The branches bear fruit because of the life in the Vine. (Jn 15:5) He then compared this illustration to knowing the words of God.

*"If ye ABIDE IN ME, and MY WORDS ABIDE IN YOU, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."* (John 15:7)

Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries defines the word "abide" as: "to stay (in a given place, state, relation or expectancy)." (G3306)

This is powerful. There are three states of "abiding."

First, we abide where He is (in the place He is). Second, we abide *like* He does (in His same state). Third, we abide with Him as Father and friend. We ask questions and expect answers. We abide in faith based on our relationship.

Let's add verse 10 to this thought.

*"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall ABIDE IN MY LOVE; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love."*

We abide with Him in the *place* of love as well. We have love *like* God's, His SO love. (Jn 3:16) He is our Father, through Christ, and we are His children. Because of our *relationship*, we *expect* Him to act for us, to do things on our behalf, and He will.

In this “abiding” is where we stay, and “staying” implies a conscious effort. We’re not flotsam, left at the will of the water in the stream, but we swim after Him. We deliberately stay close to Him.

Pay attention to the next verse.

*“These things have I spoken unto you, that MY JOY MIGHT REMAIN in you, and that YOUR JOY MIGHT BE FULL.” (John 15:11)*

Do you see it?

We walk with Him, and in walking, we partake of His life. Through obedience, we bear the fruit of godly living and are filled with eternal joy. We are not servants, miserable in our duties and left in the dark about what the Master plans, but instead we are like friends.

We have access to God on a personal level.

This closeness has always been our heavenly Father’s desire. Proverbs 3:5-6 in The Passion Translation says this so beautifully.

*“Trust in the Lord completely, and do not rely on your own opinions. With all your heart rely on him to guide you, and he will lead you in every decision you make. BECOME INTIMATE WITH HIM IN WHATEVER YOU DO, and he will lead you wherever you go.”*

Become intimate. Isn’t that marvelous? And in that intimacy, we will receive His guidance. We will know the truth and understand which way to walk. Verse 1 of this chapter in Proverbs makes this very clear.

*“My child, if you truly want A LONG AND SATISFYING LIFE, never forget the things that I’ve taught you. Follow closely every truth that I’ve given you. Then you will have A FULL, REWARDING LIFE.” (Proverbs 3:1 TPT)*

A long and satisfying life. A full and rewarding life. What incredible descriptions of our relationship with our heavenly Father. He is where we abide. He is our source of life. He is our guide and the perfect parent.

I love my daughter, and for that reason, I corrected her as she grew. I wanted her to be successful and wise and, through her obedience, to be

happy. If she would hear my advice, she would avoid things that could damage her and cause her stress.

We “abide” together, and because of all that time in each other’s presence, now she knows what I like to wear. She has bought me clothing, knowing it’s a style I prefer. She knows what I like to eat and can prepare it. She knows my habits, my hobbies, and similarly, what makes me uncomfortable.

I can say the same thing about her.

In this same vein, I know my mom. I’ve worked for her for over 20 years and can tell you many things about her that others do not know. But greatest of all, we love each other, and I respect her.

The Bible says God delights in us, so He corrects us. (Ps 149:4; Pr 3:12; Pr 29:17) This is parenting 101. God created the family. He made mothers and fathers. He designed parenting and familial relationships. He didn’t make things one way for us and another way for Him.

More importantly, where human parents are fallible. God is not. He is faithful. He is dependable. And consistent. He isn’t moody and emotional and all over the map. Unlike us, He doesn’t make mistakes. We can rely on Him to know what is best for us every time.

I find that comforting. Especially since, I question my actions at every turn. Did I say the wrong thing? Did someone misunderstand me? Believe it or not, verbal communication is not my forté.

God doesn’t have that issue. He lets me know how and when I should change my behavior, and in spending that time with Him, in learning His ways, we have become close. (Mt 11:29) I can tell you what He likes and dislikes. I ask Him things, and He answers me.

We abide together. He knows my name.



# Chapter 2

## God is Good

God desires to walk with us now as made righteous through Jesus' death and Resurrection because that was His longing at the beginning of man. Genesis tells us God walked in the garden searching for Adam and Eve. Not as an unusual thing, but that He expected to find them there, and Adam and Eve recognized his voice.

*“And THEY HEARD THE VOICE OF THE LORD GOD walking in the garden in the cool of the day.”* (Genesis 3:8)

They heard God speaking. They knew His voice. He was personal to them and accessible.

This truth is still stronger than we've understood.

Man was created in the image of God. (Ge 1:27) Not only to look like Him, but man was created to think like God and to rule like God. If you consider it, anything else seems out of character. Why would the God of the universe create weak, barren, helpless beings?

Genesis tells us otherwise.

*“And GOD BLESSED THEM, and God said unto them, BE FRUITFUL, AND MULTIPLY, AND REPLENISH THE EARTH, and subdue it: AND HAVE DOMINION over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.”* (Genesis 1:28)

Having breathed life into Adam and Eve, God blessed them. Of this blessing, John Gill's Exposition of the Bible states, “The man and the woman he had made [were blessed] with all the blessings of nature and Providence; with all the good things of life; with his presence, and with communion with himself in a natural way, through the creatures; and particularly with a power of procreating their species.”

They were to multiply (to have children) because God multiplies. They were to create life and have dominion over the earth because God is life and

God reigns. If we turn to Genesis, chapter 2, we find that Adam named all the animals, and Adam named Eve “woman.” (Ge 2:19; Ge 2:23) He was the image of God in his intelligence as well.

God expected the man and woman He’d created to talk like God and act like God, to be wise like God. They were to be filled with His nature. This was the effect of the blessing.

God desires the same thing of us.

“*So imitate God,*” it says in Ephesians 5:1. (VOICE)

This is our New Testament instruction, but one thing we must state up front. God is a God of unity. (Eph 4:4-6) What He does for one person, He does for everyone else. He doesn’t pick and choose. In fact, He is against strife and division. He has united Jew and Gentile and doesn’t see people by gender or skin color or race. His love is for “whosoever.” (Col 3:11; Jas 3:16; Jn 3:16)

He doesn’t change. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. (Mal 3:6; Heb 13:8)

So, what He was then, He continues to be. What He created man to look like and sound like is still His desire. The relationship He wanted to have with Adam and Eve is the relationship He wants to have with you and me today.

Man has walked away from that. But today, God draws all men back to Him through Jesus Christ. (Jn 12:32) He wants us to see Him as He’s always been and not as our sinful minds think He must be or as the devil lies to us about Him or, sadly, what the church describes, in many cases.

God desires to be Emmanuel, God with us, and Abba, Father, and the Comforter. (Mt 1:23; Rm 8:15; Jn 14:16, 26) These are but three sides of Him, and He is so many more amazing and wonderful things.

**God is always good.**

To imitate God, as we are instructed, we must know Him. We cannot emulate what we do not understand, and true understanding only comes



when we take the time to find it.

Being honest, I didn't take the time to know God until I was so weak that I could not function alone. My circumstances forced me to it, but I am grateful for that now. Though my mind wanted an instant healing, I am much stronger for steadily having to learn and experience Him.

Let me state this clearly. There is no better portrait of God than in His Word. Though many men held the brush over thousands of years, God directed each stroke, never altering in His purpose. He is not fickle and swung about by emotion. He never breaks His promises.

*“God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?”* (Numbers 23:19)

God gives His word, and it is 100% reliable. What He has said that He will do, He will always fulfill. (Num 23:19 CEV) And He always makes the end result GOOD.

This is God's desire in every situation. With every act of His creativity, God declared what He'd created to be good. (Genesis 1:10, 11, 18, 25, 31 VOICE)

GOOD. Pleasant. Agreeable. Rich. Becoming. Prosperous. Happy. Understanding. Kind. (H2896) Good is all these things.

The word “good” has been overused in today's culture. Something “good” is not considered necessarily to be at its best. As a writer, I was taught to not use trite words like “good” in descriptions.

I want you to toss all that out. Because “good” as God intended it to be is perfection.

James 1:16-17 in the Voice Translation says:

*“Don't be misled. Every GOOD GIFT bestowed, every PERFECT GIFT received comes to us from above, courtesy of the Father of lights. He is consistent. He won't change His mind or play tricks in the shadows.”*

There isn't anything *not* good in Him. He creates only what is good, and He is perfect, or complete, in that goodness. (G5046) He is consistently good.

God described Himself this way. In Exodus 33, where we read of Moses seeing the glory of God, God replied, "*I will make ALL MY GOODNESS pass before thee.*" (V19) Brown-Driver-Briggs' Hebrew Definitions says of this word "goodness" that it means "fairness, beauty, joy, prosperity; goodness (of taste, discernment)." (H2898)

Think of the most beautiful person you've ever seen, the most incredible work of art, and God is still more beautiful. He exceeds anything we could possibly dream of.

A sculptor might create His one perfect sculpture, the one piece of artwork we look at and say, "That was a Michelangelo." Or a Renoir. But God created and created and created and created, and ALL OF IT was good. Every man, woman, and child. Every flower, every landscape, every ocean, every animal and sea creature, was good and capable of creating more good things.

This opens our vision to how fantastic the garden must have been, how extremely good, birthed from the vision of the Creator. And know this—He wasn't surprised by how things turned out.

He didn't say, "Oh, look, I made it good ... somehow."

No, He'd planned it to reflect His goodness fully and completely.

*"Then God surveyed everything He had made, savoring its beauty and appreciating ITS GOODNESS."* (Genesis 1:31 VOICE)

We've limited our view of Him. We've seen Him as good occasionally. But God is always good. He's never *not* good. Man is a good thing, and man was meant to walk in God's goodness all the days of His life. Woman was created out of Man as another essence of God's goodness, and their union was meant to be good.

Fast forwarding to the New Testament again, Jesus came to do the will of the Father (Jn 5:30), and His will was to bring good to men. What does it say in Matthew 4:23?

*“And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching THE GOSPEL of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.”*

The word “gospel” means “good news.” (G2098) Jesus preached good news AND healed. Healing is an essence of God’s goodness. Mark 1:1 in the New Living Translation puts it this way, *“This is the GOOD NEWS about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.”*

That’s so very clear, but now stir in Peter’s words from the book of Acts.

*“How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about DOING GOOD, and HEALING all that were oppressed of the devil; FOR GOD WAS WITH HIM.” (Acts 10:38)*

God desires good things for you and me. His good will, through Jesus Christ, was to heal sickness and disease and to relieve the devil’s oppression. He anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit’s power to do good.

Psalm 23:6 says, *“Surely GOODNESS and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.”*

There isn’t a more moving statement. In God’s house, in His presence are GOOD THINGS. From His first-begotten Son, comes good life. Abundant life. Because His goodness isn’t idle. It’s active, always working to do more GOOD. His GOODNESS must multiply and change for the better whatever it touches. It is living, growing GOOD.

“Spread my goodness throughout the earth,” Jehovah said to Adam. (Ge 1:28)

“Tell them I am good,” He spoke through His Son. (Jn 10:11, 32)

God’s goodness is far beyond anything we could ever ask or think. (Eph 3:20) Though we can never fully grasp this, we must know it about Him and allow this image of Him to settle, firm, in our thinking.

God is good, and we can know Him by His goodness. (Lk 6:43-45)

**God is life and light.**

We have dulled the image of God that we are meant to reflect. We've made Him smaller and less effective, as a result. We cannot expect someone to give us something they do not have. Even not believing they have it will cripple us.

If we don't see God as good, then how can we expect Him to do anything good for us?

In this same manner, we dissociate the essences of Him into separate parts. On one finger, He is good. On another, He is life. On still a third, we read He is light, and on a fourth, that He is love. We read these as individual characteristics, working independent of each other, when they all move and work together.

When He created Adam, He "*breathed into his nostrils the BREATH OF LIFE.*" (Ge 2:7) That which gives the human body life comes from God, all the intricacies of the cells and organs live because God breathed in Adam.

He is creative life that can take something inanimate and cause it to function: the dust that formed us; Adam's rib that became woman. Give that a little thought. Walk outside and grab a handful of soil. In our hands, it does nothing but leave a stain. But with God's life poured into it, it became a man, who could walk and talk and think and feel.

Now picture God performing surgery on Adam to create Eve. The Scriptures tell us He caused Adam to fall into deep sleep and then removed His rib. With no pain, no discomfort, no time needed for healing. (Ge 2:21-22)

Life of that magnitude is unfathomable, but this is who God, Creator, is. Who the Holy Spirit is. Who Jesus, the Word of God is. (Jn 1:1; Jn 6:63; Rm 8:2)

Jesus, the Savior, is ETERNAL LIFE—the same life that formed man also provides the new birth. (Jn 1:4; Jn 6:40; Jn 12:50; Jn 17:3)

We haven't considered that. Instead, we've segmented God as if He's changed over time. He was bigger and grander at Creation than the moment we got saved.

No. John, chapter 1, unites His image.

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. IN HIM WAS LIFE; AND THE LIFE WAS THE LIGHT OF MEN. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.”* (John 1:1-5)

Reading on, it is clear Jesus is the one being spoken of. But notice, Jesus was the Word. Jesus was God. Jesus was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Jesus. (Eph 3:9; Col 1:16-17; Heb 1:2) In Jesus was life. In Jesus was light.

All of these things work together. As each of us is made up of many thoughts and emotions and likes and dislikes, or on an even simpler level, as an engine cannot run without all of its parts being united. The goodness of God is the life of God is the light of God is the love of God. All of these created the earth and everything in it. All of these raised Jesus from the dead, and all of these pour new life into men and women. God’s life.

*“I am the path, the truth, and THE ENERGY OF LIFE. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”* (John 14:6 VOICE)

We must tie these things together. God so loved the world that He offered ALL of who He was. If you accept Him into your heart, believing in Jesus’ death and Resurrection, you receive ALL of Him – His goodness, His life, His love – and have access to a relationship with ALL of these sides of Him.

You have in you the God of Creation. You have Jesus, the Word, who spoke, “Light be!” and light was. Not a dim bulb or flashlight, but the same light that fills the heavenly city. Revelation 21:3 says, *“And the [heavenly] city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for THE GLORY OF GOD DID LIGHTEN IT, and THE LAMB IS THE LIGHT thereof.”*

And so it was at creation. God spoke light on earth before He created the sun and the moon. In fact, He divided day from night days before then. (Ge

1:3,5) He also created land and the sky and plant life first. He didn't create the stars, sun, and moon, until day four. (Ge 1:14)

He needed no sun or moon to shine. He was the source. This is how masterful He is.

God's light, or glory, is referenced many times in the Scriptures. After the Israelites escaped Egypt, while they walked toward the Red Sea, a pillar of fire led their way *"to give them light."* (Ex 13:21) Moses spent 40 days and nights with the Lord, and when he came down, *"the skin of his face shone"* so much that the Israelites were afraid. (Ex 34:30)

In 2 Chronicles 5, we see King Solomon gathering the men of Israel to move the ark of the covenant into the tabernacle. They had great rejoicing and were singing God's praises when—*"the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the LORD; So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for THE GLORY OF THE LORD HAD FILLED the house of God."* (V13-14)

There was so much of God's presence, of His life, the priests couldn't stand up!

God is the essence of light, light that holds creative power in it. Light that gives life. Eternal light. Comprehend that. His light cannot be put out. (Jn 1:5 VOICE) No amount of darkness or evil can ever extinguish it. God's light is unstoppable. Undimmable. He doesn't weaken and fade.

God's life is stalwart, effectual, and pervading. God's goodness is ever present. It never ends.

A group of Israelites, fleeing from a band of Moabites, tossed a dead man's body into Elisha's sepulcher and the Scripture records, *"And when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, HE REVIVED, AND STOOD UP ON HIS FEET."* (2Ki 13:21)

That's incredible life!

It's the same life that healed and raised the dead in the gospels. (Jn 11:43) The same life that raised Jesus from the grave after three days and nights in hell. (Ps 16:10; Jn 2:19) The same light that spread over the earth, that lit

the way for the children of Israel when escaping Egypt. The light that shone in the heavens at Jesus' birth is the light that lives in us, as children of God.

If you have His life, you have His light, and you have His goodness and His love.

When I talk to someone, they are speaking to the daughter of Becky and Wayne Combee, to my husband's wife, and my daughter's mother. To the fiction writer and the hobby gardener and the nature photographer. Just as you cannot separate these sides of me, we cannot pick apart God's attributes nor change Him from the God of Creation into a lesser version, good only for the New Testament church.

You cannot dim His light in modern times from who He was in Genesis or Psalms or the gospels.

Jesus said, *"I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."* (John 8:12)

He is the light of the world today, as He was the light of the world then. He is the light of life, as He was when He provided light in the beginning.

*"And it happened just as God said."* (Genesis 1:30 VOICE)

He's the Word spoken over the waters to part the sky from the land. He's the goodness that sprang into being. As He was in Genesis, so is He in the book of John, so He was in Acts, so He will be in Revelation. No one and nothing can stop Him.





# Chapter 3

## God is Forgiveness

God wants to be an intimate part of our everyday existence, for us to walk in His goodness 24-7, 365 days a year. That is why we were created. We are meant to live in His presence and, there, to find comfort and wisdom and all we need for a long, happy productive life.

Ephesians 1:4 in The Voice Translation says this in a wonderful way.

*“God chose us to be in A RELATIONSHIP with Him even before He laid out plans for this world.”*

We were created to be in a relationship with God before the earth even entered His thoughts. What a powerful statement. We have been selected on purpose, not made haphazardly or by chance or out of obligation, but we are chosen with intent. Not as independent *from* God, but dependent on Him and working *through* Him. Our actions, our choices, are made in obedience to God and with the backing of God.

God’s first words to Adam were about obedience. He told Adam what *to* do and what *not* to do. He gave him an instruction to abstain from eating the fruit of one tree. Just one. He had many others to choose from, but, God said, “Don’t eat from that one.” (Ge 2:16-17)

We know the story, Adam and Eve disobeyed, convinced by the devil in the form of a snake to distrust God’s words. I’d like to pause, though, and draw a comparison in our daily lives. Having been given so much – our home, our cars, our job, etcetera – how often do we torment ourselves over the one thing we don’t have? Sometimes, we seek it without thankfulness for God’s care and to the detriment of our hold on peace. We allow our thoughts to convince us that it’s worth whatever we must give up in order to obtain that thing, but really, we’re motivated by selfishness or greed or jealousy. None of which are godly emotions.

Nothing done outside of obedience will ever be profitable or bring success. I thought I could handle my life when it fell apart on me, and I learned, the

hard way, that I couldn't. It is obedience to God, which has made me strong again. And disobedience which will keep me in bondage.

*"If you love Me, OBEY the commandments I have given you,"* Jesus stated. (Jn 14:15 VOICE) Then a moment later: *"The one who loves Me will DO the things I have commanded. My Father loves everyone who loves Me; and I WILL LOVE YOU AND REVEAL MY HEART, WILL, AND NATURE TO YOU."* (John 14:21 VOICE)

Read that again. Our obedience will show us who He is. We will know His heart, His will, and His nature. What an amazing promise.

Our Genesis story displays this fully.

Adam and Eve had no fear, before their sin. They walked in union with God, in close relationship. They knew where to find Him, and He knew where to find them. They fellowshiped together. When fear entered, it distorted the reality of a good, generous, loving God, into one that might be not so good, maybe even be angry. (Ge 3:10)

I know I can identify with that mindset. It is a lie from the devil.

In fact, God called out to them, not in ignorance of their sin. He wasn't unaware of what they'd done or where they were hiding. Instead, God called to them because the relationship they'd had was permanently altered.

He asked, *"Who told thee that thou wast naked?"* (V11)

Who told you? Because until then, Adam and Eve had only known the pure, good presence of God. After their sin, they couldn't be around Him without shame. The devil through the serpent had promised they would know good and evil, and his words came true. But not in the manner Adam and Eve expected.

To know evil, they had to step out from under what was good.

This wasn't God's will for them. He asked Eve, *"What is this that thou hast done?"* (Ge 3:13)

I hear such grief in that question. Not the angry, judgmental parent, but the heartbroken one. That moment when your son or daughter has done wrong, and you wish they hadn't. Because now, there will be consequences, and you wish you could spare them that.

This is God's heart. God is good, and He wants us to partake of His goodness. He desires the closeness with us that we were created to have.

This scene is painted black and white. If we are called into His light, this means we have been walking in darkness. Adam and Eve in an act of disobedience separated themselves from God. They left the light of God, the goodness of God, and knew evil for the first time. They began to walk in death.

What do I mean by "walk in death?"

Well, Adam lived, physically, long after he and Eve were kicked from the Garden. (Ge 5:5) So the death referred to, though ultimately Adam's body did die, and he was buried, this initial death was of the heart, or spirit, of man.

We learn in the New Testament that man is a spirit that has a soul, and lives in a body. (1Th 5:23; Heb 4:12) Additionally, John 4:24 tells us, "*God is a Spirit,*" and there is no other way to understand God's Word, no other way to worship Him, but through the spirit of man. It cannot be done with the mind. (2Co 3:17)

God cannot commune with evil. (Jas 1:13) He has no darkness in Him. (1Jn 1:5) He contains no death. He is light and He is life. He could not, therefore, walk with Adam *after* sin as He had before sin. The fellowship they'd had was ended, and it would take thousands of years and one incredible sacrifice to restore it.

The most well-known Bible verse reads:

*"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have EVERLASTING LIFE."* (John 3:16)

All of Scripture leads up to this event—Jesus’ death on the cross. God meant to restore man to a right relationship with Him, and He set the stage over thousands of years to return His creative, amazing life and light, to restore His goodness to you and me.

Not a new and different life from what God had in the beginning. Not a lesser life, capable of doing only some things and not others. Not a less willing life. Once Jesus had been crucified and had risen again, God didn’t decide to do less than that for us. That is what religion tells you.

Jesus promised, *“He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and GREATER WORKS than these shall he do.”* (Jn 14:12)

We will do greater works than Jesus? Yes, the power in Him, the life with which He created the world, the power that resurrected Him from the dead, has been given to us.

The apostle Paul called this “resurrection life.” (Php 3:14 VOICE)

We are called to walk in God’s Resurrection life, His creative life. Life that forgives and blesses and heals. This is an important principle. Just as you cannot separate God from His goodness, as you cannot separate His life and His light, you cannot separate Him from what that goodness will affect.

When you switch on the light in a room, you can’t choose to leave one side in the dark. In this same way, the life of God changes every part of man.

A story in the gospels helps us see this fully.

There was a man sick of the palsy, which simply means he couldn’t walk. His friends decided, one day, to take him to Jesus. Since the house where Jesus was teaching was too crowded to enter by the door, they let him down through the roof, right at Jesus’ feet.

Can you imagine doing that? What amazing faith that took.

But it is important to see Jesus’ first words. They brought the man to him for healing, but Jesus spoke forgiveness. That used to baffle me. I mean, even thinking to myself that the man must’ve needed to hear forgiveness didn’t really explain it.

Until one day I read Jesus' answer, which followed, and saw it anew.

Let's read it in the Easy-To-Read translation. *"Maybe you are thinking it was easy for me to say, 'Your sins are forgiven.' ... But what if I say to the man, 'Stand up and walk'? Then you will be able to see that I REALLY HAVE THIS POWER."* (Mt 9:5)

Do you see it? The same power that forgave the man's sins *also* healed him. Not two powers used for two separate reasons. Not one power that forgives, and occasionally, God taps into this stronger power to heal. His power forgives AND heals.

Here is another viewpoint of it. Darkness will never overpower the light, even if it's a candle flame. Now, consider God, whose light was too powerful for Moses to look at, and of course, anything that comes from darkness cannot stay in His presence. He cannot tempt with evil or be tempted by it, we said. (Jas 1:13) This is why our unforgiveness, our strife, and sins must go.

Mark 11:24 says, *"And when ye stand praying, forgive."*

Forgive because it will keep you from all that God wants to do.

The good news is God is abundantly merciful and longsuffering. We really have no idea how much. Nor how great His love is that He would do so much to prove it.

*"And I am convinced that NOTHING CAN EVER SEPARATE US FROM GOD'S LOVE. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord."* (Romans 8:38-39 NLT)

### **God is love.**

This portrait of God is incomplete. We see Him as perfect good, as eternal creative life, as light that cannot be extinguished. We see Him as

forgiveness and healing. In these things, we view His grandeur. We see Him as powerful and prosperous and generous.

But John 3:16 tells why He is those things: *“For God SO LOVED the world.”*

With one word, “so,” we see the magnitude of God’s love. Not just that He loved, but that He loved SO MUCH that, over thousands of years, He orchestrated the moment when He would return us to a right relationship with Him again.

The fellowship Adam and Eve had destroyed, He *would* make right, or righteous, again.

His love was SO GREAT He couldn’t do anything else. His love had to be satisfied because like His life and His light, it’s active. It must work. It’s that powerful, that consuming.

1 John 4:8 says, *“God is love.”*

Many times, I’ve heard a preacher has read this verse, followed by the words, “Not God HAS love, but God IS love.” Being honest, I grew up in the church and usually thought, “So what.”

Then, age 37, I came face-to-face with His love, and it changed me.

It’s not just THAT He loves, but that He cannot NOT love, and the strength of that love must act and do things for those who He loves. Love is who He is and *how* He is. God is love, and that love governs His actions. Not now and then, when He’s in a good mood, but all the time.

The apostle Paul gave a full description of God’s love in 1 Corinthians.

*“Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.”* (1 Corinthians 13:4-8 NKJV)

I know I've read this passage a lot over the years and always felt unable to keep it. But I want you, this time, to paint the image of God with it. He is longsuffering and kind. He does not envy or boast. He is not rude or self-seeking. He doesn't think evil. He bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. He never fails.

What a magnificent portrait. Whatever the situation, whatever the sin we carry, whatever the rebellion we act out, however weak we are, however full of pride, whatever our bad habits, addictions, or hateful words, God is love.

He doesn't think evil of us. He doesn't shake His head, "I knew she would act like that."

He doesn't throw up His hands. "Oh well, I just can't handle them anymore."

Let's read it again in The Passion Translation.

*"Love is large and incredibly patient. Love is gentle and consistently kind to all. It refuses to be jealous when blessing comes to someone else. Love does not brag about one's achievements nor inflate its own importance. Love does not traffic in shame and disrespect, nor selfishly seek its own honor. Love is not easily irritated or quick to take offense. Love joyfully celebrates honesty and finds no delight in what is wrong. Love is a safe place of shelter, for it never stops believing the best for others. Love never takes failure as defeat, for it never gives up. Love never stops loving." (1 Corinthians 13:4-8)*

How rich He is. How amazing. Just as His goodness must abound, just as His life must create, just as His light will drive away all darkness, His love reaches out to heal what it touches. God cannot be any other way.

"But Suzanne, what about God's judgment?" you ask. "It seems like He was angry and upset a lot in the Old Testament."

First, everything you read in the Bible should be read in light of who we know God is – that He is good and faithful and merciful. That He is light and life and love. When you know *who* He is, then everything you study in the Word of God will give a new understanding.

God is the same forever and always. (Heb 13:8)

He “so loved” man throughout time, but had to deal with man’s disobedience, time and time again. Man changed his behavior, so God had to keep His word.

He said:

*“I call on heaven and earth as witnesses today that I have offered you life or death, blessings or curses. CHOOSE LIFE so that you and your descendants will live.”* (Deuteronomy 30:19 GW)

Choose life. Anything outside of life is death. As Adam and Eve walked out of the presence of God, our ungodly choices take us away from God’s best.

We must throw out this idea that there are no consequences to sin.

We must also view everything in the Old Testament through the light of the New Testament.

To understand what I mean, look back at any moment in history. What someone saw, who lived in that moment, is different from what someone sees, years later. Similarly, in the Word of God we have a better covenant with better promises. (Heb 8:6)

So, if we know God is rich in mercy, then we see Him as full of compassion. (Eph 2:4; Ps 145:8) We focus on God’s goodness, instead of our misperceptions. Plus, we have the Holy Spirit as our Teacher. (Jn 14:26) So when something doesn’t seem to fit who we know God is, we ask Him to help us understand it. Because the limit is in our minds, not in His goodness.

God’s love in us reveals who He is. (1Jn 5:3) We see His heart, know His will, and cannot remain unaffected. His nature changes us. There is no more doing our will on our own, but instead, God leads us into the best place for us at this moment in time. Not the easiest place, necessarily, but the place where we can grow stronger and fulfill His purpose.

I can promise you that unequivocally. I know that I know that I know it, and it cannot be taken away from me. My life as it is today is 100% proof.





# Chapter 4

## God is Truth

There I stood at a crossroad. I could continue walking the path I'd been on, except I'd seen where that led, to sickness and mental distress, or I could trust God and step out in what felt like midair. I've never trusted anyone or anything as much as I did God at that moment. There was nothing of me left, no pride, no strength, no mental clarity. I needed God to even stand on my feet, much less go forward.

People who haven't panicked like that do not understand the physical toll is as much as the mental one. Your body's reaction isn't something you can just switch off. My stomach would heave; my hands and feet would go numb. Now, add to that the mental distress. Often, if you'd tried to talk to me, I couldn't have told you much more than my name and the simple truth, "Jesus loves me."

That struggle was not God's best for me. I had no image of God as a kind, loving Creator. I knew Jesus had died for my sins; I grew up in the church. But I placed no faith in Him to do anything else for me. My mom and dad's beliefs were a bunch of hocus pocus. I couldn't see the truth, staring me in the face.

John 17:17 says, "*Thy word is truth.*"

Pilate asked this same question of Jesus. "*What is truth?*" (Jn 18:38)

He lived in a society that had many gods, gods who sinned, who did harm to one another, gods whose best interest was primarily selfish. False gods. Dead religion. In his mind, what was the Hebrew God that it could do any better?

But Jesus had said to him, "*For this I have come into the cosmos: TO DEMONSTRATE THE POWER OF TRUTH. Everyone who seeks truth hears My voice.*" (Jn 18:37 VOICE)

We must not gloss over this. The power of truth created the ground they were standing on, the plants that grew outside the building, the first man to ever walk on it and breathe its air. The voice of truth, Jesus' voice, the Word of God, had spoken it into existence.

The truth was, God so loved the world and had sent Jesus to die to bring redemption and fulfill the law. (Mt 5:17) The truth was, the Messiah had come. God, the Word, stood in his midst. The truth was, the Holy Spirit would pour life into Jesus' body, and He'd rise from the tomb. The power that'd created man from dust was fully capable to bring it back to life. The truth was, the King had come. (Jn 18:37)

Pilate, of course, couldn't see any of that. His mind was darkened by the empty religion of Rome.

The apostle Paul spoke similarly to the church at Ephesus, a thriving Greek city of that day. He urged them to walk in truth and not be like everyone else around them.

*“Henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, BEING ALIENATED FROM THE LIFE OF GOD through the ignorance that is in them.”* (Ephesians 4:17-18)

Notice, their lack of understanding, their ignorance of truth, is directly related to their distance from God's life. This becomes clearer if we read further.

*“But this is not the way of life that Christ has unfolded within you. If you have really experienced the Anointed One, and HEARD HIS TRUTH, it will be seen in your life.”* (Ephesians 4:20-21 TPT)

Christ, the Anointed One, brings truth, and the results of that truth are noticeable. It will be seen.

Eight times in the New Testament, the writer says, *“I would not have you ignorant,”* when speaking to the church. Knowing God's truth was a top priority.

Jesus called Himself the wisdom of God. (Lk 11:49) This should not baffle us. Twice in the gospel of Luke, we are told, “*And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, FILLED WITH WISDOM,*” and then “*Jesus INCREASED IN WISDOM and stature.*” (Lk 2:40, 52)

His wisdom as a child amazed the church leaders. (Lk 2:47)

Then, in 1 Corinthians 1:30, we read, “[Christ] *is made unto us wisdom.*”

Christ is wisdom. Therefore, the Word of God is wisdom, and the ways of God are filled with wisdom. The presence of God is a place of wisdom and truth. We, who abide there, abide in His wisdom.

In converse, the unsaved man or woman does not have access to wisdom. Now, I’m not speaking about intelligence. Many people are smart, and many others have physical knowledge of processes learned through schooling or through practice. Man has been given common sense.

But I like what the Albert Barnes Commentary says of this last verse:

“Philosophers had attempted to become wise by their own investigations and inquiries. But Christians had become wise by the work of Christ ... they had been made acquainted with the true character of God.”

I love the word “acquainted.” It means we have personal knowledge. We’ve studied something and learned the truth about it. (Dictionary.com)

Well, wisdom comes when we have a personal knowledge of God’s character. We know who He is, what He would do, and how He would react. Whereas, without God, the mind is ripe pickin’ for the devil, as we’d say in the South. (Mt 12:43-45) And note, this applies to both the unsaved and to undedicated Christians.

Here we see a contrast. Life spent in God’s presence dispels ignorance and forms godly knowledge. This should make sense to us. God is wisdom and truth, so where He is, we will find wisdom and truth. We will gain understanding. But His wisdom doesn’t fall from the sky. We seek it. We desire it and take steps to have it, and once gained, we hold onto it. (1Pe 2:2)

It's up to use to choose to not live in darkness and ignorance.

A man without God has no choice in this matter, but a man who has accepted Christ has access to God's presence and all that He is. He can decide to seek God and grow in his faith or he can live in willful ignorance and act just like the unsaved man.

He can literally act like the devil.

### **The devil is a liar and deceiver.**

To understand light, we must also understand darkness. Jesus described the devil as the father of all lies. The devil's job is deception, and deception, by its nature, causes people to think they are right, and they cannot be convinced otherwise.

*“At the core of his character, [THE DEVIL] IS A LIAR; everything he speaks originates in these lies because he is the father of lies.” (John 8:44 VOICE)*

Deception is part of the devil's character. God is truth and wisdom and understanding. The devil is a liar and know this – the devil doesn't pick and choose. He works in the unsaved man to keep him in the dark, and he comes against the Christian to keep them from growing strong in God.

He piles on circumstances out of our control, stresses, strife, and anxiety. If he can keep our minds off God, he can work destruction in us. He is anti-God. He is not – and this is of utmost importance – he is *not* an agent of God that God uses, now and then, to prove His point.

The devil has poured this lie into the church. But it goes against God's character, *and* it weakens God.

The Pharisees saw Jesus heal a man and proclaimed He did it by the power of the devil. (Mt 12:24) We must note Jesus' response:

*“Any kingdom DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF is bound to collapse, and no town or household divided against itself can last for long. If it is Satan who is expelling Satan, then he is divided against himself—so how do you suppose that his kingdom can continue?” (Matthew 12:25 PHILLIPS)*

The Message Bible states it extremely sharp:

*“A judge who gives opposite verdicts on the same person cancels himself out; a family that’s in a constant squabble disintegrates; if Satan banishes Satan, is there any Satan left?”*”

You cannot get any more pointed than that. God and Satan do not work together. This would destroy them both. Any person or circumstances that convinces you otherwise is deceived.

We know who God is – He is good. He is life. He is light. He is wisdom and truth. He cannot and will not use darkness or the effects of darkness to perform miracles. To think so, makes the devil stronger than God, and well, that is foolishness.

### **God is peace.**

I went to a sandwich shop to pick up food for my daughter and several of her coworkers. I’m not sure how I got elected as their delivery service, but somehow, it’s become a thing. Anyhow, I had a list of what they wanted, with specific sandwich toppings, but when I began ordering, the sandwich shop worker interrupted my words to point out a way I could save money.

Now, I have a one-track mind. If you try to insert a thought that I’m not prepared for, it tends to stop me in my tracks. People close to me know this. And I guess I looked confused because the guy in line behind me tried to clarify what she’d said,

Frankly, none of it made any sense. All I could think was, *I have this list, and I’m reading the list, and I’m paying for what’s on the list. And why are they stopping me?*

Eventually, the guy said, “Oh, just do what you were doing.”

This is a simple illustration, personal to me. You may not have that issue, and I hope you don’t. But when I was first learning to meditate on the Scriptures, banishing the confusion that fear brought on me was my biggest need.

I read 1 Corinthians 4:33 a lot.

*“God is not the author of confusion, but of peace.”*

Confusion in any form, in the mind, in the heart, in our home, or at our job is not from God. You cannot be confused *and* be peaceful. God is wisdom. God gives us sound judgment. We can know what choice to make and be confident in it, free of worry, confusion, and any fear of the results.

*“For God did not give us a spirit of timidity or cowardice or fear, but [He has given us a spirit] of power and of love and of sound judgment and personal discipline [abilities that result in A CALM, WELL-BALANCED MIND and self-control].”* (2 Timothy 1:7 AMP)

God’s presence in us overcomes the troubles in our mind. By staying close to Him, we are calm and clear-headed, though our circumstances may try to convince us otherwise. God’s peace of mind serves as a guard, or protection, over our lives. (Php 4:7 VOICE) But understand this, like His wisdom and His truth, obtaining godly peace is a result of our choices.

1 Peter 5:7 in The Passion Translation says this clearly:

*“Pour out all your worries and stress upon him and leave them there, for he always tenderly cares for you.”*

“You pour them out,” this verse says. “You leave them with Jesus.”

This is our action. We are responsible to do it.

I heard a preacher say of this verse – If we are worried and stressed, it is because we do not know who God is. Once we have a correct image of Him, we will know there is nothing to be worried or stressed about.

How true!

It is up to us to build that image of God, as loving and affectionate and concerned. (1Pe 5:7 AMP, PHILLIPS) We must also stop thinking about what bothers us. This is what keeps us in that fearful place.

I know how hard that is. At first, it can seem daunting. I thought about fear ALL the time. I pictured the disasters that would occur when I went

somewhere. I'd make myself sick over circumstances that hadn't even happened.

Stopping myself from this terrible habit took great determination and the Holy Spirit's strength. I leaned on Him to remind me not to do it, sometimes every other second. I'd try to go an hour without planning for my fears. Then I'd try to go two hours and, eventually half a day.

I had such a revelation of obtaining mental freedom when I stumbled on an older sermon about controlling our thoughts.

Matthew 6:25 says:

*“Therefore I say unto you, TAKE NO THOUGHT for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on.”*

Now, let's skip to verses 27 and 28.

*“Which of you by TAKING THOUGHT can add one cubit unto his stature? And why TAKE YE THOUGHT for raiment?”*

Let's also read verse 31.

*“Therefore TAKE NO THOUGHT, SAYING, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?”*

Did you catch that? When did the thought become a worry? When we said it. That's how you “take” a thought. And as Jesus clearly stated in these verses, those worries accomplish nothing. You won't be any more fed. You won't be better clothed. You won't be any taller.

You won't find peace.

God knows everything we have need of. Even greater, He'll see to it those needs are fulfilled. (Mt 6:32-33) But He cannot work on our behalf when we are carrying all the cares. As long as we choose fear and worry, all that God is, goodness and mercy and lovingkindness, cannot work in our lives.

*“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, AND PEACE, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” (Romans 14:17)*



Or we could say, “The kingdom of God isn’t worry and stress and anxiety.” Instead, God is hope. He is peace. (Rm 15:13) Peace which, often, we don’t understand, but God gives it anyway. (Php 4:7) Supernatural peace left to us by the Word of God that spoke order into the universe. (Jn 14:27)

If He can handle that, then why do we doubt Him for ourselves?

Colossians 2:9 says, “*God’s whole nature is living in Christ.*” (NIRV) His entire nature! All that He is we can see in Christ, and Christ lives in us!



# Chapter 5

## God is Peace

It seemed like nothing in his life went right. He had troubles at work. His car is acting up. There's this bill he isn't sure how to pay. Even something as simple as picking up a sandwich for lunch was full of turmoil and unhappiness. The line was too long. The lady in front of him had three kids who would not stop climbing on the counter.

I'm sure you've met this man, or maybe, looking in the mirror, he is a lot like you. The truth is, he is a lot like many people – Christians, who attend church, but let life bulldoze them.

Ephesians 4:22-24 says, *“Take a fresh breath and to LET GOD RENEW YOUR ATTITUDE AND SPIRIT ... put on your new self, modeled after the very likeness of God.”* (VOICE)

You put it on, the apostle Paul says. We choose to stop being what we were – in our habits, in our unsaved thoughts, in our previous likes and dislikes – and we allow God's Word to change our thinking.

That is *how* we change. We keep reading and reading the Word of God. We keep hearing and hearing its principles, and as we do, what we think about will change. (Rm 10:17; Gal 3:2, 5) This is a simple thought, really. A student learns by repeating facts in his head. Someone desiring to become a doctor, for instance, has to follow his schooling with a period of training, whereby repetition teaches him how to act and react with patients.

In things of faith, Ephesians 5:26 pictures the Word of God as water that washes us clean. I love the mental image of this. Not only that we learn *how* to walk with God through reading the Word, but as we think about its truths, as we read it each day, as we dwell in it, or meditate on it, like a wave of the ocean, each pass of it over us strips the old man's thoughts and ideals away, replacing them with new ones.

*“Because of all that God has done, we now have a NEW PERSPECTIVE.”*  
(2 Corinthians 5:16 VOICE)

Our time spent putting God's words in our heart gives us God's perspective on everything. I love this thought as expressed in Colossians 3:1-2 in the Message Bible.

*“So if you're serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, act like it. Pursue the things over which Christ presides. Don't shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. Look up, and be alert to what is going on around Christ—that's where the action is. SEE THINGS FROM HIS PERSPECTIVE.”*

That is so clear.

Don't spend your time staring at your feet – or your TV, or your job, or your cell phone, or the last argument you had with your spouse. Don't take your wisdom from the world's philosophers, newsman, and pundits. The Bible says the world's knowledge is foolishness. (1Co 3:19)

Why not go to the source of all wisdom? Why not ask God, the Creator of all that's good, to show you what you need to know? If we'd see things from His perspective, we'd solve our issues. Maybe that waitress is in a difficult marriage. Maybe the man who cut you off just lost his job.

Compassion for others is clear evidence of being Christ-like. Jesus was moved with compassion throughout His earthly life, and here's the truth we've overlooked—He got that compassion from God, the Father.

*“Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath HAD COMPASSION on thee.”* (Mark 5:19)

These are Jesus' words. He had compassion on a demon-possessed man, and in His compassion did “great things,” which set the man free. He urged the man to go home and tell his friends about the Lord's compassion.

Why? Well, 1 John 3:17 says, *“If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God's love be in that person?”* (NLT)

Compassion is evidence of God's love toward man, and when I act in compassion, the anger and frustration that I would normally express, have no place in me. But compassion is just one evidence of my new godly

perspective. The Holy Spirit in me will remind me of who God is whenever I need to remember it.

Jesus, toward the end of His time on earth, gave us this tremendous promise.

*“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and BRING ALL THINGS TO YOUR REMEMBRANCE, whatsoever I have said unto you.”* (John 14:26)

What an incredible gift. What I need to know that I don't know or can't remember, I will learn if I will listen to the Holy Spirit's voice.

What does His voice sound like? Well, usually it's a prompting, an urge or a thought that comes from the heart. God gave me this book, over a period of days. I knew it was Him because there is no way I could ever have outlined it. I would not have ever connected point A to point B with my limited mental understanding. I felt compelled to it. It wouldn't leave me alone, so to speak.

Also, I recognized His voice because I have spent time listening. He is valuable to me, and who we value, we will hear speaking. Jesus said:

*“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”* (John 10:27)

And also, *“A stranger will they [the sheep] not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.”* (Jn 10:5)

There was a time when I thought the Word of God was boring. I said so out loud. After my life fell apart, I asked God to give me the desire for the Word, and let me tell you, with 100% certainty, that is one prayer He longs to answer.

The most important revelation of God that we can have is that He wants to communicate with us, and that communication is to our benefit. Always.

I am not the brightest bulb in the box, as far as physical knowledge goes, so having God's wisdom in me is invaluable. It brings peace and removes stress. My time spent in the Word of God, listening, makes me stronger, so

that whatever I come up against, I am not destroyed by it. I know that I know that if I had been strong in God, I would never have believed the devil's lies.

He tried to convince me I'd live in fear forever, locked into the walls of my house. I'd never walk outside again with any joy. I'd never go to bed and sleep well. Mornings would never look bright and hopeful. That is no way to live and knowing how I got into that condition keeps me seeking God, keeps me walking in His presence. In Him, I am strong. I am able to handle anything—in Christ.

Luke 11:21 says, "*When a strong man ARMED to the teeth guards his own house, his property is in peace.*" (PHILLIPS)

You cannot get any clearer on the importance of transforming your thoughts to be like God's than that. (Rm 12:2) His Word arms me mentally and spiritually to properly guard my house! But that strength comes through study of the Word. We can pray and pray until we are figuratively blue-in-the-face but remain unhappy and restless. Peace will not simply fall on you out of nowhere.

But if I put the Word of God's principles in my heart, the Holy Spirit will bring them to my remembrance. I will hear and know His voice, instead of being upset over the negative voices talking all around me.

God often says to me, "Let it go, Suzanne. Keep quiet and let the emotion pass. There are things you don't understand in that person's life."

Whereas the devil and his cohorts, anger and frustration, say, "Remember what he said to you. You know that wasn't fair!"

Instead of *reacting* in anger and acting like the devil, I find God's compassion in me and have the ability to remain peaceful despite anything that's been said or done, no matter how painful. The devil's attempts to draw me into stress and anxiety will not work any longer because I see God's love in me first.

A peaceful man or woman is a strong one.

**Consumed by Prayer**

I heard this story from a well-known preacher. He said someone once asked famed English minister, Smith Wigglesworth, how long he prayed each day, and Smith Wigglesworth replied, "Fifteen minutes."

The questioner was noticeably surprised, expecting him to say he spent hours each day in prayer. After all, he'd seen great miracles from the Lord in his ministry.

Then Smith Wigglesworth said, "But I never go fifteen minutes without praying."

How much this affects me. We are told to pray continually, in fact, to never cease praying. (1Th 5:17) We must pray wherever we are, at every place throughout the day.

Prayer is our strength. It is how we stop swaying with every wind that blows. Plus, by praying, we imitate Jesus. I don't think we've considered that, but Jesus' prayed. A lot. It was what kept Him strong.

A different preacher made this observation while reading the story of Jesus' disciple, Peter, walking on water. He said Peter was the second man to walk on water. Jesus was the first.

The Bible tells us Jesus laid aside His divine nature to come to earth as a man. (Php 2:7-8) So, this means Jesus walking on the water was as much a miracle as Peter's attempt. What made the difference? Why did Jesus walk across the lake during the storm and not sink?

Jesus was prepared for it. He'd spent time in prayer, time talking to God, time near God, in His Father's presence, and as a result, He did not fear. He knew God's character. He spoke with the Father and heard the Father speak. He knew the power of God, the Holy Spirit in Him, would sustain Him, though the winds blew, and the waves frothed. (Mt 14:23; Mk 1:35; Mk 6:46; Lk 6:12; Lk 9:28)

My mom always points out, of this story, that man cannot walk on water on a calm sunny day either. So, really, the weather had nothing to do with the miracle. It was done by faith in who God is.

Think of it: God's life is so great it enabled Jesus to break natural scientific laws.

But, of course, it did. HIS LIFE created the heavens and the earth. Jesus, though He was a man, knew this. He was there, the Word of God, speaking!

The disciples on the other hand were so consumed by fear that they didn't even recognize Jesus, a man they'd spent all their time with. They'd watched Him perform miracles, heard Him speak about faith, yet in that moment, they thought He was a ghost. (Mt 14:26)

That's seems incredible. How could they not know Him? Well, in the garden, as Jesus prayed before being arrested, they fell asleep. (Mk 14:37, 40) That doesn't look like men who valued prayer.

Our life with God should be consumed by prayer. (Lk 1:18) Prayer is the vessel of communication God has given us to talk with Him. Prayer is how we will know Him better, and remember, knowing Him keeps us in that place of peace and well-being.

But prayer is as much about time spent hearing as it is time speaking. God also wants us to sit and listen. It seems obvious to say, but we cannot hear if we are not listening. And taking this thought further, we listen to discern. I know my husband's voice in a crowded room, as well as my daughter's or my mom's and dad's. I should know God's voice in that same manner.

John 10:3-4 in the Passion Translation says:

*“And the sheep RECOGNIZE the voice of the true Shepherd, for he calls his own by name and leads them out, for they belong to him. And when he has brought out all his sheep, he walks ahead of them and they will follow him, FOR THEY ARE FAMILIAR WITH HIS VOICE.”*

When we've spent time in prayer, when we've spent time listening, we will be familiar with God's voice, we will recognize it from the others around us. We will find understanding and eliminate confusion, which, remember, is *not* from God.

There are a lot of things in our head that have nothing to do with God. Hebrews 4:12 tells us the Word of God can sort them out. The Word of God



and the Holy Spirit's instruction. We hear the Holy Spirit, and He makes us aware of whatever we need to know.

Aware of sin. The Holy Spirit brings conviction toward repentance. (Jn 16:8)

Aware of God's love and mercy and faithfulness. He speaks only of Christ's character. (1Co 12:3) But also aware of our position – where we stand – and our pathway – what steps we take next.

*“But I [Jesus] tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper (Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor—Counselor, Strengthener, Standby) will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him (the Holy Spirit) to you [TO BE IN CLOSE FELLOWSHIP WITH YOU].” (John 16:7 AMP)*

What a marvelous promise. We have close fellowship with the Holy Spirit. He provides comfort in our hour of sorrow. Through the Holy Spirit, we are strong. A strong man is in much better shape to face troubles than someone who is weak.

Staying strong is a continual process. An athlete can only be in tiptop shape to win in his sport by staying fit. Our spiritual fitness comes as we build the Word of God in our hearts. When we need peace, we read His promises of peace. If we need healing, we read His promises of healing. And in reading, the Holy Spirit builds strength within us.

Ephesians 6:10 gives this promise.

*“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in THE POWER of HIS MIGHT.”*

David Guzik's Enduring Word Commentary defines “might” and “power,” and it will deepen our understanding. He says:

“MIGHT is inherent power or force. A muscular man's big muscles display his might, even if he doesn't use them. It is the reserve of strength. POWER is the exercise of might. When the muscular man uses his might to bend an iron bar, he uses his power. It means that the reserve of strength is actually

in operation. God has vast reservoirs of might that can be realized as power in our Christian life.”

Guzik goes on to point out our part in receiving that strength of God’s might, saying, “But His might does not work in me AS I SIT PASSIVELY. His might works in me AS I RELY ON IT, and step out to do the work.”

In other words, knowing God is strong isn’t enough. Knowing God wants me to be strong isn’t enough. Instead, we are strong in the Lord when we put the Word of God inside, not as a mental task but a spiritual one, and that takes dedication and faithfulness.

But the rewards of it are rich.

I know whatever I face today, I can do it because the Holy Spirit gives me strength. That truth has carried me through more mentally tough situations that would have caused me to collapse otherwise. He is truly my strength. And greater even than that, He helps me to enjoy things I would tremble at on my own. (Neh 8:10; Php 4:13)

I can never give enough gratitude for that.

### **The Power of Praise**

Time and space do not permit me to write fully all the wonderful things God is. That He is faithful, none more dedicated to my well-being than Him. That He is gracious and merciful. When I stumble, He is there to forgive me of my bad judgment. Of how He brings me peace to face everything I need to do. He holds my hand when things look tough, encouraging me that, through Him, I can manage my life.

When I sit and marvel at how strong and everlasting He is, I cannot help but enter praise and worship, like David, extoling His greatness.

*“O give thanks unto the LORD, for HE IS GOOD: for his mercy endureth for ever.”* (Psalm 107:1)

Worship and praise walk hand-in-hand with prayer. We come to God with our petitions. We listen to hear Him speak. We then praise Him with our voices.

Praise and worship are the biggest weapons against fear and anxiety, anger and frustration. Praise gives us peace and strength. Because that's who God is, strength. That's His character, peace, and it's what He wishes for us.

The Bible is full of examples.

King Saul was tormented by an evil spirit, but when David played the harp, the spirit left, and King Saul was refreshed. (1Sa 16:23) The Israelites' shouts of praise caused the walls of Jericho to fall. (Jos 6:20) Paul and Silas sang praises and the bars of their jail cell opened. (Act 16:25-26)

Praise is abundant on our lips when our hearts are full of God's goodness. We praise Him for all that He is and for all that He's done. We praise Him for what He will do ... even when our emotions aren't completely in it. How I feel should never affect my praise. (Heb 13:15)

God inhabits our praises in the person of the Holy Spirit. The Passion Translation calls Him the "*Divine-Encourager*." (Jn 15:26)

How marvelous is that! When we are down, our words of praise fill our hearts with God's presence and encourage us. (1Sa 30:6 AMPC; Ps 119:28 TPT)

Ephesians 5:18-20 states:

*"Be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; GIVING THANKS ALWAYS for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Our songs of praise and thanksgiving fill us with the Holy Spirit, removing all the anxiety, worry, and strife we're struggling with. (Col 3:15-16) There, in His presence, we find an atmosphere of peace, and we focus our thoughts on better things. We cannot praise God *and* think about our problems. It is an impossibility!

*"Don't be pulled in different directions or worried about a thing. Be saturated in prayer throughout each day, offering your faith-filled requests before God with overflowing gratitude. Tell him every detail of your life, then God's wonderful peace that transcends human understanding, will*

*make the answers known to you through Jesus Christ. SO KEEP YOUR THOUGHTS CONTINUALLY FIXED on all that is authentic and real, honorable and admirable, beautiful and respectful, pure and holy, merciful and kind. And fasten your thoughts on every glorious work of God, praising him always.” (Philippians 4:6-8 TPT)*

Keep your thoughts continually fixed on God! This is the method toward maintaining peace and building our faith. Faith is, simply put, trust in God for the answers we cannot see yet. (Heb 11:1 AMP, VOICE) Our having faith means we know His character completely, and that knowledge comes through time spent reading the Word of God and through prayer and praise. We choose to walk by faith because of who He is, and we refuse to listen to negative, fearful thoughts that are outside of God’s character.

We refuse to *take* thoughts with our words and thereby make them a reality.

The voice that destroys us the most is our own. We are told to lift and encourage one another, to pray for all men, to pray for government, to “do good” to our enemies. (1Ti 2:1-2; Mt 5:44; Lk 6:27) Nowhere in those instructions does the Bible say to gossip and talk about, to discourage, or to destroy other people. In fact, that is as ungodly as whatever the other person might have done to you. The grace God has extended to us, we must extend it to others, and in so doing, we will reap an everlasting benefit in our souls.

The apostle Paul is an incredible example to us. He said:

*“For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I AM MADE ALL THINGS TO ALL MEN, THAT I MIGHT BY ALL MEANS SAVE SOME.” (1 Corinthians 9:19-22)*

How convicting that is. Are we willing to do the same? Most usually not, I think.

And we are equally cruel to ourselves. We say, “I’m too dumb.” Too slow. Too inept. We discourage ourselves. But here is relief—God is always ready to forgive. We can stop our behavior, right now, and alter our direction. We lift our hands with repentant hearts and dedicate ourselves to encouraging the people that cross our paths. (Rms 14:19 TPT) We decide to build God’s faith in us. We can overcome!

Know this, though – you may not feel like it at the time. If I waited to feel like being nice to people some days, then I would never be nice to anyone. And I include myself in that. Our feelings about who we are today or that person we must deal with don’t matter.

We pray in obedience and act out of our love for God, and He is faithful to hear us, faithful to answer. (1Th 5:24) I find comfort in that. I know my own foibles, and how I despair of them, outside of God’s power working in me!

But, “God and I will work it out,” I always say. Because I know that I know we will. And my praises lift to His ears for all the amazing things He’s working in me, knowing the next time, it won’t bother me so much. And the time after that, even less.

Greater is He that is in me, than he that is in the world. (1Jn 4:4)



# Chapter 6

## God is Our Obedience

This is a book about obedience, yet it is far more than the mere observation of rules or the discipline required to keep them. Anyone can create rules and force others to obey them. Most people usually *disobey* them. The mere fact there is a rule makes people want to break it. Watch any reality crime program, and people break the rules all the time, then once caught, they'll lie boldly to cover it up.

The apostle Paul commented on this as regards to the Mosaic law.

*“Yes, people sinned even before the law was given. But it was not counted as sin because there was not yet any law to break.”* (Romans 5:13 NLT)

There has to be a rule in order for someone to either break it or keep it.

What, then, causes a man or woman to want to obey? Why follow the rules if I'm more bound to break them? One word—love.

Jesus' words are recorded in John 14:15. *“IF YOU REALLY LOVE ME, you will keep the commandments I have given you.”* (PHILLIPS). I also like the way the Message Bible states it: *“If you love me, show it by doing what I've told you.”*

That seems so simple. We love Him, so we obey. Bible teacher, Joyce Meyer phrased the thought this way:

*“If you really love me, obedience will be the fruit of that love.’ It's not going to be a bunch of things you feel like have to do, that you struggle with. You're going to realize, just because you love God, you want to do what He wants you to do.”* (“A Heart That Murmurs” aired January 9, 2020, “Enjoying Everyday Life” by Joyce Meyer)

Obedience has painted a negative picture. We think of our parents scolding us, or of us as parents, scolding our children. We feel the unhappiness again, the disorder of that correction. Or we picture having to do something we really hate. Growing up, Mom made my weekly chore to be dusting the

furniture, and to this day, I hate dusting. It is a necessary evil, otherwise the dust will consume everything.

Obedience to God will be our highest desire when done in love, and here's the good news, if we struggle with it in any capacity, God has promised to change our hearts.

Philippians 2:13 says:

*“God is working in you to make you WILLING AND ABLE to obey him.”*  
(CEV)

I like another translation, which says it this way, *“For it is God who is producing in you both THE DESIRE AND THE ABILITY TO DO what pleases him.”* (ISV)

As I spend time with God each day, my will changes to be His will. What He loves, I love. What He desires, I desire, too. I long to do what He wishes, and He provides the power to accomplish whatever He asks.

*“I DELIGHT TO DO thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart,”* it says in Psalm 40:8. We delight to do what He asks because we want to see His joy over us. We want Him to be pleased. No parents want their child to clean their room, sulking and angry. It brings much more happiness when they do it with joy. It gives us pleasure to know they *wanted* to do it.

1 John 3:18 says, *“My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but IN DEED and in truth.”*

No more shallow obedience. We mean our words and follow them with deeds, or actions. Then it will be as it says in verse 22 of this same passage, and I think the Voice Translation says it so movingly:

*“Whatever we may ask, we receive it from Him because we follow His commands and take the path that pleases Him. His command is clear: believe in the name of His Son, Jesus the Anointed, and love one another as He commanded. The one who follows His teaching and walks this PATH LIVES IN AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.”* (1 John 3:22-24)



Isn't that our goal, to be close to Him? There, in His presence, we find everything we need for a good life – physically, mentally, spiritually. In Him is joy, strength, wisdom, forgiveness. In God's presence we are loved.

I don't know about you, but I like feeling prepared for the day. I like knowing God goes with me every step, knowing He will speak, so I keep myself tuned into to Him in order to hear Him. I learned to hear and obey through writing. Without Holy Spirit words, I can't write anything at all. But with Him ... Oh, with Him, what amazing wonders there are to unfold.

### **God is Submission**

As you devote yourself to walking with God, you will notice side effects. Except, unlike the commercials where they are always negative, the side effects of God's presence in your life are always good. Because He is good.

You can see where to walk. You hear His words spoken in your ear. And He becomes a craving, a hunger. An athlete hungers to perform his sport. A baker to create something delectable for the palate. A child of God hungers for more of God.

Jesus said:

*“Blessed [joyful, NOURISHED BY GOD’S GOODNESS] are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness [those who actively seek right standing with God], for they will be [COMPLETELY] SATISFIED.” (Matthew 5:6 AMP)*

Do you get that? COMPLETELY SATISFIED.

There's no partaking of the things of God and walking away wanting. Instead, we come to know Him, and our faith in His care for us grows to astronomical proportions. We believe He will answer our prayers, and we know that, in seeking Him, we will find whatever we need.

*“And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall NEVER HUNGER; and he that believeth on me shall NEVER THIRST.” (John 6:35)*

“Never is a long time,” my mom used to say.

She's right. To "never" hunger or thirst means I'm always able to handle today. I'm always ready for my life. God's spiritual food is the solution to any of my mental or physical needs.

We must grab that and refuse to let go, stop struggling to make our own way, and instead, allow Him to guide us through steps of obedience.

This doesn't mean we'll have the entire plan outlined in advance. Sometimes we will only see the next step, but if we'll take that one, as God has directed, He will provide the one that follows. We must release our needs into His care, whatever they are. Our progress is no longer done with our self-effort, but we've hooked up to the greatest Source of all.

*"Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. LABOUR NOT for the meat which perisheth, BUT FOR THAT MEAT WHICH ENDURETH unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."* (John 6:26-27)

Jesus stopped at a well in Samaria. Not accidental, I'm sure, but because God directed Him there. He asked a Samaritan woman for a drink from the well, and she was startled. After all, Jews didn't speak with Samaritans.

But Jesus saw her life. He saw her failed marriages, that she currently lived with a man, although unwed. He knew what she struggled with, and He wanted to heal her heart. We've read his response to her about "living water" and, perhaps, haven't considered that. But He didn't choose her to make a point to us. "Oh, she'll work for this example."

He was there to change her life. He cared for her.

*"If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee LIVING WATER."* (John 4:10)

*"Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him SHALL NEVER THIRST; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."* (John 4:13-14)

The story ends with her telling everyone what Jesus said, how He knew her life. (Jn 4:39) This was the PURPOSE of the living water He offered to her.

Your job situation, whether to stay or go or maybe if you should ask for a promotion, His everlasting life in you can direct you to what actions to make. Your rebellious teen, the living water in you will give you direction to pray for her. It will provide the strength, faith, and patience your parenting requires.

These are where we've stopped short. We expect everlasting life to only be a ticket to heaven, but it's in us NOW, through salvation, and is helpful to us NOW.

*When we choose to follow Him and obey. Our position with God is key.*

*“SUBMIT yourselves therefore to God,” James 4:7 says.*

To “submit” is “be under obedience.” (G5293) The second half of the verse says, *“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”* And in the following verse, we see God's heart: *“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.”* (Jas 4:8)

God wants to have a relationship! But notice, SUBMISSION comes first. Not as God walking all over us. That isn't the godly meaning of submission. Instead, it's us connected to Him, a vital part of the Vine, full of the amazing goodness of God that created the world, walking in the Light that illuminates heaven, working in the wisdom of Christ. We set our personal will aside, and there, strong in the Lord, we resist in faith, and the devil has no option but to flee.

*“In conclusion, be strong in the Lord [draw your strength from Him and be empowered through YOUR UNION WITH HIM] and in the power of His [boundless] might.”* (Ephesians 6:10 AMP)

This is the product of our obedience. Not that it makes us weaker and bowed under some sort of pressure, but that it works in us God's strength and ability. He can be seen in our lives and that image draws others to Him. They will want to know how God could possibly use us, and, Oh, what wonderful things we can tell them.

## God is Holy

The blessings of obedience overflow with God's goodness. By choosing to live a godly life, we place ourselves in a position of peace and strength. We understand this on a personal level. Thinking of our own children, a loving parent disciplines to give their child their best chance at becoming a prosperous, successful adult.

The book of Hebrews comments on this, saying, *"Remember, when our human parents disciplined us, we respected them. If that was true, shouldn't we respect and live under the correction of the Father of all spirits even more?"* (Hebrews 12:9 VOICE)

I realize many people grow up under harsh conditions, so the idea of obedience and discipline seems hateful and restrictive. I want to reiterate, in this book, though, who our heavenly Father is. I want you to see Him as good, loving, and kind. He is, again, the perfect parent.

We can see this by studying Jesus' life.

Jesus lived His life without sin. (2Co 5:21) That means He had no unjust thoughts or actions. No hate, strife or violence in Him. He never looked at another human being and thought evil of them. Though He was tempted in every way like we are, He didn't give into it or even consider it as an option. (Heb 4:15)

Now, understand that Jesus was perfectly united to the Father. (Jn 14:7, 9) Didn't He say that?

*"I and my Father are one."* (John 10:30)

He reflected the Father in His actions, in His words, and in His obedience.

Colossians 2:10 in the Contemporary English Version states, *"Christ was humble. He obeyed God and even died on a cross."* Only through obedience would He become the redeeming sacrifice for sin. Only by living a sinless life would He become what was required. (Php 2:8)

We read this in 1 Peter, chapter 1. Let's start with verses 15-16.

*“But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, BE YE HOLY; FOR I AM HOLY.”*

Now, add in verses 18-19:

*“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb WITHOUT BLEMISH and WITHOUT SPOT.”*

*“Without blemish and without spot”* refers to the holiness in verses 15-16.

God’s holiness in Christ is essential to our salvation. Jesus came to fulfill the law and become the final sacrifice, to lay His blood on the altar of heaven for all time. His sinlessness was required.

We cannot dull the splendor of something so magnificent and expect to have a relationship with God yet live anyway we want. (Mt 5:17; Heb 9:12)

Hebrews gives us a view of this.

*“Our parents corrected us for a time as seemed good to them, but God only corrects us TO OUR GOOD so that WE MAY SHARE IN HIS HOLINESS.”*  
(Hebrews 12: 10 VOICE)

Notice first, God corrects us to our GOOD. His correction is a benefit to us. It makes us better than we were. Next, God’s correction is for us to be like Christ, to share in His holiness.

God’s holiness is the guide to our behavior. It controls what we think and say, how we act, and even more importantly, Hebrews 12:14 says, without holiness we will not “see God.” This is a simple concept. God is light. He contains no darkness. Additionally, the Scripture says He doesn’t tempt man with evil. (Jas 1:13) Therefore, anything evil cannot approach God.

He is holy.

“Holy” is defined in the Greek as: “sacred (physically pure, morally blameless or religious, ceremonially consecrated.” (G40)

Webster's Dictionary of American English (1828) defines "sacred" as: "Separated from common secular uses and consecrated to God and his service; Proceeding from God and containing religious precepts; Narrating or writing facts respecting God and holy things; Consecrated; dedicated; Entitled to reverence; Inviolable."

I like that word, "inviolable," a lot. It means: "Not to be profaned; that ought not to be injured, polluted or treated with irreverence; Not to be broken; as an inviolable league, covenant, agreement, contract, vow or promise; Not to be injured or tarnished; as inviolable chastity or honor; Not susceptible of hurt or wound."

How marvelous! God is holy. He is not only pure and untarnished, sinless, He not only keeps his word, never breaking His promises, but He is also not susceptible to hurt or wounds. Think about that! And He has called us to SHARE His holiness.

There is a depth to this we have not understood. The apostle Paul's prayer to Thessalonica gives us wonderful insight.

*"And the very God of peace SANCTIFY you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be PRESERVED BLAMELESS unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."* (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

"Sanctify" is a word meaning "to make holy" and "to set apart from profane things." (G37) Now, also notice the phrase, "*preserved blameless.*" This is the product of holiness, but it's a little misunderstood in our thoughts.

To clarify, notice, man's spirit, soul *and* body are included. Not simply the recreated, reborn spirit, where Christ lives, nor only the mind being changed to think like God, but also the body.

Why does that matter? Well, the Message Bible translate the verse this way:

*"May God himself, the God who makes everything HOLY AND WHOLE, make you HOLY AND WHOLE, put you together—spirit, soul, and body—AND KEEP YOU FIT for the coming of our Master, Jesus Christ."* (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

Let's also read it in the Contemporary English Version:

*“I pray that God, who gives peace, will make you completely holy. And may your spirit, soul, and body be kept HEALTHY AND FAULTLESS until our Lord Jesus Christ returns.”*

Did you catch that? The strength and health of the body is a product of holiness!

We also see this in Ephesians 5:25-27:

*“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might SANCTIFY AND CLEANSE it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, NOT HAVING SPOT, OR WRINKLE, or any such thing; but that it should BE HOLY AND WITHOUT BLEMISH.”*

This verse, the one in 1 Peter 1, and the one in 1 Thessalonians 5 are referring to the Mosaic law’s requirement for an unblemished (spotless) sacrifice. (Ex 12:5; Lev 4:32; Lev 9:3; Lev 14:10; Lev 23:12; Num 6:14) Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, is called the Lamb of God (Jn 1:29, 36) and the *“Lamb that was slain.”* (Rev 5:12)

Like Him, the church, as a whole, and each of us individually are to be holy and without blemish. But look back at the Message Bible and the Contemporary English Version translations of 1 Thessalonians 5:23 – *“keep you fit”* and *“be kept healthy and faultless.”* An unblemished lamb is one that is perfect and healthy on all counts. Those in the livestock business would say the animal was *“sound.”*

Our heavenly Father desires that we be sound spiritually, mentally, and physically. By walking in holiness, we can take hold of God’s healing power. For the mind. For the body.

If you still have any lingering doubts, Word Studies of the New Testament by M.R. Vincent defines the phrase *“preserved blameless”* from the King James Version of 1 Thessalonians 5:23 as the *“perfect allotment,”* or *“portion.”* He says in the Greek it is directly related to the phrase *“perfect soundness”* used in Acts 3:16.

There, Peter and John spoke physical healing, through Jesus’ name, to a lame man, well-known in the community. (Act 3:9-10) Peter spoke, inspired

by the Holy Spirit, to the astonished crowd:

*“And his name [Jesus] through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him [Jesus] hath given him [the healed man] this PERFECT SOUNDNESS in the presence of you all.”*

Perfect soundness. Healthy. Unblemished. These are all God’s desires for His children. He would have us be like Him, not just spiritually, in holiness, but sound in every way.

However, this comes through obedience to God’s Word. It is a product of grace, the free gift given in Jesus Christ, but it is up to us to yield our thoughts and actions to a holy life. We can walk in holiness or not. By choosing to walk otherwise, we give up our intimate relationship with God.

*“Even so now YIELD your members [limbs] servants to righteousness UNTO HOLINESS.”* (Romans 6:19)

No one enjoys being corrected, and being frank, in our human mind, holiness seems unattainable. Yet Hebrews 12:11 says, our discipline to holiness produces, *“a quiet growth in grace and character.”* (TLB)

This paints such a picture for me. Not of something instant and flashy, but something gained through time and perseverance. Through maturity.

We live focused on integrity and excellence and grow in holiness. This is how we will attain peace and wholeness. This is how we rise in the morning, embrace the day, and how to lie down at night satisfied with our behavior. Holiness is how our actions will produce good fruit.

## **God is Fruitful**

The pictorial reference to fruit is found frequently in the Word of God. We, as Christ followers, living in His goodness, are to produce fruit. But it isn’t simply that God wants us to avoid producing *bad* fruit. He also wants us to avoid having *“no fruit”* at all.

Jesus told a parable about a man who did not produce fruit. The man, given money to invest, did nothing with it, but instead, buried it in the earth.



Afterward, the man's lord was angered by his lack of action. (Mt 25:28)

The book of Revelation refers to this as being lukewarm, and God made it clear that being lukewarm is far worse than being cold.

*“So because you are lukewarm, neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. You claim, ‘I am rich, I have accumulated riches, and I need nothing’; but you do not realize that you are miserable, pathetic, poor, blind, and naked. So here is what I suggest you do: buy true gold from Me (gold refined by fire so that you can be truly rich), white garments (to cover you so that you can keep the shame of your nakedness from showing), and eye ointment (to treat your eyes so that you may see clearly). “Those I love I also correct and discipline. Therefore, BE SHAMELESSLY COMMITTED TO ME, and turn back.” (Revelation 3:16-19 VOICE)*

Be shamelessly committed. How powerful that is. Boldly I say, “I am His, and I accept His corrections.” Yet those corrections can, like stirring stagnant water, churn up a lot of hurtful things. It's easier to do nothing than to clean out the pond.

Whenever my husband decides to dig through the silt of our garden pond, he finds not only detritus, decayed plant and animal life, but objects that had fallen to the bottom, overturned pots from water plants we once had there, and things the mower kicked in. On the outside, before we started, it looked pristine. But underneath the surface, it wasn't.

Also, I cannot begin to describe the smell. It clings to everything, and the only way to cleanse yourself and to settle the pond's water is by adding freshwater.

This is the Word of God in us. Remember?

*“We know He gave Himself up completely to make her His own, WASHING HER CLEAN of all her impurity WITH WATER AND THE POWERFUL PRESENCE OF HIS WORD.” (Ephesians 5:26 VOICE)*

The Word of God cleanses us. The Light that is God purifies our hearts. Another apt image. Light is used to remove tattoos and to destroy cancerous growths. God's light exposes the works of darkness, so that we can see our bad fruit and change our actions to produce godly fruit instead. (Jas 4:8)

*“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”*  
(Galatians 5:22-23)

We’ve read these as a list of things we must strive to be, and they hold that value. In the power of God’s Spirit living in us, we can change our ungodly behaviors to these godly mannerisms.

But read these again as we did the words of 1 Corinthians 13, as the character of God. He has asked us to be like Him, so these are all things He is. He is love. He is joy. He is peace. He is longsuffering. He is gentle. He is goodness. He is faith. He is meekness. He is temperance.

Let’s read it now in The Passion Translation:

*“But the FRUIT PRODUCED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT WITHIN YOU is divine love in all its varied expressions: joy that overflows, peace that subdues, patience that endures, kindness in action, a life full of virtue, faith that prevails, gentleness of heart, and strength of spirit. Never set the law above these qualities, for they are meant to be limitless.”*

Ah, how limitless is God. How loving. How peaceful and patient. How kind. How virtuous. How strong. God is all these things, and *“we are just like him,”* it says in 1 John 4:17. (ISV) We absolutely can become joyful, peaceful, and patient because He is in us.

God is good. What He created was beautiful and good. Man is an image of His perfect goodness. God is righteous, a word meaning “integrity, virtue, purity of life” (G1343), and He has made man righteous through Him. (Php 1:11; Php 3:9; 1Jn 3:10) God is holy. He has called us to walk in holiness.

God is truth. There is no lie on His tongue. (1Jn 2:27)

God is faithful to His Word, to His children. (2Th 3:3)

God is fruitful. Look back at our Genesis story again. God’s holy life created all manner of trees and plant life. One translation says they were *“pleasant to look at”* and *“charmed the eye.”* (Ge 3:6 Knox) He created them with seeds, capable of spreading and multiplying. They were active,

fruitful, and abundant. The Ronald Knox translation of the Bible refers to the Garden of Eden as the “*garden of delight.*” (Ge 2:15)

We shouldn't expect less of our heavenly Father. A holy God, faithful and true. (Rev 19:11) A God of abundance. (Ex 34:6) Jesus blessed a small boy's meal and it became more than 5,000 people could consume. (Jn 6:9-13; Mt 16:9-10)

God desires to do even greater things in us. He only needs our obedience to prove it.



# Chapter 7

## God is Everlasting

I want to draw a picture for you which spans the story of man from Genesis to Revelation. I want you to see God, the Creator, but also the God of peace, the Word of God, and the Life and the Truth as well.

Open this amazing Book with me and paint in your heart all that He is. See Him as everlasting from the first Adam to His final victorious acts. Not as individual moments somehow tossed together, but see the fullness of Him, the God who is has always been and always will be.

*“Thy throne is established of old: thou art from EVERLASTING.”* (Psalm 93:2)

Tilt back your head and view Him as you would the sky, unable to see where it starts and ends. Unable to count the stars, there are so many of them. What He was in the beginning, who He was to Moses and Abraham, to David and Elijah, are reflections of who He is today. He created perfect good, abundance, fruitfulness, multiplicity, so He is good, abundant, fruitful, and multiplying. He was merciful, gracious, and true, so He is merciful, full of grace and truth. (Jn 1:14, 17)

*“Thy kingdom is an EVERLASTING kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.”* (Psalm 145:13)

The Word of God speaks of “*everlasting joy,*” “*everlasting strength,*” “*everlasting wisdom,*” “*everlasting kindness,*” “*everlasting light,*” “*everlasting love,*” “*everlasting dominion,*” “*everlasting righteousness,*” and so many other everlasting qualities of Him.

It tells us He is “*eternal life,*” “*eternal power,*” “*eternal salvation,*” and “*eternal redemption.*”

*“For thus saith the high and lofty One THAT INHABITETH ETERNITY, whose name is Holy.”* (Isaiah 57:15)

He inhabits eternity. He abides there. It is not just where He is, but who He is.

Now, understand His great heart of love for man, that He is so big and enduring, yet saw our sinful state and reached down to us through Jesus Christ. (Ps 104:31; Ps 111:3; 1Pe 1:25) An eternal God, the Word that formed the worlds, also walked as a sinless man, to minister God's goodness to those who'd believe in Him ... *because that is who He is.* Eternal. Good. Holy. Gentle. Longsuffering.

Let's read Acts 10:38 again.

*“How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for GOD WAS WITH HIM.”*

God was with Him, so He did good. Because God is good.

The Holy Ghost was upon Him with everlasting power, so He healed those the devil had oppressed. He healed their minds *and* their bodies. Healing is a product, a fruit, of who He is.

The anointing, the power of the Holy Spirit, fell on Jesus, and He did good things of everlasting significance.

No matter how you rephrase it, the truth is the same. Jesus came to spread God's everlasting qualities among men, to bring eternal salvation. The Holy Spirit that hovered over the waters in Genesis, operated in goodness through Jesus on earth.

But here's the important thing to know—*When* people saw Him that way.

In Mark 6, we see Jesus ministering in His hometown, and the Bible says, the people became upset. *“Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us?”* they asked. *“And they were offended at him.”* (Mk 6:3)

They saw Him not as God come in the flesh. Not as goodness or healing, but the kid that used to run through town. And as a result, it says:

*“And he COULD THERE DO NO MIGHTY WORK, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. (Mark 6:5)*

Their incorrect vision of Him stopped His ability to do the miraculous goodness of God.

Now, turn with me to John 14, once more. We read earlier of the Holy Spirit’s new role in man as Comforter. But I want you to see another portion of Jesus’ words.

*“If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; WHOM THE WORLD CANNOT RECEIVE, BECAUSE IT SEETH HIM NOT, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.” (John 14:15-18)*

Jesus says, *“I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.”* Notice, *“I will not,”* and *“I will come.”* He’s describing the Holy Ghost, but He uses a personal pronoun—*“I.”*

Notice also, He said, *“Whom the world cannot receive.”*

Why can’t they? *“Because it seeth him not.”*

God is our comforter. This means legal advocate, Intercessor, and Helper. It means He brings succor. (G3875) That’s an old word meaning, “assistance that relieves and delivers from difficulty, want or distress.” (Webster’s Dictionary of American English, 1828)

In other words, the Holy Spirit works in us to bring relief.

Jesus will not leave us “comfortless,” a word meaning “fatherless.” He is with us always. Didn’t He say these words? And weren’t they also in Acts 10:38? God was with Him, and He is with us always. (Mt 28:20)

Yet how we see Him, the picture He creates inside us, is what we will know of Him. It will be the amount of goodness working in us. If we don’t picture the Holy Spirit as our comfort, if we don’t choose to receive God as Father and all the good things He is, if He isn’t light and life and hope and

kindness to us, then His power cannot work in our lives. He can work in us only what we know about Him.

Notice also, the preface to all of Jesus' words in this passage.

He said, "*If you love me, keep my commandments.*" He calls us to obedience first *because* of our image of Him.

The comparable story is frequently told of a man with one million dollars in the bank, yet this man walks around in borrowed clothing with holes in his shoes.

Or perhaps, he's the son of a millionaire, but he refuses to return home and abide by his father's rules. He'd rather tend pigs and be independent than be loved and walk in obedience. (Lk 15:13)

The Bible story says the father loved his son very much. He wanted only the best for him and had a heart of forgiveness, his arms open, just ready to receive him back and give him comfort. But until the son saw his father that way, he continued to live as less. (Lk 15:17)

When God becomes in us all the things He is, when we see Him as obtainable—We CAN walk with Him, and He desires our friendship. He is a loving Father, full of good things. He has mercy for our mistakes. He is faithful to us, even when we look away. He is patient and forgiving—Only *then* will He become all those things in us.

And what magnificence He can do through us when we believe! This is His promise, and He does not break His word.

*"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. AND I WILL BE FOUND OF YOU, SAITH THE LORD."*  
(Jeremiah 29:11-14)

**God is Sacrifice**



Man is the most selfish creature. We are so concerned with self-protection, self-awareness, and self-respect. What's "mine" is at the height of every action we take. Yet a fruit of God in us is self-control.

*Self-control* means we relinquish full control of our lives to God. He becomes Lord as well as Savior. This is what He asks above everything else, and it is a position of obedience. He is Lord because we do whatever He's asked of us *and* because we allow Him to do what it's His job to do.

We control ourselves and expect Him to keep His word to us. This is faith.

What did it say in Jeremiah 29:11? "*For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you AN EXPECTED END.*"

The word "end" in the Hebrew means, "future time," "posterity," and "reward." (Brown-Driver-Briggs' Hebrew Definitions; Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries) An EXPECTED FUTURE, we could say, and not an accidental one. Not a surprise future. But an anticipated reward.

The Contemporary English Version of this verse says, "*I will bless you with a future filled with hope—a FUTURE OF SUCCESS, not of suffering.*" This is beautiful.

Success is a product of obedience, and obedience requires faith. (Jos 1:8) It requires trusting God. We obey, knowing when we do our part, God will do His. He is in control, and He gets all the glory for the good things, all the successes, in our lives.

Matthew 7:16 says, "*By their fruit you will recognize them [that is, by their contrived doctrine and SELF-FOCUS].*" (AMP)

People will know we belong to God by how we act, and how we act, whether we are loving and kind and gentle and meek, comes from what we focus on.

Let me ask you this. Where is your focus? Do you spend all your time trying to fix yourself, a vain, fruitless work, or are you looking toward Him for healing, whether that's physical, mental, financial, or in any other way?

Isaiah 1:13 says, “*Bring no more vain oblations.*” That means idolatrous, useless sacrifices. (H7723, H4503) Jesus said similar, recorded in Matthew 6:7, “*But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.*”

Something “vain” is something futile. (Dictionary.com) God hears prayers made from a sincere heart. He responds to faith done in genuineness. But not pride or selfishness or self-centeredness.

The apostle Paul phrased it this way: “*I do not frustrate the grace of God.*” (Gal 2:21) The word “frustrate” means to “disesteem” or “neutralize”. (G114) Paul walked by faith, in expectation of God’s work in him. He “crucified” what his flesh wanted (his body and mind) and gave God control of his actions. (Gal 2:20) He didn’t act or react in a way that set aside all that the grace of God provides.

“*For I [Jesus] did not come to call [to repentance] the [SELF-PROCLAIMED] RIGHTEOUS [who see no need to change].* (Matthew 9:13 AMP)

There lies the bare truth. Self-proclaimed righteousness is no righteousness at all, and it is devoid of God’s power. You can pray and pray and pray until you are exhausted but if it is not mixed with faith and obedience, you are praying “vain repetitions.”

It is like not using a ladder to climb onto the roof, although it is within arm’s reach, accessible, and free. Instead, we throw ourselves at the building, determined to do it alone. This is self-help, and it gets us nowhere. Truthful prayer requires an honest, holy heart.

“*SELF-HELP is no help at all. SELF-SACRIFICE is the way, my way, to finding yourself, your true self.*” (Matthew 16:24 MSG)

We hate the word “sacrifice” because it implies giving up things we want, and sometimes, that is the case. We want it but don’t *need* it. Usually, though, what we’re giving up is so much less than what God wants to do for us.

If we keep reading, we learn this.

*“For if you choose SELF-SACRIFICE and lose your lives for my glory, you will continually discover true life. But if you choose to keep your lives for yourselves, you will forfeit what you try to keep.”* (Matthew 16:26 TPT)

Our self-sacrifice is to our benefit. That’s what I want you to see. That having self-control, relinquishing control to our heavenly Father, is the best choice we will ever make. All of our trying to hang onto things will cause us to lose them. Whereas rolling our cares into His hands, an instruction we have been given, brings out His goodness, all over again. (1Pe 5:7)

He delights to do good. He wants us provided for and satisfied. But any self-indulgence, self-centeredness, or self-effort will always be outside of God’s will and take us away from His presence. He will not bless selfishness.

*“Those who hunger for him will ALWAYS be filled, but the SMUG AND SELF-SATISFIED he will send away EMPTY.”* (Luke 1:53 TPT)

Obedience requires relinquishing everything to God. But when we’re hungry for Him, which really is a sign of obedience, we’re always filled. With what? Whatever we need. Wisdom to know if we should invest in our new business idea. Healing for the pain the doctor says we’ll have to live with. Safety for our children.

We love Him and *know* who He is, so we know He will supply our peace, joy, health, success, whatever things we need.

This is the true meaning of what people like to call “sovereignty.” It’s not that God will do what He wants and we will suffer, but that we give God the control to be *who* He is – good, kind, generous, the list is long! – and He takes care of us out of His great love for us.

God is a man of His word. So, anything outside of His character, He will not do.

The closer to Him you become, the more you will know this without any doubts. If it isn’t holy and good, if it doesn’t bring life and salvation, then it didn’t come from God. He will never act outside of the picture He painted in His Word.

I can promise you that.

## **God is With Us**

I want to lift your burden right now. God isn't looking for perfect people. There isn't a standard we must meet before we're considered obedient enough for Him to act.

*“For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.”* (Psalm 103:14)

God hasn't forgotten what we're made of. He's aware of our frailties and weaknesses. He doesn't require us to be clean-hearted before we ask for forgiveness. He doesn't require us to be strong before we take the first step. What a silly thought.

Instead, He's looking for willingness to grow and mature. Where the Scriptures refer to perfection, it most often means maturity. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be PERFECT, THOROUGHLY FURNISHED unto all good works.”*

The word “perfect” there means “complete” and “fitted for use.” (G739)

As we study God's Word, allowing it to correct our willful behaviors, we become fit to produce good works. The Word of God changes us.

We see same the same thought in the Old Testament. Psalm 37:37 says, *“Mark the PERFECT MAN, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.”* (H8535)

God can use us with whatever state we're in. We determine to obey Him, and we will find, as we spend time with Him, in prayer, in study, that we become stronger, wiser, and more peaceful.

When I was at my lowest point, being honest, I didn't see how anything would ever get better, but I promised to be obedient. That often meant doing things I didn't want to do. I had to leave home, knowing I'd probably fall apart. I had to determine to do it anyway.

Then, as I became more able, I went places alone. I remember the first time I went Christmas shopping by myself. That was a huge hurdle to leap.

Another time, I drove my daughter to the local community college campus so she could attend some of her high school classes. One class was at night, and my husband was usually working, so that left travel up to me. Let me tell you, my hands were shaking the entire way!

But despite my fears, I did what I knew God wanted me to do, taking small steps, until He instructed me to go further. He taught me to stand on my own, I started to believe I COULD leave home, and that was good for a while. Then when I finally went out, He walked with me, my faith in Him holding me up. Eventually, I could come and go much easier. He was with me the entire way, and my obedience is what made me a healthy adult again.

You say, “Oh, that’s great. But that’s what worked for you.”

No, there aren’t three dozen other ways to become strong. Remember? There’s only one way to the Father – through Jesus Christ. In Him is true strength, and that strength comes through obedience.

No one starts by running a marathon. Training is required.

Olympic swimmer, Michael Phelps, spent hours and hours, years, in the pool to become a gold medal winner. But at some point, in his life, he had his first lesson. Maybe he simply got wet and flailed around. He didn’t wait until he was old enough and tall enough and had watched all the videos before he got in the pool.

The man at the pool of Bethesda had lain there for thirty-eight years. Thirty-eight years! He could have refused to obey Jesus’ instruction to walk. In fact, at first, he pointed out how weak he was.

*“The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.” (John 5:7)*

“Look,” he said. “I can’t get in by myself and no one helps me.”

The story doesn't say it, but it seems to me thirty-eight years was enough time to find someone or to, at least, scoot to the edge. I hear Jesus' instructions in that light.

*“Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.”* (John 5:8)

“Get up from there!” Jesus said.

How powerful that is. But the impotent man wasn't healed until he made the effort to stand. When Jesus commanded him to rise, he was still impotent.

Do you get that? He had to obey.

In 2 Kings 5, Naaman, the captain of the host of Syria, was sent to Elisha the prophet to be healed of his leprosy, a serious, incurable infirmity. But when Elisha told him to go wash in the river, instead of obedience, he grew angry.

*“But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.”* (2 Kings 5:11-12)

Naaman believed Elisha COULD affect healing, but he didn't like the method. He wanted something more dramatic, then, failing that, something familiar to him.

I've said this many times—When I was so full of fear that I wouldn't leave home, I would much rather God have healed me instantly. But because I had to get up every day and keep going, I am much stronger.

God said, “Today, you're going to the grocery store. You can do it.” Or, “There's a family meal tonight at your mom's. You need to be there.”

In myself, I was too weak, and yes, sometimes, I still fell apart, but over time, it became less and less of an issue. My obedience to God in those years taught me who He is, and now, no one can tell me otherwise. I know

Him. We've spent time together. I've felt His gentle hand. He's surrounded me with His love. He's encouraged me. He gave me hope to get up each day. I started to believe good things would happen to me and not everything would be traumatic.

Naaman's servants set him straight.

*“And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, IF THE PROPHET HAD BID THEE DO SOME GREAT THING, WOULDST THOU NOT HAVE DONE IT? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean? Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.” (2 Kings 5:13-14)*

Healing was God's will, but Naaman had to obey the prophet to receive it.

Are you willing to take a step of faith? Or do you want your life to stay exactly like it is? Worse, no action usually means regression. By not following God, we lose ground.

I will walk forward. If God told me to go, then He will take care of me along the way. He loves me, and I love Him. It really is that simple.





# Chapter 8

## God is Commitment

There are three calls to obedience in the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit unfolded them to me early one morning before dawn. I saw them to me personally, in my spiritual walk, and for you and others in the body of Christ.

When I began writing them down for this book, however, God stopped me and had me speak to His character first.

We must have a reason to obey for our obedience to come from the right motive and bring godly results. We must first know *who* God is, and though I pray this book helps you see Him anew, it is through your continued meditation in the Word of God, through your time spent in prayer and worship from here on, that you will see Him fully for yourself.

I cannot give you the image He has painted for me. He desires to paint it for Himself in your eyes. He knows what will give you the heart for obedience that He desires.

He has created us all unique. I am a writer. My cousin is an artist. My brother is an engineer. God has sportsmen and women, schoolteachers, auto mechanics, real estate salesman, lawyers, doctors, and outdoorsmen. God knows your heart, in particular.

I urge you to press in, to seek Him, and allow Him to speak to you. I urge you to listen.

I am always learning, always growing. Writing this book has taught me so many incredible things. But that, in itself, is an important realization—I seek to grow. I want to mature. Because in that spiritual maturity, God will take my weakest traits and make them my strongest.

And here's a wonderful part of this growth—He will do it at a pace that fits me. I am slow and deliberate in most things. I like to think first then act, and I tend to drag my feet.

God has been exceedingly longsuffering in this regard.

When He showed me these steps of obedience, I realized how long I'd sat in one place, too afraid to move forward. I realized even greater, how He'd sat there with me, waiting for me to walk.

I even argued with Him after He made my progress clear. He asked me to do something new. "But, God," I said. "That is so uncomfortable for me."

God replied, and He sounded particularly peeved. "Everything is uncomfortable for you."

He is right, and that revelation set me free. I will go as He has instructed, even if it's uncomfortable. The fact is, it will never cease being uncomfortable as long as I avoid it.

This truth speaks into your life as well. Avoidance only moves us into sin and away from God. I see, more and more, how the things I don't want to hear, the thing I don't want to do is the one I must face squarely.

Our gut reaction to truth is sometimes to walk away. I urge you, next time, to take it in. When the preacher speaks of something that makes you squirm, and you know that you know God is trying to teach you through it, commit yourself to listen and obey, instead of closing your ears.

God gave this instruction to Joshua when he faced the Promised Land.

*"Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: TURN NOT FROM IT TO THE RIGHT HAND OR TO THE LEFT, THAT THOU MAYEST PROSPER whithersoever thou goest."* (Joshua 1:7)

"Observe and do," God said. But He promised strength and courage in the "doing" and prosperity as an end result. Prosperity in our job and our relationships. Also prosperity in our mind. In whatever area where we need it the most.

Prosperity comes because of our relationship with God, through our obedience to His instructions. We love Him and know He wants good things for us.

I keep repeating this, so you will never forget it. I want you to never turn loose of Him. Paint an image of His LIFE in you, life that creates and heals. See His LIGHT shine when you read the Word of God. Hear Jesus, our Lord, speaking in its words. Take comfort in the Holy Spirit when you pray. Seek Him as relief from stress and anxiety.

Instead of praying to a God who is way out there, who we think sometimes sits on His hands, we pray to the Creator, who MULTIPLIES. To the God of abundance. The God of mercy and grace and truth. And we expect the answers to our prayers because that is who He is.

Knowing God's character eliminates any doubt, any reluctance in my steps.

I know if I show up on my earthly father's doorstep with a great need, He will take me in and help me to the best of his ability. How much more can we expect of Father God? (Rm 8:15-16)

*"Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?"* King David asked in the Psalms. (Ps 139:7) Nowhere. I will dwell in Him and do what is required to remain there, for that is the place where I am blessed.

### **The Devil is Disobedience**

I wrote a fiction story a few years ago and couldn't put my finger on why it wasn't working. It was an unusual story, told as an allegory, about a girl who manifested God's light outwardly, in a physical sense. God had given me the idea, but for some reason, I couldn't proceed with it.

One day, I was in a local department store and came across a stack of books for sale, all Christian fiction. Thinking this odd, after all, it was a secular store, I picked them up and, in filtering through the stack, was drawn to one.

I bought it and took it home. I had read only a short way in when I knew why God had brought it to my attention. In any story, and in that one in particular, there is no good side without there also being evil. I could not write about the effect of the light in her and avoid the darkness around her. The plot of the book I had purchased made that very clear.

In this same way, we cannot talk about obedience and avoid talking about disobedience. It is helpful to view this topic from the opposite direction.

There are two types of disobedient people – the unsaved man or woman, who because they are separated from God have no choice in the matter, and those in the church, people the apostle Paul calls “carnal” Christians. (1Co 3:1) These are church-going men and women who choose to live in disobedience and ignore God’s instructions.

I heard a Bible teacher say the unsaved man’s reaction to his circumstances can *only* be anger and frustration. This speaks to me clearly. Those who walk in darkness, without the life of Christ, will respond like the kingdom of darkness.

We read the following verse earlier, but it needs to be repeated.

*“Ye are of your FATHER THE DEVIL, and the LUSTS OF YOUR FATHER YE WILL DO. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: FOR HE IS A LIAR, AND THE FATHER OF IT.”* (John 8:44)

A man or woman who has not accepted Christ, who does not believe in Jesus’ death and Resurrection and has not confessed Him as Lord, will be deceived about the truth. But, here’s the thing, they will think otherwise. They will believe that the path they walk is correct.

This is the nature of deception. You are not deceived if you are aware of it. The unsaved person will speak like their father, the devil. In fact, they can’t speak any other way. They will lie and steal and argue. They will adapt their sin to fit their lifestyle and have what they think are valid reasons for it. This seems harsh to say, but the apostle Paul outlined the works (or fruit) of darkness:

*“Now the WORKS OF THE FLESH ARE MANIFEST, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that THEY WHICH DO SUCH*

*THINGS SHALL NOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD.*” (Galatians 5:19-21)

In another letter, he said, “*Have no fellowship with the UNFRUITFUL works of darkness.*” (Eph 5:11)

There is no good in the devil’s hand. Where God, the Creator, spread goodness on the earth, where He blesses and multiplies, the devil steals and takes away: knowledge, wisdom, understanding, health, godliness.

These are Jesus’ words:

*“The thief cometh not, but for to STEAL, and to KILL, and to DESTROY: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”* (John 10:10)

Jesus came with abundant life.

This is more than financial success. Many people have fine houses, luxury automobiles, and overflowing bank accounts without being saved. It is possible to be happy, now and then, and not accept salvation. In fact, the unsaved person will believe, falsely, that he is happy.

This is sobering. However, truth only comes by walking with God. Otherwise, all you have, all you think about, every action you take is UNFRUITFUL.

But there is good news. Jesus came to earth and sacrificed Himself to give us access to eternity and all the products of eternity. He came to reveal to us everything God is that we might share in it. Through Him we know truth. We have wisdom. We have health.

We have abundance.

Colossians 1:13 says, “*Who [the Father] hath delivered us FROM the power of darkness, and hath translated us INTO the kingdom of his dear Son.*”

Once you accept Christ, and your spirit man is reborn, you are no longer in the devil’s kingdom. You no longer have to obey his unfruitful works. He has no power over you at all ... unless you give it to him.

This is the other side of disobedience.

Paul was upset with the church at Corinth. They wouldn't stop squabbling. They were jealous and full of envy.

*“My brothers and sisters, I cannot address you as people who walk by the Spirit; I have to speak to you as people who tend to think IN MERELY HUMAN TERMS, as spiritual infants in the Anointed One. I nursed you with milk, as a mother would feed her baby, because you were not, and still are not, developed enough to digest complex spiritual food. And here's why: YOU ARE STILL LIVING IN THE FLESH, not in the Spirit. How do I know? Are you fighting with one another? Are you comparing yourselves to others and becoming consumed with jealousy? Then it sounds like you are living in the flesh, NO DIFFERENT FROM THE REST WHO LIVE BY THE STANDARDS OF THIS REBELLIOUS AND BROKEN WORLD.” (1 Corinthians 3:1-3 VOICE)*

The King James Version uses the word “carnal” in this verse, meaning the Corinthian church thought and acted like unsaved men. This is important to understand because disobedience will block the light of God in your life. You will act and think like darkness, instead of God's amazing, fulfilling life.

Ephesians 5:1-2 speaks to this plainly. *“Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love ...”* This is their instruction, what they, as the church, are to do.

Let's continue reading.

*“But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, LET IT NOT BE ONCE NAMED AMONG YOU, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, WHICH ARE NOT CONVENIENT.”*

The word “convenient” means “proper” or “fitting.” (G433) In other words, that isn't how a child of God should act.

The next two verses continue this thought.

*“For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, HATH ANY INHERITANCE IN THE KINGDOM*

*OF CHRIST AND OF GOD. Let no man DECEIVE YOU with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the CHILDREN OF DISOBEDIENCE.”*

Remember, he’s speaking TO THE CHURCH.

“Don’t do these things,” he says. “Don’t act like that. Don’t look like disobedient, unsaved men. There is no inheritance to people who behave that way.”

What does he mean by “inheritance?” Peace of mind, wisdom and understanding, true success, and all the other FRUIT we are told to bear. (Gal 5:22-23)

*“Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye WERE sometimes darkness, BUT NOW are ye light in the Lord: WALK AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT.”* (Ephesians 5:7-8)

When I went to write this portion, the Lord gave me an example, which I believe will make this so clear. It is one thing to talk about obedience and disobedience, to list a bunch of Scriptures and another to make it applicable to you on a personal level.

We have studied the amazing benefits of a life in God’s presence, how He wants us to see Him as He is. We have described how obedience fits into the picture, that our love for Him results in our following His Word. Through it, we have access to the truth of God, the wisdom of God, and so many other wonderful things that He is.

But disobedience, refusing to obey Him, has the opposite effect. It blocks God’s light in our lives. We will not hear Him speak nor understand His words. We will be filled with all the works of darkness.

When we don’t have to!

God showed me this through an image of my beloved grandfather. He was a loving, kind man, who adored his grandchildren. In the picture God painted, however, I wanted to talk to him, we were even in the same house, but he was a floor above me, and I couldn’t access it. All I could see was the ceiling. I kept asking myself how to climb up there. How did I get into his

presence and hear his voice? Other family members walked around with me, some who had seen him, yet they couldn't help me get there.

I love my grandfather dearly. He is in heaven today. Still, putting myself in that scene, as unable to talk to him, was incredibly upsetting. Yet I knew, in the picture, I'd placed myself there. My actions had cut off my access.

This is a human example. But it is applicable to our heavenly Father. Disobedience will put up a wall between us and God. We won't experience all that He is through our own incorrect actions. There is no compromise to this. You can't have one foot in darkness and the other in the light.

The words from Revelation rise up in me again: *“Be shamelessly committed.”* (Rev 3:19 VOICE)

You're either all in the light, or you're hanging around in the dark. You're either obedient to God's life, or you're disobedient and separated from Him.

There isn't any halfway.

*“You groped your way through that murk once, but no longer. You're out in the open now. THE BRIGHT LIGHT OF CHRIST MAKES YOUR WAY PLAIN. So no more stumbling around. Get on with it! The good, the right, the true—these are the actions appropriate for daylight hours. Figure out what will please Christ, and then do it. Don't waste your time on USELESS WORK, mere busywork, the BARREN PURSUITS of darkness. Expose these things for the sham they are. It's a scandal when people WASTE THEIR LIVES ON THINGS THEY MUST DO IN THE DARKNESS where no one will see. Rip the cover off those frauds and see how attractive they look in the light of Christ.”* (Ephesians 5:8-16 MSG)

How powerful that is. I don't want to waste my time on something useless and barren or spend it scrambling around in the dark hoping no one will notice. The picture that paints is so vivid. There is no greater pressure than a constant effort to hide, especially when you know what you are doing is wrong.

The truth is, God sees it anyway. (Ecc 12:14; Lk 8:17; Lk 12:2-3) How much freedom, then to live in the LIGHT, walking the pathway God has for you. We simply must commit to do it, whatever obedience it requires.



## God is Always Listening

I was seated next to a couple in a restaurant, and the woman talked incessantly. The man nodded from time-to-time but made no effort to interject. I suspect he knew better. In my view, he couldn't have anyhow. She talked that much.

God isn't a chatterbox. He sometimes says nothing, and we are left to wait. But His silence does *not* mean we're in disobedience. I don't want to give you that impression.

Instead, you will know in your heart why God is silent. The Holy Spirit brings conviction of sin. We're aware we spoke wrongly or acted wrongly, that we need to repent and apologize to whomever we offended. We know to take corrective action.

*“A Psalm of David. Unto thee will I cry, O LORD my rock; BE NOT SILENT TO ME: lest, if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit. Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee, when I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle.”* (Psalm 28:1-2)

God is always listening. He always hears us. He always forgives when we come to Him with sincere hearts. But sometimes, what we're asking for requires a time of waiting for the answer. Not in frustration. That is not waiting. Our image of waiting, of having patience, is *impatience* instead.

Waiting on God is a time of growth. It is active. We are doing what God has given us to do until He speaks.

*“Wait on the LORD, AND KEEP his way, and HE SHALL exalt thee to inherit the land.”* (Psalm 37:34)

The word “*wait*” in the Hebrew means to bind or twist together. (H6960)

What a picture that creates. We're waiting on God, united with Him and not separated as those in disobedience. We're waiting in faith, expectant. We wait AND “keep his way,” or stay obedient.

God may be silent, but it's because He's giving us a chance to become stronger. To meditate on the Word of God for a while. To praise Him and

worship Him and build in us an image of who He is in our situation.

That is the key. No matter *what* we face WHO HE IS is our answer. Meanwhile, we stay active in what we know to do.

We can move too fast and rush ahead of God. My mother used to joke, and I'm not sure it is a joke, but she used to say if you drove over the speed limit, you left your angels behind. That's lighthearted, but when we find ourselves in God's silence, it is easy to become impatient and do things for ourselves. As well-meaning as we are, we become disobedient by pushing ahead, and that can have grave consequences.

King Saul is a major example of disobedience. Israel wanted a king, although God was against it. This speaks loudly to me. God wanted to be their source, but they begged to honor a man instead. God allowed it, with a strong warning of the outcome, and He chose Saul.

Saul proved himself to be a man of God at first and had great victories. The prophet Samuel even called him a humble man. (1Sa 15:17) But over time, in seemingly small ways, he chose disobedience. When facing the Philistines, not long after he'd become king (and before David's story), he was told to wait seven days for Samuel to come and make the sacrifice. The Mosaic law was specific about how sacrifice was to be performed, and anything done outside of those laws was sin.

Well, day seven rolled around, and it looked like his army was falling apart, so Saul decided to do the sacrifice himself. He didn't wait, and that sin cost him the kingship. (1Sa 13:13) Saul blamed it on the situation and the people, but God saw his heart.

It wasn't the only time Saul disobeyed. After that, he fought the Amalekites. He was told to completely destroy all of their families and also all of their goods. Instead, he saved the king, Agag, and allowed the people to keep the best of the cattle and goods as spoils of war.

When the prophet Samuel called him out on it, he acted nonchalant at first, then forced to admit the truth, once more, he blamed it on the people. "They insisted!"

Samuel's reaction shakes me to the core.

*“Does the Eternal One delight in sacrifices and burnt offerings as much as in PERFECT OBEDIENCE to His voice? Be certain of this: that OBEDIENCE is better than sacrifice; to HEED HIS VOICE is better than offering the fat of rams. Rebellion is as much a sin as fortune-telling, and willfulness is as wicked as worshiping strange gods. Because you have rejected His commands, He has rejected you as king.” (1 Samuel 15:22-23 VOICE)*

Rebellion against the command of the Lord is the same as worshipping another God. It is considering your will greater than what God has asked you to do. How serious that is. Samuel’s actions makes it clear. With Saul pulling at his cloak until it tore, Samuel called for Agag and slew the Amalekite king himself! (1Sa 15:33)

Saul chose a disobedient sacrifice, he chose rebellion from God’s instructions, and lost his divine destiny. He was impatient and rash and self-seeking. Repeatedly, he placed God in second place, unwilling to listen, unwilling to wait. It was better for him to not have sacrificed, better to not have offered anything at all, better to have obeyed, than to be disobedient.

He isn’t our only example to learn from.

Moses and Aaron came out of the tabernacle with the presence of God on them so strong that His glory shone visibly around them. God instructed them to gather the people in front of a certain rock with the rod in Moses’ hand. He was to speak to the rock and water would come forth.

Seems simple. Yet, Moses, in a fit of anger, struck the rock with the rod instead. Water came forth and the people’s thirst was satisfied, but ... BUT he lost being able to enter the Promised Land. (Num 20:7-12)

We reason our haste, our disobedience, may have consequences, but we’ll willingly give up whatever we might have had. It can’t be so bad, right? Like a child who disobeys and has a certain toy taken away, we’ll feel a little sorry about it but find something else to occupy us.

I ask you, though, what are you really giving up? What did God want to do in you that you forfeited because you didn’t trust Him?

What did your inability to wait keep from happening?

“I don’t know, so it doesn’t matter,” you say.

That isn’t good enough. Chances are, God will show you fully what you’ve lost. King Saul watched David take over his kingdom. He watched him find constant success in battle, and he was angry and tormented for the remainder of his life. (1Sa 16:14; 1Sa 17:49; 1Sa 18:12; 1Sa 18:29) Moses knew Joshua would lead the people into Canaan and had to see him and work with him every day. (Deut 1:38)

What will your disobedience allow the darkness to work in your life? Even greater, what of the things of God will you miss out on? I wasted so many years, thinking only about myself. I can remember specific things God wanted me to do, back as far as high school, but I ignored it, and my disobedience put me in the position of fear.

My obedience walked me out of it.

*“The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore CAST OFF THE WORKS OF DARKNESS, and let us PUT ON THE ARMOUR OF LIGHT. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But PUT YE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND MAKE NOT PROVISION FOR THE FLESH, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”* (Romans 13:12-14)

In this verse we see the truth. We cannot give our flesh, our carnal selves, any room to work, and instead, we “put on” Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us in obedience. (Heb 5:8-9) We are kind and gentle and compassionate as He was. We are faithful and dedicated and meek like Him.

Years ago, someone coined the phrase, “What would Jesus do?”

More than once, I’ve found this apt. What *would* Jesus do? Would He pitch a fit of anger or listen to the accusations of strangers and say nothing at all? (Mk 14:61)

This is far more powerful than we realize. The high priest tried to force Jesus to talk, but Jesus knew the power of His words. He’d cursed the fig tree and caused its death weeks before. (Mk 11:14) He knew one wrong word, and He’d undo everything God had sent Him for. He was that determined to obey.

We have no better example to follow.

### **What is obedience?**

We've talked a great deal about the need for obedience and the motive behind it, but I don't know about you, it never does me as much good to study a topic without specifics.

That's like someone dropping you off at the airfield and saying, "Go fly a plane."

Uhm. Yeah, some training is required first. You must know an infinite number of things about flight and airplanes before you can ever take off.

Or speaking on a topic I know a great deal about, writing, too many people sit down to write a book without any idea how to write. I am raising my hand high here. My first fiction story, I had no idea what I was doing. I needed training and lots of it – how to write good sentences, how to form a working plot, the proper way to write dialogue, and also things like editing and marketing and salesmanship.

Millions of people have written a book. Only a narrow percentage of them have written a *good* book. Still fewer, a successful one.

There is no obedience formula. Obedience requires knowing God and listening to Him for yourself. However, there are steps to obedience we must take and excellent examples of each in the Word of God as well as present day life.

One pastor told the story of his own steps of obedience. God asked him to open several savings accounts. He said to name them after specific things. This pastor was told to put five dollars in each and do nothing else right then. He obeyed and said that the accounts sat there in that condition, holding only five dollars, for several years. But he noticed, each time he opened his banking app, he'd read the names of the accounts and his faith would grow. He began adding money to them as God instructed, and years later, looking back, he realized how much God had blessed others from those savings accounts. Let me tell you, it was a substantial amount.

I don't know that I would have reacted too enthusiastically to a word from God like that.

“Five dollars? God? Are you sure?”

God knows what He is doing, and He likes to do unusual things. He likes to blow our minds and get all the glory for the results. He wants no one else to say they could have done it that way.

Look at Mary, the mother of our Lord. Or Abraham's wife, Sarah. Both are incredible miracles of conception. Or look at the Israelites crossing the Red Sea on dry land. Only God would do it that way. And He hasn't changed. We've read that Scripture several times now. He's forever the same.

He was LIGHT in Genesis. Jesus is the LIGHT in the Word of God. (Jn 1:4)

He was LIFE breathed into man at the beginning. Jesus came to give us LIFE. (Jn 6:51)

He required obedience from Adam, Noah, Abraham, David, and many others in order to find their reward. He requires obedience from us as well, and the rewards of that obedience are tremendous.

*“And it shall come to pass, IF THOU SHALT hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that THE LORD THY GOD WILL set thee on high above all nations of the earth: And ALL THESE BLESSINGS SHALL come on thee, and overtake thee, IF THOU SHALT hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God.”* (Deuteronomy 28:1-2)

IF YOU SHALL then the LORD WILL, and these blessings SHALL. “If” is a conditional word requiring us to make a choice and stick with it.

Joshua, at the end of his life, gathered the people before God, and God spoke, reminding them of all He had done for them to that point. He spoke of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the wonders He'd done in Egypt. (Jos 24:1-12) He then offered them a choice:

*“And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, CHOOSE YOU THIS DAY WHOM YE WILL SERVE; whether the gods which your fathers served that*

*were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”*  
(Joshua 24:14)

Amid people who did not believe in the true God, they were required to obey. No matter how that obedience made them look.

Lying in bed, in the darkness, I meditate on the Word of God a lot. There isn't anything else to do. I'm awake at least once during the night and usually finished sleeping by six a.m. I've been this way for years. My husband tends to wake up if I open the door, so I've learned to occupy my mind until I fall back to sleep.

One night, several months ago, God spoke a pair of Scriptures to me.

I've worked for my mom's ministry for more than 20 years. I do everything from accounting to graphic design to social media work and a lot of typing. I've typed thousands of outlines. My mom is the outline queen. Every lesson she speaks anywhere has an outline afterward.

She writes them longhand from point I to IX and includes all Scripture references. After so many years of this, I've placed many of them in my heart. I'm not as proficient as she is, but I usually know it's in there and can find it quickly.

I knew both verses God spoke to me were in the New Testament. I saw both included the word "come," which seemed significant. Additionally, I had an image of myself when the Holy Spirit spoke them to me. I saw a hand beckoning me forward.

"Now, Suzanne, how can you know it was the Holy Spirit?"

How could I not! I've been writing under the Holy Spirit's guidance since my book, *Fearless*, was released. I learned to write by hearing Him. Plus, though I knew those verses, I would never have linked them together with my own knowledge.

When God speaks, you will know it when you're close to Him.

The following night, God spoke more verses to me, and I rose and wrote it all down, or typed, as the case may be. He gave me examples from the Word of God that substantiated each one and showed me in what order they fit together. Such a magnificent moment in my life.

I realized after several days that these truths fit into the healing I'd gone through. Fear is a lie. It makes your troubles look huge. The number one thing that set me free was seeing how big God is. I spent a couple years learning His character, and the bigger God became in me, the more freedom I found.

I'd walked through the first step without knowing it. Like the Israelites, I'd faced a choice. I had to choose to obey, and without making that choice, I would have tied His hands. At some point, everyone has to admit they need help and be willing to take the steps to start on that pathway.

Step one says, "Who will you believe? Who will you obey?"

You, Lord. Amen.





## Chapter 9

### Come out and be separate.

*“Wherefore COME OUT FROM AMONG THEM, AND BE YE SEPARATE, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.” (2 Corinthians 6:17)*

In the three verses previous, the apostle Paul delineates the life of the believer, drawing a line between the goodness of God and the deception of the devil. He says:

*“Don’t develop partnerships with those who are not followers of Jesus’ teachings. For what real connection can exist between righteousness and rebellion? HOW CAN LIGHT PARTICIPATE IN DARKNESS? What harmony can exist between the Anointed and Satan? Do the faithful and the faithless have anything in common? Can the temple of God find common ground with idols? DON’T YOU SEE THAT WE HOUSE THE TEMPLE OF THE LIVING GOD WITHIN US?” (2 Corinthians 6:14-16 VOICE)*

A behavior choice is required of all believers. If you choose Christ, then you can no longer act like darkness. You deliberately separate yourself OR you walk in disobedience.

It’s either one or the other.

A player on a sports team cannot participate while wearing a disguise. That’s ludicrous. Yet we want to be Christians but look like the world. Paul, here, says NO, not possible. It isn’t enough to say the sinner’s prayer then sit at home and go on as usual. Something supernatural has happened to you. Now, it’s time to grow. Time to learn. Time to obey. What you used to do, the addictions you have, the foul language you once spoke, the entertainment you chose for yourself, all of that must change.

It won’t always be instant, but your dedication to it is important.

Look at the life of Paul. He sent Christians to their deaths, but once God changed him, he traveled the nations planting churches and encouraging

believers. He spent time in prison for His Christian beliefs. Think of it. God used a murderer to write the majority of the New Testament!

It's okay to look odd to those who don't believe. 1 Peter 2:9 says, *"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that YE SHOULD SHEW FORTH the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."*

People should see us and know we belong to God.

There is no pride in that statement. In fact, God is against pride in all forms. Instead, it is that who God is in us cannot be hidden. (Lk 11:33)

Like David, dancing before the Lord, in his undershirt (a most un-kingly thing), we aren't worried about appearances. (2Sa 6:16) Or Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refusing to bow before King Nebuchadnezzar. (Dan 3:18) They scorned his threats and received great deliverance!

Or what about Paul and Silas praising God while in prison at midnight? The prisoners heard them; they were that loud! What's greater, God heard them, and the door of the cell opened. (Act 16:25-26)

All of these men had captured the truth about their relationship with God and the rewards of obedience. What the ungodly world thought of them no longer mattered.

The apostle Paul makes the analogy of believers as a temple.

*"What? know ye not that your body is THE TEMPLE of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?"* (1 Corinthians 6:19)

We are a living temple, yet we constantly fill ourselves full of unclean things. Things we shouldn't watch, shouldn't hear. People we shouldn't associate with. We compromise godly values for what feels good, and with our words and actions, we trash the temple.

The end of the following verse, 1 Corinthians 6:20, says, *"For ye are bought with a price: THEREFORE glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."*

Glorify God in your body with what you wear, with what you say, and with how you act. How you *react*. Because you desire to conform to God's will, because you choose to be different and stand out from everyone else, you knowingly react as a godly man or woman.

The truth is our feelings lie to us and not just our bad feelings. Good ones lie too. Sometimes the good ones are the most deceiving. They say, since you love to do that, it must be God's will for you. Or maybe that since you like it, God has to be wrong about it. That person is exactly who you need. That purchase will make you happy today.

The truth is, we usually don't want to know if it is or isn't God's will. If we don't know, we won't have to deal with the guilt.

News flash: This doesn't make sin NOT be sin.

I get it. I know how hard it is to stop doing things that God has been dealing with you about. **But what I want you to see first is not the struggle, not how to be free, but that the decision you make to dedicate yourself to it is crucial.**

Because to walk daily in God's presence, to hear and understand His thoughts, those things must go. You cannot pray for more of God and to hear the Holy Spirit speaking, while clinging to whatever your unclean thing is. You cannot ask God to heal you in one area and ignore Him in another.

Unforgiveness, strife, anxiety, worry, any fruit of darkness cannot come into God's presence. How we deal with them also must change.

*But don't let the passion of your emotions LEAD YOU TO SIN! Don't let anger control you or be fuel for revenge, not for even a day. (Ephesians 4:26 TPT)*

Making the decision to separate yourself from sin and ungodliness and to follow Christ doesn't mean you will never have an emotion. This new walk is a choice. It is how you face that choice when under pressure that becomes the new change in you.

My problem was anger. I was angry about so many things and took it out on everyone. I didn't look like a temple where God lived at all.

You have an opportunity to explode, but do you take it? Or do you let things cool and face it with the right, godly mindset? Apologize (sometimes when it's not your fault), and let God be seen in you. We are told to "seek peace," and that makes staying peaceful no matter what. (1Pe 3:11)

*"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."*  
(Psalm 51:10)

I sang the above Scripture a lot before I realized it'd become my heart's prayer. It took me, what felt like forever, to see my behavior *when* I messed up. I'd be somewhere the next day, thinking I should have apologized. I should have prayed and repented **AT THE MOMENT** of the offense. When the truth was, I didn't even feel convicted until much later.

Why does that happen? A minister described it this way. He held up a soda can. Empty, you can crush it with your hands. The outside pressure is greater than what's inside (the air). But fill the can and it takes a lot more effort because, now, what's inside is resisting what's coming at it from the outside.

In short, by filling yourself full of God, by putting Him inside, the pressure of those things you struggle with will become less, and your ability to correct yourself when you slip up will become stronger.

Although we'd like an instant fix, chances are it won't come that way. My healing did not happen overnight, but that was to my advantage. It caused me to press into God. I am a different person than I would have been if He'd taken all the pain and confusion away in one breath. What I fought to do became easier the more that I practiced doing it, the more I stopped punishing myself mentally when I screwed up. Which was a lot, I assure you.

I wanted change – no more fear, no more of the physical struggle fear caused in my body, no more confusion and mental weakness, no more anger – and decided whatever I had to give up, however hard it was, or

uncomfortable, or inconvenient, I wanted to be different too badly to let pride or jealousy or anything else stop me.

And here's the thing—Praying for change *requires* making that change, and change is sometimes not too much fun. But the results of that change are an amazing relationship with God, surrounded by His peace and blessings, and it is worth that!

The Biblical Illustrator commentary makes a marvelous statement:

“New perceptions of spiritual things will come to us if we get away into the quiet of God's presence, and suffer ourselves to be absorbed by His Word. (T. G. Selby.)” (The Biblical Illustrator, 2Chr 27:6)

There is a spiritual strength in separation, in stepping away from the things of secular society and aligning ourselves with Christ. We are separate, though, not to draw attention to ourselves, although that might happen – David's wife, Michal, certainly saw him dancing – but for a more important reason. *WE STEP AWAY TO PUT OURSELVES IN A POSITION TO HEAR GOD.*

We choose to focus our attention on the things of God and, yeah, maybe people will notice. But the purpose is to change our mindset. What we valued before, how we spent our time, becomes far less important or stops altogether. (Php 2:13)

The familiar old hymn rings the lines: “*Turn your eyes upon Jesus / Look full in His wonderful face / And the things of earth will grow strangely dim / In the light of His glory and grace.*” (“Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus” by Helen Howard Lemmel)

There are not more apt words for time spent in God's presence. The more we gaze upon Him, the more we see His goodness and not the troubles around us. His presence changes our perceptions, as a General's eyesight in battle is vastly different from a man on the front lines.

1 Corinthians 2:15-16 in the Passion Translation states this clearly.

*“Those who LIVE IN THE SPIRIT are able to carefully evaluate all things, and they are subject to the scrutiny of no one but God. For Who has ever*

*intimately known the mind of the Lord Yahweh well enough to become his counselor? Christ has, AND WE POSSESS CHRIST'S PERCEPTIONS."*

Notice it is those who "live in the Spirit" who will perceive things as Christ does.

Dictionary.com defines "perception" as *awareness* and *insight*. Meaning, we do not stumble around in the dark any longer, but our footsteps are flooded with supernatural light. (Jn 11:9-10)

We hear better because we have put distance between ourselves and the noise of the world. We see better because where God's light shines, there isn't any darkness. (1Jn 1:5) Additionally, we move into a position of peace and rest. (Mt 11:28)

But know this – all of that is a result of our obedience to this first step. We must dedicate ourselves to separation and let go of everything that makes us blend in. We find time to read the Word of God each day. We dedicate ourselves to prayer, and we deliberately turn off the distractions around us. Television. Internet. Cell phone.

Those are modern distractions, but Jesus spoke a more pointed list in Matthew 13:20-22: *tribulation, persecution, offense, the care of this world, the deceitfulness of riches.*

All of these can keep you from hearing God speak. Troubles at work crowd your mind. Someone said something particularly rude, and you can't turn loose of it. You're worried about the state of society. Or maybe you've stared at your checkbook too much.

I've certainly done that.

But, here is the bottom line, and what the Holy Spirit laid on my heart – the number one reason why Christians never see answers to their prayers, the reason they don't walk in faith, the reason they are stressed and anxious all the time LIES IN ALL THE NOISE AROUND US.

Because God will not shout at you. 1 Kings 19:11-12 describes His voice as a "*still small voice*" and not an earthquake or terrific wind. In order to hear Him, we must find a quiet place and give Him a chance to speak. A man or

woman cannot fully enjoy a symphony while plugged into a music player, and God would rather speak when you are listening.

Then in hearing Him, we walk in obedience. Our first steps might be reluctant, our thinking still shaded by our world experiences, but the further we walk, the more we'll desire to walk, the more our obedience to His walk will paint a new picture of a loving God, a good God, and the good things He wants to give us.

Additionally, we don't stand alone, but with the body of believers who have also chosen to separate from the world and in that separation to gain strength and hope and peace and eternal, amazing, creative life.

*“Really, what profit is there for you to gain the whole world and lose yourself in the process?”* (Mark 8:36 VOICE)

What a sobering question our Lord posed. He continued and said.

*“What can you give in exchange for your life? IF YOU ARE ASHAMED OF ME AND OF WHAT I CAME TO TEACH to this adulterous and sinful generation, THEN the Son of Man will be ashamed of you when He comes in the glory of His Father along with the holy messengers at the final judgment.”* (Mark 8:37-38)

I don't know about you, but I don't want Him to be ashamed of me. So, I choose to stand with Christ, whether I look strange or not. I will separate from ungodliness and stand in a place where I can see better, where I can hear better.

I am unashamed, Lord. Whatever they say of me, let them say I followed You. That is enough.





# Chapter 10

## God is Direction

My picture of A GOOD LIFE is a straight line. There are no dips and valleys, no bad moments, but also no highs. No holidays, no unusual occurrences. It is boring, and, in my mind, it is safe.

I know, that is totally unrealistic.

But in separating myself from the world, I thought I could hide. Permanently.

Here's the truth, though—my steps toward freedom would eventually become stagnation and disobedience, and that would send me right back where I started.

No one wants to walk in circles.

Years ago, on a vacation that required driving through Dallas, Texas, my dad, weary from driving, let my mom take his place. When he woke up an hour later, he discovered she'd driven in a circle around the city.

Circles will take you nowhere. It is necessary to walk forward, and sometimes, the way is dotted with potholes, real ones and others created in our minds.

It took considerable time and effort for me to stop picturing a fearful future.

For example, my attitude about nighttime has taken the longest to heal. Deuteronomy 28:67 describes how I was perfectly: *“In the morning you’ll say, ‘I wish it were evening.’ In the evening you’ll say, ‘I wish it were morning.’ Afraid, terrorized at what’s coming next, afraid of the unknown, because of the sights you’ve witnessed.”* (MSG)

Just recently, He's given me to prayer in the nighttime. I look forward to it now, the quiet and just God and I talking. But that came when I ordered my steps.

*“Order my steps in thy word.”* (Psalm 119:133)

What do I mean by that? The word “*order*” here means “firmly established, fixed, stable, ready, prepared.” (H3559) When I chose God’s Word as my source, when I put His instructions inside, I became stable. I love that word. God in me prepared me for those hours of rest. Whereas before, with my mind on so many other things, I was going in the wrong direction or not going at all, and that made my future appear uncertain.

A lie of the enemy. God has wonderful things planned for me.

*“The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD,”* it says elsewhere in the psalm. (Ps 37:23) There it is again. God directs my steps. He would have me established in Him, ready and prepared for what comes next.

### **Come up higher.**

My mom had a dog, who from puppyhood to her senior years, always approached her food bowl as if a bomb was about to go off. In reality, the food was the same, the bowl was the same, and it was usually the same time of day. Yet, she’d sniff, neck extended, tentative.

I’ve been much the same. I thrive on routine and dislike any ripples in the pond, so to speak. I don’t need an adrenaline rush. I don’t want anything “new and exciting” to happen. I don’t want to be the center of attention, and frankly, I don’t understand people who do.

Jesus tells a story in Luke 14 of a man like this. He charges into a feast and takes a seat at the best table without asking, then is required to go to the end of the line, much to his disappointment.

We’ll read it in the Voice Translation.

*“Whenever someone invites you to a wedding dinner, don’t sit at the head table. Someone more important than you might also have been invited, and your host will have to humiliate you publicly by telling you to give your seat to the other guest and to go find an open seat in the back of the room. Instead, go and sit in the back of the room. Then your host may find you and say, “My friend! Why are you sitting back here? COME UP TO THIS TABLE NEAR THE FRONT!” Then you will be publicly honored in front of*

*everyone. Listen, if you lift yourself up, you'll be put down, but if you humble yourself, you'll be honored.*" (Luke 14:7-11)

Let's also read a portion of verse 8 in several other translations. Young's Literal Translation says, "*Friend, COME UP HIGHER.*" In the Message Bible we read, "*Friend, COME UP TO THE FRONT.*" The New International Version translates it, "*Friend, MOVE UP TO A BETTER PLACE.*"

Notice, first, a step of obedience was taken. Mr. Pushy Saint charged in and plopped down on the front row, only to be told he needed to slow down and sit in the back for a while.

As I have said, that is so not me. I'm content on the back row, being completely ignored. Give me hours and hours of alone time, and I'm good. But my being satisfied there is as wrong as his not wanting to sit there at all. He's pulling at the reins, just waiting for God to let him do more. I'm setting them aside, happy to no longer be where I was when fear consumed me.

Truthfully, though I knew this about myself, I didn't realize how comfortable I'd become until God asked me to get up. He said to me clearly, "Come up higher."

Again, not in pride. In obedience.

Here's the problem with both scenarios, me and Mr. Pushy Saint will both miss out on God's best until we obey. We're too consumed with ourselves, though our selfishness took different formats, to do what we've been told.

This parable is about humility. It is submission of our thoughts and desires to the will of God, and it is the second step of obedience. **First, we separate ourselves from sin, giving ourselves the opportunity to hear God speak. Second, we submit our desires to His, as steps toward our success.**

We have a flawed view of both submission and humility. Humility isn't humiliation, and submission isn't browbeating. Instead, they are the proper attitude of willingness.

*“If ye be WILLING and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land.” (Isaiah 1:19)*

Being humble comes before having success. I’ve heard many ministers tell how they began working in the church by cleaning bathrooms or leading the youth group. Their promotion only came after faithfulness doing something small. In this same vein, for me, doing the “small things” is an enormous hurdle. But, whichever type of person you are, it is your heart of humility that will take you higher.

When God spoke this portion to me, I saw the steps of obedience I had ignored, out of my own fear and discomfort. I am much humbled by my heavenly Father’s longsuffering, that He sat with me in one place for such a long time. I am humbled that He trusted me to come higher in faith.

Jesus is my example.

Philippians 2:7-9 says, *“When he appeared in human form, HE HUMBLLED HIMSELF IN OBEDIENCE to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross. Therefore, God elevated him to the PLACE OF HIGHEST HONOR and gave him the name above all other names.” (NLT)*

Notice, Jesus’s humility gave him the *“place of highest honor.”*

Peter repeated this same instruction and reward to the church.

*“Therefore HUMBLE YOURSELVES under the mighty hand of God [set aside self-righteous pride], SO THAT HE MAY EXALT YOU [TO A PLACE OF HONOR IN HIS SERVICE] at the appropriate time.” (1 Peter 5:6 AMP)*

Humility is submission done out of love. What we love, we don’t mind submitting to. Doesn’t that fit in with our motive for obedience?

But I must stress again, humility for you may not take the same path of action it does for me. There’s no need to tell me to take the backseat and stay there. That is my comfort zone. So, whereas Mr. Pushy Saint would be humbled by his obedience to that command from God, it doesn’t require anything of me at all.

Humility often requires doing things that make us uncomfortable. For me, it is a more active position than I prefer. God fits humbleness into what is best for each of us. I don't have to be like you, and you don't have to be like me. But we both have to put God's commands first.

The higher place God beckons us to is a place of service and obedience. It isn't competitive. We are not fighting each other for a place at Jesus' side. The disciples suggested that and were rebuked. (Lk 9:46) There, again, we see the importance of humility. God will not promote anyone who is filled with pride and self-sufficiency.

*“Likewise, you younger men [of lesser rank and experience], be subject to your elders [seek their counsel]; and all of you, CLOTHE YOURSELVES WITH HUMILITY toward one another [tie on the servant's apron], FOR GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD [the disdainful, the presumptuous, and He defeats them], but He gives grace to the humble.” (1 Peter 5:5 AMP)*

The higher place cannot be earned through self-effort, but, oh, what a marvelous place it is! There is nothing like being exactly where God wants you to be. Our key verse, Luke 14:10, in the J.B. Phillips translation, speaks it this way, *“Come on, my dear fellow, WE HAVE A MUCH BETTER SEAT than this for you.”*

Better than what? Than anything we could strive to do on our own. There is no success outside of God. Humility and a heart of service to others are at the core of the gospel. (Php 2:3 NLT)

Read Jesus' last statement in the parable.

*“For everyone who makes himself important will become INSIGNIFICANT, while the man who makes himself insignificant will find himself IMPORTANT.” (Luke 14:11 PHILLIPS)*

You can't get clearer than that. But I must warn you, while sitting in that position of humility, there will be that time of waiting. However, waiting isn't worrying. Waiting is done in faith, and faith is accomplished through patience. (Heb 6:12)

Humility and submission to God's will are a continued state of prayer (communication) and praise (thankfulness). Not a hopeless position nor a boring one.

Psalm 27:14 says, "*WAIT WITH HOPE for the LORD. Be strong, and let your heart be courageous. Yes, wait with hope for the LORD.*" (GW)

Then in Psalm 37:7, we read, "*REST IN THE LORD, and WAIT PATIENTLY for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.*"

What an amazing picture. Our place of obedience is a place of strength and courage, of rest. That goes against everything we've thought. We are not pacing and anxious, or jealous and envious, but, instead, full of faith, expectant.

We are the tree pictured in Psalm 1:3.

*"He will be STANDING FIRM like a flourishing tree planted by God's design, deeply rooted by the brooks of bliss, bearing fruit in every season of his life. He is never dry, never fainting, ever blessed, ever prosperous."* (TPT)

What a blessed image that is. Flourishing, deeply rooted, always bearing fruit in every season of life. Always full of God's goodness, always filled with His Holy Spirit.

*And by STANDING FIRM with PATIENT ENDURANCE you will find your souls' deliverance,"* it says in Luke 21:19 (TPT)

Faith must be exercised to be effective. (Jas 2:17) A man can own a car. He can have a job and need to travel there. But until he gets behind the wheel and cranks the engine, the car and the job are pretty useless.

We are not meant to be stagnant, no matter how comfortable that is. Water left in a container undisturbed in Florida grows algae and breeds mosquitos. Water in a lake or creek, however, has fish that eat the larvae and plants that add oxygen. Though it appears still on the surface, it is working actively.

So, too, is our humbleness. What feels like suffering in the flesh, works to our eternal life. (Gal 6:9) Not only in the heavenly future but in the present, today.

God's goodness lives in us TODAY!

We are stronger and wiser through obedience TODAY. Because we obey, our attitude becomes like Christ's, and that attitude God will honor TODAY. Whereas by seeking honor we will lose it. By seeking God we will gain everything our self-effort failed to bring.

And even greater things. Where our imagination stops, God's is HUGE.

Just consider, there are approximately 33,600 species of fish. There are 8.7 million species of animals. There are 60,000 varieties of trees. Now add in grasses and other forms of vegetation and remind yourself God created it all in a few words. (<https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/how-many-species-of-fish-are-there.html>; <https://www.wonderopolis.org/wonder/how-many-animals-are-there-in-the-world>; <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-39492977>)

Yet we doubt His plans for us and draw back. This is a dangerous mindset. Hebrews says:

*“Now the just shall live by faith: BUT IF ANY MAN DRAW BACK, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”* (Hebrews 10:38)

The Voice Translation states it this way: *“But My righteous one must live by faith, for IF HE GIVES UP HIS COMMITMENT, My soul will have no pleasure in him.”*

It isn't that our reluctance will leave us where we are, and we can live with that. But it lacks commitment, and that is anti-faith and sparks of rebellion and pride, which the Bible says is like witchcraft. (1Sa 5:23) And I would add – no matter what our reason is for drawing back. In my case, out of fear. For others, maybe it's arrogance. Whatever the cause, we will lose everything we have gained, *and* the magnificent future God has planned, a future that we can't possibly fathom.

This is God's promise to us.



*“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee GREAT AND MIGHTY THINGS, which thou knowest not.” (Jeremiah 33:3)*

What an incredible thought! I want to know. I want to hear. Speak, Lord. I'm listening.



# Chapter 11

## Come after me.

Sometimes a Scripture witnesses with our heart. There I sat, reading the parable about humility, and naturally, I continued reading to see what came after it. I could not move past Luke 14:26-27.

Here, Jesus gives a direct command about obedience. He says:

*“If any man COME TO ME, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and COME AFTER ME, cannot be my disciple.”* (Luke 14:26-27)

How eager were we when God called us higher? We’ll give it all up and follow Christ to the ends of the earth. Then, we read we must “hate” our family and skid to a halt. It sounded great until now. We love our parents. We have the best brother and sister. We can’t possibly hate them.

That isn’t, of course, what Jesus meant. Actually, we are told to honor our mother and father. (Ex 20:12) So, obviously, that wasn’t His point.

The word “*hate*” used here means “to love less”. (G3404) It is the same word Jesus used when He said, “*No man can serve two masters: for either he will HATE the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other.*” (Mt 6:24)

**This third step of obedience requires us to make God first place.** His will and our obedience to it are a priority, and that sounds as it should be. Until we realize what we must give up.

Here’s the problem we have with this verse, we view it in our limited, human mindset. We focus on what we might lose.

Let me explain.

A young ruler came to Jesus asking about eternal life, and Jesus instructed him to keep the Ten Commandments. The young ruler replied he had done

that his entire life. Jesus' next request sent him spinning.

*“Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and COME, FOLLOW ME.”*  
(Luke 18:22)

The young ruler went away sad, thinking about all he owned. He focused on what he was losing.

I can't speak to this man's heart because the Bible doesn't say, but reading between the lines, pride was an issue, and a definite lack of knowledge about God's true intent. Because after the ruler had gone, Jesus discussed the incident with His disciples. (Lk 14:26-27) His response to them can be understood better if we look ahead a few chapters, where He repeated His words with an important promise.

*“Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee. And he [Jesus] said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, Who shall not RECEIVE MANIFOLD MORE IN THIS PRESENT TIME, and in the world to come life everlasting.”* (Luke 18:30)

This story as written in Matthew 19 phrases it this way: *“And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, SHALL RECEIVE AN HUNDREDFOLD, AND SHALL INHERIT EVERLASTING LIFE. But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.”* (Mt 19:29-30)

Did you catch all that?

No man who's put God first, who's chosen to follow Jesus, who's set his pride down, who's laid his worldly possessions aside, whether that's literal or figurative ... These things *must* become less ... No one who's obeyed what God has asked of them will do without. Instead, whoever has done these things at God's instruction will receive one hundredfold NOW IN THIS PRESENT TIME *and* treasures in heaven.

The obedience that Jesus asked of the ruler, the “one thing” the ruler lacked, came with a phenomenal reward. A position of honor, the presence of God

in his life, and eternity. God promised to multiply back to him one hundred times what he'd given up.

Our heavenly Father's heart is always to make our lives better, to shower us with His goodness, and this is the vision we lack. Instead of remembering His promises, we become convinced we'll lose too much. We fail to see God's grand design and make excuses for our disobedience.

Jesus addresses this in another parable in the same chapter of Luke 14.

*“Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, COME; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began TO MAKE EXCUSE. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.”* (Luke 14:16-20)

Each man invited to attend had a reason why he couldn't come. One man says he just got married. Another has this new field to plant. A third sites his job as an excuse.

Thinking, again, of the young ruler, he used his possessions as an excuse not to come.

Can you hear it?

God is asking us to come after Him in obedience to a great reward, but we are full of reasons to put it off. Not today, we have an appointment. Not right now, we're so far behind at work. Maybe later, we haven't done our exercise for the day.

What are the chances you will stop and do it then?

Not now. Not like this. Not with her. It's too uncomfortable. It's too difficult. We just can't possibly do that with them. At some point, all of our excuses become disobedience.

Many times have parents asked their son or daughter to do a chore and listened to the excuses. And the whining – “Do I *have* to?”

Obedience that is filled with complaints isn't really obedience.

God desires to walk with us, to guide us into a higher place of blessing, a better place, but our attitude is often an issue.

Look at how the disciples obeyed.

*And he saith unto them, FOLLOW ME, and I will make you fishers of men. And THEY STRAIGHTWAY left their nets, and followed him. (Matthew 4:19-20)*

Straightway. Without excuses. Without worrying about what they were leaving behind. This is the heart God wants in us, the heart He will bless.

In contrast, one man promised to follow Jesus, but only *after* he tended to the burial of his father. (Lk 9:59) This sounds reasonable to us. But Jesus replied, “*Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.*” (V60)

Wait. What? Why did Jesus say something so seemingly uncaring? To answer that, we must keep reading.

*“And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and LOOKING BACK, is fit for the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9:61-62)*

Jesus saw the heart of these men. The kingdom of God wasn't first place, and they weren't really willing to follow. Instead, they would start planting but wish they were somewhere else. Weeds would spring up while they daydreamed, and they wouldn't notice. Birds would land and consume the seed before it could take root. They'd overlook it all.

Their hearts weren't really in the task, and God desires our hearts above everything else.

Jesus said to His disciples:

*“If any man will COME AFTER ME, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” (Matthew 16:24)*

There are no good excuses. To come out and be separate, to come up higher in His presence, to come after Him, our only good choice is self-denial.

The apostle Paul said, *“I die daily.”* (1Co 15:31)

What did he mean by that? That what his mind and body desired must be set aside for what God has asked. This is obedience, and we obey, knowing God has given His word that everything we think we need isn't even half of what He will do for us, in the end.

### **The Purpose of Obedience**

A man built a house of the finest materials. He included a kitchen with high-end appliances and stone countertops. He designed the perfect living room with a grand fireplace and a huge entertainment center. Double doors opened to a pool and landscaped back yard. Upstairs, he built bedrooms for his family with closets to spare and private baths.

Why was the house built? Why put out so much energy and money?

To live in it. That man intended to spend his time there and enjoy the fruits of his labor. He's worked and he's saved his cash, so that he can move in and sleep and eat and celebrate.

He didn't build a house to give tours. He didn't intend it to become a barn. Having painted the walls, hung photographs, and installed furniture, he isn't going to throw hay on the floor and lead in a flock of goats.

*“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and FOR THY PLEASURE they are and were created.”* (Revelation 4:11)

David Guzik's Enduring Word Commentary, of the word *“pleasure,”* says, *“We each exist TO GIVE GLORY AND PLEASURE TO GOD. Until we do that, we don't fulfill our created purpose.”*

How powerful that is.

I also love what Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible states:

“There is no other reason why the universe exists at all than that such was the will of God; there is nothing else that is to be adduced [proven] as explaining the fact that anything has now a being. The putting forth of that will explains all; and, consequently, **WHATEVER WISDOM, POWER, GOODNESS, IS MANIFESTED IN THE UNIVERSE, IS TO BE TRACED TO GOD**, and is the expression of what was in him from eternity. It is proper, then, to ‘look up through nature to nature’s God,’ and **WHEREVER WE SEE GREATNESS OR GOODNESS IN THE WORKS OF CREATION, TO REGARD THEM AS THE FAINT EXPRESSION OF WHAT EXISTS ESSENTIALLY IN THE CREATOR.**”

Wow. We are an expression of the Creator, created for His pleasure, and as such, our lives are wasted on selfish pursuits, like that beautiful house being filled with animals. That isn't its purpose, and ours isn't a huge bank account, a fancy car, a desired relationship, nor the ability to live on permanent vacation.

Psalm 22:3 tells us God inhabits the praises of His people. There is our purpose.

We are designed to live continually shouting His praise, and what a phenomenal promise—When we do, He will surround us with His presence! (Ps 5:12) Not as a “once in a while” thing, but daily, so that we can remain there.

*“But you are GOD’S CHOSEN TREASURE—priests who are kings, a spiritual “nation” set apart as God’s devoted ones. He CALLED YOU OUT of darkness to experience his marvelous light, and now he claims you as his very own. He did this so that you would broadcast his glorious wonders throughout the world.” (1 Peter 2:9 TPT)*

Such precious words. We are called out, a chosen treasure, in order to experience Him. Treasure holds value. We read this verse in the King James where it says, “*peculiar people,*” but not “peculiar” as in strange, but as in worth a great price.



Indeed, our Savior paid the greatest price of all. We honor that sacrifice with our praises.

Acts 17:28 says, *“For IN HIM we live, and move, and have our being.”*

He is the reason for our “being” anything at all. Or we could say, “Our ‘being’ is like His.” We ARE (a “being” verb) all the things that He is. He fills us with creative life. He provides the clarity of thought we need to understand the task. He gives us the strength to perform it. We take our guidance from His Word, allowing its principles to change our behavior.

*“Understand [this], my beloved brethren. Let every man be quick to hear [a ready listener], slow to speak, SLOW TO take offense and to get angry. For man’s anger does not promote the righteousness God [wishes and requires]. In a humble (gentle, modest) spirit receive and welcome the Word WHICH IMPLANTED AND ROOTED [IN YOUR HEARTS] contains the POWER TO SAVE YOUR SOULS.”* (James 1:19-21 AMPC)

Anger is *not* like God. Offense is not God’s way. Instead, He is humble, gentle, and modest, and we are to BE like Him. These are the attitudes required to receive God’s Word in our hearts and bear fruit.

As a tree was created to give shade and reproduce, that is its purpose, the life of God in us forms our will to His, and we walk in the image of Christ, as meek and peaceful. We walk in submission to the Father’s leading. He provides our promotion. He gives us favor in the marketplace. Where He IS, we will BE also. We are inseparable.

He lives in me. He moves in me. He is my being, and that saves my soul.

Matthew 7:13-14 constructs this life of BEING like God to one narrow pathway:

*“There are two paths before you; you may take only one path. One doorway is narrow. And one door is wide. Go through the narrow door. For the wide door leads to a wide path, and the wide path is broad; the wide, broad path is easy, and the wide, broad, easy path has many, many people on it; but the wide, broad, easy, crowded path leads to death. Now then that NARROW DOOR LEADS TO A NARROW ROAD THAT IN TURN LEADS TO LIFE. It is hard to find that road. NOT MANY PEOPLE MANAGE IT.”* (VOICE)

Not many manage it because it is a road of obedience that can only be walked by those who have given their lives to Christ. The narrow road requires letting go of what's easy, what everyone else is doing, and often that includes our gut reactions, and instead, doing what pleases God.

I choose to come after Him, to sacrifice my selfishness and my pride. When my feelings are roaring, I know they do not lead me into truth. Instead, I seek God, who *is* truth, and I always find Him, because I have cultivated hearing the Holy Spirit's voice.

These steps of obedience take me forward in God's purpose, to be all He has designed for me to be. But I realize that often, we can't picture God's complete plan. That is where obedience holds its greatest value – in its connection to faith and our trust in the One who leads us.

### **The Obedience of Noah**

One of the greatest examples in the Word of God to illustrate this so powerfully is the life of Noah. My childhood memories of Noah mainly involved the animals and his family's survival and that, I believed, by the skin of their teeth. Until God drew me to study it for this book, I knew only that he built a boat, and everyone got on board right before a flash flood came.

In fact, it is a story of obedience which paints such an unmistakable portrait of our heavenly Father's heart. Right at the start of it, we are given insight into Him.

*“And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and IT GRIEVED HIM AT HIS HEART. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it REPENTETH me that I have made them. BUT NOAH FOUND GRACE IN THE EYES OF THE LORD.”*  
(Genesis 6:5-8)

We've pictured God as angry. He pitches a fit over the state of things and decides to destroy it all, sort of throwing a child's tantrum. Face red, He

hurls his favorite toy across the room. Take that.

But it says God was grieved. The word “repenteth” actually means “to console oneself” or “to comfort.” (H5162) Man’s sin made Him sorrowful.

David Guzik’s Enduring Word Commentary gives a clear explanation of God here.

“God’s sorrow at man, and the grief in His heart, are striking. This does not mean that creation was out of control, nor does it mean that God hoped for something better but was unable to achieve it. GOD KNEW ALL ALONG that this was how things would turn out, but our text tells us loud and clear that as God sees His plan for the ages unfold, it affects Him. GOD IS NOT UNFEELING in the face of human sin and rebellion.”

Not that God wasn’t in control but that He had to act because sin was so great. Vine’s Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words says this as well.

“Most uses of the term in the Old Testament are connected with God's repentance ... He changed when man changed to make the right choices, but He could not change His attitude toward evil when man continued on the wrong course. As God changed His actions, He always REMAINED FAITHFUL to His own righteousness.” (Under “Repent”)

That gives the story a new light. Man continued to sin, and God could not bless sin. But Noah was different. God saw Noah’s righteous actions. He pleased God.

How exactly did he do that?

We see the answer in Genesis 6:9:

*“Noah was a JUST MAN and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.”*

Additionally, in the New Testament, 2 Peter 2:5 tells us Noah was *“a preacher of righteousness.”*

In the midst of a violent, corrupt earth, God saw one man’s obedience. (Ge 6:11) Noah stood out from among all those around him. His dedication to

godliness brought God so much pleasure at that moment. Here was a man who remembered the things of God and strove to do them. Someone who taught them to his children.

That's what it means by "perfect generations." Noah's family hadn't intermarried with the "sons of God" like so many others. (Ge 6:2)

Noah set himself apart from the evil of his day, and God noticed. Think of that. There wasn't any church for him to run to, no neighbor who would worship God with Him. There were only 8 people on the entire earth who God said He would save, and they were Noah's own children! (Heb 11:7)

Noah did what brought grace in God's eyes, and the result was the rescue of his household.

His first step of obedience enabled the ungodly world to see God in him. He stepped away from sin. His second step asked him to come up higher.

*"And the LORD said unto Noah, COME thou and all thy house into the ark; FOR THEE HAVE I SEEN RIGHTEOUS before me in this generation."*  
(Genesis 7:1)

The Holy Spirit speaks to me between the lines that this wasn't the first conversation between Noah and God. Noah walked with God, which means they'd spent time together. God wasn't searching in desperation for someone who might be righteous. It says He saw him. He knew who He was.

Knowing him, seeing his just ways, God lifted him to a safe place. Our text says, *"The LORD shut him in."* (Ge 7:16) God sealed the door.

David sang in the Psalms, *"You are all around me – in front of me and in back of me."* (Ps 139:5 GW) Then in Psalm 91:14, spoken from God's point-of-view: *"Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will SET HIM ON HIGH, because he hath known my name."*

God is our refuge, our protection from all calamity. He is the higher place, the safest spot, to be. (Ps 91:10)

*“The LORD lifteth up the meek,”* Psalm 147:6 says. To a place out of the enemy’s reach, whether that enemy is the weather or our health or adverse circumstances. But the lifting happens *because* of our obedience.

Noah’s household was saved because he heard God speak and did what he was told, although he hadn’t seen rain before and probably didn’t understand what a flood was. (Ge 2:5-6) Meanwhile, everyone around him is laughing their heads off. They can’t hear God at all, and to them, Noah just looked stupid.

God’s instructions often look foolish to those deaf to His voice and sometimes will require great humility to act on. (1Cor 1:21,23) The story is often told of Elisha, the prophet, surrounded by the army of Syria. His servant couldn’t see a way out.

“What are we going to do?” he asked.

*“And he [Elisha] answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, OPEN HIS EYES, THAT HE MAY SEE. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.”* (2 Kings 6:16-17)

God had taken care of everything, but the servant and the Syrian army couldn’t see it. Elisha, however, had the word of the Lord. He trusted Jehovah.

Hebrews 11:7 says, *“BY FAITH Noah, being warned of God of things NOT SEEN AS YET, MOVED WITH FEAR, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”*

“Fear” here means reverence. (G2125) Noah revered God and, though he hadn’t seen what God was talking about, he acted as if he had. God had spoken. He chose to walk by faith, and his faith was honored.

What an example for us.

One man faced an ungodly society and refused to compromise. He obeyed in the face of his family’s questions. I’m sure when “Good Ol’ Dad” said he

wanted to build an enormous boat, they thought he'd lost his mind. He obeyed in the face of the storm, in the face of oncoming death. God had said He would destroy all living things, after all. We are told, "*Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.*" (Ge 7:23)

Noah believed God. Noah spoke God's words, "God's got me in this, so God will carry me out," and he followed it with action. This is the process of faith. What we put in us, either God's truth or fear of the situation, is what will emerge from our lips and subsequently in our behavior.

Jesus said, "*For of the abundance of the heart [a man's] mouth speaketh.*" [Lk 6:45]

I heard a minister say Jesus calmed the storm because He had calm in Him. This moves me. What great peace He had inside to speak peace over the wind and the waves. [Mk 4:41]

In the same light, Noah trusted God to carry him through.

And the story doesn't end there. After more than a year locked up in the ark, once standing on dry ground, Noah offered a sacrifice of praise. He continued his worship as he always had, and in that, he pleased God.

Noah came out from among the ungodly people. He separated himself. He came up higher when He was called, building the boat over a long period of time. Notice, he didn't argue with God. He didn't complain about the work. He was humble and obedient. When he left the ark, he followed after God still, knowing God would supply whatever he needed for a good life.

God's response is over-the-top and awesome, as He always is. He made a new covenant with Noah. He promised to never flood the earth like that again. He promised abundance on the earth. (Ge 8:17) Then He created a whole new heavenly sign, the rainbow, as an eternal promise. (Ge 9:13)

How amazing is that?

God said, "Just for you, Noah, because of your obedience, here's what will happen after it rains for the rest of eternity."

And even greater, God said, *“While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.”* (Ge 8:22)

The entire process of planting, growing, and harvesting is traced back to Noah’s obedience!

One man chose to obey God, to submit his life and purpose to a bountiful Creator, and in so doing, he changed the earth forever.

### **The Harvest is Come**

I find this such an apt promise to Noah. After all, he’d witnessed the destruction of the earth, but he’d also seen its rebirth. (Ge 8:11) It is exactly like God to focus on the blessing and not the mistakes.

*“And God blessed Noah ...”* (Genesis 9:1)

He blessed Him. Not He lectured him.

“Now, look at what just happened, and if you don’t want to see me upset again, then ...”

No, God made the blessing and the promise of abundance, the reason to obey from then on. This is like Him. God is mercy and grace. He is abundant in forgiveness.

Psalm 103:12 says, *“As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.”*

I’d never thought of this Scripture quite this way, but my mother pointed out if you go north around the earth, you will eventually travel south. However if you go east, you are always going east. East and west never meet.

What an image of our loving God.

In another location, He promises He will not remember our forgiven sins. (Heb 8:12) Instead, He speaks blessing and hope, tempered with obedience.

Obedience is the reason for harvest. Noah's deliverance stands as proof, but in Mark 4:26-29, Jesus paints the image. He said:

*“So is the kingdom of God, as if a man SHOULD CAST SEED into the ground; And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because THE HARVEST IS COME.”* (Mark 4:26-29)

We love the idea of harvest, the picture of a farmer reaping the results of months of hard work. But that is just my point—all of what we enjoy of the harvest comes because of the farmer's obedience. There is no harvest without the planting of the seed, without watering and fertilizing, without pulling weeds.

There is no harvest without the image of the harvest as real before the seed ever touches the ground.

I love to plant things in my flowerbeds, and I plant them with the mental picture of those flowers or vegetables at their very best. But to see them grow to that level, there are steps I must take. First, the soil needs tending. In areas where it's too sandy or there's too much gravel, I bring in richer soil, and I mix in fertilizer. In areas where it's too soft and moist, I must provide proper drainage.

Preparing the soil is my job.

Jesus spoke about this in another, familiar, parable. He said:

*“Behold, a sower went forth to sow; And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the WAY SIDE, and the fowls came and devoured them up: Some fell upon STONY PLACES, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell AMONG THORNS; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: But other fell INTO GOOD GROUND, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.”* (Matthew 13:3-8)



Here, we see four types of ground. We've had this idea that God has made us each, willy-nilly, a random type of ground, and that's just what we are and where we've ended up. No! If I want to be good ground, it is my responsibility to prepare my heart, and Jesus tells us specifically what's required to do that.

Throw out the idea of getting the lucky spot. The soil of our hearts will be as fruitful as the effort we put in.

“What effort?” you ask. Well, in Luke 8: 4-8, we read this same parable with a slightly different perspective. Notice several key factors. First, in verse 11, it says, “*The seed is the word of God.*” We are the soil, and God's Word is what is planted. Now, let's read verses 12-15.

*“Those BY THE WAY SIDE ARE THEY THAT HEAR; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. THEY ON THE ROCK ARE THEY, WHICH, WHEN THEY HEAR, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And THAT WHICH FELL AMONG THORNS ARE THEY, WHICH, WHEN THEY HAVE HEARD, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But THAT ON THE GOOD GROUND ARE THEY, WHICH IN AN HONEST AND GOOD HEART, HAVING HEARD the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.”*

Each type of ground heard the Word. No one in the story *didn't* hear the Word. But the seed sprouted based on how fertile the soil was.

Much has been said about the four types of ground, and rightly so. A farmer would not choose to plant corn on the side of the road, in the center of the desert, or in a thicket. He wants acres of open ground where he can water and feed the plants and know that it's the right environment for growth.

But in our parable—What makes our hearts one type of ground or another?

We cultivate ourselves as good ground or we fail to become good ground through our obedience. We till the soil of our hearts by reading the Word of God and meditating in its principles. (Jos 1:8; Ps 1:2) End of the day, before

bedtime, you will find me reading and rereading a passage of Scripture. I read until God reveals it to me or He directs me to dig deeper.

We also spend time in fervent prayer. (Jas 5:16) Not simply a please-God-please session, but prayers spoken in faith. This plants God's Word in us and waters it and shines the sunlight of His presence onto the soil.

We plant then continue to work in the garden. God does the growing, but that growth is dependent on us to take care of the seeds. (1Co 3:6)

John 14:24-25 in the Voice Translation says, *"I tell you the truth: unless a grain of wheat is planted in the ground and dies, it remains a solitary seed. But when it is planted, it produces in death a great harvest."*

Here is another important principle.

Any seed, once planted, must die in order to produce fruit. So, too, we die to our wants so that the seed of the Word of God will grow. This sounds uncomfortable. We picture ourselves giving up something valuable, but I assure you, God's harvest is so much greater than anything we can do on our own.

We no longer live for "what I want," for what feels good, for what everyone else is doing, for what someone owes "me." The death of our selfish desires is how the harvest will grow. Growth cannot happen without the death of the seed.

God's life fills the seed and causes it to grow; our will dies in preference to His will. *"He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things,"* it says in Acts 17:25.

We are dependent on God, whether we know it or not. We are better with God, even if our head says otherwise. Our success comes only by living every day full of the life of Christ, the life of the Holy Spirit that raised Him from the dead. The same life that created the earth and gives breath to all things.

Life that multiplies, that heals, that gives wisdom and strength.

We water the seeds in our heart by consuming His Word. We read it and read it and hear it and hear it, and in the process become “*filled with all the fulness of God.*” (Eph 3:19)

We are never *not* filled but determined to stay full. Why? To foster growth.

Why waste time planting if we don’t want growth? Why settle for weak, spindly plants, that produce nothing, instead of enjoying a full, abundant harvest? Because that is what God’s life will do in us if we’ll press into Him.

*“Father, out of Your honorable and glorious riches, strengthen Your people. Fill their souls with the power of Your Spirit ... may YOUR FULLNESS FLOOD through their entire BEINGS.”* (Ephesians 3:16-19 VOICE)

How marvelous is this verse! God’s fullness floods our entire being. His life and goodness fill us, and the power of it must multiply. It must produce more good and more good and more good. This is God’s will.

We are the only reason growth doesn’t happen. That thing we need desperately – a new job, a lower mortgage, salvation in our son or daughter – can’t stay like it is any longer if we’ll believe. And like the faith of the farmer, who knows the season of his planting, who knows the needs of the seed, we cultivate our garden without any doubt as to getting results.

1 Corinthians 10:26 says, “*For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.*”

Thayer’s Greek Definitions defines “fulness” as “the body of believers, as that which is filled with the presence, power, agency, riches of God and of Christ.” (G4138)

You can’t get more certain than that.

Belief in God’s life isn’t weak and wishy-washy. We are filled with God’s presence, His power, His ability to work. With His supply. And the end results of a life like that are certain.

The harvest *will* come. God’s fullness can’t do anything else, and here’s the thing – people will notice.

“Just as a field’s crop may be unnoticed when first planted, but can’t be missed when mature, so it is with the Kingdom of God. It has small beginnings, and its root may be small, but **WHEN GOD DEVELOPS THE WORK IT CANNOT BE MISSED.**” (David Guzik’s Enduring Word Commentary on Mark 4:29)



# Chapter 12

## God is Big

Perhaps, you are sitting there, reading all this in disbelief because it seems like your life doesn't mirror it at all. I understand completely. I fell as far down as humanly possible and battled severe depression. I remember one Christmas putting the tree up and, a few days later, taking it down again.

But here's the comforting truth, when I called out to God, He heard me and answered. That is His heart. There is a portion of the story of Noah that always moves me in this regard.

Genesis 8:1 says, *“And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark.”*

God remembered Noah's faithfulness. He remembered Noah's obedience. He remembered what people had said about him, how they'd scoffed. He remembered what Noah had preached about righteousness. He remembered how long his family been trapped on the ark, amidst the storm.

Not that God had ever forgotten. But that in those words, we see God's heart. God loved Noah, and He protected him. He gave him hope for the future. (Jer 29:11)

What did God remember of me in my dark moments? Had I done some kindness He could not forget? Did He look at me and, instead, see my potential? I am humbled by that thought and forever grateful for how He lifted me out.

Not because I was any more special than anyone else, but because that is who He is. God saw me, and He acted in blessing. Not, “Look at what you've done,” but, “Look at what you can do.”

*“God made a wind to pass over the earth.”* (Genesis 8:1)

God remembered Noah and made a wind pass over the earth. He remembered and acted in deliverance.

God held my hand when I couldn't see any further than the bathroom floor. He didn't abandon me there. I'd turn on worship tunes, and His presence would fill the bedroom. As if I hadn't ever trembled, hadn't ever doubted Him.

God didn't put Noah on the boat and say, "Good luck!" He had every intention on completing what He'd begun, on rescuing, on blessing, on providing abundance again.

David Guzik's commentary says, "God knew how to make the waters subside. Even a big problem like this was not a big problem to God."

God thinks big.

He split the entire Red Sea, 169,113 square miles of water, in order to cross some two and one-half million men, women and children to the other side on dry land. He then crushed the enemy army in one huge wave. (<http://www.askelm.com/secrets/sec107.htm>)

He resurrected a dead man who'd been gone for three days and healed another being let down through a roof. He touched blind eyes, made a leper whole, fed five thousand people with a handful of bread. (Jn 11:34; Mk 2:4; Mt 11:5; Mt 15:30; Mk 6:44)

God is god of BIG things. He can move mountains into the sea. (Mt 21:21; Mk 11:23) He'll make you the head and not the tail, above and not beneath. (Deu 28:13) There's nothing too big for Him to handle, no sickness too strong He cannot heal it, no person's life too large, He won't reach down and change it forever.

He is able. He is willing. He will do it. (Jn14:4; 2Co 9:8; 1Th 5:24)

But God is god of SMALL things, too. He fed a prophet with a group of ravens. (1Ki 17:6) He defeated an army of an estimated 135,000 soldiers with only three hundred men. (Jdg 6:5; Jdg 7:7; Jdg 8:10) He killed a mighty Philistine using the slingshot of a boy. (1Sa 17:50)

He brought to earth the Savior of the world through the faith of a young girl. (Lk 1:34)

God sees the small things, knows their intricate nature, the finest thoughts in man's heart. He will provide for needs and desires we've given up on because we said, "God's too big for that." What we thought He ignored, He didn't. What we thought He didn't care about, He does. What we thought was too huge for Him was, in actuality, very, very small.

No sin, no sickness, no financial failure is out of His scope. The devil will never be stronger than God, smarter than God, and definitely not more powerful. This is, after all, The Almighty, The Great I Am, who can do everything from give light to the earth to comfort an adulteress fallen at His feet. (Jn 12:3)

God exists outside of time, outside of distance, outside of size. He never sleeps, never quits, never gives up. (Ps 121:3)

The beloved psalm says:

*“Yea, though I walk **THROUGH** the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff **THEY COMFORT ME.**”* (Psalm 23:4)

Through the valley. That's in one side and out the other.

God remembered Noah, then Noah remembered God. He built an altar and gave his thanks.

This is the way out of everything we face. We lift up our hands in worship. We strengthen ourselves by taking comfort in the Scriptures and are filled with hope for what God will do in us tomorrow. (Heb 12:2; Rm 15:4)

That thought is important. I don't have to see past today. I let God have tomorrow and commit myself to this minute, this hour. To starting. For until we take the first breath, we cannot take the second. And then the principles of seedtime and harvest kick in. We plant the Word. We water the Word, and it produces fruit.

Philippians 1:6 says:

*“I am confident that the Creator, who has begun such a great work among you, **WILL NOT STOP IN MID-DESIGN** but will keep perfecting you until*



*the day Jesus the Anointed, our Liberating King, returns to redeem the world.” (VOICE)*

God never does things halfway. If we’ll press in, He will take us “*from glory to glory.*” (2Co 3:18) And speak to us in a manner we will understand. We need not fear we will miss hearing Him if our hearts are right. He speaks all 6,000 spoken languages in the world. He knows the 200,000 dead or extinct languages as well. (<https://www.quora.com/How-many-dead-languages-are-there>)

Our heavenly Father knows all of them. Every culture. Every dialect. He understands every personality type.

He knows you.

*“Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying.” (Jeremiah 1:4)*

This phrase appears multiple times in the Old Testament. God spoke to Abraham, Samuel, King David, and many others. He spoke to the prophets.

His voice is described as “*the sound of many waters.*” (Ez 43:2; Rev 14:2) As a “*rushing mighty wind.*” (Act 2:2) He spoke out of fire. (Ex 19:18-19; Deu 4:33) He spoke through a donkey. (Num 22:28) He spoke to Job out of a whirlwind. (Job 38:1)

To Elijah He was a “*still small voice.*” (1Ki 19:12)

Point is, God speaks *to* men and women and *through* men and women. He will speak so that you can hear it, in whatever language you speak, in whatever place you will hear it best, in a method that is particular to you.

To some He speaks in paragraphs, many, many words. To me, it’s usually a single sentence. This is like me. Ask any of my family and friends, and physically, I don’t talk too much. Even texting, you get a terse response. When I’m editing any of my books, I’m removing words, never adding them.

God will speak to you how it’s best for you. But here is my first point, He *will* speak.

I expect Him to speak to me. That is my next point. I *know* He will speak. I cultivated that while learning to write. Every chapter of this book came directly from God. I typed none of it until He'd spoken first.

“Well, Suzanne, what did He say?”

Usually a Scripture verse or two or not even a complete verse, simply words from the verse. He knew I'd get up and find it. I've spent 20 years, working for my mother, finding verses. He knew my life in that area.

But He's also spoken to me through the words of others, through my daily Bible reading, even a couple times through a children's movie. Always when I needed it or at a moment when what He said needed to be addressed.

In Acts 2, the day of Pentecost, the Holy Ghost fell upon those in the upper room. Not quietly. The people outside heard them, and it says:

*“And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them SPEAK IN HIS OWN LANGUAGE. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, WE DO HEAR THEM SPEAK IN OUR TONGUES THE WONDERFUL WORKS OF GOD. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? (Acts 2:5-12)*

Now, this isn't a common occurrence, but it shows God's character. He would *“have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth,”* it says in 1 Timothy 2:4.

All men and women, of all backgrounds, raised in any environment.

My mom did some speaking in international Bible schools, and the one thing she noticed the most was how worship in different languages brought

the presence of God just the same. His presence united them. She didn't physically know the words, but she knew God. And God knew her and everyone in that room. (Act 17:26)

God *will* speak to you about your life and the direction He has for you. What job to take. Where your children should go to school. Even simple things like where to eat.

He is the God of "all things."

### **The God of All Things**

*"And God is able to make ALL grace ABOUND toward you; that ye, always having ALL SUFFICIENCY in ALL THINGS, may ABOUND to EVERY good work."* (2 Corinthians 9:8)

God cares about every part of our lives, no matter how trivial they may seem. He wants us to "abound" when we bake a cake for our mom's birthday, when we call the cable company to straighten out our bill, when we take our car to be serviced and need to choose the right auto repair shop.

Sometimes it's the small things that cripple us the most. We don our armor to fight giants but take it off when it's Uncle John asking for help to clear trees. Or to locate a baby gift for our cousin's wife, who we don't particularly get along with. Or the refrigerator needs replacing, but we have no idea what to buy.

I want to be sufficient in those tasks, too.

I've found, in my life, personally, that my need to shift responsibility onto others – a "you do it for me" attitude – never works out. Any time I think I can get him or her to take care of it, it'll fall even harder on my shoulders, and those moments are when I pray, "I can do this through Christ." I need supernatural strength to walk the dog some days, especially when it's cold and windy and she's decided to play.

I can do all things and have patience. I can do all things and understand how to fill out this financial form. I can do all things and find a perfect vacation rental within my budget. I can do all things and select the right doctor, hair salon, or lawn company.

“All things” includes all things.

*“And the Lord give thee understanding in ALL THINGS.”* (2 Timothy 1:7)

Does a God who knows our soul, who saw us when we were made in secret, a God of such infinite detail to create the smallest part of us, abandon us when we need to change a flat tire? He’s only here for me when I’m slugging it out in some spiritual battle, but not when I’ve had an argument with my spouse? (Ps 139:14-16)

No, that’s when I need understanding the most. I know God is for me; therefore, who can be against me? Always. For everything. Even if today it’s as small as calling the electric company. God is with me for that, too.

*“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us ALL THINGS?”* (Romans 8:31-32)

He will give us what we need when we seek Him. He desires to be found, and even greater, He sees us where we are. As a man with a broken leg cannot be expected to climb stairs, God did not press on me more than I could handle while my heart and soul healed. He met me there. He was “all things” to me.

God saw a widow and her son in Zarephath. He saw she’d prepared to bake her last meal and die. He sent her the prophet Elijah. (1Ki 17:9) Think about that. She’d run out of food and the man of God shows up on her doorstep with a boundless supply.

God saw the widow in the temple as she gave her last two mites. (Luke 21:2) I wonder what happened when she went home. What bounty did God bless her with? Because I’m 100% sure, He blessed her needs.

He saw the centurion’s servant and stirred his Roman master to walk by faith and seek the Jewish Messiah. (Mt 8:8) That is so out-of-societal rules for that day. No Roman would have ever submitted to a Jew.

God sees you. God desires to speak with you. What would happen in your life if you began to expect it? And what if when He spoke, you stepped out

in obedience?

## **The Obedience of Paul**

The story of the apostle Paul is a fascinating one to me. It is a story of great forgiveness and incredible obedience. But one particular incident in his life fits in here, and I think, will bless you.

Paul had been taken prisoner and was sailing with other prisoners, under guard, back to Rome. They made a stop at a place referred to as “The fair havens,” and here, God warned Paul about the upcoming weather.

*“Paul admonished them, And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives.” (Acts 27:9-10)*

Needless to say, no one believed him because the sky looked fine right then. Besides, he was a prisoner, so why should they listen? Even the owner of the ship disregarded Paul’s words. But this was a man who’d been called out from among the Pharisees and dedicated to the ministry. He’d spent time in prayer and communion with God. (Act 13:2) He’d practiced listening.

Of course, you can guess what happened. The storm blew in, and the sailors panicked. In an attempt to save themselves, they began tossing things overboard. Perhaps, if the ship didn’t weigh so much in goods and people, it would survive.

There is a lesson there. When you’ve failed to obey God’s instructions, no amount of self-effort will be enough. They’d been warned about the storm, they’d chosen disobedience. I also think God wanted to show up strong because not until they’d given up all hope, three days later, did Paul even speak and what he said was in direct opposition to everything around them.

*“But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to **BE OF GOOD CHEER**: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the **ANGEL OF GOD, WHOSE I AM, AND WHOM I SERVE**, Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought*

*before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, BE OF GOOD CHEER: FOR I BELIEVE GOD, that it shall be even as it was told me.” (Acts 27:21-25)*

Paul had unshakeable confidence in God. He knew God as faithful to His Word and admonished the others on the ship to “cheer up.” That must have sounded incredible, right then.

“Cheer up? Who does this guy think he is?”

He was God’s man. He had no fear for their safety because of his relationship with God.

The Biblical Illustrator says this powerfully:

“We see the apostle’s repose of soul in this hour of peril, and the grounds of it. It was IN HIS RELATION WITH GOD that he found restfulness.”

Paul knew God’s character, so he had rest.

This is tremendous, especially considering the circumstances. It would be 14 more days before they were saved. Yet for those two weeks, Paul continued to preach good cheer. He even stopped several of them from taking a smaller boat and going off on their own. God had said their safety relied on them staying aboard the ship. (Act 27:31)

Paul worshipped God in the midst of the storm. He ATE A MEAL and encouraged them to join in. (Act 27:34-35) It says, he was so cheerful, the others became cheerful too. (Act 27:36)

That’s how confident he was. He knew God and had no doubt He would reward him in that situation because of his obedience in others.

He’d “come out from among them” in his Damascus road experience. (Act 9:8) He went from persecuting Christians (he stood by while they stoned Stephen) to preaching Jesus as Son of God. (Act 7:58; Acts 9:20) He was on the ship as a prisoner for his beliefs, after all. He willingly laid his life aside to minister to the growing churches, serving in humility, a key to obedience.

He said this to the Corinthians.

*“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. AND MY SPEECH AND MY PREACHING WAS NOT WITH ENTICING WORDS OF MAN'S WISDOM, but IN DEMONSTRATION OF THE SPIRIT AND OF POWER: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”* (1 Corinthians 2:2-5)

He didn't want them looking at him, but at God. He relied on the Holy Spirit's POWER to preach the message of Christ as a DEMONSTRATION meant to build their faith.

Paul “came after” God, through difficult situations (infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions, distresses), and God promised to “be sufficient” for him IN ALL THINGS. (2Co 12:10) Whether facing the Roman government, angry Jewish leaders, or a storm that held the power to kill everyone on board. But wouldn't because he served the Lord.





# Chapter 13

## God is Faith

The Galatian church had taken up the precepts of the Mosaic law, and the apostle Paul was beside himself over it. *“O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth ...”* he begins. (Gal 3:1)

He goes on to compare their human efforts to a walk of faith.

*“Are you so foolish? Do you think you can perfect something God’s Spirit started with any human effort?”* (Galatians 3:3 VOICE)

Obedience should not be confused with dead works. Jesus’ death and Resurrection is a free gift of God’s grace, or in simple terms, it is His unmerited, undeserved favor. He has given us salvation and all the rewards of salvation, though we don’t deserve it. Nothing we can do on our own will ever earn the rights for it. Not praying for two hours every morning or reading the entire Bible in one year. It’s important to pray and to read the Bible, but those acts will not bring salvation.

Neither would the sacrifices and ceremonies which Paul accused the Galatians of practicing. Jesus’s death had torn the temple veil from top to bottom and created a *“new and living way”* to spend time with God, but the Galatians chose to follow the Mosaic law. (Mt 27:51; Mk 15:38; Lk 23:45) (Heb 10:20)

*“Miracle after miracle has occurred right before your eyes in this community, so tell me: did all this happen because you have kept certain provisions of God’s law, or was it because you heard the gospel and accepted it BY FAITH?”* (Galatians 3:5 VOICE)

A contrast must be drawn between obedience and dead works. Faith is active. It requires us to DO as God instructs. But those actions will never EARN salvation. That’s like being given a driver’s license for buying a car.

Our obedience by faith shows our trust in God, that we believe He keeps His Word. Then when He asks us to go in some particular direction, we

believe He will honor our obedient actions with success. Our confidence in Him is the result of our relationship. We know who He is and follow after Him. He has said to love our neighbor, to pray for all men, and to prefer others before ourselves, so we do that. (Mk 12:31; 1Ti 2:1; Rm 12:10; Php 2:3) These are acts of obedience. But, at the same time, buying the guys at work donuts every Saturday for a year will only make you popular, not closer to God.

## **The Obedience of Abraham**

No book on obedience is complete without mention of Abraham, and in fact, in the above passages, Paul uses him as an example of faith. (Gal 3:7)

We, perhaps, know the story, how Abraham left his home and traveled to Canaan at the command of God. (Ge 12:1) We've read God's words to him, the blessing of his abundant future and of Isaac, the son of promise, to be delivered in his old age. Abraham (then Abram) mourned his lack of an heir, and God told him to look at the stars, saying his offspring would outnumber them. (Ge 15:2,5)

What an amazing passage, full of truths. But in preparing to write this portion and meditating on his life, it interested me that the story of Abraham and Hagar is placed in the center. Here's a man who saw a supernatural demonstration of God's covenant promise. After his vision of the stars, he prepared a sacrifice at God's instruction and had a visible encounter. The Scripture says, "*A smoking furnace, and a burning lamp*" consumed the sacrifice. (Ge 15:17) Immediately after, he had a vision of the Israelites' bondage in Egypt, events far in the future. (Ge 15:13)

Such a supernatural scene to read, and what a vivid picture of his close relationship with Almighty God. Yet, when presented with Sarai's maid, Hagar, as an option, he consented. This shows the frailty of man, and we could dwell here on sin and repentance. But I want you to notice something which moved me.

God had promised Abraham his descendants would inherit the land. (Ge 15:18) Keep that in mind. Know, too, that Sarai was harsh with Hagar. Hagar finds herself pregnant, which was Sarai's idea, and she flees, afraid of her mistress's anger.

There she is, wandering around in the desert, great with child, when God appears to her. Commentaries agree that the phrase “Angel of the Lord” in the King James Version means our Lord Jesus. Hagar refers to him as “*God of vision.*” (Ge 16:13) And He responds in first person, “*I will.*”

Let’s read a portion of what He said:

*“And the angel of the LORD said unto her, RETURN to thy mistress, AND SUBMIT thyself under her hands. And the angel of the LORD said unto her, I WILL MULTIPLY THY SEED exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and SHALT CALL HIS NAME ISHMAEL; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction.”* (Genesis 16:9-11)

Hagar was in a difficult place, but God was merciful to her. He heard her unhappiness. He saw how she’d been treated, *but* He required obedience. *Return and submit*, He said. This seems incredible. Why would He ask that of her after what she’d been through?

BECAUSE OF THE PROMISE TO ABRAHAM.

God hadn’t specified the blessing on Abraham’s children as ONLY for Isaac. He’d simply said, “Your descendants will be as innumerable as the stars,” and Ishmael, which means “the Mighty will hear,” was the child of Abraham. Though he was conceived outside of God’s will for Abraham, Ishmael was protected and honored as part of Abraham’s blessing of obedience.

Notice also: “*And Hagar bare Abram a son: AND ABRAM CALLED HIS SON’S NAME, which Hagar bare, Ishmael.*” (Ge 16:15) Not only did she return and submit her will to theirs, but she must have told Abraham the story because He honored God’s instructions to her. This shows his repentant heart.

It also shows God’s merciful character.

Of Abraham’s life, Hebrews 11:8-12 says:

*“By faith Abraham, WHEN HE WAS CALLED TO GO OUT into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, OBEYED; and he went*

*out, not knowing whither he went. BY FAITH HE SOJOURNED IN THE LAND OF PROMISE, AS IN A STRANGE COUNTRY, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, AND WAS DELIVERED OF A CHILD when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, SO MANY AS THE STARS OF THE SKY IN MULTITUDE, AND AS THE SAND WHICH IS BY THE SEA SHORE INNUMERABLE.” (Hebrews 11:8-12)*

Abraham came out from among his brethren. He left all he'd known and traveled without a firm destination, his trust in God. Once there, he lived righteous among heathen strangers, who did not believe as he did. He kept his eyes on God's blessing, his ear open to God's voice.

He made mistakes, yes, but he was humble afterward. He had a heart of repentance, and for this reason, God honored His Word. Isaac was born, and Ishmael's descendants were also blessed.

Abraham's obedience gave him great respect among the kings in the area. He was called, by God, a prophet. (Ge 20:7) God also called him a friend, knowing he would "come after" Him always, and as a result, the blessing was multiplied to him more than can be counted.

*“And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? FOR I KNOW HIM, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment ...” (Genesis 18:17-19)*

“I know him,” God said. “He walks after me. His blessing will cover the earth.”

God blessed Sarah. God also blessed Hagar. Because of Abraham's obedience. And Abraham's blessing stretches out its hand still. To us.

In the words of Paul to Galatia:

*“Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. KNOW YE THEREFORE THAT THEY WHICH ARE OF FAITH, THE SAME ARE THE CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. SO THEN THEY WHICH BE OF FAITH ARE BLESSED WITH FAITHFUL ABRAHAM.” (Galatians 3:6-9)*

## **God is Blessing**

Modern society doesn't understand blessings much past a carelessly tossed, "God bless you," after someone sneezes. To be blessed seems like a good thought, but it holds little to no power behind it. Yet, to the Christian, it is an essential word.

The words "bless," "blessing," and "blessed" appear in the King James Bible 468 times. This makes it an important concept to grasp. I know, on the surface, it seems to have nothing to do with obedience, and yet a closer look reveals an amazing truth.

Vincent's Word Studies says the word "blessed," as used in the New Testament, held an entirely different meaning from its original use. When spoken in reference to the Greek gods, a not unfamiliar subject in Biblical times, it was a symbol of knowledge and had little to nothing to do with morality.

*“The popular Greek ideal of divine blessedness was not essentially moral. The gods were blessed because of their power and dignity, not because of their holiness ... As compared with men, in conduct they are generally characterized by superior force and intellect, but by inferior morality.” (Vincent's Word Studies)*

The Greeks considered being blessed as a product of intelligence. It meant you were incredibly smart and powerful. You didn't have to be GOOD. The Bible's use of the word, however, gave it a spiritual meaning.

Of the Bible's meaning for "blessed," the commentary says:

*“It now takes on a group of ideas strange to the best pagan morality, and contradictory of its fundamental positions. Shaking itself loose from all*

thoughts of outward good, it [being blessed] becomes the express symbol of a happiness identified with pure character. Behind it lies the clear cognition [awareness] of sin as the fountain-head of all misery, and of holiness as the final and effectual cure for every woe.”

Blessing moved from a sign of intellect and position to an awareness of sin and the need for holiness. It became inward, a matter of the heart, and was no longer something you earned or were endowed with.

The commentary continues:

“For knowledge as the basis of virtue, and therefore of happiness, IT SUBSTITUTES FAITH AND LOVE. For the aristocracy of the learned virtuous, IT INTRODUCES THE TRUTH OF THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD and the corollary of the family of believers. While the pagan word carries the isolation of the virtuous and the contraction of human sympathy, THE GOSPEL PUSHES THESE OUT WITH AN IDEAL OF A WORLD-WIDE SYMPATHY and of a happiness realized in ministry. The vague outlines of an abstract good vanish from it, and give place to THE PURE HEART'S VISION OF GOD, AND ITS PERSONAL COMMUNION WITH THE FATHER IN HEAVEN.”

This definition thrills my heart. To be “blessed” is knowing God as Father. It is communing with Him daily and expressing His faith and love and compassion. Our joy now comes from what we can do for people instead of what we think we know in ourselves. Our heart has His vision imprinted on it.

How much wider and deeper “blessed” is than we have imagined.

Now, read some of the Bible’s blessings in that light:

*“Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.” (Psalm 2:12) | “Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee.” (Psalm 84:5) | “Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times.” (Psalm 106:3) | “Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD.” (Psalm 119:1) | “Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.” (Psalm 119: 2) | “The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him.” (Proverbs 20:7) | “Blessed are*

*they that hear the word of God, and keep it.” (Luke 1:28) | “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” (John 20:29) | “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.” (Romans 4:7) | “Blessed are they that do his commandments.” (Revelation 22:14)*

Blessed are believers who see things as God sees them, who model their lives after who He is. Because all of these life choices come from having a personal relationship with God and living a life of faith and obedience.

THE BLESSED obey God’s principles because they’ve taken the time to read them, to know Him through His Word, and to seek His heart. We can also say it in reverse. Our heavenly Father desires to bless His children, and our obedience, our faithfulness to Him, makes us blessed.

Jesus spoke a number of blessings, commonly called the “beatitudes.” The New Interpreters’ Bible makes the powerful statement that these blessings are words of FAITH spoken over believers. It says their truths come to pass in our lives based on the authority of the SPEAKER (Jesus Christ), and they require us to take action. We must stand firm to see them come to pass. (<http://www.crossmarks.com/brian/allsaintb.htm>)

This wonderful truth agrees with the words of apostle Paul in Ephesians 6:13-14. He said, *“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. STAND therefore ...”*

Gone is the idea that we are blessed to sit on the couch while good things fall in our laps. No, these blessings require obedience. Obedience to walk by faith, to stand in the authority of Jesus’ name, which we have been given. We obey despite our feelings, despite our circumstances, and in that obedience, we are blessed.

Read Jesus’ words of BLESSING in that light. This is the Passion Translation.

*“What wealth is offered to you when you feel your spiritual poverty! For there is no charge to enter the realm of heaven’s kingdom. What delight comes to you when you wait upon the Lord! For you will find what you long for. What blessing comes to you when gentleness lives in you! For you will*

*inherit the earth. How enriched you are when you crave righteousness! For you will be surrounded with fruitfulness. How satisfied you are when you demonstrate tender mercy! For tender mercy will be demonstrated to you. What bliss you experience when your heart is pure! For then your eyes will open to see more and more of God. How blessed you are when you make peace! For then you will be recognized as a true child of God. How enriched you are when you bear the wounds of being persecuted for doing what is right! For that is when you experience the realm of heaven's kingdom. How ecstatic you can be when people insult and persecute you and speak all kinds of cruel lies about you because of your love for me!"*  
(Matthew 5:3-11)

I just love the various translations for "blessed." Can't you see the Father in them? Isn't that what this passage is saying—when we press into Him, delighting in Him, waiting on Him, we will see Him clearly.

The Passion Translation's footnote of these verses says:

"The Aramaic word *toowayhon* means 'enriched, happy, fortunate, delighted, blissful, content, blessed.' Our English word *blessed* can indeed fit here, but *toowayhon* implies more—great happiness, prosperity, abundant goodness, and delight! The word *bliss* captures all of this meaning. *Toowayhon* means to have the capacity to enjoy union and communion with God."

So beautiful. Through our union with Him, we are enriched, satisfied, fortunate, and blissful. We are abundantly blessed! We don't have to see the blessing right now, but we know BY FAITH that it's ours. As we demonstrate mercy, BY FAITH we receive mercy. As we make peace BY FAITH, we are seen as God's child.

Why? Because of THE SPEAKER'S AUTHORITY to bless me.

Who was the speaker? The Word of God. The Light. The Way. The Truth. The Life. The Messiah. The Son of God. The Savior. God in the flesh.

These are BLESSINGS spoken by God to BRING INTO REALITY a true intimate relationship with God. They AREN'T good behaviors that will get you into heaven. We know Jesus is the only way, and we cannot earn



salvation. At the same time, we walk in STEPS OF OBEDIENCE because of our love for Him.

We TAKE A STAND with the speaker, Jesus Christ, COMING OUT from the world and COMING AFTER Christ. We ACT like Christ. To act like Him, we must KNOW Him.

Jesus was humble. Jesus was meek, or gentle. Jesus was righteous. Jesus was pure. Jesus made peace. (Mt 11:29 KJV and VOICE; Mt 21:5; Jn 15:3 “pure” translated “clean”; Lk 1:79; Jn 14:27, Jn 16:33) What an amazing example He is for us to follow.

The beatitudes are repeated in the gospel of Luke in a shorter fashion, but there is one in particular I want to focus on, as Luke has written it:

*“Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and WHEN THEY SHALL SEPARATE YOU FROM THEIR COMPANY, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.”* (Luke 6:22)

BLESSED are we, when we COME OUT from among the world, this says. Now, let's add in Hebrews 7:26. The “high priest” spoken of here is Jesus.

*“For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, SEPARATE FROM SINNERS, and made higher than the heavens.”*  
(Hebrews 7:26)

Do you see it? Jesus walked the steps of obedience. He was separate from sinners. He was holy and undefiled and BLESSED are those who follow Him and do the same. The authority of heaven speaks it over our future.

Make those words your confession:

I am humble, and the kingdom of heaven belongs to me. When I mourn, I find comfort in God. I am meek and gentle of spirit like Christ, so I inherit the bounty of the earth. I hunger and thirst for God, and I am completely satisfied. I show mercy, so I am treated mercifully. I make peace with others. Therefore, I am God's child. I keep my thoughts pure, and in so doing, I see God. Even if people persecute me and talk down about me for my faith, heaven is my reward. (Based on God's Word translation, Matthew 5:3-12)

The commentary says that Jesus stated these blessings in a manner the people had never heard before. He spoke them with authority, and that shocked the listeners. (Mt 7:29) The Bible had changed the word “blessed” forever, but Jesus changed it yet again. He took it from the outward blessings of the Old Testament and made it something of the heart.

If, at this point, we had any doubts left, we need only meditate on Proverbs 10:22.

*“The blessing of the LORD, it MAKETH RICH, and he addeth NO SORROW with it.”*

No sorrow. None. Zilch. Nada.

I also like The Passion Translation: *“True enrichment comes from the blessing of the Lord, WITH REST AND CONTENTMENT in knowing that it all comes from him.”*

Amen, Lord Jesus. I am blessed.



# Chapter 14

## Come celebrate!

The idea of blessing paints initially an outward image of having more than we can handle, wealth and abundance overflowing in our homes and bank accounts. God wants to bless us in these ways. He is *Jehovah Jireh* our provider. (Ge 22:14; H3070) He desires to send healing. Healing from disease and injury was part of what His death provided. (Is 53:4-5; 1Pe 2:24) He is interested in every small part of our lives – to have the boss give us a raise, to help our children excel at school, and even the health of our pets.

Our obedience to His Word is required. Not as self-effort. It isn't a formula. We take two steps, and God will then take three. Instead, it is that perhaps we don't get along with the boss, but God says to submit to her. He assures us this is the job for us right now, so we must be obedient, despite our discomfort.

But here's the truth we should know—our discomfort will give way to peace if we'll submit our will to God, and months down the road, we'll have a better position in the company or a better position in another company. We can't see it at present, but through obedience, we can KNOW it is so.

Obedience often puts us into difficult situations. It requires keeping ourselves in line emotionally, although we usually would rather act otherwise. It makes us responsible for our actions. We cannot ask for a better seat at the wedding table without humility AND taking on greater responsibilities. That is part of promotion.

In Luke 12, Jesus tells the story of a man given responsibility for his master's business, but when the master is delayed, he starts horsing around. The story is meant as a warning for the Lord's second coming, of believers having their hearts prepared for His return, but we can learn from the words in verse 48.

*“For those who have received a greater revelation from their master are required a greater obedience. And those WHO HAVE BEEN ENTRUSTED WITH GREAT RESPONSIBILITY WILL BE HELD MORE RESPONSIBLE to their master.” (TPT)*

The King James Version says it this way: *“For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.”*

In the story of Ruth, Boaz, as her husband’s kinsman, was made responsible for her mother-in-law, Naomi’s, care, and as such, for Ruth as well. (Rth 4:9-10) The weight of her life, her integrity, and ultimately his own HONOR rested on his obedience to the position he’d been placed in. He promised to protect her and had to keep his word to that promise.

*“Then Boaz took responsibility of Ruth.” (Ruth 4:13 VOICE)*

Webster’s Dictionary of American English (1828) defines “responsible” as “answerable” for a debt or a duty. It’s someone who’s trustworthy and faithful.

This is Almighty God.

Psalm 111:7 says, *“All God accomplishes is flawless, faithful, and fair, and his every word proves trustworthy and true.” (TPT)* Then in Isaiah 26:4, we read, *“So trust in the Eternal One forever, for He is like a great Rock—strong, stable, trustworthy, and lasting.” (VOICE)* In the New Testament, 1 Corinthians 1:9 in the Amplified Classic says, *“God is faithful (reliable, trustworthy, and therefore ever true to His promise, and He can be depended on).”*

God is trustworthy. He is faithful and fair. He is reliable. He keeps His word.

He asks the same of us. The apostle Paul said:

*“As surely as GOD IS TRUSTWORTHY AND FAITHFUL and means what He says, our speech and message to you have not been Yes [that might mean] No.” (2 Corinthians 1:18 AMPC)*

A trustworthy man can be depended on. He is responsible. He speaks clearly and truthfully WITH GRACE. That is important. That man is blessed with honor. His relationship with God is strengthened, and all the things that *God is work* to produce good in his life.

Jesus made this statement more than once.

*“The trustworthy servant is the one whom the master puts in charge of all the servants of his household; it is the trustworthy servant who NOT ONLY OVERSEES ALL THE WORK, BUT ALSO ENSURES THE SERVANTS ARE PROPERLY FED AND CARED FOR.”* (Matthew 24:45 VOICE)

He takes responsibility and does whatever is needed where he’s been placed.

Matthew repeats Jesus’ words about this thought a short time later. Jesus told a story of three servants given a sum to invest. One servant doubled it, and received his master’s praise:

*“Commending his servant, the master replied, ‘You have done well, and proven yourself to be my loyal and trustworthy servant. Because you have been a faithful steward to manage a small sum, now I will put you in charge of much, much more. YOU WILL EXPERIENCE THE DELIGHT OF YOUR MASTER, WHO WILL SAY TO YOU, ‘COME CELEBRATE WITH ME!’”* (Matthew 25:21 TPT)

Come celebrate! I love that. This is the reward of our faithfulness.

The Amplified Classic phrases the verse this way: *“His master said to him, Well done, you UPRIGHT (HONORABLE, ADMIRABLE) AND FAITHFUL SERVANT! You have been faithful and trustworthy over a little; I will put you in charge of much. ENTER INTO AND SHARE THE JOY (THE DELIGHT, THE BLESSEDNESS) WHICH YOUR MASTER ENJOYS.”*

What has God given to you to invest in? What has He asked you to be faithful to? For me, it’s writing under the Holy Ghost’s instruction. I’m to write what He speaks, unashamed of the words. He’s given me a daughter to be faithful to. I am to set her an example of faith and godliness. He’s made me a wife, and my husband is deserving of faithfulness, generosity, and kindness. (Pr 31:11-12, 26 VOICE)

And here's the bottom line – unless I am faithful to these instructions, unless I am trustworthy there, I cannot expect to enjoy the delight, the blessedness, of the Master in any area. The “much more,” the invitation to “come celebrate,” comes from my faithful obedience.

The apostle Paul in writing to Titus gives a beautiful description of a man who dedicates themselves to work in the church. We can apply its words to women (wives) as well. Here is the standard we should measure to as representatives of Christ:

*“Each of them must be above reproach, devoted solely to his wife, whose children are believers and not rebellious or out of control. The overseer, since he serves God’s household, must be someone of blameless character and not be opinionated or short-tempered. He must not be a drunkard or violent or greedy. Instead he should be one who is known for his hospitality and a lover of goodness. He should be recognized as one who is fair-minded, pure-hearted, and self-controlled. He must HAVE A FIRM GRASP OF THE TRUSTWORTHY MESSAGE that he has been taught. This will enable him to both encourage others with healthy teachings and provide convincing answers to those who oppose his message.” (Titus 1:6-9 TPT)*

I know this seems unattainable in our human mindset, but the Holy Spirit is faithful to guide us. Our heavenly Father is merciful to forgive when we fall short of it, and the Lord Jesus stands before us as a powerful example. With His strength in us, we can do it!

For two important reasons – to encourage others and have an answer to those who do not believe. (Lk 12:11-12; 1Pe 3:15)

An author, whose book I read, said in it that Christian marriages should NOT look like the world and be filled with strife and division. They should set an example of God’s blessings on a husband and wife, who put God first. People should look at a Christian couple and see a difference in their behavior.

I love that, and it motivates me. But this same thought applies to us individually. People should see our lives and know God has changed us. They notice and ask, “How’d you do it? How did you go from where you were to where you are?”

One reason alone—The goodness of God lives in me.

## **A Good Life**

“Picture the most wonderful thing that could happen in your life ... Now, think about this. God’s goodness is greater still.” (Pastor George Pearsons, Eagle Mountain International Church)

My older dog is sedate most of the day. She has a soft bed and a blanket to curl up in. You can usually find her there sleeping. Except for first thing in the morning, when she is released from her dog crate. Suddenly, she’s a ball of energy, bouncing across the house, eager and excited to be free.

What an apt picture of how we should face each day, but I admit it took me a long time to see it. I started with a simple confession that I did not believe one bit. I’d get out of bed each morning and watch the sunrise and say, “This is the day which the Lord hath made. I will rejoice and be glad in it.” (Ps 118:1)

Some mornings, I’d fall apart afterward and spend hours consumed by panic. But when I found strength again, I’d force myself outside, and I’d repeat it. “This IS the day the Lord hath made. I WILL REJOICE and be GLAD in it!”

Over time, the picture of the sunrise, so varied and beautiful, became this verse from the Psalms and greeting the day like that gave me hope. It built faith in God’s care for me.

This verse in The Message Bible is so marvelous. It says:

*“This is God’s work. We rub our eyes—we can hardly believe it! This is the very day God acted— let’s celebrate and be festive! Salvation now, God. Salvation now! Oh yes, God—A FREE AND FULL LIFE!”*

A free life. A full life. One so good we must celebrate! John 10:10 adds to this picture we’ve drawn.

*“The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them A RICH AND SATISFYING LIFE.”* (John 10:10 NLT)



A rich and satisfying life.

A life of abundance through a daily walk in God's presence because the God of the universe, the Creator of heaven and earth, spends time with me. He knows me, and I know Him. I share in all the things He is. His Holy Spirit speaks with me. He directs my words and my actions. He talks about Jesus, and the love of Christ fills me. The power of the Resurrection works good things in my heart.

Marvelous things. Advantageous things.

*“If you then, evil as you are, know how to give good and advantageous gifts to your children, how much more will your Father Who is in heaven [perfect as He is] GIVE GOOD AND ADVANTAGEOUS THINGS to those who keep on asking Him!” (Matthew 7:11 AMPC)*

He will give me good things. Things to my advantage, knowledge that will set me ahead, direction that will protect me from harm. Amazing things. Wonderful things.

*“‘Return to your home and your family, and tell them all the WONDERFUL THINGS God has done for you.’ So the man went away and preached to everyone who would listen about the amazing miracle Jesus had worked in his life.” (Luke 8:39 TPT)*

God has done wonderful things for me! And for you.

Anything we ever need for our physical lives. Anything we need for strength and wholeness in our minds. He's left nothing out. He's not forgotten one promise. He's not failed to answer one prayer spoken on fervent lips.

*“Know this with all your heart, with everything in you, THAT NOT ONE DETAIL HAS FAILED OF ALL THE GOOD THINGS GOD, YOUR GOD, PROMISED YOU. It has all happened. Nothing's left undone—not so much as a word.” (Joshua 23:14 MSG)*

God hasn't failed in one detail of your life. He's spoken good words over you in His Word. He's blessed you on every side through His mercy and grace. Your life is filled with His goodness.

Perhaps, right now, you can't see it fully. Perhaps, you've made some mistakes.

Not trusting Him enough was mine, as well as giving into anger and selfishness. Yet despite that, He was with me. And take my word for it, even in the darkness of fear and torment, especially in those dark moments, God desired to give me a good life.

“Keep looking at me, Suzanne,” He'd say. “Keep focused on Me. Build a new picture of Me. Not the one your enemy would draw, but the one I painted with My own hand. See yourself as I see you. See Me in you.”

Oh, gentle Savior, how marvelous you are! How very, very good to me, and from now until my days are done, I will walk according to your Word in steps of obedience, your praises on my lips. I will not fail to tell everyone who will hear me how incredible You are.

This is a fabulous life. A blessed life. A wise and understanding life. A merciful life. A beautiful life. (Song 4:13 TPT) A long, satisfying life. (Ps 91:16)

A good life. Won't you come join me?

# For Study

The Bible says, “*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*” (2Ti 2:15) It isn’t enough to read a book for a few hours. We must study God’s Word and commit it to heart. Only then, will we KNOW HIM and correctly “divide,” or discern, the truth.

Studying is a continual process.

For that reason, knowing that much ground was covered in these pages, I have clustered its thoughts here in a simplified format to enable you to really dig down deep. For it isn’t what I said that matters, but what God says that will change you forever.

There are two sections. One is WHO GOD IS, all His characteristics provided in His Word. The second are the STEPS OF OBEDIENCE as provided in the Scriptures and as seen in Jesus’ life.

Then, after you read and study these verses, open your own Bible and read them for yourself. Hear the Holy Spirit talking and follow where He leads. I promise you will never be the same!

# Who God Is

## **A good life**

*“This is a good life—my heart is glad, my soul is full of joy, and my body is at rest. Who could want for more?” (Ps 16:9 VOICE)*

*“You direct me on the path that leads to a beautiful life. As I walk with You, the pleasures are never-ending, and I know true joy and contentment.” (Ps 16:11 VOICE)*

*“My child, if you truly want a long and satisfying life, never forget the things that I’ve taught you. Follow closely every truth that I’ve given you. Then you will have a full, rewarding life.” (Pr 3:1 TPT)*

*“Your inward life is now sprouting, bringing forth fruit. What a beautiful paradise unfolds within you.” (Song 4:13)*

*“Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.” (Is 12:3)*

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” (Jer 29:11 NIV)*

*“But I have all, and abound: I am full,” (Php 4:18)*

## **In Him is**

*“Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.” (Ps 16:11)*

*“The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him.” (Ps 28:7)*

*“I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.” (Ps 91:2)*

*“The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.”  
(Lam 3:24)*

*“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?” (Mt 7:11)*

*“But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” (Jn 4:14)*

*“And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:” (Php 3:9)*

*“Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.” (Col 2:7)*

*“Now that you have welcomed the Anointed One, Jesus the Lord, into your lives, continue to journey with Him and allow Him to shape your lives.”  
(Col 2:7 VOICE)*

*“God’s whole nature is living in Christ.” (Col 2:9 NIRV)*

*“Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.” (1Pe 1:21)*

### **His benefits**

*“Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.” (Ps 103:2-5)*

*“O my soul, come, praise the Eternal; sing a song from a grateful heart; sing and never forget all the good He has done. Despite all your many offenses, He forgives and releases you. More than any doctor, He heals your diseases. He reaches deep into the pit to deliver you from death. He crowns you with unfailing love and compassion like a king. When your soul is*

*famished and withering, He fills you with good and beautiful things, satisfying you as long as you live. He makes you strong like an eagle, restoring your youth.” (Ps 103:2-5 VOICE)*

### **Man is made in God’s Image**

*“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” (Ge 1:27)*

*“And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” (Ge 1:28)*

*“And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.” (Ge 2:19)*

*“And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. ” (Ge 2:23-24)*

### **We Imitate God**

*“Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;” (Eph 5:1)*

*“So imitate God. Follow Him like adored children,” (Eph 5:1 VOICE)*

### **God is relationship.**

*“For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation.” (Ps 149:4)*

*“For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.” (Pr 3:12)*

*“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” (Jn 12:32)*

*“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” (Jn 15:7)*

*“If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.” (Jn 15:10)*

*“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.” (Jn 15:14-15)*

*“I don't call you servants any longer; servants don't know what the master is doing, but I have told you everything the Father has said to Me. I call you friends.” (Jn 15:15 VOICE)*

*“God chose us to be in a relationship with Him even before He laid out plans for this world.” (Eph 1:4 VOICE)*

*“Whatever we may ask, we receive it from Him because we follow His commands and take the path that pleases Him. His command is clear: believe in the name of His Son, Jesus the Anointed, and love one another as He commanded. The one who follows His teaching and walks this path lives in an intimate relationship with God.” (1Jn 3:22-24 VOICE)*

### **God does not change.**

*“God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?” (Nums 23:19)*

*“For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” (Mal 3:6)*

*“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” (Heb 13:8)*

### **God is Father.**

*But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and*

*persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven. (Mt 5:44-45)*

*“And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.” (Lk 11:2)*

*“Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.” (Jn 20:17)*

*“For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” (Rm 8:15)*

### **God is abundance.**

*“And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good.” (Ge 1:20-21)*

*“And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.” (Ex 34:6)*

*“And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God.” (Deu 28:2)*

*“And the LORD shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers to give thee.” (Deu 28:11)*

*“Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.” (Jn 6:13)*

*“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more*



*abundantly.” (Jn 10:10)*

*“For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.” (2Co 4:15)*

*“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,” (Eph 3:20)*

### **God is better.**

*“If your child asks for bread, do you trick him with sawdust? If he asks for fish, do you scare him with a live snake on his plate? As bad as you are, you wouldn’t think of such a thing. You’re at least decent to your own children. So don’t you think the God who conceived you in love will be even better?” (Mt 7:9-11 MSG)*

*“For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.” (Heb 7:19)*

*“So all of this magnifies the truth that we have a superior covenant with God than what they experienced, for Jesus himself is its guarantor!” (Heb 7:22 TPT)*

*“But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.” (Heb 8:6)*

*“God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.” (Heb 11:40)*

### **God is comfort.**

*“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” (Ps 23:4)*

*“But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.” (Mt 9:22)*

*“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;” (Jn 14:16)*

*“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;” (2Co 1:3)*

*“All praise goes to God, Father of our Lord Jesus, the Anointed One. He is the Father of compassion, the God of all comfort. He consoles us as we endure the pain and hardship of life so that we may draw from His comfort and share it with others in their own struggles.” (2Co 1:3-4 VOICE)*

### **God is completeness.**

*“But you—you serve your God and he’ll bless your food and your water. I’ll get rid of the sickness among you; there won’t be any miscarriages nor barren women in your land. I’ll make sure you live full and complete lives.” (Ex 23:25-26 MSG)*

*“That is why whoever accepts and trusts the Son gets in on everything, life complete and forever!” (Jn 3:35 MSG)*

*“I have told you these things, that My joy and delight may be in you, and that your joy and gladness may be of full measure and complete and overflowing.” (Jn 15:11 AMPC)*

*“A mind focused on the flesh is doomed to death, but a mind focused on the Spirit will find full life and complete peace.” (Rm 8:6 VOICE)*

*“I am confident that the Creator, who has begun such a great work among you, will not stop in mid-design but will keep perfecting you until the day Jesus the Anointed, our Liberating King, returns to redeem the world.” (Php 1:6 VOICE)*

*“And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.” (Col 2:10)*

### **God is our confidence.**

*“For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken.” (Pr 3:26)*

*“May the Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father (who has loved us and given us unending encouragement and unfailing hope by his grace) inspire*

*you with courage and confidence in every good thing you say or do.” (2Co 2:16-17 VOICE)*

*“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore,” (Eph 6:13-14)*

*“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” (Heb 4:16)*

*“Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.” (Heb 10:35)*

### **God is encouragement.**

*“But David encouraged and strengthened himself in the Lord his God.” (1Sa 30:6 AMPC)*

*“Your revelation-light is eternal; I’m encouraged every time I think about your truth!” (Ps 119:52 TPT)*

*“I will give them, within My house, an enduring memorial and a name better than if they had sons and daughters— A name that will never be forgotten and will continue to inspire and encourage forever.” (Is 56:5 VOICE)*

*“And I will send you the Divine Encourager from the very presence of my Father. He will come to you, the Spirit of Truth, emanating from the Father, and he will speak[b] to you about me.” (Jn 15:26 TPT)*

*“Everything that belongs to the Father belongs to me—that’s why I say that the Divine Encourager will receive what is mine and reveal it to you.” (Jn 16:15 TPT)*

*“For the Scriptures encourage us with these words: ‘Everyone who believes in him will never be disappointed.’” (Rm 10:11 TPT)*

*“You see, everything written in the days of old was recorded to give us instructions for living. We find encouragement through the Scriptures and a call to perseverance that will produce hopeful living.” (Rm 15:4 VOICE)*

*“Now may the God Who gives the power of patient endurance (steadfastness) and Who supplies encouragement, grant you to live in such mutual harmony and such full sympathy with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus,” (Rm 15:5 AMPC)*

*“But God, Who comforts and encourages and refreshes and cheers the depressed and the sinking, comforted and encouraged and refreshed and cheered us by the arrival of Titus.” (2Co 7:6 AMPC)*

### **God is enduring.**

*“The goodness of God endureth continually.” (Ps 52:1)*

*“For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.” (Ps 100:5)*

*“The glory of the LORD shall endure for ever: the LORD shall rejoice in his works.” (Ps 104:31)*

*“His work is honourable and glorious: and his righteousness endureth for ever.” (Ps 111:3)*

*“Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.” (Jn 6:27)*

*“For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.” (Heb 10:34)*

*“But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.” (1Pe 1:25)*

### **God is everlasting (eternal).**

*“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.” (Ps 90:2)*

*“Thy throne is established of old: thou art from everlasting.” (Ps 93:2)*

*“Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.” (Ps 145:13)*

*“For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy.” (Is 57:15)*

*“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” (Jn 3:36)*

*“This mystery is revealed through the prophetic voices passed down in the Scriptures, as they have been commanded by the Eternal God. In this time, this mystery is being made known to the nations so that all may be led to faith-filled obedience.” (Rm 16:26 VOICE)*

### **God is faithful (trustworthy).**

*“All God accomplishes is flawless, faithful, and fair, and his every word proves trustworthy and true.” (Ps 111:7 TPT)*

*“So trust in the Eternal One forever, for He is like a great Rock—strong, stable, trustworthy, and lasting.” (Is 26:4 VOICE)*

*“God is faithful (reliable, trustworthy, and therefore ever true to His promise, and He can be depended on).” (1Co 1:9 AMPC)*

*“Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.” (1Th 5:24)*

*“But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.” (2Th 3:3)*

*“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.” (Rev 19:11)*

### **God is forgiveness.**

*“As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.” (Ps 103:12)*

*“If you, God, kept records on wrongdoings, who would stand a chance? As it turns out, forgiveness is your habit, and that’s why you’re worshiped.” (Ps 130:3-4 MSG)*

*“But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house.” (Lk 5:24)*

*“Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” (Act 5:31)*

*“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;” (Eph 1:7)*

*“For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” (Heb 8:12)*

*“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1Jn 1:9)*

### **God is free of evil.**

*“No one who is tempted should ever be confused and say that God is testing him. The One who created us is free from evil and can't be tempted, so He doesn't tempt anyone.” (Jas 1:13 VOICE)*

*“Don't let anyone under pressure to give in to evil say, ‘God is trying to trip me up.’ God is impervious to evil, and puts evil in no one's way. The temptation to give in to evil comes from us and only us.” (Jas 1:13-14 MSG)*

### **God is fruitful (full of fruit).**

*“And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” (Ge 1:28)*

*“Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.” (Ge 17:5-6)*

*“And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them.” (Ex 1:7)*

*“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” (Gal 5:22-23)*

*“But the fruit produced by the Holy Spirit within you is divine love in all its varied expressions: joy that overflows, peace that subdues, patience that endures, kindness in action, a life full of virtue, faith that prevails, gentleness of heart, and strength of spirit. Never set the law above these qualities, for they are meant to be limitless.” (Gal 5:22-23 TPT)*

*“Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.” (Php 1:11)*

*“That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;” (Col 1:10)*

**God is fullness (copiousness, plenty, multitude).**

*“And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.” (Jn 1:16)*

*“For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.” (1Co 10:26)*

*“And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” (Eph 1:22-23)*

*“And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.” (Eph 3:19)*

*“Father, out of Your honorable and glorious riches, strengthen Your people. Fill their souls with the power of Your Spirit ... may Your fullness flood through their entire beings.” (Eph 3:16-19 VOICE)*

*“For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;” (Col 1:19)*

*“For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” (Col 2:9)*

## **God is good.**

*“And God saw that His new creation was beautiful and good.” (Ge 1:10, 11, 18, 25 VOICE)*

*“Then God surveyed everything He had made, savoring its beauty and appreciating its goodness.” (Ge 1:31 VOICE)*

*“And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.” (Ex 33:19)*

*“Know this with all your heart, with everything in you, that not one detail has failed of all the good things God, your God, promised you. It has all happened. Nothing’s left undone—not so much as a word.” (Jos 23:14 MSG)*

*“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life : and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.” (Ps 23:6)*

*“The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.” (Nah 1:7)*

*“And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel [good news] of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.” (Mt 4:23)*

*“Blessed [joyful, nourished by God’s goodness] are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness [those who actively seek right standing with God], for they will be [completely] satisfied.” (Mt 5:6 AMP)*

*“If you then, evil as you are, know how to give good and advantageous gifts to your children, how much more will your Father Who is in heaven [perfect as He is] give good and advantageous things to those who keep on asking Him!” (Mt 7:11 AMPC)*

*“This is the Good News about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.” (Mk 1:1 NLT)*



*“For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.”* (Lk 6:43-45)

*“’Return to your home and your family, and tell them all the wonderful things God has done for you.’ So the man went away and preached to everyone who would listen about the amazing miracle Jesus had worked in his life.”* (Lk 8:39 TPT)

*“I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.”* (Jn 10:11)

*“Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?”* (Jn 10:32)

*“How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.”* (Act 10:38)

*“Yet he has never left himself without clear evidence of his goodness. For he blesses us with rain from heaven and seasons of fruitful harvests, and he nourishes us with food to meet our needs. He satisfies our lives, and euphoria fills our hearts.”* (Act 14:17 TPT)

*“Don’t be misled. Every good gift bestowed, every perfect gift received comes to us from above, courtesy of the Father of lights. He is consistent. He won’t change His mind or play tricks in the shadows.”* (Jas 1:16-17 VOICE)

### **God is greater.**

*“The house which I am to build is great, for our God is greater than all gods.”* (2Ch 2:5 AMPC)

*“Measure how high heaven is above the earth; God’s wide, loving, kind heart is greater for those who revere Him.”* (Ps 103:11 VOICE)

*“He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do.” (Jn 14:12)*

*“When the law came into the picture, sin grew and grew; but wherever sin grew and spread, God’s grace was there in fuller, greater measure. No matter how much sin crept in, there was always more grace.” (Rm 5:20 VOICE)*

*“So neither he who plants is anything nor he who waters, but [only] God Who makes it grow and become greater.” (1Co 3:7 AMPC)*

*“Now to the God who can do so many awe-inspiring things, immeasurable things, things greater than we ever could ask or imagine through the power at work in us,” (Eph 3:20 VOICE)*

*“For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself.” (Heb 6:13)*

*“Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.” (1Jn 4:4)*

*“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.” (1Jn 5:9)*

### **God is healer.**

*“Yet it was our suffering he carried, our pain and distress, our sick-to-the-soul-ness. We just figured that God had rejected him, that God was the reason he hurt so badly. But he was hurt because of us; he suffered so. Our wrongdoing wounded and crushed him. He endured the breaking that made us whole. The injuries he suffered became our healing.” (Is 53:4-5 VOICE)*

*“Our weakness and it was he who carried the weight of it, our miseries, and it was he who bore them. A leper, so we thought of him, a man God had smitten and brought low; and all the while it was for our sins he was wounded, it was guilt of ours crushed him down; on him the punishment fell that brought us peace, by his bruises we were healed.” (Is 53:4-5 KNOX)*

*“And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched*

*him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.” (Mat 8:2-3)*

*“This man must come from God; otherwise, this miracle would not be possible. Only God can do such things.” (Jn 9:33 VOICE)*

*“How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.” (Act 10:38)*

*“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.” (1Pe 2:24)*

### **God is holy.**

*“For I am the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.” (Lev 11:45)*

*“For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.” (Is 54:5)*

*“For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.” (1Th 4:7)*

*“May God himself, the God who makes everything holy and whole, make you holy and whole, put you together—spirit, soul, and body—and keep you fit for the coming of our Master, Jesus Christ.” (1Th 5:23 MSG)*

*“Our parents corrected us for a time as seemed good to them, but God only corrects us to our good so that we may share in His holiness.” (Heb 12: 10 VOICE)*

*“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:” (Heb 12:14)*

*“But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.” (1Pe 1:15-16)*

## **God is increase.**

*“Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey.” (Deu 6:3)*

*“And this is what will happen: When you, on your part, will obey these directives, keeping and following them, God, on his part, will keep the covenant of loyal love that he made with your ancestors: He will love you, he will bless you, he will increase you.” (Deu 7:12-13 MSG)*

*“Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us.” (Ps 67:6)*

*“The LORD shall increase you more and more, you and your children.” (Ps 115:14)*

*“For by me [Wisdom from God] your days shall be multiplied, and the years of your life shall be increased.” (Pr 9:11 AMPC)*

*“As Jesus grew, so did his wisdom and maturity. The favor of men increased upon his life, for he was loved greatly by God.” (Lk 2:52 TPT)*

*“I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.” (1Co 3:6)*

*“I planted, Apollos watered, but God [all the while] was making it grow and [He] gave the increase.” (1Co 3:6 AMPC)*

*“And [God] Who provides seed for the sower and bread for eating will also provide and multiply your [resources for] sowing and increase the fruits of your righteousness [which manifests itself in active goodness, kindness, and charity].” (2Co 9:10 AMPC)*

## **God is joy and satisfaction.**

*“This is the day which the Lord hath made. I will rejoice and be glad in it.” (Ps 118:1)*

*“This is God’s work. We rub our eyes—we can hardly believe it! This is the very day God acted— let’s celebrate and be festive! Salvation now, God.*

*Salvation now! Oh yes, God—a free and full life!” (Ps 118:1 MSG)*

*“The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.” (Jn 10:10 NLT)*

*“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” (Jn 15:11)*

*“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” (Rm 14:17)*

*“Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” (1Th 5:16-18)*

### **God is life.**

*“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” (Ge 2:7)*

*“And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.” (Ge 2:21-22)*

*“And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet.” (2Ki 13:21)*

*“In him was life; and the life was the light of men.” (Jn 1:4)*

*“If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.” (Jn 4:10)*

*“And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” (Jn 6:35)*

*“And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at*

*the last day.” (Jn 6:40)*

*“I am the path, the truth, and the energy of life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (Jn 14:6 VOICE)*

*“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” (Jn 17:3)*

*“He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.” (Act 17:25)*

*“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”*

*(Rm 8:2)*

*“For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” (Gal 6:8)*

*“I am sprinting toward the only goal that counts: to cross the line, to win the prize, and to hear God’s call to resurrection life found exclusively in Jesus the Anointed.” (Php 3:14 VOICE)*

*“And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.” (1Jn 2:25)*

### **God is light.**

*“And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.” (Ge 1:3)*

*“And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night:” (Ex 13:21)*

*“And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him.” (Ex 34:30)*

*“It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of musick, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the*

*house of the LORD; So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God.” (2Ch 5:13-14)*

*“In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.” (Jn 1:4-5)*

*“A light that thrives in the depths of darkness, blazes through murky bottoms. It cannot and will not be quenched.” (Jn 1:5 VOICE)*

*“I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” (Jn 8:12)*

*“This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” (1Jn 1:5)*

*“And the [heavenly] city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.” (Rev 21:3)*

### **God is love.**

*“The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.” (Zeph 3:17)*

*“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (Jn 3:16)*

*“And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rm 8:38-39 NLT)*

*“Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not*

*provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.” (1Co 13:4-8 NKJV)*

*“Love is large and incredibly patient. Love is gentle and consistently kind to all. It refuses to be jealous when blessing comes to someone else. Love does not brag about one’s achievements nor inflate its own importance. Love does not traffic in shame and disrespect, nor selfishly seek its own honor. Love is not easily irritated or quick to take offense. Love joyfully celebrates honesty and finds no delight in what is wrong. Love is a safe place of shelter, for it never stops believing the best for others. Love never takes failure as defeat, for it never gives up. Love never stops loving.” (1Co 13:4-8 TPT)*

*“He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.” (1Jn 4:8)*

### **God is merciful and compassionate.**

*“Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations;” (Deu 7:9)*

*“And he said, LORD God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart:” (1Ki 8:23)*

*“But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.” (Ps 86:15)*

*“The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy.” (Ps 145:8)*

*“Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.” (Mk 5:19)*

*“But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,” (Eph 2:4)*

*“If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God’s love be in that person?”*



(1Jn 3:17 NLT)

**God is peace.**

*“I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly.” (Ps 85:8)*

*“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” (Is 9:6)*

*“Ah, how beautiful the feet of those on the mountain who declare the good news of victory, of peace and liberation, The voice that calls to Zion, that chosen place for God’s promise people, announcing to them ‘Your God rules!’” (Is 52:7 VOICE)*

*“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” (Jn 14:27)*

*“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” (Jn 16:33)*

*“Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:)” (Act 10:34-36)*

*“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Rm 5:1)*

*“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” (Rm 14:17)*

*“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.” (Rm 15:13)*

*“And know that the peace of God (a peace that is beyond any and all of our human understanding) will stand watch over your hearts and minds in Jesus, the Anointed One.” (Php 4:7 VOICE)*

*“God is not the author of confusion, but of peace.” (1Co 4:33)*

*“Finally, brothers and sisters, keep rejoicing and repair whatever is broken. Encourage each other, think as one, and live at peace; and God, the Author of love and peace, will remain with you.” (2Co 13:11 VOICE)*

*“For God did not give us a spirit of timidity or cowardice or fear, but [He has given us a spirit] of power and of love and of sound judgment and personal discipline [abilities that result in a calm, well-balanced mind and self-control].” (2Ti 1:7 AMP)*

*“Casting the whole of your care [all your anxieties, all your worries, all your concerns, once and for all] on Him, for He cares for you affectionately and cares about you watchfully.” (1Pe 5:7 AMP)*

*“Pour out all your worries and stress upon him and leave them there, for he always tenderly cares for you.” (1Pe 5:7 TPT)*

### **God provides all things.**

*“And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.” (Mt 21:22)*

*“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” (Jn 14:26)*

*“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (Rm 8:31-32)*

*“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.” (2Co 9:8)*

*“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” (Php 4:13)*

*“And the Lord give thee understanding in all things.” (2Ti 1:7)*

*“Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.” (3Jn 1:2)*

### **God remembers.**

*“And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark.” (Ge 8:1)*

*“And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt.” (Ge 19:29)*

*“And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb.” (Ge 30:22)*

*“And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.” (Ex 2:24)*

*“For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.” (Ps 103:14)*

*“God remembered us when we were down, His love never quits.” (Ps 136:23 MSG)*

*“For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.” (Heb 6:10)*

*“For God, the Faithful One, is not unfair. How can he forget the work you have done for him? He remembers the love you demonstrate as you continually serve his beloved ones for the glory of his name.” (Heb 6:10 TPT)*

### **God is safety and deliverance.**

*“I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.” (Ps 4:8)*

*“Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.” (Ps 91:4)*

*“You are all around me – in front of me and in back of me.” (Ps 139:5 GW)*

*“The LORD lifteth up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground.” (Ps 147:6)*

*“And he has raised up for us a standard of salvation in his servant David’s house! Long, long ago, through the words of his holy prophets, he promised to do this for us, so that we should be safe from our enemies and secure from all who hate us.” (Lk 1:69-71 PHILLIPS)*

*“Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.” (Lk 10:19)*

*“Since you don’t need to worry—about security and safety, about food and clothing—then pursue God’s kingdom first and foremost, and these other things will come to you as well.” (Lk 12:31 VOICE)*

*“Through Him also we have [our] access (entrance, introduction) by faith into this grace (state of God’s favor) in which we [firmly and safely] stand. And let us rejoice and exult in our hope of experiencing and enjoying the glory of God.” (Rm 5:2 AMPC)*

*“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” (Heb 2:14-15)*

*“The confidence of my calling enables me to overcome every difficulty without shame, for I have an intimate revelation of this God. And my faith in him convinces me that he is more than able to keep all that I’ve placed in his hands safe and secure until the fullness of his appearing.” (2Ti 1:2 TPT)*

**God is a spirit.**

*“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.” (Is 61:1)*

*“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” (Jn 4:24)*

*“Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” (2Co 3:17)*

*“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1Th 5:23)*

### **God is strength.**

*“For who is God, save the LORD? and who is a rock, save our God? God is my strength and power: and he maketh my way perfect.” (2Sam 22:32-33)*

*“For the joy of the LORD is your strength.” (Neh 8:10)*

*“It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect.” (Ps 18:32)*

*“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” (Eph 6:10)*

*“In conclusion, be strong in the Lord [draw your strength from Him and be empowered through your union with Him] and in the power of His [boundless] might.” (Eph 6:10 AMP)*

*“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” (Php 4:13)*

### **God is success.**

*“The Eternal One was with Joseph, however, and he became successful in his own right as a slave within the house of his Egyptian master.” (Ge 39:2 VOICE)*

*“If you carefully obey all the terms of this covenant, then you’ll be successful in everything you do.” (Deu 29:9 VOICE)*

*“David was successful in everything he did because the Eternal One was present with him.” (1Sa 18:14 VOICE)*

*“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.” (Jos 1:8)*

*“I will bless you with a future filled with hope—a future of success, not of suffering.” (Jer 29:11 CEV)*

*“Put on God’s complete armour so that you can successfully resist all the devil’s methods of attack.” (Eph 6:11 PHILLIPS)*

### **God is truth.**

*“For the word of the LORD is right; and all his works are done in truth.” (Ps 33:4)*

*“For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” (Jn 1:17)*

*“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” (Jn 17:17)*

*“For this I have come into the cosmos: to demonstrate the power of truth. Everyone who seeks truth hears My voice.” (Jn 18:37 VOICE)*

*“But this is not the way of life that Christ has unfolded within you. If you have really experienced the Anointed One, and heard his truth, it will be seen in your life.” (Eph 4:20-21 TPT)*

*“All of Scripture is God-breathed; in its inspired voice, we hear useful teaching, rebuke, correction, instruction, and training for a life that is right so that God’s people may be up to the task ahead and have all they need to accomplish every good work.” (2Ti 3:16-17 VOICE)*

### **God is unity.**

*“The Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins. But how can I prove this to you? Maybe you are thinking it was easy for me to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven.’ There’s no proof that it really happened. But what if I say to the man, ‘Stand up and walk’? Then you will be able to see that I really have this power.’ So Jesus said to the paralyzed man, ‘Stand up. Take your mat and go home.’” (Mt 9:5 ERV)*

*“‘Any kingdom divided against itself is bound to collapse, and no town or household divided against itself can last for long. If it is Satan who is expelling Satan, then he is divided against himself—so how do you suppose that his kingdom can continue?’” (Mt 12:25 PHILLIPS)*

*“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (Jn 3:16)*

*“Just as the human body is one, though it has many parts that together form one body, so too is Christ. For by one Spirit we all were immersed and mingled into one single body. And no matter our status—whether we are Jews or non-Jews, oppressed or free—we are all privileged to drink deeply of the same Holy Spirit.” (1Co 12:12-13 TPT)*

*“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” (Eph 4:4-6)*

*“Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.” (Col 3:11)*

### **God is wisdom.**

*“And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship,” (Ex 31:3; Ex 35:31)*

*“And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore.” (1Ki 4:29)*

*Wisdom far greater than Solomon’s is right in front of you, and you quibble over ‘evidence.’ (Mt 12:44 MSG)*

*“And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.” (Lk 2:40)*

*“And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.” (Lk 2:47)*

*“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man”. (Lk 2:52)*

*“Therefore also said the wisdom of God ...” (Lk 11:49)*

*“But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:” (1Co 1:30)*

### **God is with us.**

*“Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him: With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.” (2Chr 32:7-8)*

*“The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.” (Ps 46:7)*

*“Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” (Is 7:14)*

*“Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” (Mt 1:23)*

*“And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.” (Rev 21:3)*

### **God is the Word. The Word is God.**

*“And it happened just as God said.” (Ge 1:30 VOICE)*



*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (Jn 1:1)*

*“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” (Jn 1:14)*

*“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” (Jn 6:63)*

*“Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.” (Jn 6:68)*

*“And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.” (Jn 12:50)*

**The Word (Jesus) was in the beginning and throughout time.**

*“The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.” (Jn 1:2-3)*

*“He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.” (Jn 1:10)*

*“Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.” (Jn 8:58)*

*“And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:” (Eph 3:9)*

*“For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.” (Col 1:16-17)*

*“Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;” (Heb 1:2)*

*“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do*

*appear.*” (Heb 11:3)

# Steps of Obedience

**There is a Triune God – Father (Creator), Son (Word of God), and Holy Spirit.**

*“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness:” (Ge 1:26)*

*“For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.” (1Jn 5:7)*

**Jesus had unity with the Father.**

*“I and my Father are one.” (Jn 10:30)*

*“If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.” (Jn 14:7)*

*“Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” (Jn 14:9)*

*“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:” (Php 2:6)*

**Jesus was obedient.**

*Learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble of heart. (Mt 11:29 VOICE)*

*“For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” (Rm 5:19)*

*“When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names.” (Php 2:7-9 NLT)*

*“Christ was humble. He obeyed God and even died on a cross.” (Col 2:10 CEV)*

**Jesus was sinless.**

*“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” (2Co 5:21)*

*“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” (Heb 4:15)*

*“For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.” (Heb 7:26)*

### **The command to obedience**

*“I call on heaven and earth as witnesses today that I have offered you life or death, blessings or curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants will live.” (Deu 30:19 GW)*

*“If you love Me, obey the commandments I have given you.” (Jn 14:15 VOICE)*

*“If you love me, show it by doing what I’ve told you.” (Jn 14:15 MSG)*

*“The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” (Rm 13:12-14)*

*“If you have heard Jesus and have been taught by Him according to the truth that is in Him, then you know to take off your former way of life, your crumpled old self—that dark blot of a soul corrupted by deceitful desire and lust—to take a fresh breath and to let God renew your attitude and spirit. Then you are ready to put on your new self, modeled after the very likeness of God: truthful, righteous, and holy..” (Eph 4:21-24 VOICE)*

*“God is working in you to make you willing and able to obey him.” (Php 2:13 CEV)*

*“For it is God who is producing in you both the desire and the ability to do what pleases him.” (Php 2:13 ISV)*

*“Remember, when our human parents disciplined us, we respected them. If that was true, shouldn’t we respect and live under the correction of the Father of all spirits even more?” (Heb 12:9 VOICE)*

*“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” (Jas 4:7)*

*“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” (1Pe 2:2)*

*“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.” (1Jn 5:3)*

### **Obedience in humility**

*“For everyone who makes himself important will become insignificant, while the man who makes himself insignificant will find himself important.” (Lk 14:11 PHILLIPS)*

*“In a humble (gentle, modest) spirit receive and welcome the Word which implanted and rooted [in your hearts] contains the power to save your souls.” (Jas 1:21 AMPC)*

*“Likewise, you younger men [of lesser rank and experience], be subject to your elders [seek their counsel]; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another [tie on the servant’s apron], for God is opposed to the proud [the disdainful, the presumptuous, and He defeats them], but He gives grace to the humble.” (1Pe 5:5 AMP)*

*“Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God [set aside self-righteous pride], so that He may exalt you [to a place of honor in His service] at the appropriate time.” (1Pe 5:6 AMP)*

### **Obedience in loving others.**

*“And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.” (Mk 12:31)*

*“Until then, there are three things that remain: faith, hope, and love—yet love surpasses them all.[u] So above all else, let love be the beautiful prize*

*for which you run.” (1Co 13:13 TPT)*

*“If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:” (Jas 2:8)*

*“My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.” (1Jn 3:18)*

*“And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.” (1Jn 4:21)*

### **Obedience to meditate on God’s Word**

*“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.” (Jos 1:8)*

*“But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.” (Ps 1:2)*

*“I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.” (Ps 40:8)*

*“Order my steps in thy word.” (Ps 119:133)*

*“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.” (Ps 119:11)*

*“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” (Col 3:16)*

### **Obedience in prayer**

*“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;” (Mt 5:44)*

*“And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;” (Lk 18:1)*

*“Pray without ceasing.” (1Th 5:17)*

*“Most of all, I’m writing to encourage you to pray with gratitude to God. Pray for all men with all forms of prayers and requests as you intercede with intense passion.” (1Ti 2:1 TPT)*

*“Therefore, I encourage the men to pray on every occasion with hands lifted to God in worship with clean hearts, free from frustration or strife.” (1Ti 2:8 TPT)*

*“Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.” (Jas 5:13)*

*“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” (Jas 5:16)*

### **Obedience in praise and worship**

*“I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.” (Ps 34:1)*

*“O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.” (Ps 107:1)*

*“Be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Eph 5:18-20)*

*“Don’t be pulled in different directions or worried about a thing. Be saturated in prayer throughout each day, offering your faith-filled requests before God with overflowing gratitude. Tell him every detail of your life, then God’s wonderful peace that transcends human understanding, will make the answers known to you through Jesus Christ. So keep your thoughts continually fixed on all that is authentic and real, honorable and admirable, beautiful and respectful, pure and holy, merciful and kind. And fasten your thoughts on every glorious work of God, praising him always.” (Php 4:6-8 TPT)*

*“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”* (Col 3:15-16)

*“Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”* (1Th 5:16-18)

*“By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.”* (Heb 13:15)

### **Obedience in waiting**

*“Wait with hope for the LORD. Be strong, and let your heart be courageous. Yes, wait with hope for the LORD.”* (Ps 27:14 GW)

*“Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.”* (Ps 37:7)

*“Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land.”* (Ps 37:34)

*“And by standing firm with patient endurance you will find your souls’ deliverance.”* (Lk 21:19 TPT)

### **Trustworthy (Responsible) Obedience**

*“The trustworthy servant is the one whom the master puts in charge of all the servants of his household; it is the trustworthy servant who not only oversees all the work, but also ensures the servants are properly fed and cared for.”* (Mt 24:45 VOICE)

*“Commending his servant, the master replied, ‘You have done well, and proven yourself to be my loyal and trustworthy servant. Because you have been a faithful steward to manage a small sum, now I will put you in charge of much, much more. You will experience the delight of your master, who will say to you, ‘Come celebrate with me!’”* (Mt 25:21 TPT)



*“His master said to him, Well done, you upright (honorable, admirable) and faithful servant! You have been faithful and trustworthy over a little; I will put you in charge of much. Enter into and share the joy (the delight, the blessedness) which your master enjoys.” (Mt 25:21 AMPC)*

*“For those who have received a greater revelation from their master are required a greater obedience. And those who have been entrusted with great responsibility will be held more responsible to their master.” (Lk 12:48 TPT)*

*“Each of them must be above reproach, devoted solely to his wife, whose children are believers and not rebellious or out of control. The overseer, since he serves God’s household, must be someone of blameless character and not be opinionated or short-tempered. He must not be a drunkard or violent or greedy. Instead he should be one who is known for his hospitality and a lover of goodness. He should be recognized as one who is fair-minded, pure-hearted, and self-controlled. He must have a firm grasp of the trustworthy message that he has been taught. This will enable him to both encourage others with healthy teachings and provide convincing answers to those who oppose his message.” (Tit 1:6-9 TPT)*

## **The Steps of Obedience**

Come out and be separate

*“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.” (2Co 6:17)*

Come up higher

*Then your host may find you and say, “My friend! Why are you sitting back here? Come up to this table near the front!” Then you will be publicly honored in front of everyone. Listen, if you lift yourself up, you’ll be put down, but if you humble yourself, you’ll be honored.” (Lk 14:10 VOICE)*

*““But, when thou mayest be called, having gone on, recline in the last place, that when he who called thee may come, he may say to thee, Friend, come up higher; then thou shalt have glory before those reclining with thee.”” (Lk 14:10 YLT)*

*“But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests.” (Lk 14:10 NIV)*

*“No, when you are invited, go and take your seat in an inconspicuous place, so that when your host comes in he may say to you, ‘Come on, my dear fellow, we have a much better seat than this for you.’ That is the way to be important in the eyes of all your fellow-guests! For everyone who makes himself important will become insignificant, while the man who makes himself insignificant will find himself important.” (Lk 14:10-11 PHILLIPS)*

Come after me

*“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” (Mt 16:24)*

*“If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.” (Lk 14:26-27)*

### **The Reward of Obedience**

Come celebrate!

*“Commending his servant, the master replied, ‘You have done well, and proven yourself to be my loyal and trustworthy servant. Because you have been a faithful steward to manage a small sum, now I will put you in charge of much, much more. You will experience the delight of your master, who will say to you, ‘Come celebrate with me!’” (Mt 25:21 TPT)*

Know God’s will and nature

*“The one who loves Me will do the things I have commanded. My Father loves everyone who loves Me; and I will love you and reveal My heart, will, and nature to you.” (Jn 14:21 VOICE)*

# About The Author

Author, Suzanne D. Williams, is a native Floridian, wife, mother, and photographer. She is the author of both nonfiction and fiction books. She writes devotionals and instructional articles for various blogs. She also does graphic design for self-publishing authors.

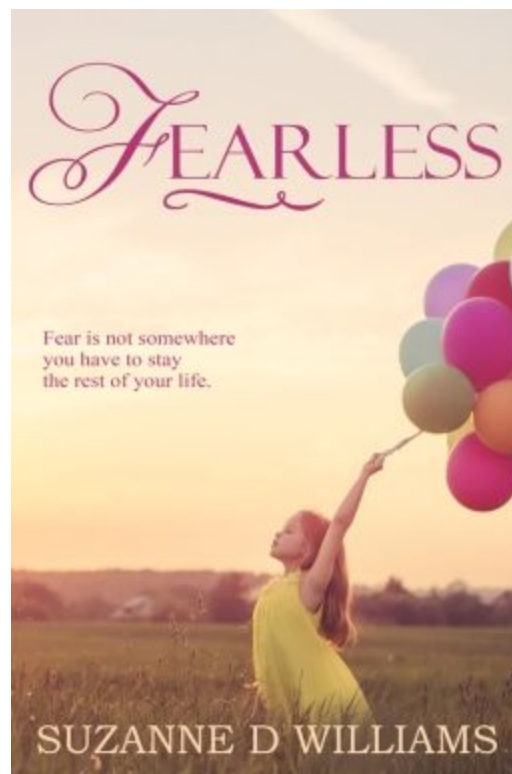
She is free of fear. She is obedient to God's Word. She is blessed.

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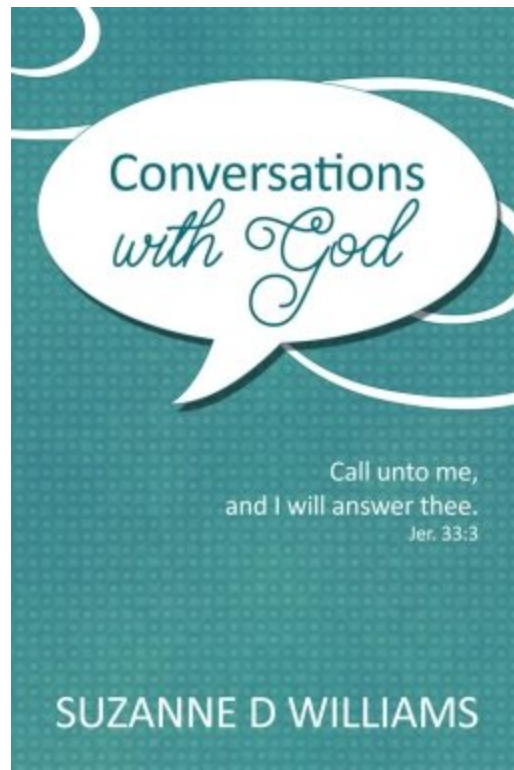
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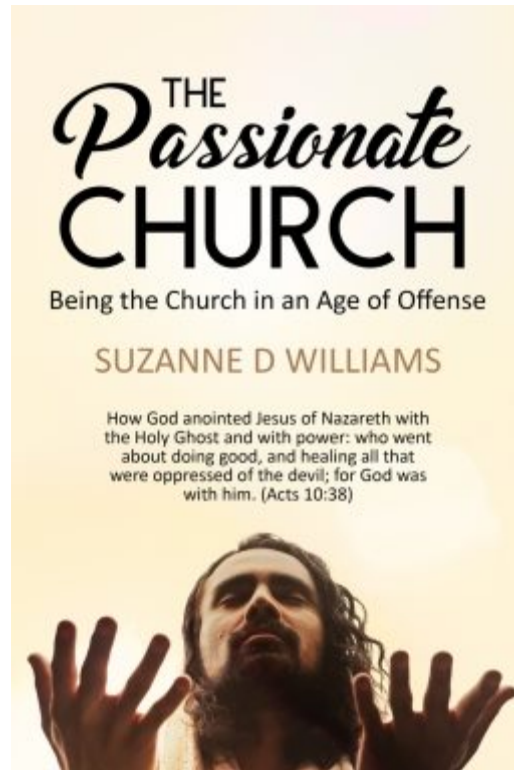


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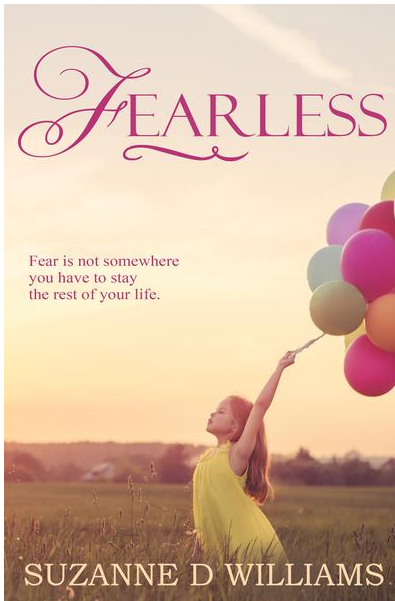
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