

# *Christian Life Digest*

## *Featuring:*

*Finding God's Will For Your Life, Hearing From God, The Bible,  
Faith By The Book, Hooks To Hang Your Faith On, There's A  
Reason For That, The Peace of God, The Gospel of Prosperity,  
Divine Appointments And Forgiveness.*

*Bible Teaching  
For Today's Walk of Faith*

*we walk by faith, not by sight*

*Volume  
#3*

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## Volume #3 Introduction

This Book is Volume Three of Five Volumes. Each volume focuses on different Biblical Teachings. The goal of each volume is to edify, and educate the Christian in the deeper things of God. This third volume addresses such concepts as Finding God's Will For Your Life, Hearing From God, The Bible, Faith By The Book, Hooks To Hang Your Faith On, There's A Reason For That, The Peace of God, The Gospel of Prosperity, Divine Appointments, Divine Healings And Forgiveness.

The KJV of the bible is used most often as examples and is referred to many times. It is considered by the author to be the most reliable source of knowledge and revelation in matters of Christian Living.

Fewer believers read their bibles on a regular basis than ever before. Walking by Faith is almost a forgotten art. Folks that go to church and those that don't are mingling together so much that the world can't see any difference between them. Hearing from God is laughed at as though the hearer was crazy and in need of help. Times have changed drastically in the Christian World, at least in the United States. We are in need of revival, renewal and refreshing by the Spirit of God.

Volume #3 of Christian Life Digest is an attempt to refresh, renew and reunite the Christian believer with the, "Walk By Faith" way of life. This volume is meant to bring back the right perspective, which is the sustaining force in living the Christian Life.

Most of us live our lives based upon assumptions that may or may not be true. Some folks don't even question the thought process that society says is the basis for living. "**Real Truth**" and, "**Absolute Truth**" must emerge once again in the minds of God's people.

# Finding God's Will For Your Life

## Introduction

The purpose of this study is to help believers to find and keep the, "Will of God", for their lives. What to do in certain situations is vital to pleasing the Lord and living an abundant life.

I will be sharing specific scriptures that will erase any doubts that may arise concerning God's Will for His children. My hope is that every reader will walk away with a clear perspective of who God really is, His destiny for His children and the principles that take us into God's presence and keep us in His will.

When I was a young Christian, I wished with all my heart that I could actually know the will of God. I often sent up prayers to heaven saying, "Lord, what do I do now?" It got so bad that I could hardly drive my car because I couldn't decide if God wanted me in the left or right lane on a 4-lane highway.

Months went by with my continual prayers to God that shouted into heaven, "What Do I Do Now?" Finally, I was invited to a bible study, started going to church and began reading my Bible. The answers came ever so slow but fast enough for me to digest and store them away in my heart.

Now, after 60+ years of Bible study, prayer and life-application, I can say with confidence that I do know and understand "God's Will" for my life. I am still learning and studying and applying. I even, at times, ask my self, "Why didn't I see that before now?"

I am going to open your eyes if you are blind, refresh your spirit if it is weary and strengthen your personal walk with Jesus, our Savior, by providing the tools needed to keep you keeping on. **Hang on!** It's sure to be an exciting adventure.

## *Knowing That You Know*

If you call yourself a Child of God, you should agree with me that you ought to know the Will of your Heavenly Father. You are openly admitting to a relationship and claiming family rights and access. Are we in agreement so far?



Knowing God is a logical assumption when we claim to be His child. Yet most of the Christians I know have serious doubts about the "Will of God" for them. This can only mean one of two things:

1. Your relationship with God the Father is not a close one. You pray, He listens, but you rarely feel His presence or hear His Voice....or

2. You have claimed to be a child of God but really are not. You know there is something not right but are too ashamed or afraid to openly admit to not being a child of God.

In either case mentioned above, there is a way to “*know that you know*” so there is no more doubt. However, knowing that you know takes Faith. God is speaking all the time through the Bible, through His Spirit and through other folks that He brings into your life. The quick fix to “*Knowing That You Know*” is to “*Listen And Believe*”.

I can say, without a doubt, that I know the Will of God for my life. I can make such a claim because God, my Heavenly Father, has published 66 books that contain over 3,000 promises and many great statements as to what His will is for His children. It’s all there in the Bible, just waiting for me to dig it out, “Listen And Believe”.



To know that you know is a great feeling because there is no anxiety in it. I know and have been persuaded that this way is the right way and my new perspective brings me a lot of comfort, peace and hope for the future.

“And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, this *is* the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.” **Isaiah 30:21**

**The Bible Says**, “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*.<sup>16</sup> The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:<sup>17</sup> And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” **Romans 8:15-17**

As the scripture says, the Spirit of God will bear witness with our spirits that we are the children of God. If you’ve even felt, seen or otherwise realized the witness of God’s Spirit, you will know without a shadow of a doubt, that you are a child of God.... and if a child also a joint heir with Christ.

### **How Does The Holy Spirit Bear Witness With Our Spirit?**

Notice that the apostle Paul didn’t say that the Spirit bears witness with our flesh, our souls or minds. He didn’t say the witness would be through the intellect. He said the witness would be from Spirit to spirit. That means it could be one of many gentle quiet assurances that we did the right thing at the right time. It could be a sense of stability when things are going rough. It could be, an “I just know” feeling.

The point here is that God’s Spirit is talking to us and our spirit is listening and rejoicing that it can hear God when He speaks. One definite witness, that I can recall, is when I read the scriptures they started jumping off the page with new and fresh revelation. The Bible, all of a



sudden, came alive and spoke directly to my spirit. God's Holy Spirit was and is still confirming to me that I am a child of the Living God.

So we have a quiet assurance and a loud voice that calls us to the Word of God, where we receive faith, instruction, assurance, strength, and knowledge and a lot more. God's witness is everywhere.

### It's Not Rocket Science



Finding God's Will is not rocket science. We have already learned that God's Holy Spirit is available to confirm or excuse our decisions in life. We also know that it is our, "Free Will" that engages truth and activates faith to empower us to walk in the Spirit.

The key to "Knowing That You Know" is absolute submission to His Will. Here's what Jesus said, "If any man will do his will, (God's Will), he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." **John 17:7**

We have to be ready and willing to do His Will. When we are, we will know the doctrine or revelation knowledge necessary to accomplish the revealed Will of God. **Question!** Why should God give us the knowledge of His Will if we are not willing or not ready to use it? That would be a waste of time and energy on God's part and He just doesn't operate that way.

He has, however, already revealed His Will in the pages of the Bible. If we really want to know, we can read and discover and learn and apply all that God has for us? So, let's look at the Bible.

I will take you on a journey so you can discover some of the great and precious promises that prove out what the Will of God is. We will look at several scriptures and discuss them.

### God's Divine Will As Revealed In The Bible



"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." **Genesis 1:26**

God wanted to create man, (Mankind or Male & Female). His divine will was to create us. He did that in His likeness and image. Then He gave us dominion over the earth and all its life forms. **What does this say to us?** Simply this, we were not a mistake, after thought or freak mutation of nature by evolved over millions of years. We were a specific, deliberate design to accomplish the goals and objectives of God in the earth.

”And let them have dominion” **Genesis 1:26** The word, “Them” is all of us. We were to rule as the “Head” and not the Tail.

*Now, let's proceed on our journey  
to discover the revealed “Will of God.”*

**Revelation #1... God's will for our lives is to take dominion over evil and live in such a way as to reveal the image and likeness of God.**

## **Man Is Created Male & Female**

**Genesis 2:18-25** is the biblical record of God creating Woman as a help meet for Adam. “And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.”

“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; **22**And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. **23**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. **24**Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. **25**And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.”

**Revelation #2... It is God's Will for a man to have a woman at his side. God ordained marriage and joined them together.** Where does this leave Homosexuality? It was never in the will of God.

**Revelation #3... God's greatest creation, (Mankind), fell into sin and is now in need of a Savior.**



## **The Fall of Man Death In Adam, Life In Christ**

(Genesis 3:1-7; Genesis 7:1-5; 2 Peter 3:1-9)

”Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: **13** (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. **14** Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.” **Romans 5:12-14**

**Romans 5:18-21** tells us, “Therefore as by the offence of one *judgment came* upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one *the free gift came* upon all men unto justification of life. **19** For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. **20** Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: **21** That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Man falls from God’s reality into the darkness of sin. He lost the image and likeness of God, But, God still loves him and makes a plan for his restoration. Man is justified by the blood of Jesus. His righteousness was imparted to us, that is, all who believe.

#### **Revelation #4...God loves us & does not want us to perish.**

Jesus said, “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** Whosoever believes is given eternal life.

“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” **Romans 5:8** He died for us that we might live for Him. (This is the foundation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.)

#### **Revelation #5...God wants us to repent and accept Jesus as our Savior so we can live in relationship with Him.**

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” **II Peter 2:9** We must repent of our sin because Salvation is essential to knowing God’s Will.

**Revelation #6...God wants us to live life with a thankful heart.** This allows God to be God over us and allows us to express our dependence upon Him. It also relieves us from the burden and stress of being our own god. We don’t have to be in control of everything.

## **Give Thanks In Everything**

“In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”

#### **I Thessalonians 5:17**

The Bible is filled with commands to give thanks to God (**Psalm 106:1; 107:1; 118:1; 1 Chronicles 16:34; 1 Thessalonians 5:18**). Most verses go on to list reasons why we should thank Him, such as “His love endures forever” (**Psalm 136:3**), “He is good” (**Psalm 118:29**), and “His mercy is everlasting” (**Psalm 100:5**). Thanksgiving and praise always go together. We cannot adequately praise and worship God without also being thankful.

Having feeling and expressing appreciation is good for us. Like any wise father, God wants us to learn to be thankful for all the gifts He has given us (**James 1:17**). It is in our best interest to be reminded that everything we have is a gift from Him. Without gratefulness, we become arrogant and self-centered. We begin to believe that we have achieved everything on our own. Thankfulness keeps our hearts in right relationship to God, the Giver of all good gifts.

Giving thanks also reminds us of how much we do have. Human beings are prone to covetousness. We tend to focus on what we *don't* have. By giving thanks continually we are reminded of how much we *do* have. When we focus on blessings rather than wants, we are happier. When we start thanking God for the things we usually take for granted, our perspective changes. We realize that we could not even exist without the merciful blessings of God.” (Excerpts from [www.gotquestions.org](http://www.gotquestions.org))

**Revelation #7... God is worthy of our trust and when we trust in, rely upon and adhere to His voice, He will direct our paths.**

**Proverbs 3:5-6** offers another “Will of God” Revelation. “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. <sup>6</sup>In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”

Why should we trust the Lord? Many Christians ask that question because of adverse situations they are in or have gone through. Here are a few reasons:

1. God is not a liar. He will always deal with us from a vantage point of truth.
2. God is immutable, which means, He can never change. He does not say one thing and do another. When He speaks... Well, listen to how Isaiah put it...”So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” **Isaiah 55:11**
3. God is Love... This can only mean that He has no hate in him. His war and revenge is against His enemies who walk in darkness, steal, kill and destroy. His children are the “Apple of His Eye” and the subject of His grace.
4. God is our Protector...”The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.” **Psalm 34:7**
5. God really does care for us...”Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.” **I Peter 5:7** “Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.” **Psalm 55:22**
6. God is a God of Blessings, Not Curses...(Psalms 1:1-3) Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; {2} But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. {3} He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper.



7. God is a God of Peace.... "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen." Romans 16:20

Because of who He is, we can, with confidence, acknowledge Him, trust Him, disregard our own feelings and follow His lead. He will always direct our paths.

### **Revelation #8...God wants to bring us back to where He had originally intended us to be, in His Image.**

Thus He speaks through the pages of the Bible, letting us know that He wants us to set ourselves apart for fellowship with Him.

"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:" **I Thessalonians 4:3**

The generic meaning of sanctification is "*the state of proper functioning.*" To sanctify someone or something is to set that person or thing apart for the use intended by its designer. A pen is "sanctified" when used to write. Eyeglasses are "sanctified" when used to improve sight. In the theological sense, things are sanctified when they are used for the purpose God intends.

The Greek word translated "sanctification" means "holiness." To sanctify, therefore, means, "to make holy." In one sense only God is holy (Isa 6:3 ). God is separate, distinct, and there is no other. No human being or thing shares the holiness of God's essential nature. There is one God. Yet Scripture speaks about holy things. Moreover, God calls human beings to be "holyas" or holy as he is holy (**Lev 11:44 ; Matt 5:48 ; 1 Peter 1:15-16** ). Another word for a holy person is "saint," meaning a sanctified one. The opposite of sanctified is "profane" (**Lev 10:10** ).

The imperfect state of creation is a reminder that God's fully sanctified purpose for it has been disrupted by sin. Evil is the deprivation of the good that God intends for the creation He designed. The creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. It is awaiting its sanctification when everything will be set right (**Rom 8:21-22 ; Rev. 20-21** ).

Human beings, made in God's image, were the pinnacle and focus of his creation. The sanctification of human beings, therefore, is the highest goal of God's work in the universe. God explicitly declared it to be His will (**1 Thess 4:3** ). He purposed that human beings be "like Him" in a way no other created thing is. Human beings are like God in their stewardship over creation (**Gen 1:26-31** ). Yet this role is dependent on a more fundamentally important likeness to God-moral character. By virtue of God-given discretionary autonomy (faith), human beings may so depend upon God that his moral character (communicable attributes) are displayed. (Dictionaries - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology - Sanctification)

We can never be holy in ourselves as He is Holy but by faith, we can become the very righteousness of God in Jesus Christ. “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.” **II Corinthians 5:21**

**Revelation #9... God wants us to allow the mind of Christ to dwell in our hearts.**

This is a voluntary act of humility, and servitude to God the Father. It is the only way that we can be highly exalted with Christ.

”Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. “ ” **Philippians 2:5-11**

**Revelation #10...God wants His Peace to Rule or referee in our hearts.**

“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.” **Colossians 3:15**

The word “Rule” in verse 15 actually expresses the intent to “Reign”. It also can be interpreted as “Referee” as in a game. Paul is telling the church to allow the peace of God to referee any and all situations as though they were a game. By doing so, you can use God’s peace as a referee’s whistle. It will blow with anxiety, confusion, worry and so on to let you know that you are off sides and in need of a reconnect with the Holy Spirit to attain His peace and sustain an attitude of thankfulness.

If you find yourself in anger, worry or any other such attitude, you can automatically know that you have lost God’s peace. God wants you to walk and live in His peace so you do not have to experience all that jazz of the flesh. It will kill you if left unattended.



**Revelation #11...God wants us to prove what is the good, and perfect will of God.**

”And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” **Romans 12:1**

We cannot allow non-believers to define what is or is not the acceptable or perfect Will of God. We need to be the Bible that they will not read. We need to demonstrate what good is and what perfect is so others around us can see what the perfect will of God is. The only way to get the job done is to reject the pull of this world into all its sin and be transformed in our minds so we do not fall for the wiles of the devil.

How do we renew our minds? By transforming your own mind from always thinking evil to allowing the mind of Christ to dwell in you. He will do the rest. Your mission is to not be conformed to this world but to align yourself with God's Will.

### **Revelation #12... God wants us to Put on the whole armor of God so the devil can't hurt us.**

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. <sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. <sup>13</sup> Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” **Ephesians 6:10-13**

Our fight is with the rulers of darkness. We are fighting because we need to defend ourselves. If we don't, we will become open game for the devil. Hear what Peter says in **I Peter 5:8-9,**

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.”

### **Revelation #13...God Wants Us to Guard our Hearts With All Diligence.**

“Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” **Proverbs 4:23** To keep ones heart is to guard it with all diligence. It implies that we should act as a gatekeeper that allows good things in and bad things from getting in. God wants us to protect our spiritual growth and resources. They can be depleted and even stolen by the devil.

### **Revelation #14...God Wants Us to Pray Without Ceasing**

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” **I Thessalonians 5:16-18**

We pray without ceasing when we start our day talking to God and maintain an atmosphere of prayer all day. We rejoice and give thanks along the way and life flows along like a calm gentle sea.

## Revelation #15...God Wants Us To Have Fellowship With Him.

### Fellowship With God

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;” **I John 1:1**

This simple and bold statement means that one can have a relationship with God. This idea would surprise many of John's readers, and it should be astounding to us. The Greek mind-set highly prized the idea of fellowship, but restricted to men among men - the idea of such an intimate relationship with God was revolutionary.

Jesus started the same kind of revolution among the Jews when He invited men to address God as Father (**Matthew 6:9**). We really can have a living, breathing relationship with God the Father, and with Jesus Christ. He can be, not only our Savior, but also our counselor and our closest friend.

Actually, for many people, this is totally unappealing. Sometimes it is because they don't know who God is, and an invitation to a "personal relationship with God" is about as attractive to them as telling an eighth-grader they can have a "personal relationship with the assistant principal." But when we know the greatness, the goodness, and the glory of God, we want to have a relationship with Him.

Other people turn from this relationship with God because they feel so distant from Him. They want a relationship with God, but feel so disqualified, so distant. They need to know what God has done to make this kind of relationship possible.

John identified this eternally existent being, who was physically present with John and others as the Word of Life. This is the same Logos spoken of in **John 1:1**.

The idea of the Logos - of the Word - was important for John and for the Greek and Jewish worlds of his day. For the Jew, God was often referred to as the Word because they knew God perfectly revealed Himself in His Word. For the Greek, their philosophers had spoken for centuries about the Logos - the basis for organization and intelligence in the universe, the Ultimate Reason that controls all things.

It is as if John said to everyone, "This Logos you have been talking about and writing about for centuries - well, we have heard Him, seen Him, studied Him, and touched Him. Let me now tell you about Him."

This life was manifested, meaning that it was made actually and physically real. John testified as an eyewitness (we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you) that this

was the case. This was no fairy tale, no "Once upon a time" story. This was real, and John tells us about it as an eyewitness. (Excerpts from David Guzik article on Fellowship With God)

## **Revelation #16...God Wants Us To Seek His Kingdom First, Above All Else In life.**

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” **Matthew 6:33**

Jesus said to seek first the kingdom of God in His Sermon on the Mount (**Matthew 6:33**). The verse’s meaning is as direct as it sounds. We are to seek the things of God as a priority over the things of the world. Primarily, it means we are to seek the salvation that is inherent in the kingdom of God because it is of greater value than all the world’s riches.

Does this mean that we should neglect the reasonable and daily duties that help sustain our lives? Certainly not. But for the Christian, there should be a difference in attitude toward them. If we are taking care of God’s business as a priority—seeking His salvation, living in obedience to Him, and sharing the good news of the kingdom with others—then He will take care of our business as He promised—and if that’s the arrangement, where is worrying?

But how do we know if we’re truly seeking God’s kingdom first? There are questions we can ask ourselves. “Where do I primarily spend my energies? Is all my time and money spent on goods and activities that will certainly perish, or in the services of God—the results of which live on for eternity?” Believers who have learned to truly put God first may then rest in this holy dynamic: “...and all these things will be given to you as well.”

God has promised to provide for His own, supplying every need (**Philippians 4:19**), but His idea of what we need is often different from ours, and His timing will only occasionally meet our expectations.

A growing number of false teachers are gathering followers under the message “God wants you to be rich!” But that philosophy is not the counsel of the Bible. It is certainly not the counsel of Matthew 6:33, which is not a formula for gaining wealth. It is a description of how God works. Jesus taught that our focus should be away from this world—its status and its lying allurements—and placed upon the things of God’s kingdom. (Excerpts from gotquestions.org)



**Matthew 6:33** is a call to priorities. We are invited to have fellowship with Christ but not in the appetites of sinful flesh. He wants us to walk with Him in His kingdom. Jesus says that if we sell out to Him, He will provide for us but if our selling out is to get rich, we have missed it before we start. God certainly wants us to prosper and be in good health but not by manipulation or exultation of self.

## **Revelation #17...God wants us to be filled with His Holy Spirit**

“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but 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;” **Ephesians 5:18-19**

This scripture clearly reveals God’s Will for His Followers: Don’t get drunk, Be Filled and Sing. I want to focus more closely on being filled with the Spirit. I am sure you will agree that he is not referring to the spirit of evil or the human spirit of which we are already absorbed. It is obvious that the Spirit we need to be filled with is none other than the Spirit of The Lord.

**How does one get filled with God’s Spirit?** The text here uses Greek words that mean to be continually filled as though it were possible to use up the Spirit and find yourself to be empty. I think that many Christians are running on empty and are in serious need of a fill-up.

Paul wrote: “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.” In the original Greek, the phrase “be filled: is a present-tense verb.

To signify a “one-time filling,” Paul would have used the past tense or a future verb tense; instead, he chose the present tense to denote that the filling of the Holy Spirit is not a one-time event, but a continual experience. Scripture says that we must be continually filled with the Spirit, not just once or twice.

The word filling seems awkward when referring to the Holy Spirit’s entrance into our lives. The Spirit of God is not a liquid, like water. He does not fill a person the way cold milk fills a cup. The Holy Spirit is God—He is one in essence with the Father and the Son—but He is also a distinct Personality and has all the attributes thereof. That is why we refer to the Holy Spirit as the third Person of the Trinity. Many Scripture passages point to these facts.

Like a person, the Holy Spirit searches, helps and guides. He knows; He feels; He wills. Scripture speaks of the Holy Spirit’s mind, His love and His instruction. In **Ephesians 4:30**, Paul wrote: “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” The only way we can grieve someone is if the one we are grieving has feelings.

Because the Holy Spirit is a Personality, it makes more sense to talk about the Holy Spirit’s control or compulsion in our lives, rather than His filling of our lives. Holy Spirit-driven is a good way to look at our response to His control.

A person who is filled with the Spirit is driven by the Spirit—driven in a gentle, loving way. A Spirit-driven person allows the Holy Spirit to direct and guide every decision.



Because the world, the flesh and the devil oppose the Spirit-controlled lifestyle, we need to be filled and renewed continually. (Excerpts taken from Joel Comiskey's article CBN.org.)

**Baptism** with the **Holy Spirit** or in the **Holy Spirit** in Christian theology is a term describing **baptism** (washing or immersion) in or with the **Spirit** of God and is frequently associated with the bestowal of **spiritual** gifts and empowerment for Christian ministry. **(Acts 1:5,8)**

To illustrate, consider this...if we drank water from a glass, then the water would be inside us. However, if we went to the beach and stepped into the ocean, then we would be in the water. We receive, as it were, a drink of the Holy Spirit when we are saved, but when we are "Baptized in the Spirit", it is as if that initial drink becomes an ocean that completely surrounds us.

Just as the indwelling Spirit that Christians receive when they are saved reproduces the life of Jesus, so the outpoured, or baptizing, Spirit reproduces the ministry of Jesus, including miracles and healings.

When Jesus gave the Great Commission (**Matthew 28:19-20**), He knew that His disciples could not fulfill it in their own power. Therefore, He had a special gift in store for them: It was His plan to give them the same power that He had -- the power of the Spirit of God. So, immediately after giving them the Great Commission, Jesus commanded his disciples not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father promised, "which," He said, "you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now" (**Acts 1:4-5**). He further promised: "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (**Acts 1:8**).

The disciples waited in Jerusalem as Jesus had commanded, and one day when they were all together, "suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent, rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance" (**Acts 2:3,4**). Then Peter explained to the crowd that gathered that they were seeing the working of God's Spirit and told them about Jesus. The Christian church began that day with the disciples and the three thousand people who joined them as a result of the day's events.

We can undertake making disciples of all nations with some degree of success without the baptism in the Holy Spirit, but when we do, we are undertaking a supernatural task with limited power.

It is God's will -- it is His commandment -- that we be baptized with and continually filled with the Holy Spirit: "Be filled with the Spirit" (**Ephesians 5:18**). The knowledge and reality of the empowering Spirit enables us to reproduce the works of Jesus. (Excerpts from CBN.org)

So, as I see it, the baptism of the Spirit is given so the believer can receive ministry gifts to aid in his or her service to the lord. The In-filling of the Spirit is to replenish the refreshing required to continue day to day. One has to do with reaching out to others. The other has to do with hearing and fellowshiping with God so we have direction, purpose and a clear focus.

### **Revelation #18... God Wants Us to Know That He Is Working Everything Together For Good.**

Why should we Trust God, Give Thanks, Pray Without Ceasing, and follow all the other teachings of Jesus? I would venture to say because of **Romans 8:28** ,” And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

God’s Will is clearly revealed to those who seek it. However, it is accomplished only in the lives of those that Love God and are the called according to His purposes. We also know that God calls everyone to repentance and salvation (John 3:16) The next pre-qualifier is that we love God. You would think that His children love their father. If they do not, it’s because they do not know Him. In any event, Loving God is the prime directive. Jesus said, “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.” **Mark 12:30**

### **Revelation # 19... God wants us to practice morality.**

"You shall have no other gods before Me," "you shall not make for yourself a carved image," "you shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain," "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy," "Honor your father and your mother," "You shall not murder," "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" and "You shall not covet anything that is your neighbor's." (Exodus Chapter 20).

It is God’s will for His children to practice morality. That’s why He gave His children the 10-commandments. The fact that they exist shows us the difference between right and wrong. They were never meant to be a standard by which salvation was attained or denied. They were, instead, designed as a moral compass to guide the child of God along life’s path towards his or her destiny.

## **Conclusion**

I am sure you will see even more scriptures that will reveal the “Will of God” for your life as you keep reading the Bible. I have listed some more prominent ones so you can get a feel for what to look for as you read.

So far we have discovered 18 that should be active in our lives today. These revelation truths are as follows:

- God's will for our lives is to take dominion over evil and live in such a way as to reveal the image and likeness of God.
- It is God's Will for a man to have a woman at his side.
- God's greatest creation, (Mankind), fell into sin and is now in need of a Savior.
- God loves us & does not want us to perish.
- God wants us to repent and accept Jesus as our Savior so we can live in relationship with Him.
- God wants us to live life with a thankful heart.
- God is worthy of our trust and when we trust in, rely upon and adhere to His voice, He will direct our paths.
- God's highest will is to bring us back to where He had originally intended us to be, in His Image. Thus He speaks through the pages of the Bible, letting us know that He wants us to set ourselves apart for fellowship with Him.
- God wants us to allow the mind of Christ to be in us. This is a voluntary act of humility, and servitude to God the Father. It is the only way that we can be highly exalted with Christ.
- God wants His Peace to Rule or referee in our hearts.
- God wants us to prove what is the good, and perfect will of God.
- God wants us to Put on the whole armor of God so the devil can't hurt us.
- God Wants Us to Guard our Hearts With All Diligence.
- God Wants Us to Pray Without Ceasing
- God Wants Us To Have Fellowship With Him.
- God Wants Us To Seek His Kingdom First, Above All Else In life.
- God wants us to be filled with His Holy Spirit
- God Wants Us to Know That He Is Working Everything Together For Good.
- God wants us to practice morality, denying immoral impulses and fleshly desires.

The best way to find God's Will for your life is not to ask friends, family, or anyone else. They are not God and often are wrong in their own decisions, which, if I am right, will show up in their lives as a testimony against them.

The best way to know God's Will is to ask God in prayer, stay in the Bible and look for direction, correction and guidance. ***It's all there.*** If you start a log of scripture verses and what they specifically meant to you, you'll have a history to refer to when you feel lost or confused.

## **Remember This**



All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

*II Timothy 3:16*

The Best way to live in this world is to apply the scriptures and live in them moment by moment. The truth you find in the scriptures will far exceed what this world has to offer.

## **Hearing The Voice of God**

### *Introduction*

Is God speaking to mankind today? Is anybody listening? If God were speaking to you, what do you think He'd be saying? Is it too way out to say, "I am hearing from God"? After all, He is the creator of all things. He is the "Supreme Ruler" of the universe. Why would He want to talk to me? How do you know, for sure, that the voice talking to me is Gods' voice?

We are left here on planet earth, seemingly, all alone to fend for ourselves. It's a make it or break it existence with our future in serious doubt of fruition. Is that how you feel? I used to think and feel like that...like... Why do I exist? Why am I here at this place and this time? Do I have a purpose in life? or am I just drifting with the masses towards an unknown destiny?

Well... I do not think or feel that way anymore. I was a teenager back then with very little knowledge or wisdom. It's been over 60 years since I felt lost and alone and without hope.

Things changed when I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior. He led me to the Bible and I, not only discovered my existence and purpose, but also my destiny. I realized that I didn't have to walk alone through a world that is less than perfect. **I found myself in God.**

As I search, prayed and sought after truth, I began to hear from God. He started speaking directly to my spirit in ways I never knew were even possible. This divine fellowship, between God and me, proved to me that it was real and that I was really a "Child of God."

### **The Witness of The Spirit**

**Romans 8:16**, helped me a lot because it said that God would show Himself to me so I would know that I know that I am in His loving care. "The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God." **Romans 8:16 KJV**

Here it is in the World English Bible... "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God;"

I am sure you are wondering how the Spirit of God testifies or bears witness. It's kind of hard to explain. There are so many little things at so many different times. I guess the most significant would be answered prayer. When you are praying about a thing, asking

for a specific results and He brings it into reality, you can't help but acknowledge that it was His doing.

I have seen the hand of the Lord in my life, moving on my behalf; to deliver me from harm and bless me in ways that were so clearly His work of grace.

Then there's the Bible. You haven't lived until you read the scriptures and certain promises seem to leap off the page into your heart. You just know that the Holy Spirit is speaking to you and often it is concerning a specific problem or request. God's counsel and guidance becomes alive as you read.

## Channels of Communication

God speaks to us in many different ways. If we are aware of them, we will be more ready to listen. Here are the three most important ways to consider:

1. **The Bible**...1<sup>st</sup> and foremost is the Holy Scriptures. This is where you discover God. His story, actions, character, and love are all clearly revealed. It is a great source of counsel and wisdom.
2. **Divine Unction**... The Holy Spirit will drop a thought or even an answer to a situation directly into your heart. You will have a peace about it and you will just know that you. This is, for sure, a non-verbal communication.
3. **God's Messenger**... God will often send a messenger with a "Word" of truth. The messenger could be the pastor of a church in a sermon, a Bible Study Teacher, a Godly friend, an angel in a dream, a vision, and so on. However, be sure that the message lines up with the knowledge of God. It cannot contradict the truths set forth in the Bible. If it does, it is not from God.

If we desire to hear the voice of God, we must open our hearts. We do not hear with our ears. It is the heart that listens. As "Children of God", our hearts cry out for the living God. He is our Father and friend. It is His hand that guides us, helps us, and delivers us. He is the source of our blessings and very existence.

Many folks do not hear from God because they do not want to know. God, for them, is at arm's length and sought after only in a crisis. Day-to-day involvement with God is not on their agenda. Jesus as Lord is, to them, a slogan, not a lifestyle. This has been true for centuries. Here's what Jesus said back in His earthy days...

"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." **Matthew 11:15** He said this because they were not listening. They didn't have their ears attached to their hearts.

You have to have ears in order to hear but your ears need to be attached to your heart...meaning, this is a serious matter and it needs your full attention. You must be willing to take it to heart and act upon it.

There are a few things you can do to make it easier to hear the voice of God. Consider these;

1. **Establish a Quiet Time**...In today's self-driven world where everything is fast paced and rushed; it can be hard to hear from God. Although, your ultimate goal is to hear His voice in any circumstance. However, you have to start somewhere and a quiet time is a good place to meditate on the Word and listen.
2. **Stop The Mental Traffic Flow**... The devil tries to keep our minds flowing with needless noise. As long as we are thinking about lots of meaningless things, we will not have the time to listen for the, "Still Small Voice" of God. Stop the mind chatter and listen.
3. **Focus on God**...Seek Him while He may be found. Don't wait for Him to come to you. Engage in prayer and ask Him to share Himself with you. This will shut out everything else and clear the channel between you and God. This action is Biblical.

### **Here the words of Jesus...**

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks, it shall be opened." **Matthew 7:7-8**

4. **Accept God's Will**... If we do not want to accept God's will, He most likely will not tell us His will. It is clearly revealed in the Bible. However, He wants to share that with you personally from His heart. Obedience is the key to hearing God's voice.
5. **Call Upon The Holy Spirit**... We were given the Holy Spirit at our New Birth (When we accepted Jesus) It's ok to call upon the Holy Spirit to interpret our prayers, heal our wounds, and help us to hear from God. He was given to us for that purpose.
6. **Learn To Recognize God's Voice**...You can recognize His voice among all the other voices coming and going through your mind. It just takes practice. Here's what John, the apostle said...

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." **I John 4:1**



God wants you to examine every thought because all thoughts are not yours. They also enter your mind from Satan, The Flesh, and Other's Expectations as well as from God. The one to act upon is the one that brings you the most peace. If you feel fear, anxiety, confusion or guilt, reject it and cast it out immediately. Do not entertain it.

**7. Be Filled With The Spirit...** God wants us to be continually filled with His Holy Spirit. This is a daily if not moment-by-moment process. We need to walk in His Spirit, Live in His Spirit, and apply all that He reveals to us. Listen to what Paul said to the Ephesians. There's a new song in your future.

“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but 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;” **Ephesians 5:18-20**

Being filled is a “Be, Being” action verb... meaning allow God to continually fill you. In other words, one time is not enough. It has to be a steady flow of Holy Ghost power to keep you filled and ready to face the world.

## **When You Don't Hear His Voice**

What happens when you just cannot discern which voice is God's? Sometimes, God wants us to use our minds and search for an answer. He will give us indicators and expect us to draw our own conclusion based upon the knowledge of God already revealed. Here are a few indicators that will help you to know if the voice you are hearing is from God:

- Is what's being said contrary to Biblical truth? If so, it is not God talking to you.
- Is what's being said causing confusion, doubt or anxiety? If so, it's not from God. God's voice always brings peace and has a tone of love and care.
- Is what's being said putting you under false expectations or oppressing you in any way? If so, it's not from God.
- Do you feel good about doing what is being said? If you are afraid and feel a sense of guilt if you participate in whatever is being asked of you, it's not of God.

Remember, the devil will always lie to you and suggest that you participate in some sort of immorality. It could be anything from telling a lie to stealing to even sex or murder. His goal is to tear down what God has built up in you.

God's voice, on the other hand, always encourages, builds up, strengthens, and is always in an attitude of peace.

## Missing Out Is Not An Option

You should never feel sad about missing the Voice of God. **Here what the scriptures say:** “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” **Isaiah 55:11**

God knows who you are, where you are and what you are doing. If He wants to talk to you, you will not miss His Word because He says it will not come back to Him void but will accomplish that to which He sends it.

Jesus put it this way, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” **John 10:27** If you are His, you will hear Him when He calls.

The shepherd trains the sheep to listen for His voice among many other voices. That is what the Holy Spirit does when He bears witness with our spirit. He is teaching us to discern the voice of God.

“The steps of a man are ordered by the Lord, And He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the Lord upholds him with His hand.” **Psalm 37:23-24**

God will order our steps, and even when we blow it, if we are truly trying to do His will, He will lift us up and give us a second chance.

## Knowing Comes From Commitment

“Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.” Proverbs 16:3

If our thoughts are established, we will know that we know what the will of the lord is and we will already be in close communication with God, our Father who loves us. Paul tells us in Romans how to commit...

“I beseech (Beg) you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” **Romans 12:1-2**

It is so much easier to hear when we are submitted to God and His will for our lives. I can remember a story from the Old Testament about a disobedient prophet. God finally opened the mouth of an Ass and rebuked him. (Numbers 22:28-30) We don't want God to have to speak through an Ass before we will listen. It is better to hear and obey and keep the favor of God on us.

## The God Who Speaks

God loves to talk, whereas Idols do not speak because God is alive and Idols are not. God Himself is known as “The Word”, and His speech commanded nothing to be everything (**John 1:1–3**).

“The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty” (Psalm 29:4). When God wants the dead to come to life he says, “Live!” (Ezekiel 16:6), and when Jesus wanted his friend to walk out of the grave, he spoke, “Lazarus, come out” (John 11:43). Even now, Jesus is holding together your molecules with his words (Hebrews 1:3). If Jesus were to stop speaking, you would stop existing.

## A Still Small Voice

There is only one place in Scripture where God is said to have spoken in a “Still Small Voice,” It was to Elijah after his dramatic victory over the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:20-40;

God is not confined to a single manner of communicating. Elsewhere in Scripture, He is said to communicate through a whirlwind (Job 38:1), to announce His presence by an earthquake (Exodus 19:18), and to speak in a voice that sounds like thunder (**1 Samuel 2:10; Job 37:2; Psalm 104:7; John 12:29**). In **Psalm 77:18** His voice is compared to both thunder and a whirlwind and in Revelation 4:5, we’re told that lightning and thunder proceed from the throne in heaven.

Nor is God limited to natural phenomena when He speaks. All through the Old Testament, He speaks through His prophets. The common thread in all the prophets is the phrase, “Thus says the Lord.” He speaks through the writers of Scripture. Most graciously, however, He speaks through His Son, the Lord Jesus. The writer to the Hebrews opens his letter with this truth:

“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world” (**Hebrews 1:1–2**).

**Hebrews 1:1-2** tells us that the voice we are hearing is the voice of Jesus. Hebrews says this...

“Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you. So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me? **Hebrews 13:5-6 NIV**

It is less important to know how God speaks to us than it is to know what we should do with what He says. God speaks most clearly to us in our day through His Word. The

more we learn it, the more ready we will be to recognize His voice when He speaks, and the more likely we are to obey what we hear.

## Conclusion

Let's summarize so we are all on the same page. Here's some of what we know so far:

1. God's Word will find you and accomplish everything He wanted. It will not return to Him empty.
2. We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit continually so as to benefit from His gifts and walk with Him through life's every trial.
3. A Quiet Time is a good place to start listening for God's voice.
4. God is not restricted to a "Still Small Voice." He can shout with the voice of thunder if He needs to.
5. We are encouraged to try or test the spirits (Thoughts) that enter our minds to be sure they are of God.
6. The Bible is the life-source of all revelation and knowledge of God. Every thought must align with its truth.
7. The more we are committed to doing God's Will, the easier it will be to hear His voice.
8. When we cannot discern the voice of God in a situation, we should look for indicators, Bible Knowledge, that we already know and use it to approve or reject the voice in our head.
9. The Spirit of God will bear witness with our spirit that we are His children.
10. Don't wait for something to happen. "**Ask, Knock & Seek**" the Lord until heaven opens and you hear His voice. This is His Will that you do so.

*The Best Way Is Always God's Way*

## The Bible God's Holy Word Introduction

The Bible is a fascinating book to read. It speaks of mysteries, has plenty of drama, Battles galore, talks about human relationships, marriage, life and death issues, forgiveness, rewards, faith, hope, love and a lot more. Its central theme is the redemption of mankind by a loving God who created them. If you look hard as you read, you may even get a glimpse of God Himself and learn who he is. The read is well worth the effort.

## **Bible Statistics** **(King James Authorized)**

**Number of books** in the Bible: 66 (written by approximately 40 different writers, over 1600 years, on 3 different continents, in 3 different languages, on thousands of different subjects, yet with one central theme—God's redemption of mankind from sin won for the whole world by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ), **Chapters:** 1,189,

**Verses:** 31,102 **Words:** 783,137, **Letters:** 3,116,480, **Number of promises** that are given in the Bible: 1,260, **Commands:** 6,468, **Predictions:** over 8,000 **Fulfilled prophecy:** 3,268 verses, **Unfulfilled prophecy:** 3,140 **Number of questions:** 3,294, **Longest name:** Mahershalalhashbaz (Isaiah 8:1) **Longest verse:** Esther 8:9 (78 words), **Shortest verse:** John 11:35 (2 words: “Jesus wept”). This is the King James Bible. Some Bibles might be Job 3:2 (Job said.), but King James has that as “Job answered” which is longer than Jesus wept. There are 8,674 different Hebrew words in the Bible, 5,624 different Greek words, and 12,143 different English words in the King James Version.

**Middle books:** Micah and Nahum, **Middle verse:** Psalm 103:2-3 **Middle chapter:** Psalm 117, **Shortest chapter** (by number of words): Psalm 117 (by number of words), **Longest book:** Psalms (150 chapters) **Shortest book** (by number of words): 3 John, **Longest chapter:** Psalm 119 (176 verses), Number of times the word “God” appears: 4,094 Number of times the word “Lord” appears: 6,781, Number of different authors: 40, **Number of languages** the Bible has been translated into: over 1,200 languages.

## **Old Testament Statistics** **(King James Authorized)**

**Number of books:** 39, **Chapters:** 929, **Verses:** 23,145, **Words:** 602,585 **Letters:** 2,278,100, **Middle book:** Proverbs, **Middle chapter:** Job 20 **Middle verses:** 2 Chronicles 20:17,18, **Smallest book:** Obadiah **Shortest Verse:** 1 Chronicles 1:25, **Longest verse:** Esther 8:9 **Longest chapter:** Psalms 119, **Largest book:** Psalms

## **New Testament Statistics**

**Number of books:** 27, **Chapters:** 260, **Verses:** 7,957, **Words:** 180,552, **Letters:** 838,380, **Middle book:** 2 Thessalonians, **Middle chapters:** Romans 8, 9, **Middle verse:** Acts 27:17 **Smallest book:** 3 John, **Shortest verse:** John 11:35, **Longest verse:** Revelation 20:4 **Longest chapter:** Luke 1, **Largest book:** Luke

## **The English Bible**

What a fascinating history, the English Bible has martyrs, translations by Kings and poets and a search for the definitive translation that would confirm “truth.”

Here's a short, concise history of the English Bible from the earliest times to the late 1800's and early 1900's.

**443 BC...** Completion of all the books of the original Hebrew manuscripts that make up the 39 books of the Old Testament

**200 BC...** Completion of the Septuagint Greek Manuscripts that contain the translation of the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 14 books of the Apocrypha.

**60 AD...** Completion of the Greek manuscripts that make up the 27 books of the New Testament

**90-95 AD...** Council of Jamnia, a Jewish council, met to revise the Books of the Canon (or the Old Testament as it is known to Christians.) These were the criteria:

1. The books had to conform to the Pentateuch (the first five books).
2. The books had to be written in Hebrew.
3. The books had to be written in Palestine.
4. The books had to be written before 400 B.C.

One result is the removal of the 14 books known as the Apocrypha.

**360 AD...** Laodocia Council meets to decide which books and writings will be accepted as Holy Scripture. The Greek Septuagint is accepted for the Old Testament. Criteria for the New Testament writings include that they must be written by an Apostle or during the time of the Apostles, that they must support true doctrine and must have wide spread usage.

Thus, even though the Shepherd of Hermas, the First Letter of Clement, and the Didache may have been widely used and contain true doctrines, they were not canonical because they were not apostolic or connected to the apostolic age, or they were local writings without support in many areas.

**390 AD...** Jerome's Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible is produced and in wide circulation. It includes all 80 books including the Apocrypha. It is used in Celtic monasteries in Britain. During this period the British within the Roman Empire use Latin as the official language

**Historical Background: 5th – 6th Century...** Germanic peoples who came to Britain bring their dialects of which Saxon becomes standard Old English. Because of this, a need for an English version of the scriptures arises.



**7th Century...** Herdsman Caedmon, spoken of by Bede, the learned monk of Jarrow, sings the themes of the Bible in



English. This becomes a common method for presenting scriptural themes in English.

**640 AD to 735 AD...** Aldheim is credited with translating the whole Bible into English while Bede was still working on completing his translation when he died. The translations of these times are based on translations of the Latin Vulgate version rather than translations of the original Hebrew and Greek versions.

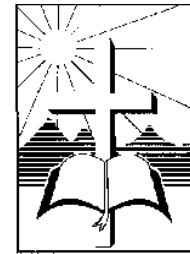
**1384...** John Wycliffe finishes the first translation of the entire Bible into English. His version and copies of it are handwritten.

**1408...** Synod of Oxford tries to suppress the Wycliffe Bible with little success.

**1455...** Gutenberg invents the printing press making it possible to mass-produce books. The first book printed is Gutenberg's Bible in Latin.

## Historical Background: Reformation

A revolution in western thinking followed the midpoint of the 15th century A.D. The Renaissance opened up the treasures of both classical and patristic learning in a new way. It also revived interest in the study of both Greek and Hebrew that made possible the study of the Bible in the original languages. This new interest in original editions stimulated textual research and also evidenced the corruption and ignorance of the contemporary church.



The Renaissance created new opportunities for humanist scholars such as Erasmus of Rotterdam, who sought to make the Bible available to people of all ages, social levels, and countries.

More radical in outlook than Renaissance humanists were the Reformers, who measured the teaching and practice of the contemporary church by the standards of scripture. The Reformers were horrified by the obvious discrepancies. There soon emerged a mission to discover the pure biblical message and to reconstruct both the teaching and practice of the church. The Reformers became deeply convinced that it was both reasonable and necessary to circulate God's word to purify the church from ignorance and destructive practices. (From <http://davidsonpress.com>)

**1525...** William Tyndale's New Testament is completed. His translation is based on the Latin Vulgate, Erasmus Greek and the original Greek manuscripts. His wording and sentence structures are found in most modern day translations of the Bible.

Tyndale was committed to taking the Bible directly to the people. Expressing open defiance of the Pope, Tyndale said that if God would spare his life he would make it possible for even a ploughboy to know more about Holy Scripture than the Pope himself. By August of 1525, his translation of the New Testament was complete. Printing began at Cologne, but when the authorities forbade the project, Tyndale escaped to Worms, where

6,000 copies were printed and sold in England by April of 1526. The official opposition in England led to the destruction of most of these early copies.

Tyndale's English work is similar to that of Martin Luther. Although he used Luther's German translation, Tyndale also drew upon the Latin Vulgate as well as Erasmus' Greek text. Ninety percent of the New Testament in the King James Version (KJV) is Tyndale's translation. By the same token, where the KJV departed from Tyndale's wording, the English Revised Version (ERV) of 1881 went back to it. Without question, this first printed English New Testament is the basis of all future works in translation.

**1536...** Tyndale executed. Tyndale did not live to complete his Old Testament translation. On May 21, 1535, he was arrested and later executed for heresy at Vilvorde, Belgium, on October 6, 1536. His dying prayer was that the Lord would open the eyes of the King of England. He left behind a manuscript containing the translation of the historical books from Joshua to 2 Chronicles that was finally published in 1537.

**1535...** Myles Coverdale, a student of Tyndale's, produces a Bible. It includes 80 books (The 39 Old Testament, 27 New Testament and 14 Apochrypha) His version uses the translations Tyndale was able to complete. Coverdale finished translating the rest of the Bible but not being a Hebrew or Greek scholar his portions are based on intermediate Latin and German translations rather than the original Greek and Hebrew.

**1537...** Matthews Bible printed. Matthews Bible is really Tyndale's translation supplemented by Coverdale's translation. Henry VIII through the efforts of Archbishop Crammer and Thomas Cromwell gave permission for this English version of the Bible to be bought and sold throughout Britain.

Historical Background Leading to King James (Protestant) and Rheims-Douay (Catholic)

**Bibles:** It is during this time that the Protestant Reformers gain political power in England with the break off from the Catholic Church by Henry VIII. The various Bible translations that follow are dependent upon the rise and fall of Protestant power. Mary Tudor is Catholic and during her time no new translations are permitted. Elizabeth is Protestant. Mary Stuart, never allowed to reign, is Catholic. Her son James who became King James I of England and King James VI of Scotland was raised in England by Elizabeth as a Protestant upon Mary Stuart's abdication of the crown of Scotland when James was one year of age.

**1539...** The Great Bible is called that because of its size but it is basically Matthews Bible and was authorized for public use. It contains 80 books including the Apochrypha as an appendix.

**1546...** Council of Trent is called to answer the accusations of corruption and apostasy in the Catholic Church by the Protestant Reformers. The Council meets over a 27-year period. One of the results is that Jerome's Latin Vulgate version of the Bible is held to be the official version of the Bible accepted by the Catholic Church.

**1560...** The Geneva Bible is printed. Verses are added for the first time in this edition. It is also the first translation of the Bible based entirely on the original Hebrew and Greek. It was translated by exiles from England living in Geneva during the Catholic Mary Tudor's reign. The majority of the translation is attributed to William Whittington a relative of John Calvin.

**1568...** Bishops Bible produced. Because there was no "official" version of the Bible in England at this time, the Archbishop of Canterbury suggested the Geneva Bible be revised by the Bishop's to be used by all the churches. This is the version known as The Bishop's Bible

**1609...** Rheims-Douay Bible is the First Complete English Catholic Bible. Called Rheims – Douay because the New Testament portion was first completed in Rheims France in 1582 followed by the Old Testament finished in 1609 in Douay. In this version the 14 books of the Apochrypha are returned to the Bible in the order written rather than kept separate in an appendix.

**1611...** King James Version... The stated purpose of the King James translation was "not to make a bad version good, but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones one principal good one." It is primarily a re-translation of the Bishop's Bible. 54 men were called to work on translation (47 actually participated) using all the widely accepted versions up to then including Bishop's, Geneva, Matthews, Coverdale and Tyndale translation as well as looking at original manuscripts.

All available copies of the original manuscripts are brought in. It is found that the Hebrew manuscripts are virtually identical while there are wide variations in the Greek manuscripts as they have been hand copied and handed down. The 47 men work as teams checking each other's work. It was printed originally with all 80 books including the Apochrypha again as a separate section.

**1613-1901...**At that time until today translations have continued as translators gained a better understanding of the Hebrew language and the Greek writers. 300 corrections were made in the 1613 version of the King James Version. In the 18th century Bishop Challoner made revisions to the Rheims-Douay Bible removing some Latin terms and adding the use of King James translation in some areas.

**The Apochrypha were removed in 1885** from King James Versions when the English Revised Version was printed and in **1901** when the American Standard Version was printed.

## The Geisler Lists

**The Bible meets all the criteria listed by Geisler lists which are used to determine if a book was from God:**

1. It would claim to be God's Word.

2. It would be historically accurate when it speaks on historical matters.
3. The authors would be trustworthy.
4. The book would be thematically unified and without contradictions.
5. We would have received accurate copies of the original manuscripts.
6. It would make statements that would reveal knowledge about the way things work beyond the knowledge of its day. (See Geisler *Encyclopedia* pages 692-693.)
7. It would make predictions about the future that could not be known through natural means.
8. The message would be unique.
9. The messengers would be confirmed by miracles.
10. The words would have a transforming power.

Each year, the Barna Group partners with the American Bible Society on *State of the Bible*, a comprehensive study of Americans' attitudes and behaviors toward the Bible.

## Six Trends In Bible Engagement

*According to the recent Transformational Discipleship study conducted by LifeWay Research, only 20% of churchgoers read their Bibles. The study spans all Christian groups.*

This year's research (April 2014) reveals six trends in Bible engagement: from the Bible's continued role as a cultural icon, to increased digital Bible reading, to a rise in skepticism toward Scripture, particularly among Millennials.

**1. Bible skepticism is now “tied” with Bible engagement.** This year's research reveals that skepticism toward the Bible continues to rise. For the first time since tracking began, Bible skepticism is tied with Bible engagement. The number of those who are skeptical or agnostic toward the Bible—who believe that the Bible is “just another book of teachings written by men that contains stories and advice”—has nearly doubled from 10% to 19% in just three years. This is now equal to the number of people who are Bible engaged—who read the Bible at least four times a week and believe it is the actual or inspired Word of God.

Digging into the population segmentation of Bible skeptics, we find that two-thirds are 48 or younger (28% Millennials, 36% Gen-Xers), and they are twice as likely to be male (68%) than female (32%). They are more likely to identify as Catholic than any other single denomination or affiliation (30%) and are the most-likely segment not to have attended church (87%) or prayed (63%) during the previous week. They are also most likely not to have made a commitment to Jesus that is important in their life today (76%).

Not only are Millennials more likely to be skeptical toward Scripture, they are also less likely to read the Bible (39% say they never read the Bible, compared to 26% of all adults), less likely to own a Bible (80% compared to 88%) and less likely to believe the Bible contains everything a person needs to know to live a meaningful life (35% compared to 50%). Given the increase in Millennials who don't believe the Bible is

sacred and the decrease in Bible awareness among Millennials, Bible skepticism will likely continue to rise in the next five years.

**2. Despite the declines, most Americans continue to be "pro-Bible."** While the percentage of Americans who believe the Bible is sacred has fallen in recent years, from 86% in 2011 to 79% in 2014, it's still a sizable majority of all adults. In general, Americans continue to view the Bible very positively. More than half of Americans (56%) are "pro-Bible"—meaning they believe the Bible is the actual or inspired word of God with no errors. Most adults say the Bible encourages forgiveness (91%), generosity (88%) and patience (89%) while discouraging war (62%), slavery (60%) and prostitution (82%). Nearly nine in 10 households own at least one Bible (88%) and the average number of Bibles per household is 4.7.

Being pro-Bible doesn't necessarily mean Americans use the Bible regularly, however. Only 37% of Americans report reading the Bible once a week or more. Among those who have read Scripture in the previous week, not quite six in 10 (57%) say they gave a lot of thought to how it might apply to their life. While the Bible's place in America as a cultural icon endures, it's not always perceived as a transformational text. Even as Bible ownership remains strong, readership and engagement are weak.

**3. Distraction and busyness continue to squeeze out the Bible.** So what keeps people from reading the Bible they own? Like all other forms of analog media, the Bible is pushed to the side in part because people are just too busy. Among those who say their Bible reading decreased in the last year, the number-one reason was busyness: 40% report being too busy with life's responsibilities (job, family, etc.), an increase of seven points from just one year ago.

Other factors Americans cite as reasons for less time reading Scripture include a significant change in their life (17%), becoming atheist or agnostic (15%), going through a difficult experience that caused them to doubt God (13%) and seeing that reading the Bible made very little difference in someone else's life (8%).

These relatively smaller percentages reveal that Americans don't often turn away from the Bible over ideological or emotional conflicts. Indeed, on the whole Americans say they want to read the Bible—62% wish they read Scripture more—they just don't know how to make time.

**4. The age of screens has come to stay in the Bible market.** One antidote to the distraction of the screen age is to put the Bible onscreen. And this past year certainly saw the Bible come to more screens than ever—from smartphone apps to primetime TV—and Americans responded. Of adults who increased their Bible readership last year, one-quarter (26%) say it was due to having downloaded the Bible onto their smartphone or tablet. More than one in 10 (12%) credit their increased Bible reading to podcasts or streaming church services. And an additional one in 10 (11%) say watching The Bible miniseries on TV inspired them to read Scripture more.

In just a handful of years, use of tablets and smartphones for Bible searches has skyrocketed, from 18% in 2011 to 35% in 2014. That said, a strong majority still prefer to read the Bible in print (84%); the same holds true even among Millennials (81%), who are most likely to use the Internet to read Bible content (62% compared to 44% of all adults).

**5. Increasingly, people come to the Bible for answers or comfort.** While the majority of people still come to the Scriptures to connect with God, their number is shrinking, from 64% in 2011 to 56% in 2014. Today, people are increasingly likely to come to the Bible for more pragmatic needs: nearly one-third (up from 26% in 2011) say they read the Bible for comfort or to help them address life's questions. This increase is consistent with last year's study, which showed that Millennials in particular want to know how the Bible connects to everyday matters like parenting, finances, the workplace, and so on. They are the generation most likely to read the Bible for direction or answers to a problem (25%, compared to 19% of Gen-X, 16% Boomers and 11% Elders).

**6. People are less likely to link moral decline with a lack of Bible reading.**

Eight in 10 adults believe the values and morals of America are declining—but perceptions about the reasons for the decline have shifted over time. Compared to 2013, people are more likely to blame declining morals on movies, music, and TV rather than on a lack of Bible reading. Additionally, while half of all adults would say the Bible has too little influence on society, only 30% of Millennials believe this.

Bible skeptics are less likely than other segments to say the values and morals of America are declining. It's not clear whether this belief informs their skepticism or their skepticism informs this belief—or a complex dynamic of both. Millennials, as well, are less likely than the national average to say morals are on the decline (74%). Among young adults who agree there is a moral decline, just 17% blame a lack of Bible reading, compared to 26% of all adults.

## **Additional Findings From The Bible In America**

- In 2016, 77 percent of practicing Catholics and 84 percent of practicing Protestants expressed a desire to read the Bible more.
- 29 percent of African-Americans are considered Bible engaged, the most of any race.
- 86 percent of practicing Catholics and 72 percent of Hispanic-Americans have a high regard for Scripture.

Yet in spite of this positive perception of the Bible, the percentage of Americans who view the Bible as a book of teachings written by men has risen from 10 percent to 22 percent over the past six years. In this same period, the percentage of Americans who view the Bible as sacred literature has dropped, 86 percent to 80 percent, and the percentage of Americans who say the Bible is not a sufficient guide for meaningful living

has risen, 23 percent to 33 percent. So while the majority of Americans hold the Bible in high regard, Bible skeptics are on the rise.

To counter this trend, American Bible Society is leveraging modern technology and social media, work that has resulted in the development of a Bible-based online game for teens and ownership of (.bible), a new, top-level domain.

## The Inherent Word of God

**Definition of, “inherent”** ...involved in the constitution or essential character of something: belonging by nature or habit : intrinsic

We refer to the Bible as the Inherent Word of God. The definition above tells us what, “Inherent” means. It says, in effect, that the Word of God is an essential part of the very character of God.

This is seen in the gospel of John... “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.” **John 1:1-5**

The Word, that’s God’s Word, became flesh and dwelt among us. **John 1:14** The Word is God and was with God in the beginning. The Word is the written expression of God. As we read the Bible, we hear from God and even at times see Him in our spirits.

## Biblical Inerrancy

**Biblical inerrancy**, as formulated in the "Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy", is the doctrine that the Bible "is without error or fault in all its teaching"; or, at least, that "Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact".

A formal statement in favor of biblical inerrancy was published in the Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society in 1978. The signatories to the "Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy" admit that "inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture". However, even though there may be no extant original manuscripts of the Bible, those which exist can be considered inerrant, because, as the statement reads: "the autographic text of Scripture, ... in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy".

Some equate inerrancy with infallibility; others do not. Biblical inerrancy should not be confused with biblical literalism.

Inerrancy has been much more of an issue in American evangelicalism than in British evangelicalism. According to Stephen R. Holmes, it "plays almost no role in British evangelical life."

There are a minority of biblical inerrantists who go further than the "Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy", arguing that the original text has been perfectly preserved and passed down through time. This is sometimes called Textus Receptus Onlyism, as it is believed the Greek text by this name (Latin for received text) is a perfect and inspired copy of the original and supersedes earlier manuscript copies.

This position is based on the idea that only the original language God spoke in is inspired, and that God was pleased to preserve that text throughout history by the hands of various scribes and copyists. There are others who not only believe the original text has been supernaturally preserved without error in its copies, but that the English translation made from that supposed perfect manuscript was also supernaturally composed. This position is known by its opponents as King James Onlyism or KJV Onlyism. One of its most vocal, prominent and thorough proponents is Peter Ruckman. His followers are generally known as Ruckmanites. He is generally considered by many to hold the most extreme form of this position. Ultimately both positions suffer from the same historical and textual problems, but KJV Onlyism adds another layer of difficulty to overcome.

The copies of the original language texts that are used by modern translators as the source for translations of the books of the Bible are reconstructions of the original text. Today's versions are based upon scholarly comparison of thousands of biblical manuscripts (such as the Dead Sea Scrolls) and thousands of biblical citations in the writings of the early Church Fathers.

The "doctrine of the inerrancy of scripture" held by the Catholic Church, as expressed by the Second Vatican Council, is that "the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching solidly, faithfully and without error that truth which God wanted put into sacred writings for the sake of salvation."

## **Biblical Infallibility**

**Biblical infallibility**... is the belief that what the Bible says regarding matters of faith and Christian practice is wholly useful and true. It is the "belief that the Bible is completely trustworthy as a guide to salvation and the life of faith and will not fail to accomplish its purpose. Some equate 'inerrancy' and 'infallibility'; others do not."

## **Differences In Infallibility And Inerrancy**

From dictionary definitions, Frame (2002) insists that "infallibility" is a stronger term than "inerrancy". "'Inerrant' means there are no errors; 'infallible' means there *can be* no



errors." Yet he agrees that "modern theologians insist on redefining that word also, so that it actually says less than 'inerrancy.'"

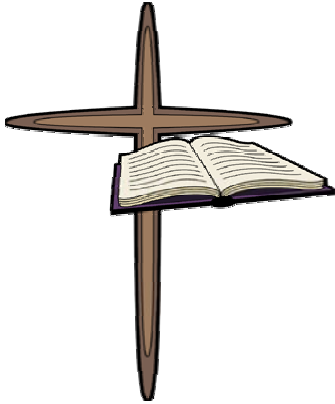
Some denominations that teach infallibility hold that the historical or scientific details, which may be irrelevant to matters of faith and Christian practice, may contain errors. This contrasts with the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy, which holds that the scientific, geographic, and historic details of the scriptural texts in their original manuscripts are completely true and without error, though the scientific claims of scripture must be interpreted in the light of the phenomenological nature of the Biblical narratives. For example, Davis suggests "The Bible is inerrant if and only if it makes no false or misleading statements on any topic whatsoever. The Bible is infallible if and only if it makes no false or misleading statements on any matter of faith and practice." In this sense it is seen as distinct from Biblical inerrancy, but always accompanying it. The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy uses the term in this sense, saying, "Infallibility and inerrancy may be distinguished but not separated

## The Inspired Word of God

“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” (II Timothy 3:16–17)

The first predicate adjective that describes **Scripture**, namely, its being **inspired by God**, focuses on the authority of His written Word. *Theopneustos* (**inspired by God**) literally means, “breathed out by God,” or simply, “God-breathed.” God sometimes breathed His words into the human writers to be recorded much as dictation. He said to Jeremiah: “Behold, I have put My words in your mouth” (**Jer. 1:9**). But, as clearly seen in Scripture itself, God’s divine truth more often flowed through the minds, souls, hearts, and emotions of His chosen human instruments. Yet, by whatever means, God divinely superintended the accurate recording of His divinely breathed truth by His divinely chosen men. In a supernatural way, He has provided His divine Word in human words that any person, even a child, can be led by His Holy Spirit to understand sufficiently to be saved.

It is of utmost importance to understand that it is **Scripture** that is **inspired by God**, not the men divinely chosen to record it. When speaking or writing apart from God’s revelation, their thoughts, wisdom, and understanding were human and fallible. They were not inspired in the sense that we commonly use that term of people with extraordinary artistic, literary, or musical genius. Nor were they inspired in the sense of being personal repositories of divine truth, which they could dispense at will. Many human authors of Scripture penned other documents, but none of those writings exist today, and, even if discovered, they would not carry the weight of Scripture.



We know, for instance, that Paul wrote at least two other letters to the church at Corinth (**1 Cor. 5:9; 2 Cor. 2:4**), but no copies of those letters have ever been found. The letters doubtless were godly, spiritually insightful, and blessed of the Lord, but they were not Scripture.

Many men who wrote **Scripture**, such as Moses and Paul, were highly trained in human knowledge and wisdom, but that learning was not the source of the divine truth they recorded. David was a highly gifted poet, and that gift doubtless is reflected in the beauty of his psalms, but it was not the source of the divine truths revealed in those psalms.

**Scripture** first of all and above all is from God and about God, His self-revelation to fallen mankind. From Genesis through Revelation, God reveals His truth, His character, His attributes, and His divine plan for the redemption of man, whom He made in His own image. He even foretells the eventual redemption of the rest of His creation, which “also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God” and which “groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now” (**Rom. 8:21–22**).

The Bible is not a collection of the wisdom and insights of men, even of godly men. It is God’s truth, His own Word in His own words. The psalmist declared, “Forever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven” (**Ps. 119:89**). God’s Word is divinely revealed to men on earth and divinely authenticated in heaven. Peter declares unequivocally, “Know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (**2 Peter 1:20–21**).

Those God-given, humanly recorded words became God’s written Word, inerrant and authoritative as originally given. *Propheteia* (“prophecy”) is not used here in the sense of prediction but in its basic and broader meaning of speaking forth, of proclaiming a message. It carries the same inclusive idea as “the oracles of God,” with which ancient Israel had the marvelous privilege of being entrusted (**Rom. 3:2**). “Interpretation” (**2 Peter 1:20b**) translates *epilusis*, which refers to something that is released, sent out, or sent forth. In this verse the Greek noun is a genitive of source, indicating origin. In other words, no message of Scripture was originated and sent forth by men’s own wisdom and will. Rather, the godly men through whom Scripture was revealed and recorded were divinely instructed and carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Within the Bible itself, “God” and “Scripture” are sometimes used almost interchangeably. Referring to words spoken directly by God to Abraham (**Gen. 12:3**), Paul wrote “the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘All the nations shall be blessed in you’ ” (**Gal. 3:8**). Later in that same chapter the apostle again personifies Scripture as God, declaring, “Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe” (v. 22). In his letter to the church at Rome, Paul wrote, “For the Scripture says

to Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth' ” (Rom. 9:17).

When he first preached to the Galatians, many years before he wrote his epistle to the churches there, the apostle had declared,

And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, “Thou art My Son; today I have begotten Thee.” And as for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no more to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: “I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.” Therefore He also says in another Psalm, “Thou wilt not allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay.” (Acts 13:32–35)

When Paul told Timothy that the scriptures are inspired of God, the reader understood that he was saying, God-breathed. They were not just the words of mere men but of God Himself.

## **Bible Verses On The Word of God**

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” **Hebrews 4:12**

“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.: **II Timothy 3:16-17**

“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” **Psalm 119:105** “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” **James 1:22** “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word” **Psalm 119:9** “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.” **Isaiah 40:8**

“As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the Lord is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him.” **Psalm 18:30** “The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.” **Psalm 119:30** “For the word of the Lord is right; and all his works are done in truth.” **Psalm 33:4** “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” **John 1:1**

“But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God” **Matthew 4:4** “In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.: **Psalm 56:4**

“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” **John 8:31-32**

“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.” **John 1:14** “Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.”

**Psalm 119:160**

“So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” **Isaiah 55:11** “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”

**Psalm 119:11**

These are but a few Bible verses that I thought you should be aware of. We should always be a doer of God’s Word and not just a hearer.

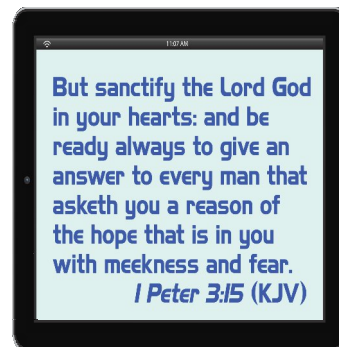
## Conclusion

What does all this mean to you and me? It means this:

1. We can trust the Bible as our only true source of Godly knowledge and wisdom.
2. We can draw from the Bible, faith, hope and spiritual growth.
3. We can communicate with God, gaining direction and leadership.
4. We can see Jesus through the gospels, miracles, prophecy and poetic psalms.

The Bible is still the #1 Best Seller. It should be the only source for the rule and practice of life.

We should read the Bible every day but not as a routine to get through it in one year. We should be in prayer and Bible reading for the purpose of hearing from God and walking away with a renewed faith.



## Faith By The Book Introduction

The Purpose of this teaching is to lead Christians back to a life of Faith. The author’s goal and hope is that the reader will realize the true value of faith in everyday situations and practice his or her faith as a lifestyle.

What is Faith? Why is it so important? How do we obtain it? Where did it come from? How is it used in everyday life situations? What kinds of faith are there? How does it benefit me? We will address these questions and more in the pages that follow.

Most Christians do not understand what Faith is, how to use it in daily life and how to obtain it. It has been lost in the shuffle and substituted by church membership, head knowledge and a mysterious sort of hope. You can prove this to yourself by listening to what folks are talking about. The topics of discussion are more on the lines of what the doctor said or other natural life experiences.

Did you know that faith is a supernatural experience that propels the believer into another realm beyond the natural? We will see, in this teaching, how faith can defeat the devil, prosper the believer, transform the situation from bad to good and bring you closer to God in the process.

We will discuss the application of faith in Spiritual Warfare, Spiritual Growth, Fellowship With God, Salvation, Obedience, and lots more. I am excited to share all that the Spirit has revealed to me. However, as a diligent student of the bible, I will be using lots of scripture references to validate what I say so there is no doubt that it is of God and applicable for today's Christian Living.

## **Isaiah 25:1**

“O Lord, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth.”

# **Faith Strictly By The Book**

To understand faith, we need to take a look at the Holy Bible. It will reveal all that we need to know so we can discover the necessity for faith in our lives. So let's take a quick trip into the scriptures.

1. Without faith it is impossible to please God. (Hebrews 11:6)
2. Faith comes to us by hearing the Word of God. (Romans 10:17)
3. Faith is both the substance and evidence of our hope. Hebrews 11:1)
4. Faith is believing what is not as though it were, (Romans 4:17)
5. Faith is supernatural, a gift of the Holy Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-23)
6. We live by the faith of the Son of God. (Galatians 2:20)
7. A measure of Faith is given to every believer. (Romans 12:3)
8. Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith. (Romans 12:2)
9. Faith without works is dead. (James 2:14)
10. We walk by faith and not by sight, looking for those things that are not seen by the world... that are eternal. (II Corinthians 5:7 & 4:18)
11. God's Word is a hook to hang our faith on. (Matthew 4:4)
12. Faith shields us from the fiery darts of Satan. (Ephesians 6:16)

There are a lot of definitions of faith. Its meaning depends on who you are talking to and what they believe. I prefer to go strictly by the book but not any book. I look to the bible. **“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”** Hebrews 11:1 KJV

Faith is both the substance and the evidence of what is hoped for. This definition is different from our dictionary. Here’s one of several definition from Webster’s dictionary:

**“A firm belief in something for which there is no proof): complete trust”**

This is the closest definition to what the bible says. However it is far from any biblical reality. I say this because biblical faith has all kinds of proof. One has only to read the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of Hebrews and study the hero after hero of faith. The key phrase is, ”By Faith.” If that’s not enough, there are countless books on how God was moved by faith to deliver His people and change the course of history. Finally, the committed Christian can look back into his or her own walk with God to see God’s hand at work as a result of having faith in God’s written Word.

We are taught by science that we must see some evidence before we can believe. Biblical faith does not demand seeing to believe. Its ability to hope is its evidence that what is not yet seen does really exist and will show up in God’s good timing. This is opposite to the teachings of science. Believe to see rather than see to believe.

However, faith by the book is not blind faith. It has its roots deep into the truth of God’s Word. It requires a hook to hang itself on in order to become active. Thus, the Word of God provides over 3,000 hooks. We call them promises that were spoken by God in times past and recorded by dedicated men in a book called the Bible.

Contrary to popular teaching, faith is not mental delusion, presumption or self-deception, but a work of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

## Types of Faith

**Human Faith** is a basic characteristic. The faith that they exhibit is soulish and self centered. It is not biblical faith. There is a difference. However, “All men do not have faith” (**2 Thessalonians 3:2**) (He is speaking of biblical faith.)

Many non Christians exhibit faith, that the chair will support their weight; that the sun will rise bringing another day; that life will go on as it has for thousands of years; that fate will smile upon them with riches and fame. Human faith is our own brand that plays out in our soul. It is based upon Self gratification and the will to survive.

**Biblical Faith**, on the other hand, is based upon what God has said and who God is. It always leads us to an abiding trust in God and a serious dependency upon Him to work everything together for our good. (**Romans 8:28**)

**Blind Faith**...There is such a thing as, “Blind Faith.” This is not really faith at all but rather an excuse to escape the voice of God. If you believe a thing without question, you open yourself to

a flood of confusion, demonic attacks and disappointments. I say this because “Blind Faith” has no foundation or reference. True faith rests upon the Word of God and His character. It justifies our belief and gives purpose to our hope.

Some say that there are levels of faith that we obtain as we grow spiritually but I disagree with that premise. Listen to what **Romans 12:3** says, “For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.”

This scripture clearly teaches that no one person is better than another. We are all equal in the sight of God and all have “A Measure of Faith.” I may use my measure of faith to accomplish great things and you may use your measure for less noticeable things but we both have no reason to think of ourselves as more spiritual or better than.

**Hebrews 12:2** tells us, ‘looking unto Jesus, the **author and finisher** of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.’ He authored our faith and He has finished it. After all, it is His faith that we accept and live by and dwells in us. **Galatians 2:20**

**Great Faith...**Luke 7:2-10 holds the secret to understanding and exercising faith.

And a centurion’s slave, who was highly regarded by him, was sick and about to die. **3** When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders asking Him to come and save the life of his slave. **4** When they came to Jesus, they earnestly implored Him, saying, “He is worthy for You to grant this to him; **5** for he loves our nation and it was he who built us our synagogue.” **6** Now Jesus started on His way with them; and when He was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to Him, “Lord, do not trouble Yourself further, for I am not worthy for You to come under my roof; **7** for this reason I did not even consider myself worthy to come to You, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. **8**“For I also am a man placed under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, ‘Go!’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come!’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this!’ and he does it.” **9** Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled at him, and turned and said to the crowd that was following Him, “I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such **great faith.**” **10** When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

## Here Are A Few Points To Consider

1. There was an acknowledgement of the spiritual authority and power of Jesus. We didn’t hear such doubt as; “If it be thy will.” The centurion recognized Jesus’ authority.
2. His request was to speak the Word and he knew it would happen.
3. When faith rests on the Word of God, things happen.
4. Jesus marveled at seeing such a trust and belief in His Authority and said this was the greatest faith He had ever seen in Israel.

So, great faith recognizes Jesus as the ultimate authority and trust in Him to accomplish all that His Word declares.

<sup>18</sup> But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your <sup>[a]</sup> works, and I will show you my faith by my <sup>[b]</sup> works. <sup>19</sup> You believe that there is one God. You do well. **Even the demons believe—and tremble!** <sup>20</sup> But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? <sup>[c]</sup> <sup>21</sup> Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?

<sup>22</sup> Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works, faith was made perfect? <sup>23</sup> And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”<sup>[d]</sup> And he was called the friend of God. <sup>24</sup> You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.

<sup>25</sup> Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? <sup>26</sup> **For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” (James 2:14-26)**

Faith must have a purpose. It could be the hope of receiving an answer to a prayer or a belief that a vision or Word from God will come true. The believing initiates the action and motivates the work. Without it, faith is dead or non-existent.

**Godly Faith....** Finally and most importantly, there is the faith of God. It is a gift of the Spirit to every believer for the expressed purpose of living life here and now in the flesh in this world. It is connected to God’s will and purposes for His children. It is completely supernatural in its origin and nature. It comes with confidence and assurance that what our Heavenly Father spoke into our lives will indeed come true.

## **Building Blocks of Faith**

There are several building blocks that produce faith in a believer. Divine revelation is one. Personal belief is another. Obedience to the Word is also a building block. However, we cannot forget Hearing From God and Personal Experience.

Hearing from God is how we obtain faith. **Romans 10:17** says, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” We must keep ourselves in a posture that supports hearing from God. Going to bars, watching porno films or “R” rated movies will not foster an open channel to God. That channel is through daily bible reading and prayer. The point is...are you listening? You cannot hear if you are not listening.

Remember Jesus’ words in **Mark 8:18**, “*having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?*” They see but don’t see. They hear but do not hear. We do not want to be like them.



If faith comes by hearing, that means that it is not our faith. We do not have enough to get the job done. God has to give us His faith so we can use it to master every experience. Listen to Paul in **Galatians 2:20**, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live **by the faith of the Son of God**, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” KJV. It is His faith that overcomes. Ours is just not adequate.

So...by hearing, we get the faith of God because Jesus lives within us and His faith becomes ours. We need only to believe to tap into it. It is this faith that we live by every day. His faith is strong and unwavering. It is based upon a total surrender to God and His will. It does not operate independently outside of God's will. Jesus said, “And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.”(**John 8:29**)

If we adopt a total surrender to God's will and seek Him before we act, we will know His will and know that we are living by His faith.

Another building block of faith is Personal Experience. If we walk by faith, in the spirit and not in the flesh, we will no doubt see and experience God in a number of ways. We will hear his voice. We will see in reality what we have been praying and hoping for, and we will build a history of the Move of God in our lives. This history is another building block of faith because we can look back and say to ourselves, “God was there for me when this or that happened and I made it through. If He was there then, He will be there now.” Thus enters confidence and trust in God that keeps us from wavering.

I have had more than one Christian say to me, “God talks to you?” They look with a puzzling attitude like, “How can that be?” I usually just laugh and tell them, sure, He talks to me and I talk to Him.” It's called Fellowship and I enjoy it most every day.

## **Faith & Reality**

Faith is not a denial of reality. It is not pretending you don't have a problem. It is, however, holding fast to an unseen reality that God says, not only exists, but also can be obtained. (**II Corinthians 4:18**) “While we look not at the things, which are seen, but at the things, which are not seen: for the things, which are, seen are temporal; but the things, which are not seen, are eternal”. As Christians, seeking to walk by faith, our eyes should always be on Jesus and what His Word says. We find ourselves looking for something we cannot see but know is there.

We do not say, “I am not in pain” when we are. We acknowledge and deal with it the best we can but our eyes are ever focused on the Word of God and His promises. The prophet Isaiah said this about that... (**Isaiah 53:1-5**)

“Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? **2** For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. **3** He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

**4** Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. **5** But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”

The key is to look towards the power of God to accomplish what He says in His Word and not towards the problem. We are always faced with a choice.

Whose report will we believe? Do we see only the facts and ignore the Word? Or do we believe God’s Word and refuse to settle for the consequences of what the facts are saying. It is my feeling that if the bible says we are healed by His stripes, we are. We can, with confidence, hold fast to that truth and make it ours. If Abraham staggered not at what God told him, we can do no less. We stagger not at the Word. We believe it with all our hearts.

I see this a lot in TV commercials. They always say things like, “I am dealing with **MY**, whatever it is, but this pill has helped”. Then there is a list of side effects. I always say, “It may have attacked my body but it is not mine.” I see it and will deal with it but I do not lay claim to it. My eyes are on the unseen...the Power of God to intervene and deliver me as the word says. “The angel of the LORD encamps round about them that fear him, and delivers them.” (**Psalm 34:7**) Either it’s true or it’s not. I happen to believe it’s true and I hold fast to it.

## Faith Requires Action

It is the Holy Spirit of God that leads us into all truth (**John 16:13**) and it is that truth that becomes the hook that we hang our faith on. His first leading will always take us to the bible where we can hear God speaking through the Prophets, The Apostles, and Jesus, His only begotten son. However, faith must be associated with a work to be active. (**John 6:29**) “Jesus answered and said unto them, *this is the work of God* that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.”

The work of God is to believe on Jesus, the Christ or Messiah. However, what exactly are we to believe? Listen to what Jesus said as recorder by **John 3:16**... ”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.”

Notice that Jesus is telling us about God, the Father and how much He loves us. Our faith can easily rest on this truth. It is a hook to hang our faith upon. Our believing it with all our hearts activates it and it becomes the Work of God. Faith is always linked to a biblical truth. It never sits idle or inactive.

We can trust in our Father God, that what Jesus said is true and we can be fully persuaded that what God said will come to pass in our lives. However, hearing the Word of God but not believing it makes it null & void. (**James 2:14-19 & 26**) KJV

<sup>14</sup> “What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? <sup>15</sup> If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, <sup>16</sup> and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?

<sup>17</sup> Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”<sup>18</sup> “But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your <sup>[a]</sup> works, and I will show you my faith by my <sup>[b]</sup> works. <sup>19</sup> You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! <sup>26</sup> For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also”

When a person believes in a God-given promise, faith begins to rise up in their spirit. The process of believing leads to obedience to the truth which is evident in some sort of work that ultimately brings, “*that which is hoped for*” into existence.

Living Faith has both belief & obedience but believing must come first. Many Christians get it backwards and end up saying that because I do good works, I have faith. Their good works are not born out of divine revelation or a belief in the vision shown them by God. There must be a promise from God that creates the good work. We believe that God said it and because He said it, it will come to pass. Because we believe this, we join in the work, partnering with the Holy Spirit to make it a reality.

If our, “That which is hoped For” is outside of God’s will, we can believe all we want but it will not come true. That’s why we first examine the vision or Word from God to be sure it is in fact from God. When we know that we know, we believe, adhering to the promise, even if it is beyond belief. Even if family and friends think we are crazy.

God told Abraham that he would be the father of many nations. He told Noah that he was about to flood the Earth and to build an ark. He told Moses that it was time to deliver His children from the bondage of Egypt. He told Lot that He was going to destroy Sodom & Gomorrah. In each case they were to believe that what God said would come to pass and that they were to play a significant role in His plan.

The point is...God told each of them. *What has God told you?* He has told all of us about the future and what we should be doing, about our enemy, Satan and how to defeat him, About sickness and how to gain victory over it, about our personal salvation and how to obtain it and all the other promises in the bible. We must have a “**God told me**” experience in order to activate our faith. Once activated, our believing it sustains it and holds it before our eyes until the power of God brings it into reality.

## Faith & Feelings

Faith is not based upon our feelings. If I do not feel saved, it doesn’t mean that I am not saved. Remember, Salvation is based upon the Word of God. He tells us what is true. Our feelings often disagree with the Word of God. “*Let God be true, but every man a liar.*” (**Romans 3:4**). If our

feelings do not line up with “Biblical Truth”, we should always call our feelings a lie and let God’s Word stand before us.

Here are some excerpts from an article on Faith Verses Feelings written by Kenneth E. Hagan, a renowned bible teacher and evangelist...

“The beloved man of faith, Smith Wigglesworth, once said, “I can’t understand God by feelings. I can’t understand the Lord Jesus Christ by feelings. I can only understand God the Father and Jesus Christ by what the Word says about them. God is everything the Word says He is. We need to get acquainted with Him through the Word.” Too many people try to get acquainted with God through their personal feelings. When they feel good, they think God has heard their prayers. If they don’t feel particularly good, they think He has not heard them. Their faith is based on their feelings whereas it should be based on God’s word.”

Thomas was one who based his faith upon his feelings, upon what his physical senses told him. He said that he would not believe that Jesus was raised from the dead unless he could see with his own eyes the prints of the nails in Jesus’ hands, and touch the nail prints with his own hands. That’s why he is known as “Doubting Thomas.”

He relied on what he could see and touch, not on what God had to say. We have so many “Doubting Thomas” Christians today – those who believe only what they feel, believe only what they can see, hear, or touch. But real faith in God is based upon the Word of God. Real faith in the Word says, “If God says it is true, it is.” Believing God is to believe His Word.

If our faith is based upon feelings, then we are just using natural human faith. We cannot get spiritual results with natural human faith. We have to use scriptural faith, Bible faith, believing in God’s Word. If our faith is based upon the Word of God, then we believe the Word regardless of evidences that may or may not satisfy our physical senses.

Emotions are a vital part of what it means to be a human being. However, all of us recognize that there are good and evil emotions. This is clearly shown in Galatians Chapter five. If we are “Born Again” we are made in the image of God and redeemed in Jesus Christ. But often our emotions confuse and mislead us.

So what is the proper place for emotions in a Christian's walk of faith? I have already stated what Paul told the Galatians in Chapter five...that we are to crucify the deeds of the flesh and embrace the fruit of the Spirit.

Our enemy, the devil, according to what Peter said in **I Peter 5:8** “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour:” All he needs to do is give us a little push into the flesh (to operate with and through our feeling) It could be a suggestion or a statement communicated directly into your mind that stirs up resentment, hate, jealousy, prideful ego and all the other deeds of the flesh. The Apostle Paul addresses this very issue in **Galatians 3:1 & 3:3** “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth,

crucified among you? Are ye so foolish having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?"

The sum of the matter is to rely upon, adhere to and live by the Word of God, not your feelings.

## Hebrews 4:12

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”



## Faith Verses Fact

Faith and fact have been at odds for centuries. The premise of Faith is, believe it first and you will eventually see it. Fact, on the other hand says, don't believe anything until you see it first. Thus is the age old conflict between Science and Religion. It is also the basis for the contraversery between eveolution and creationism. However, both are a belief system that shapes the way we think.

The evolutionary scientist looks at life through his or her beliefs. This criteria shapes daily thinking, actions and lifestyle. It excludes God because He is not necessary. It strips human life of its dignity because there is no rational for its existance. Life is just there by chance with no divine purpose or absolutes.

Those of us that believe in creation see life based upon what God has revealed to us...things like we are created in His image, there is a purpose for our being alive at this time and in this place. Life now becomes precious and demands respect. We are accountable to God for how we live and treat others. We believe and thus see whereas they see and draw conclusions, most of which are wrong.

That being said, lets look at faith in our belief system. I will use Abraham as a case study to explain myself. **Romans 4:17** says, (as it is written: "I have made thee a father of many nations"), in the presence of Him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead and calleth those things which are not, as though they were."

Notice that God called those things that were not as though they were. ***This is the basis of all faith.*** We look to God and listen for His voice. He will always call things into our life that do not exist and speak of them as though they do. With Abraham, it was to be the father of many

nations. What has he said or called into your life? Abraham did not waiver at God's statement, even though Sarah was beyond child bearing age and he was approaching 100. Can you imagine telling folks around you that you will be the father of many nations? They might think you are a bit crazy but that's exactly what Abraham did. His name was Abram and it was changed to Abraham which I've been told, literally means "Father of Many Nations"

## Here are a few points to consider

1. The facts did not line up with the vision. Sarah's womb was dead.
2. The vision, to be the father of many nations, was way beyond Abraham's ability to accomplish it.
3. Faith always depends upon what God says, not what we see or even facts that may or may not exist.
4. True faith is believing that God, who spoke it, can and will accomplish it. There can be no doubt because God is in charge and He never fails.
5. Time is not a factor when exercising faith. Abraham waited almost 20 years to see Isaac and died in faith never seeing the end result while living on the earth. But God still brought it about and I am sure he saw its accomplishment from heaven.
6. God's Word, spoken over us requires believing something supernatural that only God can accomplish. If it were natural, it would be left to our ingenuity with no need for God's intervention.

When we believe God, we open up ourselves to criticism because what we believe is beyond the comprehension of our critics. I was once told that you can not share a big vision with a small minded individual. He will not be able to handle it. That's why they criticize. They are small minded people.

Think about it. God told Noah to build an ark because it was going to rain. It had never rained before that time. The facts did not line up with the vision yet Noah was obedient and took the flack from all the naysayers of his day until he entered the ark.

Sometimes we are asked to believe and even act in the face of great opposition. Our faith does have consequences and we must weather every storm that rises up as a result of our standing in faith. Here's a hook to hang your faith on, **Romans 8:28**, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose."

I remember a time, about 34 years ago when I was the Executive Director of a Chamber of Commerce in south Florida. I was recently divorced, alone and chasing every skirt in town. I also had just returned to God after a brief encounter with backsliding from faith into fear and other stuff. Then I met my current wife. She was single and a great looking skirt, better than those of my previous acquaintance. I even hired her as my office manager and we worked together for almost a year.

I had a policy not to date those I worked with but one day, as sure as I can be, I heard the voice of God in my head telling me I could be with this lady. That one Word from God told me that

she was not just another skirt to chase around town and that I could trust her to be my wife without question.

This was hard for me to accept, even though it came from God, because I had been hurt in a previous marriage where marital trust had been broken. I had to believe God when He said, "you can be with this one." So, I broke my own rule and pursued my heart's desire. We have been together ever since.

I tell you this personal story because I want you to know that God always knows best. He will speak into your life. If you are listening, you will hear amazing things that will even change you and your destiny.

## **Faith Always Has Opposition**

My decision to marry my office manager met with lots of opposition. My so-called friends felt I should stay single and keep running with them. My family wasn't sure that I was doing the right thing. My kids wanted me for themselves so they could run all over me. My bosses wanted me single so I would continue to put in 50-hour weeks, except for one who wanted me to marry her daughter. However, I chose to obey the voice of God and follow my heart.

## **Galatians 5:1**

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

## **Faith & Spiritual Growth**

Growing Spiritually should be the goal and desire of everyone that follows Christ. If we profess to be a Christian, we are bound by the teaching of Jesus. Listen to what He says, "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." **(Matthew 16:24)**

Denying oneself is to reject the appetites of the flesh in order to be filled with the Spirit. **Galatians 5:19-25** says, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, <sup>20</sup> Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, <sup>21</sup> Envy, 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."

<sup>22</sup> "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, <sup>23</sup> Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. <sup>24</sup> And they that are Christ's have

crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” Notice the differences between the fruit of the Spirit and the deeds of the flesh.

Faith is listed as a fruit. It grows as we walk in the Spirit. This total abandonment of self, with all its evil deeds dies and we are free to receive God in our spirit. **Ezekiel 36:26** says “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.”

We must die so God can raise us up into newness of life. Look at **Galatians 2:12**, “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. **Romans 6:4** says it like this, “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. Newness of life comes to us through death, burial and resurrection, not ours but that of Jesus who was the propitiation or substitute for our sins.”

He died that we might live and fellowship with God the Father. Listen again to the Old Testament prophet, Isaiah, who said about Jesus, long before He was born, “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” **Isaiah 53:5**

So, living by the faith of the Son of God, we deny our sin nature to begin a new walk in the Spirit with God. Faith grows in us along with the other fruits of the Spirit, which ultimately changes our thought patters, lifestyle and destiny. That is how Faith operates in our spiritual growth. Without the death of Self, there is no resurrection and no transformation of thoughts and no new lifestyle.

Someone might say, like I said years ago, “Hey, this is me, good or bad, I am what I am and that will never change.” Back then, if you told me I had to crucify my feeling, suppressing the deeds of the flesh, I’d call you a nut. It makes no sense. I lived for me and I was the boss of me in everything. I sat on the throne of my own life as king.

This “Me” mindset eventually led down a road of sin and sorrow. Every time I tried to do right or think right thoughts, I failed and found myself back in the pigpen of sin. Then I began to read the bible and came across theses scriptures:

1. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)
2. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23)
3. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:23)
4. 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)
5. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (Romans 10:13)



6. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. **(Romans 5:10)**
7. For just as through one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so also through the one man's obedience the many will be *made righteous* (Romans 5:19)
8. Walk in the Spirit & you will not fulfill the deeds of the flesh. **(Galatians 5:16)**
9. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: **(Colossians 2:6)**
10. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. (Romans 12:1)
11. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (Romans 12:2)
12. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit. (Ephesians 5:18)

I had to make a choice about what the scriptures said. On the one hand, I could see the bible as ancient literature. On the other hand, I could believe it as truly the Living Word of God. I chose to see it as God's Word for me and hung on to it for dear life.

Then I read another scripture that quoted Jesus. He said, "But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." **(Matthew 4:4)**

I saw it and still see it as God speaking directly to me. It was the voice of God telling me to live by the Word of God.

Jesus paid the price for my sin. He lived the life I could not live because of sin and died on a cruel cross, paying the penalty for my transgressions. I missed the mark of God's righteousness but Jesus did not. He is my Savior and that is why I follow Him.

### **Romans 5:8**

"But God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."



## **Faith & Spiritual Warfare**

Faith is always tested. If we Christians were never tested, then we wouldn't need to have faith. Therefore, faith is more valuable in hard times than good times because it proves our allegiance and reliance upon God. When Christians take God at His Word, they are holding up the shield

of faith and preventing injury. Oftentimes, people of strong faith can model this principle and even use their shield to protect others. (Taken from Sharefaith Media)

The shield of Faith is a defensive weapon that is designed to protect the child of God in the spiritual battle. This is made clear in **Ephesians 6:16**: "*Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.*"

You probably didn't know that you are currently in a life and death battle with Satan. The prize is your soul. Will it be filled with the fruit of God's Spirit? or will it fall in battle to become full of sin and debauchery? You can be the image of God here on the earth or the image of Satan. The reflection is your choice. It will show up in your lifestyle and attitudes. The bible says, "*For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.*" (**Galatians 5:17**)

We are commanded to put on the whole armor of God and lift up our shield of faith to quench the enemy's fiery darts. (**Ephesians 6:13**)

A fiery dart can be an impure thought, a feeling of inadequacy, a critical statement by family or friends, an accusation against our character, a lie about us, and a whole lot of other things. They are meant to bring us to depression, suicide, low self-worth, and hopelessness. However, your shield of faith can and will stop them from entering into your soul and causing damage.

I know you may be asking, "How does the shield work? Remember, faith activates by believing the Word of God. If He says you are loved and accepted (**Ephesians 1:6**) and you hold fast to that when someone says you are good for nothing or rejects you, your belief in what God has said about you will help you to overcome the attack.

## **Who Cares What Others Think Or Say?**

God loves me and accepts me and that's all that really counts. Paul put it this way in **Romans 8:31 and following**...

"**31** What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? **32** He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? **33** Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; **34** who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. **35** Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? **37** But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. **38** For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, **39** nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

As I have said before, the Word of God is the hook that we hang our faith on. When we believe what God has said, we stand strong and the fiery darts of our mortal enemy are quenched. They cannot harm us any more because we do not take them to heart. We reject them, replacing them with God's Word.

## Psalm 34:7

“The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear him, and delivers them.”

### Faith & Obedience

You cannot demonstrate faith without obedience. What would have happened if Noah didn't build the ark? What if Moses refused to return to Egypt to do God's bidding? What if Jesus ran away from Calvary's cross? Thank the Lord that all of those mentioned above were obedient. Their obedience was, for sure, due to an undying belief that what God said would actually happen. Because God said so, they stepped up to the plate and played the game.

Now let's look at a few situations where God said and the man of God did not obey and observe the consequences.

First is the disobedience of Adam, the 1<sup>st</sup> man. The disobedience of this one man caused the entire human race to plunge into sin and be stripped of the indwelling Spirit of God. Paul tells us of the event in **Romans 5:12-14**.

“12 Wherefore, as by one-man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: <sup>13</sup>(For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. <sup>14</sup>Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of *Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.* (KJV)

#### Let's continue with verse 17-21 KJV

<sup>17</sup>For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)

<sup>18</sup>Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.

<sup>19</sup>For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. <sup>20</sup>Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: <sup>21</sup>That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

So what really happened? God gave Adam a command, telling him that failure to comply would result in his demise. “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt **surely die.**” (**Genesis 2:17**) The devil came along and deceived Eve but Adam, ignoring God's warning, willfully disobeyed. This is what Paul says is “**One Man's disobedience**”.

Adam did die as a result of his sin. He died spiritually. When God created him, He breathed into him the breath of life and he became a living soul. (**Genesis 2:7**) He lived on but with a dead spirit. God's spirit departed from him and he populated a world full of Zombies. We, without God, are surely the, ”Walking Dead”

But wait, there is good news, Jesus enters the human drama but comes by way of a Virgin birth. This was essential because Adam's DNA was tainted with sin and caused everyone coming through his lineage to be of a fallen nature. He was a prototype, the 1<sup>st</sup> man.

Jesus is referred to by Paul as the Last Adam. "And so it is written, the **first man Adam** was made a living soul; the last **Adam** was made a quickening spirit." (**I Corinthians 15:45**) His DNA was pure, free from sin, which made Him acceptable as the spotless Lamb of God, whose coming was foretold by the prophets and whose life was sacrificed on the cross of Calvary as a penalty for the sins of mankind.

Now listen to Jesus as He refers to Himself as recorded by John. (**John 3:16**) "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."

By the way...everlasting life is not a life separate from God that last forever. It is, however, the life of God, which is everlasting, being placed back into humanity, in particular, every "whosoever" that believes on the only begotten Son of God.

Here's what Jesus said to Nicodemus, a religious ruler in Israel, "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be **born again**, he cannot see the kingdom of God. <sup>4</sup> Nicodemus saith unto him, how can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?"

<sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water (physical birth) and of the Spirit (Spiritual Birth), he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup> That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. (**John 3:1-6**)

Now let's look at one more act of disobedience. This time the bad consequences are restricted to the one who disobeyed, Jonah. You'll remember the story when God told Jonah to go to Nineveh with a proclamation that God would destroy that city because of its great sin. (Check it out in the book of Jonah)

But Jonah flees the voice of God, running away because that city was so very wicked and he feared them. So he books passage on a boat, is caught in a huge storm and ends up tossed into the sea as an appeasement to the gods. But that's not all. He is swallowed by a great fish and spends three days in its belly fighting for his life.

He cries out to God from the belly of the monster fish (Probably a whale) and is heard by God who commands the fish to dump Jonah on the shore. You know the rest of the story...he goes to Nineveh, delivers his message, the city repents and life goes on.

The point is...sometimes disobedience puts you in a life and death struggle inside the belly of a whale. Today, that whale in your life could be drugs, unemployment, divorce, sickness and a host of other difficult circumstances. If you find yourself there, don't forget to cry out to God through a repentant heart.

Faith requires obedience. It is always a call to believe God for something that is beyond your natural ability. It is a supernatural event that God wants you to be a part of and believe in. He offers His own faith for you to use in believing and asked only that you put away all the, "I can't do this" feelings. You can do all things through Him, if you want to.

## Faith As A Lifestyle

Walking in faith is a lifestyle. You have to be there all the time. If you pop in and out when it suits you, you'll miss the richness of a Spiritual relationship with God. If I were to relate lifestyle as being a drunk you would automatically understand. That means I drink all the time to excess until I am intoxicated. That's easy to understand. However, when I speak of being intoxicated with the Spirit, most would say that I am a fanatic. I've gone off the deep end and so forth. **Ephesians 5:18** says, "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;"

I am reminded of what an old minister from my past said about this scripture. He would say that the true meaning of this verse is...if you're going to be intoxicated, be intoxicated with the Holy Ghost because there is no hangover or ill effects. Instead, you experience Love, Joy, Peace, longsuffering and all the rest of the fruit of the Spirit. It will explode inside of you. It is intoxicating to say the least.

Faith as a lifestyle requires a positive perspective. It avoids depression, poor me attitudes, gossip, and all other negative emotions. Its focus is on what God is saying and how that affects the day I live in. It is a die-hard commitment to doing God's will, not my own. It is a persistence that keeps on keeping on until it breaks through every barrier. It trusts in the Lord at all times and if it should fail, it's quick to seek the Lord for help in being restored.

We are to live faith and speak faith in every situation. **Luke 6:45** tells us that,

"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks." KJV

We put good in our heart that we gleaned from the biblical fields of truth knowing that because it is stored up inside of us we will automatically speak it out in times of need, thereby confessing faith. The NAS Bible offers this from **Matthew 15:11** "It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man."

Speaking the right thing can only happen if we have the right thing inside of us. Otherwise we draw from what is there, evil and negativity that raises it head when we least expect it.

**II Corinthians 5:7** says, "*We walk by faith and not by sight.*" That should be the lifestyle of every Christian. Walking by faith in an upside down corrupted world is hard. We are forever attached by things and people that try to lead us back into a non-faith lifestyle. The Spirit of God stands in the gap between the two styles of life beckoning to us to come...to believe what He tells us and not what we see. Our sensory perception can deceive us into thinking we are doing the right thing. However, that road can only lead to death and destruction.

We should always focus on what the Word of God says. The Holy Spirit will guide us into the truth of God's Word. It's time to walk down the Highway that leads to glory.

Faith is not by chance. It is not a strange notion or just a positive attitude. Faith is the only way to please God. Hebrews 11:6 tells us this..." But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him".

## Proverbs 3:5-6

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

## Conclusion

We have covered what faith is, what it is not, how it operates in Spiritual Growth and Spiritual Warfare. We have discussed building blocks and types of faith. The one thing we have not discussed is, can Faith fail?

The answer is YES & NO. Biblical Faith always works. It cannot fail. Here's why:

1. It is supernatural, a gift of the Holy Spirit.
2. It was authored and finished by Jesus.
3. It comes to us by hearing the Word of God.
4. It hooks itself to biblical promises.

However, a Christian can experience a, "Faith Failure," when one or more of these conditions exist. (1) We stop hoping for what the Word said we could have, thereby falling into unbelief. We then lose the promise. (2.) We are disobedient to the Word. We lose the promise. (3.) We hope for things that are not in accordance to God's plan and purpose for our lives. These things will kill faith and cause us to lose the promise.

The most common reason why faith does not work is unbelief...we stop believing. Satan will discourage you and trick you into believing that God did not really tell you or that it hasn't happen yet so it most likely won't happen and therefore why continue to believe. Remember Abraham; he staggered not at the promise of God. That means he never stopped believing, even after 20 years of waiting for it to happen.

When we stop believing, we actually insult God. We are literally saying He cannot or will not accomplish what He revealed to us in His Word. Our posture should be, "I don't care if it takes my entire life, God will do what He promised."

Doubting what we hear and receive from God's Word is the same as staggering. It is actually unbelief. Our faith can and does fail when we doubt. There can be no doubt or staggering.

Listen to what Jesus said to Peter. "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." (Luke 22:32) Peter must have been on the verge of giving up and doubting himself and all that Jesus taught him. His faith was certainly at risk. Will

it remain or will it digress into unbelief. Jesus prayed that Peter would stay in faith, even though he could not understand all that was about to happen.

Jesus also prayed for every believer that would follow Him from His day, down through the ages, until the end of time. His prayer is in **John 17:20-21**. “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; <sup>21</sup> That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”

It should be noted that a faith failure does not result in a loss of one’s salvation. God is not an Indian giver. Our salvation is based upon His righteousness, not ours. He finished the work of God and became our Savior. We can not live in a back and forth lifestyle where one day we are saved but, oops, I failed and now I am not saved but I will get right and then be saved again. This notion puts salvation on our merits and subject to our feelings, not the blood of Jesus. It is a lie of the enemy.

**FAITH IN GOD’S WORD NEVER FAILS.** However, we can only have faith in what we have heard. We can’t believe until we hear. We must hear God before we can have faith in God. Faith in God will never fail to produce that which He has spoken. That brings us back to, “*Are you listening?*” If you are not listening, you’ll miss what God wants you to know. How can I believe for anything when I haven’t heard from God? Listen to what happens when God speaks.

“So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” (**Isaiah 55:11**) KJV. It does not return void but prospers.

There is still that nagging feeling of disappointment that lingers in our souls when our prayers go unanswered. I prayed so long and fasted and gave money to the church but God remained silent...or the outcome was so very different than what I was asking for. There is an example of this situation in the scriptures. **John 11:24** says, “Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou had been here, my brother had not died.” Mary and Martha sent for Jesus but He did not come until after Lazarus was dead. They were disappointed in Jesus but when He did arrive He raised Lazarus from the dead.

However, the lesson for us to learn is... God’s timing is not ours. He operates on a different schedule. Life, Death and Eternity are in His hands, at His good pleasure. When life goes contrary to my plans, I tell my wife, “There must be a reason for that.”

If our prayers are not answered right away or not at all, there must be a reason for that. Our posture is to continue to believe and trust in God, knowing that He knows best. Our faith should rest on **Romans 8:28**, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

God’s purpose and plan for our lives may contradict our own desires and feelings. We must remain in His Will and not get angry with God when things do not go our way.

I believe that our faith fails because it is ours and not God's. We live by the faith of the Son of God. His faith never fails. Most of us just do not want to wait for God's good timing. We live in an instant society and see God as a "Bellhop" that waits for our beckoning call. This kind of thinking is wrong.

Believing is the key to having faith. "Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." **(Mark 9:23)** It's time to believe God and don't let go.

## Here's How I See it

We believe in God: that He exists, that He is a loving and caring God, that He is continually sharing Himself with us and that He has our best interest at heart. Faith believes in God and His Word. It's that simple.

# Hooks To Hang Your Faith On

## Introduction

I take pen in hand to write this teaching in hopes that both seekers of truth and believers in God will gain a more clear perspective in how to utilize the scriptures in their Christian walk.

I will be using the KJV as my resource and plan to elaborate accordingly as the Spirit moves. My goal is to edify, instruct and reveal so there will be no doubt how to gain victory against the enemy.

I see the scriptures as hooks that we can use to hang our faith on. It's a great picture that shows the believer what to look for when caught in a trial and how to apply scripture to any given circumstance.

A hook is a promise of God or a fresh revelation given by the Spirit. When we hang our faith on it, we believe in it and rely upon it and adhere to it until our victory has been attained.

The Bible is full of promises from God to His children. They speak of many things from healing to deliverance, salvation, forgiveness and a lot more. The Lord showed me many years ago that these precious promises are really spiritual hooks that His children can use to activate their faith.

If I have a hook, or promise, and I hang my faith upon it, it forms a lifeline that holds me and keeps me in times of trouble. For example: The devil seeks to deceive me into thinking that I am not loved. He brings around folks that criticize me, put me down and laugh at me. Like anyone else, I begin feeling down and worthless. Then I read, "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." **Hebrews 1:6 kjv**

Suddenly I see that God has freely given us grace but more than that, He gave it to the ones He loves...me. I now know that God really loves me and what all those other folks are saying are lies.



I hang my faith on the fact that He loves me and no other voice counts...thus I gain self-respect and self-worth. This is victorious living.

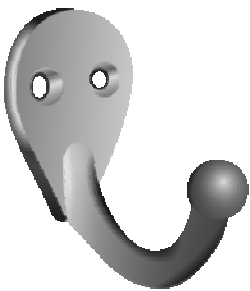
We will be looking at several hooks and how to hang our faith on them to overcome the attacks of the enemy and inward self-generated fears.

It is important to realize that there is a real devil that rules over principalities, rulers of darkness and Spiritual wickedness. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." **Ephesians 6:12**

We are in a situation where we are being attacked every day. There is no neutral ground or safe city. We either fight back or fall prey to deception, lies and oppression. This is not a new concept or doctrine. Hear what Peter said to the 1<sup>st</sup> century Christians, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary, the devil, walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world." **I Peter 5:8-9**

It's time to own up to the reality of a real enemy and learn how to fight back. We have precious promises in the Bible that guarantee victory over the sinister forces of evil. It's time to take back what we've lost and declare our freedom from future oppressions.

## Hooks To Hang Your Faith On



As I have already mentioned, the hook is a Bible verse that is lodged in your mind. It got there from your reading of the Bible and seeing the Divine Truth. It was so powerful that you could not help but remember it. "*Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*" **Psalms 119:11**

It is our love for God that drives us to hid His Word in our hearts. We may not remember the address of the verse or the exact wording but we do remember the essence of what is being said. This is how a hook comes to be in our mind.

Let's look at a few hooks and see how they apply to our daily life. The 1<sup>st</sup> will be in relation to Salvation. We all have these nagging thoughts that torment us. They say, "Where did I come from?" "Why am I here?" and "What happens to me when I die?"

Some folks answer these thoughts with Reincarnation. Others say, "You die and that's it". Yet other folks say you return into the fabric of the Universe that is ever groining and eternal. These conclusions are erroneous for sure. The only true answer comes from God and is found in His Holy Word, the Bible. Here's what it says:

1. “**So God created man** in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” **Genesis 1:27** We did not come from Apes, a primeval swamp or a long evolutionary trek. We got here as a direct act of creation by God, Himself.

2. “So God created man **in his own image, in the image of God created he him**; male and female created he them.” **Genesis 1:27** We are here to be the image of God in the earth...His likeness and image. This is our destiny and why God created us in the 1<sup>st</sup> place. This image is His character. Paul taught the 1<sup>st</sup> century Christians that God’s image was the fruit of the Spirit. “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**

3. “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” Genesis 1:27 Man was created male and Female, not male and male or female and female. It was his intent to display His Glory in the earth through the lives of a male and a female relationship where love, Joy, Peace and all the rest of his character could flourish. Same sex marriage is an abomination unto the Lord and a distortion of his Glory. It was not why we were created and does not answer the question, “Why are we here?”

The final question is, “What happens to us when we die?” Jesus gave us the answer clear as day. John recorded it in his gospel letter to the church, “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**

Our destiny is to live with God for all of eternity. That’s what will happen to us when we die, if we, become a *whosoever* and believe in Christ. “We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” **II Corinthians 5:8** Where are we going when we die? To be with Jesus, the one we have believed in for so many years.

What’s all of this have to do with hooks to hang your faith on? Simply this, the enemy of our soul is trying to steal, kill and destroy. We, as sincere Christians and followers of Christ know, from the scriptures that we are God’s creations, fashioned to reveal His image in the earth and destined to be with Christ when we die. This truth forms a hook in our mind. It is this hook that we hang our faith on and thereby gain stability, hope, assurance, and peace of mind.

The placing of our faith on the hook is an expression of our belief. It activates our faith and brings us into a higher reality where the attacks of evil cannot hurt us. No longer do we suffer the pain of a low self-esteem or the confusion of not knowing who we are and why we are here. The placing of our faith on the hook of Salvation grounds us and keeps us as we walk through life. To hang our faith on the hook is to believe the truth of the scripture with our whole heart.

Here’s another hook that will bring you a clear perspective of life and keep you focused on the things that really matter. “But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” **Matthew 4:4**

There are many voices out there that call to us, telling us what to think, what to do and how we should live life. The liberal minded speak loudly as to immoral practices and lifestyle. Others

push a political correctness that is far from the truth of God's calling. Everybody we meet has an opinion as to what to wear, do or think. However, Jesus put it into perspective for us when He said we were to live by every word that comes out of the mouth of God.

God's Word clarifies and delineates. It sorts through all the voices and lights up those that speak the truth. We can hook our faith on God's Word, knowing that it will bring peace of mind, clarity of purpose and focus to our thoughts.

To live by the word is to hold up every thought, every voice, and every so-called truth to what the Word says to see how they fare. If they are not in line with the Word, they are false and can immediately be discarded as error, lies and deception. Thus we walk in the Spirit from Bible truth to Bible truth.

Using God's Word as a clarifying force, we can quickly identify many of the deceptions that other folks have fallen into. All we have to do is say, "What does God's Word say on the subject?" Then look for what has been said. This is what Jesus did in Matthew 4:4. He said, "**It is written**". He had to have asked himself, what has been said before about this matter. He had already hidden the Word in His heart and could easily find it again when it was needed.

Now let's apply this simple process of holding everything in light of what God has already said on the matter to a few popular beliefs floating in our society today. What does God's Word say?

**Reincarnation...**"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:" **Hebrews 9:27 Once To Die but never over and over again.**

**Same Sex Marriage...**The Bible clearly condemns homosexuality as a sin and Christians who seriously follow God's Word must also condemn it as sin. Consider these words:

1. **Lev. 1:22**, "You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination."

2. **Lev. 20:23**, "If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them."

3. **I Cor. 6: 9-10**, "Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God."

4. **Romans 1:26-28**, "For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and

receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper." Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry

**Sex Before Marriage...** Fornicators shall not inherit the kingdom of God. I Corinthians 6:9 This term refers to those who engage in sexual activity, which God has declared sinful. He has not declared all sexual activity to be wrong. In fact, He condones and even encourages lawful sexual activity according to His design and purpose (I CORINTHIANS 7:2-4; HEBREWS 13:4). Fornication refers to sexual activity outside of the marriage relationship between a man and a woman. It would include premarital as well as extramarital sexual relationships of whatever duration from a one-night stand to an ongoing affair. Such activity was rampant in first century Corinth. It is rampant today in our own society. But it matters not how commonly it is practiced, it is still unrighteous and it will keep one from entering heaven. Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry

**Abortion ...** There are numerous teachings in Scripture that make it abundantly clear what God's view of abortion is. **Jeremiah 1:5** tells us that God knows us before He forms us in the womb. **Psalms 139:13-16** speaks of God's active role in our creation and formation in the womb. **Exodus 21:22-25** prescribes the same penalty—death—for someone who causes the death of a baby in the womb as for someone who commits murder. This clearly indicates that God considers a baby in the womb to be as human as a full-grown adult. For the Christian, abortion is not a matter of a woman's right to choose. It is a matter of the life or death of a human being made in God's image (**Genesis 1:26-27; 9:6**).

**Pornography...** Even though the Bible does not say anything about pornography, it is still wrong. Pornography deals with photography and/or illicit paintings and/or cartoons that are designed to arouse sexual passions in the viewer. It is certainly possible that at the time when the Bible was written that there were various art forms that depicted sexually explicit things. But apparently this phenomenon was not sufficiently prevalent enough for the subject to be addressed in the Bible. Nevertheless, we can derive an accurate conclusion from Scriptures that deal with other issues and apply them to the issue of pornography.

**Matthew 5:27-28**, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery'; but say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart."

**I Cor. 6:18**, "Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body."

**Col 3:5**, "Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry."



All these things, when held up to the light of the scriptures, are clearly wrong and definitely not God's will for His children. Once we see that, we can stand in opposition to them and avoid the snare of the devil that has captured so many of our fellow believers.

**Another hook to hang your faith on is Acts 4:12, the "One Way" theological truth.** "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." **Acts 4:12**

Jesus said, as recorded in the gospel of John, "Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." **John 14:6**

We know that the way to heaven is through Jesus and only Him. There is no path through being a good person or by believing in the church doctrines that promote religion as a way to salvation.

Jesus is the only way to God, the Father. Our destiny, hope of eternal life and very existence is in Him. To believe otherwise is error. Knowing this truth puts us in touch with God and full access to His grace and blessings. When we believe in Him as the only begotten Son of God that was sent as God's spotless lamb to be sacrificed on Calvary's cross for our sin, we find peace with God and realize the abundant life that Jesus promised. (**John 3:16, John 14:6 & John 10:10**)

It is hard for most folks that are not "Born Again" to understand why there is just one way to God, yet it is true. There is only one way and that is through Jesus Christ. The Bible is our source to prove that the one-way doctrine is valid. **Acts 4:12** is a clear teaching of this doctrine. **NO Other Name**

All the world religions cannot save us. Joining a church or specific faith cannot save us. It must be an acknowledgment of our sin, our cry before the throne of God for forgiveness, and our invitation for Jesus to come into our hearts and save us. His name is the only one that can get us through death into eternal life.

Here are a few scriptures that support the only "One-Way" doctrine.

1. There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. (**I Timothy 2:5-6**)
2. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved... (**Acts 16:31**)
3. That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, THOU SHALT BE SAVED. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (**Romans 10:9-10**)

The skeptic would say, "You mean to tell me that all the religions of the world are wrong and only Christianity is the one true religion?" Remember, Christianity is not a religion. It is a relationship born out of love between man and the one true and living God. There is no one true

religion. Religion, in itself, will not get us to God. It is the blood of Christ that unlocks the door and our confession of faith in Jesus that makes it all happen. (**John 14:6**)

Why is Jesus the only way to God? He is the only way because God planned it that way. He set the penalty for sin, which was death. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. (**Ezekiel 18:20**) In fact, Jesus was the slain lamb of God before the foundation of the world. (**Ephesians 1:3-7**)

Christianity states that the God of the Bible is the only true God and salvation is only possible by accepting Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son as Savior and Lord. **II Corinthians 5:21** says, "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."

God validated His Son as the only way in multiple ways so we can be assured that Jesus was indeed the only way to Him. Here are some to consider.

1. He claimed to be the only way as in **John's record 14:6** says but validation came through miracles that proved He was who He claimed to be.
2. Eyewitnesses saw Jesus' miracles and validated them as authentic. Over 500 followers saw Jesus, after His resurrection, and watched Him ascend into heaven.
3. The prophets foretold of His coming, where He would be born, that He would be God in human flesh and lots more...all prophetic statements were realized in Jesus, even those like in Isaiah chapter 53 that were uttered hundreds of years before Jesus came.
4. God Himself validated Jesus as His sole pathway to Him. "While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye Him!" (**Mathew 17:5**)
5. The Apostles lost their homes, wealth, and even their lives preaching the gospel. Would they do that if it were a lie? I don't think so. They testified to the truth and were willing to die for it if necessary. (See Foxes Book of Martyrs)
6. Thousands of Believers, over several centuries have testified of how Jesus helped them and blessed them.
7. I can personally testify that I have seen the hand of the Lord in my life and communicate with Him daily. I know He is the Christ.

The provability that one man could fulfill all prophecies about a Messiah that God Himself said would come, (**Gen.3: 15**), and perform fantastic miracles while here on earth, and be raised from the dead, and ascend into heaven while hundreds looked on is astronomical. But Jesus did just that...fulfilled everything that was foretold about the coming Messiah. He had to be who He said He was and therefore is truly the only way to God.

Now that you know all this, you can draw strength from the truth and believe in Him. It's time to hook your faith on Jesus.

**Another Hook Is Romans 8:16-17...** “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.”

The central truth of **Romans 8:16** is that God's Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. We don't have to wonder if we are saved or if there is a God or feel like we are all alone in this world.

As we seek the Lord, pray to the Father and ask for guidance, it is the Spirit that communicates with us, telling us what to do, when to do it and how to act. He actually teaches our hands to war against evil forces. Over a period of time *we will develop a history* of things that the Spirit has done in our lives. It is this history that becomes a hook for us to hang our faith on.

I can go back in my Christian experience with God, now more than 55 years, and see the hand of the Lord in action on my behalf. It is the Spirit that moves the hand of the Lord in my favor. If He was there then, there is no reason why He will not show up now, when I need Him again. Jesus said, I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.” **John 14:18** “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**

It is important to listen for the voice of the Spirit. He will confirm your birthright, destiny and resting place. He will walk beside you through every trial and heartache providing wisdom, peace, deliverance, and any other emotional or physical necessity.

Knowing that we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ is a powerful position to be in. It is worth all the suffering we may encounter as we serve the Lord. This perspective gives us automatic victory over fear, doubt, worry, and the fiery darts of the devil.

**Another Hook Is Romans 8:28,** “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

Here is a hook that is sure to work every time. It is, however, predicated on two things: 1.) You must love God. 2.) You must be in the “Them” crowd who are called according to His purposes.

All, “Born Again” folks are in the, “Them” crowd. They make up the church. They are the “Whosoever” of **John 3:16** that believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

All, “Born Again” believers love God. We actually worship Him and adore Him because He first loved us and gave His only Son as a ransom for our souls.

So, do you qualify? If you do, you can rest assured that all things will work together for your good. It may seem like they don't but you do not see the overall picture as God does. He knows



the beginning from the end and how to operate around man's free will to cause everything to work out in accordance to His will and in our favor.

We have a clear perspective in **Romans 8:28**. There can be no doubt. What we now are experiencing, good or bad, will ultimately work together for our good. Thus we can rest when we go through trials and experience tragedies and suffer loss. God is for us and is actively engaged in keeping us in His will and on the right path to Glory.

Hang your faith on this hook and you will find peace of mind, hope, a positive outlook on life and a deeper relationship with your Savior. I use a phrase when things happen. It reminds me of Romans 8:28 and that I should hook my faith upon it. The phrase is "**There's a reason for that**"

## Conclusion

I have taken just a few of the bible verses that are special to me to show you how the scriptures can be hooks to hang your faith on. There are many more promises, biblical truths and treasures to be found in God's Holy Word.

It's now up to you to search them out and make them a hook for your faith. There are many more bible verses that can also be hooks for the activation of your faith.

Remember, the times in which we live are full of terrorist attacks, fiery darts from the devil, critical judgments of us by others for being conservative, and attitudes of hate from the children of darkness. We must stand in faith, walk by faith and live in faith to overcome. Knowing the scriptures and believing them with all our hearts can easily accomplish all of this and more.

May the Lord bless you as you exercise your faith by believing God's Word. It was especially written for you so you can make it through these days

## There's A Reason For That Introduction

Have you ever wondered why things happen? Things like someone pulling out onto the highway right in front of you and then slowing down...or like you can't get your car started and are late for work...or having a meeting downtown and not having to go. We are going to look at some possible scenarios and possible outcomes. We will be speculating on some and showing facts on others. Here's a real live example from the Bible. It's found in **John 9:1-23**

“Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And He said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing. Therefore the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind said, “Is not this he who sat and begged?” Some said, “This is he.” Others said, “He is like him.”

He said, “I am he.” Therefore they said to him, “How were your eyes opened?” He answered and said, “A Man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, ‘Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.’ So I went and washed, and I received sight.”

Then they said to him, “Where is He?” He said, “I do not know.” They brought him who formerly was blind to the Pharisees. Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also asked him again how he had received his sight. He said to them, “He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.”

Therefore some of the Pharisees said, “This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath.” Others said, “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?” And there was a division among them. They said to the blind man again, “What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes?” He said, “He is a prophet.”

But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind and received his sight, until they called the parents of him who had received his sight. <sup>19</sup> And they asked them, saying, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?”

His parents answered them and said, “We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but by what means he now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes we do not know. He is of age; ask him. He will speak for himself.” His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed that He was Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

Did you get the picture? Jesus was walking by with His disciples and saw a blind man. His disciples wanted to know why this guy was blind from his birth. Jesus said it was because the works of God should be revealed in him. He was also careful to explain that it was not the guys’ fault or his parents.

So he, the blind man, went through life begging for alms and living in a world of darkness until one ordinary day of doing the same old things, God could show His power in Jesus.

**There Was A Reason For His Blindness.** There is always a reason for what happens to us. The sovereignty of God was at play as God intervened in someone's life. You can bet your bottom dollar that when God steps in, He has a good reason for doing so.

## **God's Intervention Can Cause Turmoil**

It's important to see what happened as a result of Jesus' Miracle.

1. The blind man now sees clearly.
2. All His friends see or hear about the miracle and are amazed.
3. His parents are glad.
4. The religious leaders are angry with Jesus and excommunicate the blind man from the temple.
5. The blind man is now an evangelist of sorts as he tells how he can see.

The man's lifestyle has changed dramatically and that change has touched the lives of others in a significant way. Now we can see why, There Is A Reason For That.

## **Unexpected Delays Can Have A Good Outcome**

My wife's brother lives in the New York area. On 9/11 he was scheduled for an early meeting downtown at the Twin Towers. His meeting was canceled at the last minute and he didn't go. The day of the meeting, a terrorist flew a hijacked passenger jet into the Twin Towers and the Pentagon and more than 3600 people died.

Is the canceled meeting just a coincidence or an intervention of God? He very well could have been killed had the meeting taken place. He lives today, very possibly because his meeting was canceled.

## **Evaluating The Possibilities**

It is important to realize that most folks see only what they want to see. Two people can review the same evidence and come to very different conclusions. It's all in your belief system and how you see things. In the Biblical example above, some said the man was the same one that they saw begging before but others wouldn't go that far and said he looked similar. The religious leaders were stuck in their own dogma and threatened everyone with being politically correct.

We, as Christians, believe that God is always with us and if we have read the scriptures, we surely have come across **Psalm 34:7**, "The angel of the LORD encamps round about them that fear him, and delivers them." We believe that it is indeed possible for God to intervene into our daily routine to protect and even deliver us from evil. We are always evaluating the possibilities and looking for the hand of God.

I know what you will most likely say, “ What about when tragedy strikes and the outcome is not what we desire? I have had several folks tell me of freak accidents where their loved ones have died or become crippled. How does that work within the sovereignty of God?

These things are hard to deal with because they happen to us. Nevertheless, “There Is A Reason For That”. The truth is... God does not generate every happening. We generate some from our own free will. Others do too. Therefore, the reasons for an occurrence can differ depending on the source.

Ask the drunk that runs over a little kid. Ask the terrorist that blows up a plane. Ask the construction guy that builds a shabby building that falls down in the 1<sup>st</sup> severe storm. God does not generate them and it was not His will that they happen. He allows us to be a free moral agent and gives us a free will to do whatever we want. However, He also holds us accountable for our actions. God has promised us that He will work everything together for good. Hear what **Romans 8:28** says, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

So, some things are born out of God’s divine will. Others come from us. Yet other things happen as a result of nature and weather patterns. Finally, there are those things that come from our adversary, the devil. Hear what Peter said in **I Peter 5:8-9** “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.”

## The Underlying Premise

The underlying premise to, “**There’s A Reason For That**” is as follows:

1. The belief that God is good.
2. The understanding that God seeks our very best.
3. The words of Jesus in **John 10:10b**, “I have come that they (Us) might have life and that they Us) may have it more abundantly”
4. That Jesus will never leave us.
5. That God’s angel sets up his camp of warring angels all around us because we reverence God.
6. That God is really for us and not against us.
7. That we can evaluate the reasons, looking for the hand of God.

## Judging Before The Results Are In

Some folks make a judgment before the results are fully known. One year, we lost two dogs and a cat to sickness and disease. It all happened within a 30-45 day period. Our hearts were broken and, as is natural, we questioned why? It was easy to blame God because He is in control of

everything, right? He could have intervened and saved our precious pets. However, He did not... or did He?

Our emotions raged and we kept hearing the thoughts of Satan that said how bad God was to allow this to happen. Fortunately, we stayed in Faith, believing that God is good and He was not in the business of killing our pets.

To believe what was racing through our emotions would be to believe a lie because we know who God is and such an act would be out of character for Him. Plus we read in the Bible that, "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy." We quickly realized that this thing was not from our Heavenly Father.

We still struggled with Why? But withheld our judgment saying, "There Must Be A Reason For That". We just don't know it as yet. Later, we learned that the dog food, even though it was a better mix and more costly, had several recalls due to bacteria problems and that the vet we were using at the time had no real answers.

Our final conclusion was to say, we don't really know except the animals were suffering and God took them before they got worse. He spared us the continual agony of watching them slowly die and spared our beloved pets the ever-worsening pain. So finally we could put it to rest that God was not at fault and our animals are now in His loving care.

I know it is hard not to blame God but it is important to look to Him for answers, realizing that He is on our side and will be forever.

## **A "Reason" Implies A Plan**

If there is a reason for everything that happens, is there also a plan? The Bible teaches Foreknowledge and Sovereignty of God. That means that God's master plan was designed after every happening in every century, with every person, animal, weather, etc was identified by its corresponding reason.

Foreknowledge... is the ability to know what will take place and the results of those events before they take place. God is all-knowing and all-powerful. He is the only one that can judge the intent of the heart. God saw it all before the foundation of the world and designed His Master Plan accordingly.

Sovereignty... is God's absolute right to rule over His creation. "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Isaiah 55:11 God's work, from which He rested on the 7<sup>th</sup> day, was not just the creation of planets, universes, and the great expanse. It was also to make every decision as to His own will without violating man's free will choices.

God, in that decision making process, takes into account many different things, including:

1. **Fulfilling Romans 8:28** which says, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”
2. **Setting appointments for folks to die.** “And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment” **Hebrews 9:27**
3. **Sending Jesus to earth.** “But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons... and because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

These are but a few of the millions of decisions relative to God’s Sovereignty. However, this is the only way God could truly give man free will and to allow him to be a free moral agent. In doing so, all of life has a cause, effect and reason. There is a master plan that retains God’s Sovereignty and man’s free will.

## **Some More Biblical Examples**

### **Jesus, An Excellent Example**

I’d like to use Jesus as an example of, “There’s A Reason For That”. You are aware that He was and still is the Only Begotten Son of God, sent by Him as a penalty for sin and Savior for all who believe in Him? **John 3:16**

You should also be aware that the Romans crucified Him and put Him in a borrowed grave. Picture yourself there, seeing His miracles, hearing His gospel of the Kingdom and actually seeing Him being killed on the cross of Calvary. What would you think? He is now dead and all that He said apparently died with Him. That’s what some of the disciples thought. At the garden, when they came for Jesus, they all ran away in fear. Only John was there at the cross. Peter denied knowing Jesus three times before He went to His death.

If I would have told the disciples, “There is a reason for that”, they would have thought I was crazy. But there was a reason for the crucifixion. They didn’t know it then but after Jesus rose from the dead and showed them His hands and side, they knew. It all became clear. It was God’s master plan being worked out so He could redeem His children and save them from His own sentence of death.

With the eyes of man, this would seem like a tragedy. However, the true reason was not apparent, actually hidden from the world but known by the believers. The world rejoiced at the death of Christ but God had the last laugh. He used their evil deeds to bring about something good, our redemption and planned it all before the foundation of the world.

## Joseph, Another Biblical Example

You know the story, how Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery and told his father that he was dead. That he ended up in Egypt and became the Pharaoh's right hand man. That, because of a famine, his brothers came to Egypt looking to buy food and came face to face with Joseph. This is what Joseph says to his brothers. "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." **Genesis 50:20**

All of this was in God's master plan just waiting to be enacted. It's also a clear example that the story is not over until it is over. There was a reason that Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers. It wasn't what God wanted but was the very thing God used to save Jacob's family and continue His will.

## A "What If" Scenario

I have pointed out Biblical examples and even a real life story of, "There's A Reason For That". Now let's take a look at a hypothetical. I will give you the scenario and multiple choices. See if you can pick the right answer.

You are driving too fast to work. You are late and you are trying to make up time so you won't be that late. You are on a two-lane highway with a fair amount of traffic.

A farmer pulls out in front of you. He is hauling a trailer full of watermelon. He is going slower than the speed limit, forcing you to slow down. There is too much traffic coming the other way for you to pass. All you can do is poke along behind the farmer.

You have read this eBook and I am now the voice in your head saying, "There's A Reason For That". What reason could there be for this happening to you?

- Maybe there's a cop hiding down the road and if you were speeding you probably would have been caught.
- Maybe an accident was about to happen that would have involved you had you kept on at a faster pace but because you slowed down, there was no accident.
- Maybe you have a problem getting angry too quickly at things and God uses things like this so you will learn patience.
- Maybe all the above is applicable.
- Maybe none of the above applies.

The, "What If" scenario answer is "e" but does it really matter why a thing happens? We know that God has put His Holy Spirit into our hearts as a seal of our redemption and He will do what is best for us. "Now he which established us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God;

who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” **II Corinthians 1:21-22**

**The point is...** there is a reason for things happening. They just don't happen on their own and sometimes they are sent by God to teach us, protect us and keep us walking in His grace.

## Conclusion

There are a million reasons why things happen in life. Trying to figure them all out can be exhausting and unprofitable. Knowing the possible sources can be comforting but still frustrating. All I need to know is my Heavenly Father is in control of my life and what happens to me.

I have His Spirit to lead me out of harms' way and into His blessings. If I should encounter things that go against my will and frustrate me, I can use them to cultivate patience and my spiritual walk. I can also reject them as being an attack from the devil.

The source or reason for them entering my reality is not important. What is important is that the things I experience do not break my stride as I walk with the Lord.

I know that Jesus came that I might have life and that life would be more abundant than ever before. **John 10:10b** I also know that I am aware of the tricks of the devil and can resist him and the things he brings my way by standing in Faith against him.

God is good. He is the Father of all life and is the very essence of Love. We should trust Him in all things and rely on Him to get us through the good times and even the bad times. He will, if we reverence Him, work everything together for our good.

So, keep looking up and drop pre-judging of every little thing. Relax and enjoy life. It is God's will that you do.

## Peace of God

### The Key To A Successful Walk of Faith

### Introduction

We are living in a world that is full of anger, hate and suffering. We face the threats of terrorism, war, unemployment and economic collapse among other things. Finding peace is a lost art because the news keeps telling us all the bad stuff in life and why we should be afraid or worry.

Today is not that different than when the apostle Paul was on the earth. He lived in a time of economic stress, hate and hard times yet in the midst of all of life's trials, he writes to the fledgling church of the first century, "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful." **Colossians 3:5**



How can one be thankful and remain at peace when another country has invaded yours and now rules with an iron hand? How can peace rule in the hearts of those that are enslaved, ridiculed and degraded? Those were the days of Roman rule.

I can answer these questions with a simple explanation of the scripture given above. But first, here are a few Bible verses to meditate upon.

**Psalm 85:8...NIV...** I will listen to what God the LORD says; he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants— but to let them not turn to folly.

**Phillipians 4:7...KJV...** "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

**Psalm 29:11...KJV...** "The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace."

**Psalm 119:165...KJV...** "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them."

**John 6:33...KJV...** "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."

**I Corinthians 14:33...KJV...** "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints."

**Psalm 37:37...KJV...** "Mark the perfect (*Mature*) man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace."

Romans 14:7...**KJV...** "For the kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

Craig Von Buseck, a contributing writer for CBN says in his CBN.org website article...excerpts

Without great trials, we would have no great victories. The Lord reveals Himself in the difficulties of life as our Deliverer, our Sufficiency, and our Lord. The psalmist tells us, "*many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers [us] out of them all*" (**Psalm 34:19**).

If you are really serious about walking with God, He will teach you, and guide you, and comfort you, and yes, you will know His peace in your life. In fact, as you mature in your walk with the Lord, peace and joy will be multiplied to you. It is an interesting paradox that our heavenly Father orchestrates in our lives. On the one hand, our trials increase, as we grow stronger in the Lord. On the other hand, the fruit of the Spirit - including peace and joy - develop to the point that we are given grace to weather the trials, and the rest of our lives are filled with harmonious fellowship with God.

We should expect to experience God's peace in our lives. If you are not walking in peace, it may be the result of several different scenarios. It may be that you are in the midst of a particular test or trial sent from God. Or you may be under attack from the devil. Or you may have an area of your life that you have not yet surrendered completely to God. The Lord intends for you to have peace. If you are not experiencing God's peace on an ongoing basis, you may need to ask the Holy Spirit to show you:

- if you are experiencing a test that should be submitted to;
- if you are under an attack that you should resist; or
- if there is an area of continual sin, unforgiveness, anger, or some other hindrance that should be renounced and repented

Most pastors will teach that when you are seeking to find God's will, you can identify the leading of the Holy Spirit when you sense God's peace about a matter. I agree, and I believe that is absolutely true. The peace of God is one of the key indicators of God's guidance. **Colossians 3:15** tells us to let the peace of God rule in [our] hearts. Peace is the umpire of our heart, telling us if we are "safe" in God's will, or "out," following our own path or the deception of the devil.

The prophet Isaiah wrote, "For you shall go out with joy, and be led out with peace" (**Isaiah 55:12**). God's best for our lives is that we will be led forth in peace and joy. Have you ever heard someone say, "I'm not going to allow these circumstances to rob my joy?" In making this declaration they are being absolutely biblical - peace and joy are our possessions when we are born again. The only way that you will walk in unrest as a mature believer is if you allow circumstances or the devil to rob you of your joy.

You may say, "The devil robbed my joy." The truth of the statement is that the devil attempted to rob you of your joy - but he only succeeded if you allowed him to. The life of the Christian is one of peace and joy.

- That is why Paul and Silas could sing praises to God in the Philippian jail (**Acts 16:25**).
- That is why the apostles praised the Lord after being beaten by the teachers of the law, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame in Christ's name (**Acts 5:40-41**).
- That is why Stephen could praise the God of heaven as he was being stoned for his bold witness (**Acts 7:55-60**).

## Supernatural Peace

There are times, when we are seeking the will of God and we reach the point of decision that we experience supernatural peace. This is an important aspect of discerning between good and evil, and it comes by reason of use (**Hebrews 5:14**). The peace of God is like a compass for our souls, leading us in the direction that the Holy Spirit intends for our lives. We can take great comfort in knowing that the sovereign God is so involved in our lives that He would supply us with this internal compass as we seek to do His will.

At the same time, the mature Christian will recognize that there is another way that God uses the fruit of peace to direct our steps. As we surrender to the lordship of Jesus Christ in our lives, He brings us to a place where we experience His blessed peace on an ongoing basis. Instead of anxiety, anger, or depression, the peace of God becomes the normal state of mind for the Christian.

## The dictionary Defines

### The Peace of God This Way

Peace is a state of tranquility or quietness of spirit that transcends circumstances. The term *peace* is described in Scripture as a gift from God and congruent with His character (1 Thessalonians 5:23; Galatians 6:16; 1 Peter 1:2; Hebrews 13:20).

## Peace Passes All Understanding GotQuestions.org

Philippians 4:7 refers to “the peace of God which transcends all understanding.” Most of Paul’s letters began with the words “Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

If God is peace, then to know God is to bask in His peace. The closer we draw to Him, the more of His peace we can enjoy (**James 4:8**). God gives us clear instructions about how to draw near to Him. **Psalm 24:3–4** says, “Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god.” But Scripture is also clear that we cannot make ourselves clean enough or pure enough to earn the presence of the Lord (**Romans 3:10, 23**).

So how do we draw near enough to experience His peace? Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid” (**John 14:27**). We come into the presence of the Lord through His Son (**John 14:6**). When we allow Jesus’ death and resurrection to purchase our forgiveness from God, we are counted as righteous (**2 Corinthians 5:21**). Our sins are forgiven because Jesus already paid the price for them. Only then can we have peace with God (**Romans 4:5; 5:1; 1 John 4:10**).

The initial peace that comes from having our consciences wiped clean grows as we get to know God better (**Hebrews 10:22**). First Peter 1:2 says, “May God give you more and more grace and peace as you grow in your knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord” (NLT). When we grow in understanding of the depths and riches of God’s love toward us, (**Ephesians 3:18–19; Romans 8:38–39**), our minds and spirits begin to rest in His power and wisdom. We begin to understand that He really will make all things work together for our good (**Romans 8:28**). We learn that His purposes will be accomplished (**Psalm 33:11; Proverbs 19:21; Isaiah 45:9; 46:9–11**).

## **Bad Attitudes Destroy**

Certain attitudes can destroy the peace of God. When we equate trust with the assumption that God will give us whatever we want, we set ourselves up for disappointment. The Bible is filled with examples of the opposite happening to God's people (**2 Corinthians 12:7–9; Hebrews 11:13; Psalm 10:1**). Trust means we have set our hearts to believe God, whatever may happen. When we insist on being in control, we sabotage God's desire to let us live in peace. When we choose worry rather than faith, we cannot live in peace. Jesus warned us often about fear and worry (**Matthew 6:34; Luke 12:29; Philippians 4:6**). Worry is the enemy of peace. God invites us to cast our cares upon Him and then let go of them (**1 Peter 5:7**).

Living in peace can be compared to the petals of a flower unfolding in the morning sunlight. The petals of peace in our lives unfold as we learn more about God. We discover that His character is always faithful. We experience His continual goodness. We read more of His promises (**Psalm 100:5; 115:11; Isaiah 26:4**). We learn to bask in His overwhelming love for us (**Romans 8:38–39**). We refuse to allow ever-changing circumstances to determine our level of contentment, relying instead upon the character of God that never changes (**James 1:17; Malachi 3:6**).

When we develop a lifestyle of making the Lord our refuge, we begin to live in the peace of God (**Psalm 46:1; 62:8**). **Psalm 91:1** holds the secret to living in the peace of God: "He that dwells in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust."

That secret place in our hearts is where we go to meet with God. When we choose to live there and hide away under His shadow, staying in constant communion with Him, we can remain peaceful, even when circumstances may not be. When we learn to cry out to Him in times of trouble, we find that His peace really does pass all human understanding (**Philippians 4:7**).

The Bible reveals to us that the foundation of all true peace is a proper relationship with our God and Creator. Ultimate peace is the individual being reconciled to God. (Bibletruth.org) This can only happen through Jesus Christ, His only Begotten Son. (**John 3:16**)

**You Can Decide To Be Peaceful**  
**Joyce Meyer Ministries**

***Ultimate Peace Is The Individual  
Being Reconciled To God.***

We can make the decision to stop allowing ourselves to get upset, aggravated and frustrated. Although we may think, “I can’t help it,” according to Jesus, we can help it. He offers us peace that can keep us from getting this way.

It’s important for us to realize that we have a responsibility to not let our hearts be troubled or afraid. We will never break loose from anything we’re struggling with until we take personal responsibility for where we are now.

Most people just want to blame someone or something else for their problems – a bad childhood, their lack of education, their nationality, their personality – and make excuses for the way they are. But we can’t let the things from our past, or present, become an excuse to stay there. Believe me...I know.

I grew up in a home full of turmoil. It was a very unstable, unpleasant atmosphere, filled with alcohol, anger and all kinds of abuse. However, I learned that I had to take responsibility for my actions if my life would ever be different than what I experienced throughout my childhood.

I remember when I realized that living with frustration; aggravation and worry really just did me no good at all. All I ever got from being this way was a headache, a backache, a grouchy attitude, and regret for saying things I never should have said.

As I began to take responsibility and say, “God will help me to do something about this if I really want Him to,” things began to change. It wasn’t easy and it didn’t happen overnight, but as I trusted God more and more to help me, and then made right choices to act like Christ instead of the way I felt like acting when I was upset or didn’t get my way, I changed. I learned to live with the peace Jesus gives.

We can have anything God says we can have. He is no respecter of persons. The promises of God are for “whosoever will” (see Acts 10:34-35). We’re all “whosoEVERs,” but not all of us are willing to do what we need to do to inherit the promises of God. We may be willing to hear the truth, but are we willing to **do** what it says?

I want to challenge you to decide right now to be determined and persistent in seeking God and being obedient to what He’s telling you to do. Our enemy, the devil, is persistent and will do whatever he can to wear us out and keep us from God’s will. But we need to have the same tenacity in Christ to never give up – by God’s grace – and make him sorry he ever bothered us.

Remember, as a born-again Christian, you are full of the Spirit of the living God, who makes us more than conquerors. We should plan ahead to stay peaceful during trials. Everything is not going to go our way all the time, and when it doesn’t, we can be prepared to stay in peace in the midst of it all.

Let your confession be: “With God’s help, I don’t have to be aggravated or frustrated. I can stay calm and hold my peace.” The ability to display stability and remain calm in troubled times can be one of our greatest testimonies to a troubled world.

## Using The Peace of God As A Referee

Let's take another look at **Colossians 3:15** "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful." Here is the key to a successful Christian Life. Fail in this exercise and you will never attain peace and will stay frustrated, angry and depressed all the days of your life.

However, when you apply the scripture, it really works and you can see its affect immediately. Here's what you do:

1. Treat the word rule as a "Referee."
2. Listen for the voice of reason.
3. Obey what is being told to you to do.
4. Stand in faith and hold on to your initial decision.
5. Do not waver in action or thoughts.
6. Trust in the Lord that He knows best.
7. Reject every thought that tries to change your course of action.

## It's All About The Process

When you have peace, it is a gift from God's Holy Spirit. We can walk in it and allow it to rule. This means a total surrender to God's will, knowing that he knows best. Once you are there, your will does not count. It is not a concern anymore. Your heart and mind is focused to doing God's will and you are dedicated to searching it out and doing it. This is what it means to let the "Peace of God" rule.

Now that you are surrendered to doing the will of God, you have to seriously listen for His voice. He will tell you if you are in or out of His will. He uses his Peace to communicate with you. If you have peace in a situation, you are in His will. This is assuming you have talked it over with God and still feel what you are about to do is right. If you start losing His peace, getting confused or feeling skeptical, back away from it because it is leading you out of God's will. It's like the Holy Spirit is blowing a whistle, like a referee, and yelling, "Off Sides!" He uses the absence of peace to tell you that you are moving away from the will of God.

So the process is to surrender to God's will, listen for His voice, Obey what He says, allow His peace to referee, and never move out of its influence.

## Hinderences To Maintaining God's Peace

There are several hinderences to staying in the Peace of God. Here's a list to be aware of:

1. **Satanic Attacks**...The devil will shoot fiery darts at us in the form of thoughts, trying to get us to make decision that dishonor God or lead us away from His will. (**I Peter 5:8-9**) We are to resist him steadfastly in the faith.

2. **Fleshly Desires**...Our own selfish desires are strong and will pull at our souls to do things that are self-gratifying. The way to overcome these desires is to submit and resubmit yourselves unto God until the desires subside.
3. **Disobedience**...Sometimes we catch an attitude and rebel. This happens mostly when what the Holy Spirit says is not to our liking. The victory is in **Romans 8:28**, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” We must hold on to this scripture. It says that God is working everything together for our good, even if we do not see it in front of us.
4. **Public Opinion**... Lots of folks give way to public opinion. They do not want to be seen as strange or as one who thinks outside of the norm. It begins with peer pressure and grows into politically correct and then settles on what others say or think. We need to decide on God’s will and stick to it no matter what.

Walking in the peace of God takes time. We have to learn how because it is not automatic. It’s like learning to play the piano. There are the basics, then lots of practice and mistakes, but finally the joy of getting it right and doing it. The good thing about it is God wants us to have and enjoy His peace. No one can take it away from us. We can give it up, the devil can steal it if we are not careful, but it is ours do with or without.

## Conclusion

Don’t think that anyone can experience the Peace of God. It is not even offered to most people. You must be, “Born Again” to experience the Peace of God. If you doubt my claim, read **John 3:1-3**.

It says, “There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: <sup>2</sup>The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. <sup>3</sup>Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

When you are, “Born Again” you become a child of God. Jesus taught Nicodemus this truth in verses 5-6, “Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water, (Physical Birth), and of the Spirit, (Spiritual Birth), he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup>That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

So we need to be born of the Spirit in order to see the kingdom of God. Guess what? in the Holy Ghost. “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and **peace**, and joy in the Holy Ghost” **Romans 14:17**

It’s the “Born Again” folks that are given the Spirit who in turn brings “Peace” along with other gifts and into their lives. Thus they gain access to the Peace of God which rules or referee’s their everyday.

See my other eBook, “How To Be Born Again” if you need more explanation.

**God bless you as you search out His will  
And learn to walk in His peace.**

## **The Gospel of Prosperity Introduction**

I must tell you that I do believe in the gospel of prosperity. As I researched for this topic, I found so many that opposed this teaching. I thought that every Christian would believe that God wants His children to be in good health and to prosper in this world. I couldn't imagine anyone not agreeing with this premise. However, many do for a lot of good reasons which I will get into shortly.

They, those that disagree, call it “The Gospel of Prosperity” and brand those that teach it as “Prosperity Preachers”. Well, the word, “Gospel” means good news so we are really talking about the good news of prosperity.

The Bible is full of “Good News” about a lot of things, such as, Life Eternal, Victory over Satan, Salvation, Finding Peace In The Midst of Confusion, being Born Again and so on. Prosperity and Good Health are also on this list.

I will agree that many have over stated this, “good news” and have used it to advance their own agendas. However, that does not negate the truth of the teaching. We should not run away from Biblical truth because some disagree.

### **Truth & Error**

Let's look at some error and some truth. Come, let us reason together. First are the errors being taught in some of today's churches. These are misconceptions.

1. **Name It And Claim It...** Some folks believe that they can Name It & Claim It and God will give it to them. They negate the sovereignty of God and His will for their lives. This is no more than an attempt to fulfill fleshly desires at God's expense.

However, if God has spoken to you about a specific thing and revealed to your spirit that He will bring it to pass, we can, and only then, Name It And Claim It. A good example is Abraham. God told him that he would be the father of many nations and that Sarah, at age 90, would give birth to the promised son. The Bible tells us that Abraham believed God and did not waver in his faith. He Named It And Claimed It because God spoke it to him. When God speaks a word into our spirit, we are bound to it. We must Name It And Claim It because that is the essence of all faith. We believe by doing so.



2. **Man of God Authoritarianism** ...There is a movement that pushes the idea that the Pastor is the Man of God and thus the final authority concerning spiritual matters. Those who oppose the prosperity message site instances where believers have been abused by pastors and taken financially for the sake of the church and its ministry.

The error in this teaching is in not discerning the Lord's Body. The Bible tells us that the pastor is only one of many gifts given to the church for its edification and that every believer is also a member of the body with several gifts. The emphasis is always on money and that is not God's will. Jesus said, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." **Matthew 6:33** Notice the emphasis is on seeking first the kingdom of God.

3. **Giving To Get**...Some say that you need to give in order to get. They teach that you give \$10 and will get \$1,000. Their emphasis is on a financial return. Whereas, Jesus said, "But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil." **Luke 6:35**

The error goes like this...when we give in order that we get, it centers our thoughts and actions on ourselves. If we need money for bills or just fun, we give to God, naming our seed, that it grows a harvest of far more than we gave. This sort of thinking is self-centered not God centered. The Holy Spirit should lead our giving. He indwells us and leads us in everything, including our finances. It's ok to expect a big harvest from our giving but not always does it come in the form of cold hard cash. When we claim the cash we *hinder God from working on the total of our needs and life in Him*. "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." **James 4:3**

4. **Seeking God For The Wrong Reasons**...Some preachers teach their followers to seek God for the wrong reasons. They learn to call upon the Lord for their physical needs and often overlook God's will. The concept of pleasing God and living out His destiny for us is lost in the shuffle. Seeking wealth instead of God is not the way to success.

"Therefore take no thought, saying, what shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." **Matthew 6:31-32** (Note that the focus is on not worrying about material things because your Heavenly Father knows what you need.)

5. **Prosperity Is Only About Money**... Another misconception I want to mention is that money itself is just plain wrong. It's not, and there's no reason to feel guilty when God causes it to come into our life. It's okay to have money, as long as we don't make acquiring it the top priority in life. "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Timothy 6:10).

Our reason to seek God is to worship Him, to praise Him, to have fellowship with Him, to hear His voice and follow His lead. He is Lord, not us.

## **Truth About Prosperity**

Second are the truths being taught in other churches today. Because the above errors are true errors, doesn't mean the idea of Prosperity in the life of the believer is wrong. The idea is good. The current teaching by certain groups is wrong. Let's look at some Biblical truth concerning prosperity. It is my belief that God wants His children to be in good health and continually prospering.

## **Word Origin And History of Prosper**

I do need to qualify the concept of prospering. Here's what the dictionary says.... .v. mid-14c., from Old French prosperer (14c.) and directly from Latin prosperare "cause to succeed, render happy," from prosperus "favorable, fortunate, prosperous," perhaps literally "agreeable to one's wishes," from Old Latin pro spere "according to expectation," from pro "for" + ablative of spes "hope," from PIE root \*spe- "to flourish, succeed, thrive, prosper"

How do we measure prosperity? Is it by Gross National Product (GNP), Unemployment, Personal Wealth or what? A family in a 3<sup>rd</sup> world country with a tin roof over their home can be looked at as prosperous when the rest of the community has grass roofs. The idea of prosperity is relative to ones life situation. It's not all money and financial wealth. It could be as simple as being blessed by God.

Now lets look at Biblical truth. I want you to look for a partnership between God and Man as we discuss theses scriptures.

## **My Version of The Laws of Prosperity**

### **1. God Blesses Those Who Bless The Poor.**

- One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and "one who waters will himself be watered. **Proverbs 11:24-25**
- He who gives to the poor will never want, but he who shuts his eyes will have many curses. **Proverbs 28:27**

**Can You See The Partnership?** God's blessings are meant to go beyond you to the blessing of others. When we give to bless others we are also blessed.

### **2. The Size of Your Harvest Is Dependant Upon The Amount of Seed You Plant.**

- Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.. **II Corinthians 9:6-7**
- Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. **Galatians 6:7**

**Can You See The Partnership?** When we sow (Plant/Give) without resentment ...out of a pure heart, He causes our harvest to grow beyond measure. We decide the size of our harvest by what we sow.

As you give, God will begin to pour His blessing upon you. As you use your talents, under His direction, and allow your resources time to grow, His blessing will multiply beyond anything you can now imagine.

### **3. The Abundance Is For The Needs of Others.**

- And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything; you may have an abundance for every good deed. **II Corinthians 9:8**

**Can You See The Relationship?** God causes His grace to abound so we can benefit from all the blessings. The abundance is to be shared with others. This is our part of the relationship.

### **4. God Is The Source of Our Prosperity.**

- And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. **Philippians 4:19**
- Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. **Matthew 6:31-32**

**Can You See The Partnership?** God is actively at work on our behalf to bless us and provide all our needs. Our part is to not worry about things and trust Him to provide our every need.

### **5. Obedience Brings An Abundance of Prosperity.**

- And you shall again obey the Lord, and observe all His commandments, which I command you today. “Then the Lord your God will prosper you abundantly in all the work of your hand, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your cattle and in the produce of your ground, for the Lord will again rejoice over you for good, just as He

rejoiced over your fathers; if you obey the Lord your God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, if you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and soul. **Deuteronomy 30: 8-10**

- “Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do.” **Deut. 29:9**
- Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts. **Malachi 3:10-11**

**Can You See The Partnership?** We are to seek the Lord with all our hearts and to keep His commandments. This is the key to success and blessings. He asks and we obey...a great partnership, because it is to our benefit.

#### **6. God Wants Us To Prosper And Be Healthy.**

- Beloved, I wish above all things that thou may prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospers. **3 John 2:4**
- Let them shout for joy and be glad, who favor my righteous cause. And let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, Who has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant” **Psalms 35:27**

**Can You See The Partnership?** God is for us, not against us. It is His will that we stay healthy and prosper in all that we do. **Note:** God’s will is for the soul, (Mind, Will and Emotions) to prosper. That goes beyond money. It covers physical, mental and spiritual life.

Some have said, “to be wealthy is evil” However, if it was evil, John would not have said what he said. When the Apostle wishes that we prosper and be in good health, you got to believe it is of God.

#### **7. True Prosperity Is Hidden In The Word of God.**

- But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. **Matthew 4:4**

**Can You See The Partnership?** We are given the Word of God to live by. Our part is to digest it and walk in it and live by it. If we do this, we will prosper.

#### **8. Prosperity And Spiritual Growth Dance Together.**

1. “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” **Matthew 6:33**
2. The blessing of the LORD makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it. **Proverbs 10:12**

**Can You See The Relationship?** Jesus told His followers to seek. As they did, they grew spiritually. You cannot seek the Lord and His righteousness without growing up in Him. God promises to add to our quest for life, all the other things that the world seeks to attain. By seeking Him first, we maintain a clear perspective and remain true to our calling.

### **9. Speaking The Word Will Bring Prosperity To Pass.**

3. “For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.” **Mark 11:23**
4. But He answered and said, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.’”

**Can You See The Partnership?** God allows us to speak His word in faith. He has made his power available to us when we speak in faith. The Mountain is a metaphor of any given situation we might be in. It is the obstacle that hinders us from accomplishing God’s will. Remember, moving a mountain is a breakthrough. It is also an example of prospering. It’s not all about money.

### **10. Wealth And Prosperity Requires The Power of God.**

5. “But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day.” **Deut. 8:18**
6. Once God has spoken; twice have I heard this: that power belongs to God. **Psalms 62:11**

**Can You See The Relationship?** We do not have to beg God or become a Work-A-Haulic to prosper. He gives us the power to gain wealth. He is working with us to accomplish His destiny.

Let’s summarize so we have a clear understanding of what it means to prosper and how we can prosper, the Biblical way.

The Term, “Prosper”

We can prosper in many different ways. Prosperity is not limited to just money. It also involves other aspects of life. When we benefit from a situation or are blessed in some way, we prosper. This is God’s will for His children.

## **The Purpose of Prosperity**

The purpose of prosperity is to be a blessing to the less fortunate. We have a responsibility to the poor and those that have fallen on hard times. It is our privilege to share our wealth with them. That's why God's blessings are in abundance, so we have plenty to meet our needs and the needs of others.

## **The Source of Prosperity**

The source of our prosperity is our Heavenly Father. He knows our needs and the needs of others. He is the only one that can give us our daily bread without it tormenting us. He freely gives all that we need.

## **The Key To Prospering**

The Word of God is the primary key to our success. He has provided the written word in these last days so we can know His will and all the many promises that are made available to His children. It is our job to search them out, digest them and live in the truth of each one.

The golden key to true prosperity is to refrain from all negatives and to focus the great energy on the positive, which is practicing the Presence of God. God knows how to prosper you. Your part is to discipline your thinking and speaking to only positive, prospering thoughts and words. Love the Source and love to think and speak prosperously, and your prosperity will grow in wonderful ways. - Lovingly, Rev. John Wolcott Adams

## **The Hindrances To Prosperity**

Here are a few hindrances to prospering.

- 1.) A lack of faith. 2.) Unbelief. 3.) Disobedience. 4.) Laziness
- 5.) Ignorance of the truth. 6.) Worldliness

## **The Errors That Give The Prosperity Message A Bad Name**

*Name It And Claim It...The Man of God Authoritarianism... Giving To Get...Seeking God For The Wrong Reasons*

## ***Conclusion***

Being prosperous not only means having wealth, but health, happiness, long life, and success. God promises these to us in His Word. When we remember to apply His scriptural lessons to our life, we open up the door to those promises.

“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” (Joshua 1:8).

God wants everyone to prosper and He has given us all the ability and the power to prosper! However, prosperity begins with understanding our role.

We are God’s stewards. Our lives, talents, abilities, and living in a world of unparalleled opportunity are all gifts from God. By meditating on His Word we can fulfill our destiny and please God in the doing so.

Jesus said, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.” **Matthre 6:19-20**

It is obvious that wealth and prosperity on this earth is given to advance the kingdom of God and to bless others. The souls we touch and the blessings we administer in His name are the true treasures that will last an eternity.

There are so many wealthy folk in this world. Many of them are miserable and empty inside. They are lost in the darkness of sin. Their money can’t buy peace of mind or happiness.

## **Jesus Gives While The Devil Takes**

However, we are children of God and joint heirs with Christ. We can believe God for the blessings of others and to prosper us in this life. I say this because Jesus said so. “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 so we can have life in abundance. On one hand, the devil seeks to destroy, steal and kill. On the other hand, Jesus comes to give life. Jesus gives while the devil takes.

So, let God be God in your life and believe Him for all your needs and a healthy abundance for others around you that are in need.

**One Other Thing...**“Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.” **I Cor. 10:24**  
Here’s what Paul said...“Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.” **I Cor. 10:33**

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” (**Psalm 1:1-3**).

*May The Lord Bless You  
As You Ponder All That Has Been Said*

# Forgiveness

## Introduction

Are we supposed to forgive others? Under what conditions do we forgive? Would that apply to murder, rape, theft, or just an argument? How often do we forgive the same offender? What happens if we don't forgive?

These are tough questions but we will look at them and see what the Bible has to say. We will also keep our eyes on Spiritual Warfare as we examine FORGIVENESS so we discover how the devil uses forgiveness to torment the believer.

We will also see how not forgiving can affect our physical and emotional health and lifestyle.

I will be using mostly the KJV of the bible and some other versions. I will also refer to other articles already published to broaden this overview of forgiveness.

## **Biblical Terms For Forgiveness**

**P. G. Mathew offers this explanation  
of Forgiveness in his 1995 web article**

Of all the world's religions, only Christianity offers complete forgiveness. Only the Bible—consisting of the Old and New Testaments—reveals to us an infinite, personal God who has a plan by which he completely forgives the sins of everyone who repents and believes in Jesus Christ...and this God not only forgives sins, but he forgives them forever.

What is this wonderful, biblical forgiveness? There are several words used for forgiveness in the Bible: three Hebrew words in the Old Testament and four Greek words in the New Testament. The first Hebrew word is *kafar*, from which we get the meaning "to cover," as in, "to cover or blot out our sins." The second word is *nasa*, which means "to bear, to take away." The third word is *salach*, which is used only with reference to God forgiving the sins of people. It means "to pardon," as in, "our God [who will] freely pardon." (Isaiah 55:7)

In the New Testament, first you find the Greek word *apoluein*, which means, "to release." There also is the wonderful word *charizomai*, which comes from the word *charis*, or "grace." *Charizomai* means, "to grace you," to freely give you heaven when you deserve hell. What a truly beautiful word! The third word is *aphesis*, from the Greek word *aphiemi*, "to send away."



Finally, there is paresis, which means, "to disregard"-this word is used in the context that God will not see our offenses, but rather will disregard them.

## *Forgiveness* *A Two Way Street*

The term, "Forgiveness", according to the dictionary, means, "the action or process of forgiving or being forgiven." I'll bet you didn't know it is a two way street.

I can forgive you and you can receive forgiveness. If I forgive and you do not accept it, you stay in a state of anxiety, frustration and sometimes even hate. Your unforgiveness keeps you tied to me as long as you do not let it go. It is still an unresolved conflict. However, my willingness to forgive you has freed me from any unresolved conflict. Here's why:

1. By forgiving you, I break the cycle of hate.
2. By forgiving you, I bury the hatchet that binds us together in conflict.
3. By forgiving you, I no longer hold conflict as my primary focus. I can move on to other things.
4. By forgiving you, I can look upon you with a new perspective that excludes hate.
5. By forgiving you, I am delivered from the attacks of the devil that seek to torment me in the situation.
6. By forgiving you, I cleanse my attitude from bitterness so I do not defile others around me.
7. By forgiving you, I eliminate the stress and related illnesses associated with dealing with an offense over and over again.

In order to forgive and be forgiven, some things have to be crystal clear. **Consider these:**

- The one being forgiven must acknowledge that he or she is responsible for the fault.
- The one forgiving must be willing to truly forget the fault, so much so, that it never again becomes the primary topic of thought or discussion. (I have a saying that helps me. It goes like this, "Lets not go down that road again.")
- The one forgiving must accept and acknowledge any wrongdoing he or she may have done during the conflict. It could be insults, throwing things or even a demeaning tone of voice.
- Both parties must forgive themselves. Often, the person at fault can never forgive himself or herself, even when the other has forgiven them and God has forgiven them.

# Forgiveness

## A Biblical Perspective

A definition for forgiveness could be -- giving up my right to hurt you, for hurting me. It is impossible to live on this fallen planet without getting hurt, offended, misunderstood, lied to, and rejected. Learning how to respond properly is one of the basics of the Christian life. Remember, forgiveness is a Free Will choice.

The word “forgive” means to wipe the slate clean, to pardon, to cancel a debt. When we wrong someone, we seek his or her forgiveness in order for the relationship to be restored. It is important to remember that forgiveness is not granted because a person deserves to be forgiven. Instead, it is an act of love, mercy, and grace.

How we act toward that person may change. It doesn't mean we will put ourselves back into a harmful situation or that we suddenly accept or approve of the person's continued wrong behavior. It simply means we release them from the wrong they committed against us. We forgive them because God forgave us (Ephesians 4:31-32 and Romans 5:8).

## Reasons To Forgive

- We forgive because God has forgiven us. (Ephesians 4:32)
- We forgive in obedience to God. (Matthew 6:14-15; Romans 12:18)
- We forgive others to gain control of our lives from hurt emotions. (Genesis 4:1-8)
- We forgive so we won't become bitter and defile those around us. (Hebrews 12:14-15)

There are times we don't feel like forgiving those who have wronged us. It is easier to act our way into feeling than to feel our way into acting. Having a nature of not forgiving others brings about bitterness, and bitterness has been linked to stress-related illnesses by some medical researchers. By forgiving others, we free ourselves spiritually and emotionally. Forgiveness is an act of our own personal will in obedience and submission to God's will, trusting God to bring emotional healing. (Excerpts from AllAboutGod.com)

## Divine Forgiveness

**Divine Forgiveness....**God's restoration of relationship that entails the removal of objective guilt. Thus, to forgive the offense against God's holiness or the perpetrator of the offense are synonymous. Forgiveness can be extended both to nations (especially Israel) and to individuals.

**The Old Testament....** God is depicted in the Old Testament as merciful. He is described as "slow to anger" and "abounding in love/mercy, " "compassionate and gracious" (Exod 34:6; Num 14:18; Neh 9:17; Psalm 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Joel 2:13; John 4:2 ). God is lenient toward his

people, not treating them as their sin deserves (Ezra 9:13-15 ; Psalm 78:35-38; 103:8-10 ), and willing to forgive wickedness, rebellion, and sin (Exod 34:7; Num 14:18).

**National Forgiveness...** In one case, God forgave a nation other than Israel and did not bring the punishment on it that he had planned. God as righteous was compelled to bring judgment on Nineveh, but God as merciful sent Jonah to warn the city of the impending judgment. The Ninevites, including the king, believed and repented of their evil ways and their violence (Jonah 3:8 ). As a result God as merciful relented from the evil that he had planned to bring on them. This is an illustration of the general principle by which God deals with nations (Jer 18:7-8).

Israel is distinguished from other nations as being chosen by God out of all the nations of the earth as his special possession (cf. **Exod 19:15 ; Deut 7:6 ; 14:2 ; 26:18 ; 1 Kings 3:8 ; 1 Chron 16:13 ; Psalm 33:12 ; 105:6 ; 106:4-5 ; 135:4 ; Isa 41:8 ; 43:10 ; 44:1-2** ).

Israel's election has its roots in God's covenant with Abraham, renewed with Isaac and Jacob, thus giving God's relationship with the nation an unconditional basis (**Gen 12:1-3; 15:18; Genesis 17:8 Genesis 17:21; 22:17; 26:3-5 ; 28:13-15 ; 35:11-12 ; Exod 2:24 ; 6:4 ; Exodus 13:5 Exodus 13:11 ; 32:13; 33:1; Deut 1:8; 4:37; 7:8; 10:11; 26:15; 34:4; Joshua 1:6; 21:43-44; 1 Kings 8:40; 1 Chron 16:16-18; 2 Chron 20:7; Neh 9:7-8; Psalm 105:8-11**).

So, in spite of Israel's disobedience, after he has punished the nation, God is committed to dealing mercifully with it because of the covenant made with the fathers and his love for them (**Lev 26:42; Deut 4:31; 9:26-27; 2 Kings 13:23; Psalm 106:40-46; Jer 33:25-26; Micah 7:20**).

God unconditionally promised the land and prosperity in the land to the fathers and their descendants (Abrahamic covenant). Their descendants, however, would possess the promises only on the condition of their obedience to the Law (Mosaic covenant), and, after they had sinned, would be restored to a state of prosperity and security in the land only on the condition of national repentance (**Deut 30:1-10; 31:14-32:47; Book of Judges 1 Kings 8:33-40 1 Kings 8:46-51; 2 Chronicles 6:24-31 2 Chronicles 6:36-39; 7:13-16 ) II Chronicles 7:14**).

God as merciful made unconditional promises to Abraham and his descendants, but God as righteous demanded obedience to the Torah as the condition for the realization of these promises for each generation.

**Individual Forgiveness....** God, as righteous, required obedience from individual Israelites; by observance of all that God commanded each would live (**Lev 18:5; Neh 9:29**). Only some violations of the Torah were forgivable.

The Day of Atonement was a significant means by which individual sins could be forgiven. In Leviticus, chapter 16, Aaron (or his descendants) is instructed first to expiate (Atone For) himself and his house annually. Then, taking two goats, Aaron is to offer one chosen by lot as a sin offering for the expiation of the sanctuary (v.16), while over the other he is to confess all the wickedness of the sons of Israel and all their rebellion, their sin and release this second goat into

the wilderness. The released goat removes all wickedness. This was a national ritual designed to remove individual offenses against God's holiness.

In his dealing with individual Israelites, God as merciful stands in tension with God as righteous. He does not deal with individual sin as it deserves, but forgives and mitigates punishment.

In addition, God forgives people who should not be forgivable; for the sake of mercy, God violates the conditions of his own covenant and often acts more leniently than the Torah would allow.

David murdered Uriah and committed adultery with Bathsheba (**2 Sam 11**); both actions were punishable by death so that both David and Bathsheba should have been killed. Instead, God forgave David (and presumably Bathsheba), although he was punished for his deeds (**2 Sam 12**). In Psalm 51, said to have been occasioned by Nathan's rebuke, David asks God to forgive him (vv. 1-2) and expresses confidence that his sacrifice of a broken spirit and contrite heart are acceptable to God (vv. 16-17).

Solomon went so far as to worship other gods, including the detestable god Molech (**1 Kings 11**). Although God removed the kingdom from his son as punishment, Solomon was not judged according to the Torah, which required death for those who turned away from worshiping and serving God (**Deut 17:2-7**).

God's dealings with the subsequent kings of Israel and Judah also reflect a much greater leniency than was allowed in the Torah. In spite of all the evil Ahab had done, God did not kill Ahab, which was the required penalty for his sin of complicity in the murder of Naboth. Because Ahab repented God did not even bring punishment on Ahab's house (**1 Kings 21:27-29**), as he had originally planned.

## Repentance

Repentance is a factor causing God to depart from the standards of the Torah. The individual is understood on analogy to the nation, so that, just as the nation is restored to favor after repentance, so is the individual. Although the prophets mostly spoke to Israel as a nation, in **Ezekiel 18:21-23, 27** the individual Israelite is addressed and offered God's unconditional forgiveness. Repentance after committing a violation of the Torah punishable by death has the effect of bringing about God's mercy.

The prophets often spoke of a time when the nation would be restored to the land and forgiven. At this time, God would also give to individual Israelites the means by which to meet the conditions of the Mosaic

**The New Testament**...The tension between God's dealings with human beings in terms of his mercy and righteousness finds resolution in the New Testament. That the promises of forgiveness and spiritual transformation have become realities through the appearance, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus Christ is assumed throughout the New Testament. This resolution pertains to the nation, individuals within the nation, and individual Gentiles.

John the Baptist offered forgiveness to the nation on the condition of repentance (**Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3**). His offer exemplified the tension between God as merciful and God as righteous, as shown by the fact John rejected some who had not first produced the fruit of repentance before seeking the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin. He evidently assumed that Israel was the totality of Jews who were faithful to the covenant. John the Baptist pointed to the resolution of this tension, however, when he said that the one who would come after him would baptize with the Holy Spirit (**Matt 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16** ).

Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God, and offered his hearers the possibility of entrance into this kingdom on the condition of repentance. He was the mediator of salvation, which included the extension of forgiveness (**Matt 9:3-6; Mark 2:7-12; Luke 5:21-25; 7:36-50**).

Like John the Baptist, Jesus required that individuals appropriate the offer of salvation; the process of entering the kingdom was that of becoming a child, by passively receiving God's forgiveness. It is for this reason that Jesus said to his opponents that "the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you" ( **Matt 21:31b** ).

Jesus' offer of the kingdom to all on the condition of repentance led to the charge that he associated with tax-collectors and sinners, which his opponents considered offensive to God's righteousness (**Matt 9:10-13; 11:19; Mark 2:15-17 Luke 5:30-32; 7:34; 15:2** ). The offense probably lay not in the fact that Jesus taught that God would forgive the repentant, but that Jesus actively sought out sinners and offered them the possibility of forgiveness. In Jesus' opponents' view, sinners ought to take the initiative.

One must remember that for a Jew, repentance meant more than simple remorse; it included "**Moral Reformation**". This explains why some of Jesus' sayings emphasize the need for righteousness in order to be included in the kingdom of God. The same stress on God as both merciful and righteous found in the Old Testament period is found in Jesus' teaching about the kingdom. The mere fact that Jesus required repentance as a condition of entrance into the kingdom is sufficient to make the point.

These two aspects of Jesus' teaching, however, are not in tension, because he saw his time as that of eschatological salvation, the time of the resolution of the tension between God as merciful and God as righteous in his dealings with human beings.

**Eschatological**... the part of theology concerned with death, judgment, and the final destiny of the soul and of mankind.

Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God and later taught that his death would be the means by which the new covenant would be realized. He also taught that the Spirit would be given after his return to the Father (**John 7:39; 14-16**).

Jesus' preaching of the kingdom of God led to his arrest and execution. This had two consequences.

**First**, in response to the crisis in his ministry that this produced, Jesus incorporated his rejection and impending death into his message. He interpreted his death as vicarious and expiatory, as the means by which forgiveness and renewal would come to Israel and the nations in spite of Israel's rejection of the messenger of the kingdom.

Jesus understood his death in light of the destiny of the Servant as a guilt offering for many (**Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45; Luke 22:37**). He also interpreted his impending death at the Last Supper as that of the Passover lamb whose sacrifice would bring about the possibility of forgiveness and the realization of the new covenant (**Matt 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20**).

**Second**, Jesus' rejection would bring into being a messianic community, the church. Since Jesus required personal repentance as a condition for entrance into the kingdom of God, the potential existed for distinguishing a faithful remnant from those who were unrepentant and disobedient. Judgment would come to those who rejected him, while those who accepted Jesus' message would receive the Spirit and be constituted as the messianic community, for whom some of the promises would be realized (**Acts 1:8 ; 2:1-13**).

Also Gentiles would become part of this community and receive the Holy Spirit (**Matt 28:18-19; Acts 10**). Jesus still foresaw, however, a future for the nation (**Luke 21:24; Acts 1:6-7**), when God would bring about salvation on a national basis.

Paul writes that Jesus' death is the means by which God's forgiveness comes not only to the Jew but also to the Gentile (**Gal 3:7-9; cf. Acts 3:25**). Like Jesus, he sees the tension between God as merciful and God as righteous resolved in the realization of the promises of forgiveness and spiritual transformation.

**Human Forgiveness**.... In the Lord's Prayer, receiving forgiveness from God is joined to forgiving others (**Matt 6:12; Luke 11:4**). Jesus' parable of the unmerciful servant makes the point that human beings are obliged to forgive because God has forgiven them (**Matt 18:23-35**).

God's forgiveness is actually said to be conditional upon forgiving others (**Matt 6:14; 18:35; Mark 11:25-26; Luke 6:37**). Jesus says that there ought to be no limit on the number of times that one should forgive another so long as the offender repents and asks for forgiveness (**Matt 18:21-22; Luke 17:3-4**). (Excerpts from Barry Smith's discourse, Baker's Evangelical Dictionary)

## **The Parable of The Unforgiving Servant**

“Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. <sup>24</sup> And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. <sup>25</sup> But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. <sup>26</sup> The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. <sup>27</sup> Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

<sup>28</sup> But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. <sup>29</sup> And his fellow servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. <sup>30</sup> And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

<sup>31</sup> So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. <sup>32</sup> Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: <sup>33</sup> Should not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?

<sup>34</sup> And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. <sup>35</sup> So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.” **(Matt. 18:23-35)**

This parable has at least 5 good points to consider about forgiveness. They are:

1. We are Stewards of our Heavenly Father’s stuff and must do things in accordance to His will, not ours.
2. Because our King (Jesus) showed mercy to us, we are to show mercy to others that are in our debt.
3. Failure to be like our King is to be wicked and causes us to fall out of favor with our lord.
  1. What we do to others, God will do to us. If we are merciful, so is He and vice versa.
  2. We are to, from the heart, forgive those that are indebted to us when they ask for mercy.

### **Do you serve God or your feelings?**

#### **Joyce Meyer asks this question in an article published on the Internet**

**Do you serve God or your feelings?** Now, that may sound like an odd question for a believer, but really, it isn't. Let me put it this way... When you ask God to forgive you, do you accept His forgiveness right away or do you waste time feeling guilty?

So many Christians struggle with guilt and condemnation. They're trying to pay God back for what they did wrong when Jesus already made it right.

God's unconditional love is a very difficult concept for people to accept because, in the world, there's always payment for everything we receive. It's just how things work here. But God is not like people! Aren't you glad about that? We need to learn that whether or not we feel forgiven, we're forgiven. (Excerpts from Joyce Meyer Ministries)

Some folks cannot forgive themselves. I know of several people that say they cannot follow God because of all the bad things they have done in the past. They do not understand the grace of God nor His unconditional love that wipes the slate clean when we repent. John, the Apostle, made

this clear as he wrote his first letter to the church. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” **I John 1:9**

The emphasis in **I John 1:9** is the word, ”**All**”. God cleanses us from **All**, meaning everything we have ever done that was offensive to God. That means we are clean and pure as white snow. He actually tosses our sins in a sea of forgetfulness.

The phrase “**Sea of Forgetfulness**” is not actually in Scripture. When people mention the “sea of forgetfulness,” they are usually referring to several passages that talk about God’s forgiveness, and how when we are justified in Christ, God forgets our sins so completely that they might as well be buried at the bottom of an ocean.

The main passage that contains the idea of a sea of forgetfulness is **Micah 7:19**: “He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.” Another verse, **Isaiah 1:18**, says that God will make our scarlet sins as white as wool. **Psalms 103:12** expresses the thought in yet another way: “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”

A sea of forgetfulness represents a place where our sins are sent very far away from us, so that they can no longer affect us. It does not mean that we, as believers, no longer sin or that our sins are erased from God’s mind. It only means that our sins no longer have any bearing on our salvation. Jesus’ perfect life, sacrificial death, and glorious resurrection is the only means by which we are saved (**Acts 4:12**). When we trust in Christ, we come under a new paradigm. Although our sins still grieve God and cause ruin in our lives and in the lives of others, our salvation is secure (**Romans 8:1, 31–39**).

The idea that our sins are lost in a sea of forgetfulness is a comfort. We are no longer judged by our sins (**Romans 8:1**), and that fact frees us to live life in a way that pleases God. When we fear judgment, ironically, we are tempted to sin even more, because we want to escape from the fear of judgment, and sin is often pleasurable for a time (see **Hebrews 11:25**). But, eventually, the fear of judgment returns. This is a vicious cycle. Spiritual growth requires that we recognize the total forgiveness that exists in Jesus Christ and that we rest in that forgiveness.

If we admit that we are sinners and trust in Christ, He forgives and cleanses us (**1 John 1:9**). Our sins are no longer part of the equation and will not be remembered **Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 8:12**.

(Excerpts from GotQuestions.com)

## Too Good To Be Saved?

Many people do not believe they require salvation. They believe that they are good enough to reach heaven on their own merit, and they do not accept the truth about their own fallen state. They use the old copout to avoid any religious discussion by saying, “I am a good person. I do not hurt other people and I try my best to be good. Sometimes, I even give money to a good cause or to a church.”



These people are deceived, because they do not understand the scripture. They live in guilt and are being tormented by the devil for sins of the past that they asked forgiveness for and that God has already forgiven. **(1 John 1:8-10)**. Every person needs God's. "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." **Isa. 64:6**

## **Conditions Suitable And Not Suitable For Forgiveness**

### **Under what conditions do we forgive?**

I think that we are to forgive in all conditions but the extent of the offense plays a big part in our "After the offense" life. Also who is causing the offense makes a big difference on our plans for forgiving. A brother or sister in Christ is different than a stranger and the situation in which the offence occurs is a factor as well.

I am sure you have heard of the answer Jesus gave when asked about forgiveness. I call it the 70 X 7 Scenario. "Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?... Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times: but, until seventy times seven. **Matthew 18:21-22**

Note that Peter refers to a brother. Jesus says 70 X 7, which I believe, is a metaphor for an unlimited amount. This would be consistent with God's unlimited mercy.

The fact that there is a clear repentance on the part of the offender indicates that the offender is seeking reconciliation. I believe that repeated assaults by one individual would establish a pattern that is predictable. To extend unlimited mercy would be an act of God's love that transcends our human ability. The one being offended must above all else examine the motives and intent of the one causing the fault. Here's why:

1. The devil can use anyone to steal your joy and crush your spirit. If a brother or anyone else is continually offending you, there's got to be an underlying reason that needs to be dealt with.
2. Brothers and sisters in Christ, as well as family members, are close to you and can, if not corrected, dominate you with offensive actions that are meant to control you. That's not good.
3. It is not good for you or the offender to continue a relationship of offense and forgiveness. It will cause unwanted stress and anxiety.

### **Under What Conditions Do We Not Forgive?**

There are no conditions in which we do not have to forgive. Jesus made that clear when He said, "**Matthew 6:14-15**: "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father

will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."

There are however a few conditions where it is not advisable to forgive without an apology. Let's look at them.

- **When the offender does not ask to be forgiven.** If we forgive before they ask, we diminish the seriousness of the offense and suggest to the offender that we can be played or controlled by their oppression. Jesus said we were to forgive every time they ask.
- **When we stand up for what we believe.** We, by standing up for what we believe, run the risk of offending others or being offended by others. To forgive in this situation can cause the offender to dismiss the premise of our stand and further attack our beliefs.

Will God be mad at you for standing your ground against the attack of the devil that came through the offender? Peter told the early church, "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world" **I Peter 5:8-9**

God will not be angry. He tells us, in no uncertain terms, that we are to watch out for offenses that come our way as fiery darts. The sad part is that often these darts are channeled through people. They are energized by attitudes of jealousy, envy and other fleshly emotions.

It is important to remember who our enemy really is. It is not the offender. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." **Ephesians 6:12**

Our real battle is with these evil entities that are bent on our destruction. They will use any human they can find to channel their lies. We, of course, need to avoid them or confront those who hurl the fiery darts of Satan and we are also empowered by the Holy spirit to speak to these evil ones, in the name of Jesus, and bind them from further attacks and cast them out of our reality.

**Matthew 6:14-15** is another key scripture on forgiveness. Verse 9-13 is where Jesus shares the Lord's Prayer. Then He says we need to forgive men their trespasses so our heavenly Father can forgive us. However, this does not mean we make every offender our bosom buddy.

There are some folks that harbor hate towards you for lots of different reasons and will not even consider an apology. Yet others are too stubborn to initiate a discussion much less offer an apology.

We are still admonished by the scriptures to forgive them, even if we can not reconcile. It's the only way to gain forgiveness from God. The offense is not the focal point of Jesus' teaching. The focal point is forgiveness because it mirrors the nature and will of God.

## Forgiveness And Reconciliation

There are times when we can forgive but, because of the offence, can never forget. Some things that happen to us are terrible. Consider Murder of a loved one by a drug user that is breaking into your dwelling. How about a violent rape that causes emotional damage? What about an affair that destroys your marriage?

When there are serious emotional wounds, it is almost impossible to forgive to the point of reconciliation. The thing is...we are not asked to be best friends with a terrorist or violent attacker. We do need to forgive from a distance so we are not emotionally tied to the offender.

The devil loves to keep God's children in a state of confusion and hate for those that have hurt them in the past. He will bring those times up frequently so we dwell on them, get angry and stay trapped in a vicious cycle of torment. The best policy is to forgive, try to forget and move on with God. He will heal the broken hearted and restore the weary soul to good health. It might take a while but it will happen as we walk with Him by faith.

Reconciliation is important among husband and wife, boss and employer, family members, and friends. However, the 70 X 7 rule still applies. The offender has the responsibility to initiate reconciliation. The way to open this type of discussion is to start with a heart felt apology.

I know what you are thinking. You want to look at **Matthew 5:23-24**. "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remembers that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

When you see a "Therefore" in scripture, you should read the full context previous to it to determine why the writer is saying Therefore. In **Matthew 5:23-24** the text that is before the therefore reads like this.

"21...Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

Notice that the context is talking about a would-be offender and the judgment for certain offenses. The offense mentioned is being angry with your brother without a cause. If this fits us, we are to lay down our offering at the altar and seek reconciliation.

The action is directed to the offender, not the one that was offended. The 70 X 7 rule still applies to the one who was offended. They can forgive, forget and move on. It would be good to stay open to the possibility of an apology should it occur, even if it is many years later. We, as Christians, can also pray for the offender, that he or she would come to a place of wanting reconciliation. Our prayer should be against the devil that holds the offenders captive and deliverance from the guilt they carry every day as a result of their offense.

# What Forgiveness Isn't

## **6 myths that may be keeping you from letting go.**

By Denise George...Published in Today's Christian Women

### **Myth 1...Forgiving means the offender didn't really hurt you.**

"Forgiveness is a redemptive response to having been wronged and wounded," wrote author Lewis B. Smedes. "Only those who have wronged and wounded us are candidates for forgiveness. If they injure us accidentally, we excuse them. We only forgive the ones we blame." Choosing to forgive her father acknowledges the pain Jamie endured at his hands. It also begins her healing.

### **Myth 2...Forgiving means you excuse the offender's hurtful act.**

An accidental "slip of the tongue" needs no forgiveness because it isn't deliberately caused. Intentional hurts—like my friend's betrayal—need forgiveness. When I forgave my friend, my forgiveness didn't lessen the impact of her painful action. But forgiveness unlocked my own "prison" of bitterness.

### **Myth 3...Before forgiving, you must first understand why the offender hurt you.**

Our human mind yearns to make all the confusing puzzle pieces fit together neatly before we forgive. However, the truth is we can forgive an offender even if we never discover the reasons for the inflicted pain. Author Philip Yancey writes in *What's So Amazing About Grace*, "Not to forgive imprisons me in the past and locks out all potential for change. I thus yield control to another, my enemy, and doom myself to suffer the consequences of the wrong."

### **Myth 4...Before forgiving the offender, you must feel forgiving.**

Forgiveness has nothing to do with how you feel. You can feel hurt, betrayed, and angry, and still completely forgive the one who wounded you. Biblical forgiveness is an act of the will. It's a choice you make.

**Can you still feel angry after you forgive?** Yes! Anger means you're in touch with reality—it's part of being human. But be careful to aim that anger at what your offender did, not at the offender. Then let your anger push you toward justice.

### **Myth 5...Forgiving means the offender will face no consequences.**

When we choose to forgive someone, our forgiveness doesn't "let him off the hook." Forgiveness also doesn't mean justice shouldn't be served.

### **Myth #6... When your offender is punished, you'll find closure**

I left the 6<sup>th</sup> myth off because it was too graphic.) It spoke to the emotional hurts from an offense that still lingered, even when justice was enacted on the offender. Closure does not always happen.

## Confronting The Offender

Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe [unto him], through whom they come! 2It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. 3**Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.** 4And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him. **Luke 17:3-4**

Jesus made it clear that we are to confront the offender with a strong rebuke, showing him or her the error of his or her ways. He also says this with regard to brethren, not strangers. However, he does warn us to, “Take Head” or watch carefully so you donot fall under the attacks of evil people.

With those in the community of Faith, we are to be ready to forgive when the offender repents. We are also encouraged to rebuke or express sharp disapproval or criticism of (someone) because of their behavior or actions. Don't be afraid to challenge their authority and criticise them for their evil actions. I believe this is a good course of action for anyone that has been offended.

## Are You Offended Because You Are Too Sensitive?

We must be careful not to wear our feelings on our shoulders. I have seen several folks that get offended at the smallest things. Sometimes the would-be offender was not even aware that they were being offensive. Yet my friends jumped at the chance to become offended.

When this happens, it is a clear sign of deep insecurity and a very low self-worth. It's not a good way to build friendships. It's also an indication that this over sensitive person is being used by the devil to cause contention and anxiety. Most of the time, it is a cry for attention and sympathy.

## Conditional Forgiveness

It should be clear by now that forgiveness is a conditional thing.

- **Mat 6:12** (TEB) "Forgive us the wrongs that we have done, as we forgive the wrongs others have done us."
- **Luke 6:37** (NIV) "...Forgive, and you will be forgiven."

**Mat 6:14-15** (NIV) "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But, if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will *not* forgive your sins."

### **Dealing With Play Actors**

I have had several encounters where my offenders were play acting as in a movie, living out a role, so as to deceive me into thinking they wanted forgiveness but I could see it was clearly an act. Sincerity is essential in the giving and acceptance of forgiveness. That's because healing from God is transmitted from one to the other and it is not a joke.

Take the habitual drunk that begs for forgiveness but never follows through. This is a prime example of what I am saying here. There must be guidelines to giving forgiveness in cases like this...things like attending AA or getting professional counseling, etc. Also, in the case of adultery, it is a break in trust and some borders or guidelines must be established to insure sincerity.

### **Denial Is Not Forgiveness**

The inability to really forgive is often due to a false concept that "forgetting is forgiving". Forgetting is NOT forgiving. To be sure, if we forgive we will forget *as a result*. *But the reverse is not true: forgetting is not forgiving--it is denial.*

**Ps 51:6** (NAS) Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being...

If we attempt to achieve a bogus forgiveness by deliberately putting "out of mind" the offense, we might be fooling ourselves and others that we have "forgiven". But all of the emotions and plots and hurt are still there--only held back by force of will in a deliberate denial.

But then we see "that person" again and all the bitterness and pain rise up again within us. Or, in the off moment--when such mental gymnastics cannot be maintained--we catch ourselves in an elaborate meditation of revenge or fit of rage and anger. Then we see just how deep and effective this sort of "forgiveness" is.

A mind "bent" by denial has a nasty habit of "snapping back" in the worst of moments.

**1 John 2:9** (Wey) Anyone who professes to be in the light and yet hates his brother is still in darkness.

Denial is merely a delusion: flimsy, fake, and shallow. Forgiveness is real: robust and solid and deep. It is not an avoiding of the truth, but a specific dealing with it squarely, however painful.

Consider God's perspective. Nothing is hidden from His sight: the evil intent, the hidden lust, the damage done, the choosing of that which is wrong, etc. And yet He is the author

and *originator* of forgiveness. If we are going to really forgive, we are going to have to do it His way: with our eyes open.

For those God chooses to forgive, He will "forget" their sins, "remembering them no more". But let us not accuse the omniscient God of not knowing something or of being ignorant of any fact. He has told us that *nothing* is beyond His sight. Rather let us understand the "figure of speech" and spiritual dynamic of *how* God forgives.

**Heb 8:12** (NIV) "For I will *forgive* their wickedness and will *remember* their sins no more."

**The order here is essential. Forgiveness first, forgetting second.** Until real forgiveness takes place, the offense is "in our faces" as regards that person, and it is the same with God. The sin comes between us, and cannot be "forgotten" until dealt with. If and when we enter into true forgiveness, we can then regard the person without the "offense" looming first and foremost between us.

**Isa 43:25** (NIV) "I, even I, am he who *blots out* your transgressions, for my own sake, and *remembers* your sins no more."

## The Lure of Sin

Another barrier to forgiveness is sin that surfaces as bitterness; revenge, hatred, etc. It has a perverted sort of appeal. Who has not felt the intoxicating lure of a grandiose meditation of scorching retribution? While we know this is wrong, it sure is great fun in the moment to fondle such thoughts.

**Eph 4:26-27,31** (NIV) "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold... Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

## Vengeance Is The Lord's

**Rom 12:19** (NIV) Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.

Surely God has more power to pour wrath on our enemies than we do, and He surely sees the evil done all too clearly. So the thought may strike us to let Him do the dirty work. But when we think this through, it may not turn out, as the carnal man within us might like. For let us face the plain fact that God has this habit of forgiving people and extending great mercy, at least for the time being.

So... we may not see fire from heaven come down to consume those we wish would receive God's vengeance. It is not that He is letting them off by some magic or deflection of mind; it is just that He may take the painful punishment Himself. (Excerpts from The Miracle of Forgiveness)

## Let's Not Forget The Power of God

Some offenses are so terrible that it is almost impossible to overcome, but God gives us the power, through His Spirit, to forgive. I have found that God always tells us to do things that are beyond our natural capability. He does that so He can participate in our lives to demonstrate His power, love and grace. "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." **II Timothy 1:7**

Forgiveness is no different. We must call upon the power of God to sustain us in the pain and sorrow that comes with being hurt. He alone can heal our broken hearts and make right our path in life. God is still a mighty refuge and a very present help in times of need. **Psalm 46:1**

### Conclusion

Our gracious Lord will be there for us, to heal, restore, bless and love us back to a full and rewarding life. He will take care of those that offend us whether it's a stranger seeking to hurt us in a violent act or a brother or sister that is jealous.

**Remember, God is greater than the offense or the offender.**

I'd like to share these final thoughts written in an article on the Internet by Rev. Charles Blair, pastor of New Church LIVE in Bryn Athyn, PA... When we forgive others, there is a freedom where we are no longer shackled by our own anger.

It moves us from our selfish illusions to a beautiful reality. It is hard work. But letting go of the fantasies that we can change the past, that we can change others, or even that we are the ones who can change ourselves, opens room for God to help us ward off the resentment we feel.

Each time we forgive, it paves the way for the next time we need to forgive. Practicing the courage and patience, and letting the Lord into the process of forgiveness becomes like exercising a muscle, it grows stronger and stronger. Together with Him, we can come to a point where forgiveness is intuitive, a blessed way to live!

**May The Lord Bless You And Keep You  
As You Seek His Will.**