

Forgetting Who You Are

May 1

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." 1Peter :9

On August 19, 1999 a woman's picture appeared on news media. She was an amnesiac who had no idea of her name, home, or past. Personnel at the women's shelter in Ada, Oklahoma, where she had been staying, called her "Angel".

PREVIEW

A truck driver found Angel dazed, bleeding and rain-soaked beside the road. She was taken to a truck stop for help. When the sheriff deputy arrived, Angel had a \$20 bill in her pocket and wore a wedding ring. Pushing her brown hair back from her face, the woman said, "I don't know who I am or where I've been.

"Angel" was transported to a local hospital. Doctors examined her and agreed that her amnesia resulted from head trauma. Further examination revealed a bump on her head and the scar of a Caesarean surgery. Angel had a vast knowledge of dogs, so authorities speculated she could be a veterinarian. Angel could not provide any information because of her memory loss.

INNERVIEW

On Thursday, September 16, a relative saw "Angel's" published photo and recognized her as Tina Martinez. She was married, the mother of three teen-aged children and a dog breeder. She disappeared on August 14, after she jumped from the moving car in which she and

her husband were riding and arguing. Her sisters are now trying to help her recall the details of her childhood.

Mrs. Martinez reminds me of people I have known. Oh, they do not have lumps on their heads. They recognize the person staring them in the mirror. They can call a name and cite dates of birth, schools attended and the names of family members. However, they are blank and clueless.

They suffer from a form of spiritual amnesia. They do not know their identity as people created by God and loved by Him. They have forgotten — if they ever really knew — what God did to reach them through Jesus. They do not realize that he not only wants to save them eternally but to give their lives purpose, direction and fulfillment **immediately**.

REVIEW

If life is not working well for you, perhaps the blows you have taken disoriented you. So you struggle with your identity. You question the meaning of life. You have neither direction or hope for the future.

Augustine was correct, when he stated, *"God made us to live in fellowship with himself, and our hearts are restless and disoriented until we find our way back to Him."*

Praise God For: His joy

Thank God For: those who encourage others

Ask God's Forgiveness For: missed chances to bless

Daily Sunshine In The Sun

Ask God To Help: bus riders and car commuters during the winter

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: boldness to witness for him

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

Have you considered ways to spur someone toward love and good deeds? Write down a plan of action and follow through with it!

Journal for Digging Deeper:

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Lord, today I thank You for:

Today, Lord, I need

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

The Removal Of An Embrassing Mark

May 2

""If God is for us, who can be against us?"-Rom 8:31 NIV).

News media carried the story of Joseph Beahm deciding to get himself a tattoo. However, today tattoos are not surprising. I can remember when tattoos identified either a veteran of the military, a member of a motorcycle club or a particular rebel. Tattoos now are fashionable.

On August 7, 1994 Beahm paid \$100 to have a New Jersey Boardwalk tattoo artist. What was supposed to read "Why Not, Everyone Else Does" turned out "Why Not, Everyone else Does". I do not know the artistic ability of the artist but he could use some remedial work in spelling.

PREVIEW

A hasty decision to get a tattoo is a bit like some of the other things we do. We see something trendy, decide to go with the flow and wind up wishing we had been smarter. Many people who took their first puff, first swallow, or first pop on a dare —now must fight and claw every day to break their addiction to tobacco, alcohol or some illegal drug. There are the "innocent" flirtations that would never go anywhere and the few dollars "borrowed" from petty cash that would be returned put back on payday.

The foolish decision quickly becomes an embarrassing act. Then you realize it has left a mark that will not wash away. It is there for the world to see.

INNERVIEW

A dermatology center offered to remove the misspelled word from Beahm's back. The center's customary fee of \$2,100 was waived. The embarrassing, brash blunder signature did not cost the perpetrator anything.

If Joseph Beahm's tattoo is a metaphor for our human experience of being forced to carry the embarrassing marks of our foolish decisions, the medical clinic's offer of free removal is tantamount to the gospel's offer of salvation by grace!

REVIEW

What Isaiah said about the stain left by sinful deeds seems appropriate here: "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool" (Isaiah 1:18). The God who loves you is able to remove the offending mark, bleach out the stain and laser-beam the embarrassing tattoo.

All of us bear the ugly blotches of our experience with sin. With apologies to Paul Harvey, it's "the rest of the story" we need most to hear.

Praise God For: His strength

Thank God For: friends I have been able to bless

Ask God's Forgiveness For: not helping when I could have

Ask God To Help: the blind and deaf

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: someone to assist

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

Daily Sunshine In The Son

Choose a Psalm and sing it to your own melody as an offering of worship to the Lord. Write down ways in which worshipping with other believers encourages you. Share your thoughts with someone this week.

Journal for Digging Deeper:

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Lord, today I thank You for:

Today, Lord, I need

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

Hearing For Eternity

May 3

"Care about each other as much as you care about yourselves."-Philippians 2:4a
(LB)

Did you hear about the old man who suffered serious hearing problems for over a decade before finally going to a specialist? Examination proved he was a perfect candidate for hearing aids. He was fitted with the devices and restored to perfect hearing.

When he returned to the clinic for a checkup six months later, his doctor asked, "Is your family excited about the marvelous improvement in your ability to hear?"

"Oh, I haven't told them about it!" replied the fellow. "I just sit around and listen to their conversations. I've changed my will three times so far."

PREVIEW

Some people must think others around them are deaf. They criticize and make unkind remarks. They try to make themselves look good by tearing others down. It is a fundamental mark of personal insecurity when someone makes a habit of defaming others — whether in politics, business or personal relationships.

Isn't it strange how often-hateful words one says about another finds its way back to the person? Thus the Bible says: "Do not revile the king even in your thoughts, or curse the rich in your bedroom, because a bird of the air may carry your words, and a bird on the wing may report what you say" (Ecclesiastes 10:20).

INNERVIEW

Children certainly aren't as hard of hearing as some parents seem to think. Call a child "clumsy," "stupid," or "bad" enough times, and the word becomes a label. More than that, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. "If that's what my Dad (or Mom) thinks of me," reasons a child, "why should I try to be anything else?"

And some people must think God cannot hear them either. The obscene and irreverent language that comes from their mouths testifies to the fact that they either do not believe the Lord is truly everywhere or that he is deaf to their profanity.

REVIEW

When Scottish theologian John Baillie taught at Edinburgh University, it is said that he regularly opened his course on the doctrine of God with these words: "We must remember, in discussing God, that we cannot talk about Him without him hearing every word we say. We may be able to talk about others behind their backs, but God is everywhere — yes, even in this classroom. Therefore in all our discussions we must be aware of his infinite presence and talk about him, as if it were, before his face."

No wonder the Bible says: "He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from calamity" (Proverbs 21:23).

Be careful what you say this week. Someone will hear every word.

Daily Sunshine In The Son

Praise God For: His kindness
Thank God For: the world's givers
Ask God's Forgiveness For: being more of a taker
Ask God To Help: cab and bus drivers
Ask God To Supply Our Need For: strength to help others

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I pray for the needs of others, especially

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

Have you contacted someone whom God has put on your heart? Have you been an encouragement to people just as you have been encouraged by God and others?

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Today, Lord, I need

Lord, today I thank You for:

The Dare To Make A Difference

May 4

"Simply let your "Yes be Yes and your No be No." -Matthew 5:37 (LB)

Many people dream of changing the world. So they become active in politics, education or a business or profession that will influence the masses. But the crime rate remains high and prisons are not built fast enough to avoid overcrowding. Poverty continues to grind whole families beneath its crushing weight. The problems of homelessness, cancer, aging, child abuse, divorce and teen pregnancy are overwhelming.

PREVIEW

The God likeness inside us helps one only notice the problems that blight our world and cause great misery. However, we also feel compelled to help. Is it really possible for anyone to make a difference?

The first atomic bomb used in war was dropped over Hiroshima, Japan, in 1945. Dr. Fumio Shigeto was waiting for a streetcar about a mile from the center of the blast. He was sheltered from its deadly force by the corner of a concrete building. He was stunned and disoriented by an explosive force more devastating than anything humankind had ever experienced.

INNERVIEW

Dr. Shigeto's bewilderment quickly turned into a sense of being overwhelmed. He was one physician with a tiny black bag still held in his hand. All around him he could hear the screams of desperately wounded men and women. He needed an army of physicians, nurses and technicians. He needed tons of supplies and every bed in dozens of hospitals.

What could one man with so little at his disposal do in the face of such an incredible situation of need? The stunned survivor knelt, opened his medical bag and began treating the person lying at his feet.

Dr. Shigeto's experience parallels our own. We look around and see such incredible devastation in our world that it is easy to be paralyzed and do nothing. After all, what difference can one person make against such formidable odds?

REVIEW

God does not expect you to change the world. He is not holding you accountable for helping everyone in need. That burden would be too heavy and impossible for anyone. But there is a hint of what you can and should do in the example of Jesus. Although he preached to huge crowds, he touched and healed people one at a time.

There is one lonely person or one frightened child you can help today. There is someone you know whose marriage is in trouble or who is about to die from her alcoholism. There is a kid failing history class or a friend at work who is depressed.

Forget about changing the world. Reach out to **one** person near you today.

Daily Sunshine In The Son

Praise God For: His love

Thank God For: daily blessings

Ask God's Forgiveness For: taking His blessings for granted

Ask God To Help: enemies forgive

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: His love for mankind

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

Have you reached out to others for support as you strive toward you personal and spiritual goals? Can you encourage someone else who is trying to achieve victory? Choose who it will be.

Journal for Digging Deeper:

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Lord, today I thank You for:

Today, Lord, I need

Walking In The Light of Honesty

May 5

“So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God” - (Romans 14:12)

You have heard it over and over again. In fact, you have used it more times than you care to remember. It is called the rhetoric of rationalizing. Or maybe you prefer to be more straightforward and just call it the art of making excuses.

- "What I did wasn't as bad as what she did."
- "I can't help being the way God made me."
- "I know it hurt his feelings, but it was the truth."

PREVIEW

There is nothing new or modern about this excuse language. It is as old as Eden and deeply ingrained in the processes of human thought and speech. It would appear that human beings have elevated it to an art form.

- "The woman you put here caused me to eat the fruit of that tree."
- "Kings get bored just sitting on their balconies and watching traffic."
- "Crucify him! Who knows what 'truth' is anyway?"

INNERVIEW

The trick of explaining away sin and refusing to accept responsibility has been institutionalized in our culture. The late psychiatrist Karl Menninger wrote a book and called our attention to the virtual disappearance of the word "sin" from the English vocabulary. With a verbal sleight of hand, we substitute words like "weakness," "maladjustment," or

"sickness" for sin. They do not sound as sinister.

The greatest sin of all is blindness to one's own sinfulness. Until sin is admitted, forgiveness cannot be sought. Only when I accept responsibility for my actions can anything constructive begin to correct them. The language of penitent confession is a far cry from rationalizing and making excuses.

- "God, be merciful to me. I am a sinner."
- "Jesus Christ came to save sinners — of whom I am the worst."
- "If we confess our sins, he will forgive and purify us" (1 John 1:9).

REVIEW

It is a rare person who is brave enough to admit that he is responsible for the miscalculation on an office report, that she was the one who spread the rumor or his marriage is falling apart because he has been so selfish and unreasonable.

Rare as such people may be, however, they are the ones who gain the respect of us all. They are also the ones who correct mistakes, heal relationships and conquer their defects of character. In their remorse, they find God. He forgives them instantly and gives them power to overcome otherwise impossible odds.

If you have been hiding beneath a smokescreen of excuses, it is time to come into the light of honesty. You will see clearly again — for the first time in a long time.

Daily Sunshine In The Son

Praise God For: His sacrifice for us
Thank God For: the perfect gift
Ask God's Forgiveness For: my selfishness
Ask God To Help: friends put friends above self
Ask God To Supply Our Need For: self-denial

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:
What does it mean that God "sanctifies" you? Describe ways in which you see His peaceful work of sanctification in your life.

Journal for Digging Deeper:

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Lord, today I thank You for:

Today, Lord, I need

Courage To Honor Your Conscience

May 6

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" -1Jno 1:9

In October 1999, West London mourned its worst train accident in recorded history. They removed over seventy (70) charred and mangled bodies from the fiery wreck that occurred during morning rush hour. A preliminary report by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) said: "The immediate cause of the accident appeared to be that the Thames Train passed a red signal approximately 700 meters before the collision point. The track controllers realized the outbound Thames Train had passed Signal 109 but were not able to stop the inbound First Great Western Train before it struck the local commuter".

PREVIEW

Officials had known for a period of time that Signal 109 was one of the most dangerous trains on the British rail lines. Poor visibility at the site has caused drivers to miss the warning light at least eight times during the previous years. This time the result was disastrous. An automatic train protection device that stops trains passing red signals was scheduled for installation at the site by 2003.

The HSE has now prohibited operation of Signal 109 and rerouted all trains from that track until the visibility problems are corrected. HSE also ordered twenty-two new controls at other signal points with high red-light violations.

INNERVIEW

The news reports caused me to think of the "train wrecks" I have witnessed in human lives. People choose to run through red lights placed in their way by God. Recently, a man closed his eyes to all the danger signals of an office relationship that had grown out of control. Now it is a full-blown affair, threatening him to lose his wife and two small children.

"I saw it coming!" he told me through tears. "I thought I could keep it from doing any harm. I guess it just felt good to have my ego stroked by someone who was young, pretty and thought I was such a great guy." Unfortunately, I have heard his story dozens of times. "How could I have been such a fool?" he sobbed.

REVIEW

Your conscience is a God-given internal monitor for behavior. Negatively, it flashes red lights to remind you to correct something before serious harm is done. Positively, it is a spiritual compass assuring you that you are navigating within the boundaries God has set for right and wrong.

During this week, resolve to honor your conscience. You do not want to be one of those smoldering wrecks that make the news, do you?

Daily Sunshine In The Son

Praise God For: His patience

Thank God For: wise teachers

Ask God's Forgiveness For: not acknowledging to self my weaknesses

Ask God To Help: patch differences between friends

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: courage to confess faults

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

What ineffective weapons of this world are you using to fight a spiritual battle? Consider writing your own prayer incorporating the pieces of God's full armor as described in Ephesians 6:10-18. Commit to praying it daily. Journal what happens.

Lord, today I thank You for:

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

Today, Lord, I need

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Living With Imperfection

May 7

"I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. -Psalms 139:14

We often miss some of life's best opportunities and are then heard saying, "I don't know how to do that. I'd make a fool of myself by even trying".

Perfectionists settle for nothing short of a first-rate performance from themselves. When they come across something that has to be learned through trial and error, they become intolerant of their limitations. They pile up points in the skills they do with efficiency, while ignoring or putting down the skills they do poorly.

PREVIEW

People with this twist of personality often lean toward depression, for no one is capable of premier performances at everything. They become so tense they sometimes fail even the things they normally do best. They never relax. They remove risks by narrowing their interests. They find safe, comfortable and boring ruts.

It is liberating for some people to find out they can make mistakes and survive. The world does not end if your bright idea flops. You will not die if you mess up in front of your peers. You are not worthless if someone hears you sing off-key.

INNERVIEW

Thank God for mistakes! Mistakes help you learn and suggest you are still approaching your personal horizons. They give you a chance to grow. Mistakes inform us that you are still human.

If you were perfect, life would be terribly dull. There would be nothing new to learn or challenges to conquer. We would be too intimidated to talk to you, work beside you or play tennis with you. And you certainly would not need anyone of inferior status and ability to care about you.

REVIEW

Do not be paralyzed by your fears. Whatever you desire to do well will be mastered at the end of a process involving miscues and false starts. But if it is worth doing at all, it merits your best. So give it a try. Learn a new computer program. Write a poem. Take piano lessons. Paint a room. Water ski. Love someone.

At the cross, God showed us how creative he could be with what appeared to the entire world a horrible failure. So give God a chance with you.

Praise God For: salvation

Thank God For: losing His life for me

Ask God's Forgiveness For: embracing the wrong things

Ask God To Help: the fearful let go

Problems For Godly Mothers

May 8

"Any enterprise is built by wise planning, becomes strong through common sense, and profits wonderfully by keeping abreast of the facts."- Proverbs 24:3 (LB)

Colossians 3:15-20

Whether your kids are preschool, elementary, teenagers, college students or adults raising their own families, you know that sometimes being a mother can drive you nuts.

While thinking about Mother's Day I want to share with you from the scriptures a tribute to godly mothers. First, we will examine the lives and problems of some of the mothers in the Bible. From our text in Colossians, we will gain some encouragement and learn how we can honor and help you.

Eve, Given to Temptation and Mother of a Murderer (Gen.3-4).

Most of us are very familiar with the Genesis account of the Fall, when Eve ate the forbidden fruit from "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" and how she shared it with Adam and he sinned too.

Adam was not different from modern men when God asked him what happened. (Genesis3:12) Adam said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate."

In Genesis 4, we learn that Eve bore two sons, Cain and Able. She loved both of them. Like any good mother, she had an abiding love for both.

Imagine how she felt when she learned the tragedy that Cain had murdered his brother Able out of jealousy. How could she deal with

her sorrow? How could she extinguish her pain? How could she have prevented this from happening?

The Bible makes it clear that this murder was a result of the sin that has entered the world through human pride, rebellion and greed.

From Gen.3-4, we learn that mothers give birth to their children in an imperfect, flawed and tragic world. This world threatens children and children grow up to threaten and destroy each other.

Hagar, Abandoned and Abused (Gen.21).

Gen. 16 describes how Abraham, the father of the Jews, had a wife named Sarah who was barren and past childbearing years. She wanted to help God fulfill His promise to her husband so she gave him her Egyptian servant-girl, Hagar as a concubine, a woman to bear him children. Hagar bore a fine son named Ishmael, who became the father of the Arab nations.

After God miraculously gave Sarah a son named Isaac, she no longer wanted Hagar and Ishmael hanging around. Sarah had Abraham send them away.

Hagar left their camp with her young son and traveled through the middle of a burning desert south of Beersheba in the wilderness of Judea. The bread was gone and the water skin was empty. Hagar placed her child under a bush so she would not have to watch him die. Hagar sat at a distance and waited for death.

Daily Sunshine In The Son

"God heard the voice of the lad." and sent an "angel" to reassure her of His great promises. (Gen.17-18) He then provided "a well of water."

Lord, today I thank You for:

God is still calling to exhausted, despondent mothers today. His voice is still filled with hope. We can still say, "God has heard the cry of your children. Do not give up. Do not abandon Him. Look, there is a well, food, living water and the bread of life."

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

- Praise God For:* His little messages
- Thank God For:* Changed attitudes
- Ask God's Forgiveness For:* petty irritations
- Ask God To Help:* siblings love each other
- Ask God To Supply Our Need For:* correction

I pray for the needs of others, especially

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:
What situations are you allowing to block God's joy in your life? Ask God to take away the joy blockers from your life and give you courage to conquer them. Find at least one opportunity today to bring joy to a joyless situation.

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Today, Lord, I need

Problems For Godly Mothers (2)

May 9

“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.- Phil. 3:12

Colossians 3:15-20

Jochebed, Desperate and Deliberate (Ex.2).

In the chapter that describes the birth of the great leader Moses, we do not see his mother's name. It is found in the genealogies (6:20 & Num.26:59).

Jochebed had a tremendous problem. The boy babies of her people were being drowned in the Nile River by a cruel and oppressive government.

When her son was born, she hid him for three (3) months, until he was too old to be hidden any longer. During this time she worked on a little basket made of bulrushes, which she daubed with tar and pitch.

Jochebed placed her son in the basket on the edge of the river and sent her older daughter, Miriam to watch "afar off."

The daughter of Pharaoh came to bathe and saw the basket floating in the reeds. She had one of her maids bring the child to her. Moses' real mother was hired to nurse him until he was seven (7) years old.

Moses grew up in Pharaoh's palace. He grew up in the luxury and splendor of the greatest empire of the ancient world. But Moses' real mother taught him faith and his true identity with the people of God.

When Moses came of age, he left the wealth, power, and ease of Egypt and returned to the oppressed people of God. (cf. Heb.11:24-26)

You cannot explain Moses' actions or understand the contributions of his life apart from the story of his mother. Jochebed, kept her faith, used her creative imagination, taught her child and received pay for these skills.

Mary, Fearful and Faithful (Luke 1).

An angel told Mary an amazing message, that the Holy Spirit would conceive in her the Messiah. When she heard this message, she obediently proclaimed, "Let it be to me according to your word".

Outcast, she and her betrothed husband, Joseph traveled seventy (70) miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem to register for the Roman census.

How do you think Mary felt when she saw Joseph coming back shaking his head and saying, "There's no more room at the inn?" How do you think she felt knowing she would give birth to the Messiah in a stable? How do you think she felt when the prophet Simeon said "a sword will pierce through your own soul?" How do you think she felt when they had to flee to Egypt from the fury of Herod?

Daily Sunshine In The Son

How do you think she felt 12 years later when she and Joseph traveled all day long, thinking that Jesus was with them -- only to learn he had never began the journey?

How do you think she felt at the foot of the cross. She was a witness to His resurrection. Mary knew what it was to weep & to rejoice, to have her heart torn & then healed.

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

- Praise God For:* enduring the Cross
- Thank God For:* the spiritual wisdom of friends
- Ask God's Forgiveness For:* hanging on to hurts
- Ask God To Help:* children caught in custody battles
- Ask God To Supply Our Need For:* friends who challenge us

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:
Write a prayer using Jeremiah 33:3; in your prayer, call on Him to reveal where He wants you to serve Him.

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Today, Lord, I need

Lord, today I thank You for:

Encouragement For Godly Moms

May 10

“And let the peace of God rule n your hearts, to hich also ye are called I one body; and be ye thankful. –Col. 3:15

First, Get a Grip on God's Peace (v.15).

Notice the important word "let." "Let" means it can happen if you will allow, permit or agree to it happening. You must actively choose to "let the peace of God rule in your hearts."

God rules the world. He is sovereign, in control. However, He does not rule our "hearts" until we "let" Him.

PREVIEW

Moms, what rules your heart; fear, frustration, anxiety, anger or apathy? Let the peace of Christ give you inner guidance in keeping priorities straight and in giving you the wisdom you need.

INNERVIEW

Hold on to your faith. FAITH IS NOT BELIEVING GOD CAN. IT IS BELIEVING THAT GOD ALREADY HAS.

"Faith is the key that brings heaven and earth together.

It is reason at rest with God.
It is the means God chooses to make His all ours;

It is the great INDISPENSABLE to the life of victory;

It is abandoned trust in the trustworthiness of God.

FAITH IS...Seeing light with your heart--when all your eyes see is darkness.

Trust the Lord who upholds and sustains you and **let** His inner peace give you inner strength and inspiration.

REVIEW

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

Praise God For: being Truth

Thank God For: truth that sets us free

Ask God's Forgiveness For: lack of honesty

Ask God To Help: Alzheimer's victims

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: courage to live the truth

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

Is there a specific time you tend to put God on hold or turn the volume down? What are some of the great and unsearchable things God has told you lately?

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Daily Sunshine In The Son

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Lord, today I thank You for:

Today, Lord, I need

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

Encouragement For Godly Moms (2)

May 11

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another, in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord”. –Col. 3:16

Second, Get a Grip on God's Word (v.16).

Again, moms, we must "LET the word of Christ dwell in you [us]." Do you spend time studying, meditating and memorizing the Word?

PREVIEW

The Bible is "unique" in every manner. Although recognition, awards, and trophies have been given to those, who having mastered the human language, have expressed themselves through pen and ink, yet there is no written treaties, composition, manuscript, essay, thesis, document, commentary, or research paper that presents the Bible any competition, for the Bible is in a classification" of its own. What it...

- ... promises, it can deliver...
- ... prescribes, it can fulfill...
- ... demands, it can provide...
- ... requires, it can supply...
- ... expects, it can enable...
- ...proclaims, it can confirm... and what it...
- ... declares, it can defend... !

It does NOT require the approval of mankind, the support of the politicians, the patronage of historians, the endorsement of the press, the interpretation of commentaries, the apology of the saints, nor even the backing of the clergy for it to stand.

Its message...

- ... is profound, yet so simple...

- ... chastises, yet is so comforting...
- ... convicts, yet consoles...
- ... is general, yet direct...
- ... disciplines, yet it delights...
- ... warns, yet it welcomes...

and although its message is...

... old, centuries old, millenniums old, yet it is ever new and refreshing It is a timeless Book of eternal value.

INNERVIEW

Someone said, "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world." You have such a profound influence on the lives of your children, even your grown children. Let that influence come from the inerrant Word of God!

Notice that the "Word" is to "dwell in your richly". This means "abundantly or extravagantly". Do not settle for a passing knowledge of scripture. Your children's faith may depend on your grasp of the Word!

REVIEW

The "Word" is to "dwell in you... in all wisdom". You do not only need knowledge concerning the Bible, you need the wisdom of the Bible? What can be done when you do not know what to do? Open the book!

Notice how you are to teach and admonish your children "through psalms and hymns and spiritual songs". Even if you cannot sing a note, they will hear the "grace in your heart".

Daily Sunshine In The Son

Praise God For: being Truth

Thank God For: Gospel Ministers

Ask God's Forgiveness For: hiding the truth

Ask God To Help: truth be shared and received

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: boldness to speak truth

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

Tell God your understanding of how He views you.

Describe how because of these truths your life is different from the way it was in the past.

Journal for Digging Deeper:

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Lord, today I thank You for:

Today, Lord, I need

Encouragement For Godly Moms (3)

May 12

And whatever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. –Col. 3:17

Third, Get a Grip on God's Plan (v.17).

Moms, "what ever you do in word or deed..." whether it is something you say or do, "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus".

I told a young stay-at-home mom this week, "Don't ever let anyone say to you that what you are doing doesn't matter!" The greatest accomplishment of your life is to nurture godly children.

Pray that your children will "let" God work out His plan in their lives and guide them.

Also, you are to always "be giving thanks to the Lord." Let your life be an offering in expression of gratitude & praise.

Teach them the six ways to tell right from wrong!

THE COMMON SENSE TEST - Are you simply being foolish? How would you judge someone else if they did the same thing? *"For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." Matthew 7:2 NIV*

THE SPORTSMANSHIP TEST – Are you playing fair? How would you feel if someone else did the same thing to you? If it is not right for everyone, it is probably not right for anyone. *"Treat others the way you would want them to treat you." Matthew 7:12 CEV*

THE BEST SELF-TEST – Are you trying to be the best that you can be? Will it help you become a better person? *"Work hard at whatever you do." Ecclesiastes 9:10 CEV*

THE PUBLICITY TEST – If everyone knew what you were doing, would you still do it? It is surprising how the light of public knowledge changes our perspective and our behavior. *"In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." Matthew 5:16 NIV*

THE MOST ADMIRER PERSON TEST – Would the person you most admired do this? If you told that person about it, would you feel proud or ashamed? *"Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps." 1 Peter 2:21 NIV*

THE FORESIGHT TEST – What can possibly go wrong? Could you live with the consequences? *"Do not brag about tomorrow! Each day brings its own surprises." Proverbs 27:1 CEV*

THE GLORIFICATION TEST – WILL THIS ACT OR DECISION MAKE GOD LOOK GOOD!

Daily Sunshine In The Son

Praise God For: helping me be honest
Thank God For: young people who want to what is right
Ask God's Forgiveness For: mishandling the truth
Ask God To Help: young people to learn honesty
Ask God To Supply Our Need For: commitment to truth

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:
List some areas of your life that are not pleasing to God right now. Give God permission to make the necessary changes in your life so that it will be pleasing to Him.

Journal for Digging Deeper:

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Lord, today I thank You for:

Today, Lord, I need

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

Support For Godly Moms

May 13

“Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on...” –Phil. 3:12,13

Colossians 3:15-20

A Word for Husbands (v.19).

You are to "love" your wives. The word for love used here means an unconditional, non-judgmental and sacrificial love. You are not to be "bitter" towards them. There is a specific warning here about harshness, which means not just physical brutality but also a cold judgmental attitude. Do not call her "honey" and treat her like lemon juice!

Too many husbands have abdicated all spiritual responsibility to their wives. The responsibility of family devotions is given to their wife. The kids go to church only if the mother insists.

Many mothers are exasperated because their husbands have no interest in leading their families. Their husbands are too lazy or disinterested to act as godly biblical men.

A Word for Children (v.20).

The Bible says children are to "obey your parents IN ALL THINGS". Why? Your parents must answer to God not only for their lives, but your life also.

Children, obedience to your mother and honoring her, regardless of your age, is "well pleasing to the Lord."

Thank God For: bold Christians

Ask God's Forgiveness For: my embarrassment of Him

Ask God To Help: Christians in the minority

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: creative ways to witness for Him

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

List how many of your goals are the same as God's goals. How might your life be different if you sought His direction while planning the next hour, day, week, month, and year?

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Journal writing lines consisting of multiple horizontal lines.

Lord, today I thank You for:

Prayer writing lines consisting of multiple horizontal lines.

When Life Knocks You Down

May 14

“Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and for evermore. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, the LORD’s name is to be praised. –Psa. 113:2,3

Walter Payton, one of the National Football League's all-time greats, died on November 1, 1999, after a bout with cancer. His thirteen-year career with the Chicago Bears ended in 1987. Yet he set several NFL records — including rushing attempts and rushing yardage — that continued to stand a dozen years after he had left the game.

Dominating football player that he was, Payton displayed a basic decency that fame, money and possessions did not change him. His uncommon- among-star-athletes modesty was confirmed in an interview several years ago. "I don't perceive myself as being better than anyone else," he said. "I shovel my driveway. I go to the grocery store. I pump my own gas. Some athletes don't do that."

PREVIEW

Payton assuredly was not better than any other person battling cancer. He was diagnosed with aggressive bile duct cancer. He placed his name on a transplant list and did not try to jump over others who were also waiting for a new liver. One was never found for him.

NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue said: "Walter exemplified class, and all of us in sports should honor him by striving to perpetuate his standard of excellence. Walter was an inspiration in everything he did. The tremendous grace and dignity he displayed in his final months reminded us again why 'Sweetness' was the perfect nickname for Walter Payton."

INNERVIEW

Upon hearing of Payton's passing, I was reminded of a frequently told story. During a Monday Night Football game between the Chicago Bears and the New York Giants, one of the ABC announcers made the observation that Walter Payton had amassed over nine miles in career rushing yardage. "Yeah," replied the other announcer, "and that's with somebody knocking him down every 4.6 yards!"

Life is not easy. With skills, breaks, and accomplishments, there are still setbacks. Regardless, of gifts or hard work, circumstances can arrive and knock you down. Despite how good the economy, how profitable your business or how strong your portfolio, things can change suddenly and drastically.

REVIEW

One of the secrets to success in any field is persistence. When you hit a setback, keep trying. When something knocks you down, get up and run with the ball again. When there is a reversal, ask God to give you wisdom, strength, and stamina.

Former teammate Mike Singletary spent the final weekend of Payton's life reading Scripture and praying with him. "What I experienced this weekend was by far the best of Walter Payton I've ever seen," he said.

Daily Sunshine In The Son

Until Payton stopped breathing, "Sweetness" never stopped getting up when he was knocked down. Now, that is style, class and a perfect example for us!

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

Praise God For: His firmness

Thank God For: saying no when I need it

Ask God's Forgiveness For: my resistance to His Will

Ask God To Help: teens and parents to better communicate

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: open communication

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

List how many of your goals are the same as God's goals.

How might your life be different if you sought His

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Lord, today I thank You for:

Today, Lord, I need

Knowing Who To Please

May 15

"I don't try to please myself but him who sent me." -John 5:30

Have you ever been caught in the dizzying trap of trying to please everybody? Or maybe you have been trying to please only two people with obvious conflicts of interest?

Companies make this mistake with boards whose focus is unclear or conflicted. Small businesses often try to make too many people happy. Clubs, mothers, teachers, restaurants, politicians and children of divorced or fighting parents are all subject to the stress of trying to please everyone. You just cannot do it!

PREVIEW

God cannot please everyone. The farmer is praying for rain on his fields the same day a scout leader is praying a camping trip will not be rained out. The autumn enthusiasts are praying for extended periods of fall color while those of us with debilitating allergies cannot wait for the first couple of killing frosts. A fifth grader who prays for snow so he can miss school counterbalances the elderly man, who hopes for a mild winter without heavy snows because of his heart condition.

INNERVIEW

If God himself cannot please everybody, should it surprise us that we cannot either? Only a fool thinks he or she can do what is beyond God!

Should you try to please family members who want more of your time or a boss demanding more hours at the office or on the road?

Should you please your company's shareholders or your clients? Should you please your quota or your conscience?

Maybe we should all take our cue on this one from Jesus. He said, "I don't try to please myself but him who sent me" (John 5:30). Everyone watched Jesus, and every pair of eyes had an expectation. Yet he kept his life in balance by honoring one supreme obligation, the one highest overseer. His one boss was God. He had an audience of one and was dedicated to pleasing him above all else — and all others.

REVIEW

My first question is "What does God require me in this situation?" Now, my focus has been automatically centered. If you commit to doing the right thing above the pressing or politically correct thing, you have defined your moral duty to be more critical than any competing selfish interest. If you settle your heart on what God wants you to do, it will always be right to do that — no matter what anyone else thinks. I know this rule of thumb does not settle every hard case but it sets the right tone for a life well lived. This rule also frees one of an overwhelming need for the approval of others that can dominate and destroy a life. Jesus was never stressed out over the fear of rejection, for he always knew he was serving an **audience of one**.

Daily Sunshine In The Son

In the end, it is only God you want to hear say, "Well done"! His opinion is the only one that matters. Are you clear about whose approval you will seek today?

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

- Praise God For:* His forgiveness
- Thank God For:* loving confrontation
- Ask God's Forgiveness For:* taking others for granted
- Ask God To Help:* teens and parents to better communicate
- Ask God To Supply Our Need For:* open communication
- Ask God To Supply Our Need For:* minds filled with His thoughts

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:
A life unplanned and unchecked is prone to return to failure-ridden patterns. What three things could you do today to keep your focus on God?

Journal for Digging Deeper:

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Today, Lord, I need

Lord, today I thank You for:

Recovering From Set Backs

May 16

“Everyone with good sense wants to learn.”- Proverbs 18:15 CEV

How do you handle life’s little crises? What happens when the project you have been working on falls through, you are laid off or perhaps you get sick on the day of the big celebration? How do you respond when you are in the middle of the fast lane of life and you hit the proverbial speed bump?

spilt milk” (or spewing water line). Once you have analyzed the situation, made the changes, learned the lessons, then get back in the game! No one ever scores while sitting on the bench! **“Forgetting what is behind, I struggle for what is ahead.” Philippians 3:13 CEV**

CONTROL YOUR EMOTIONS – Often Emotions cloud our view of reality. It is usually not as desperate as we feel that it is. Emotions should not be ignored, but handled and channeled in a constructive direction. **“Losing your temper causes a lot of trouble, but staying calm settles arguments.” Proverbs 15:18 CEV**

Praise God For: His strength
Thank God For: putting me in situations where I feel over my head
Ask God’s Forgiveness For: my fear
Ask God To Help: those who are feeling inadequate
Ask God To Supply Our Need For: faith

DISCOVER WHAT WENT WRONG – Did you do something which contributed to the problem? Were you at fault? Was there something that you could have done differently? Was it a lack of planning? Ask yourself. Ask others. Ask God. It is amazing what can be learned when we listen! Find out what went wrong. **“Without good advice everything goes wrong – it takes careful planning for things to go right.” Proverbs 15:22 CEV**

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER: List problems that you have no power to fix. Ask the Holy Spirit to supernaturally intervene in each of these areas.

Journal for Digging Deeper:

MAKE NECESSARY CHANGES – Rather than spending time fixing the blame, concentrate on fixing the problem. **“If you keep being stubborn after many warnings, you will suddenly discover you have gone too far.” Proverbs 29:1 CEV**

LEARN THE LESSON(S) – More than likely you are going to face a situation similar to this in the future. What will you do differently? If you take the same actions, do not expect different results! **“Everyone with good sense wants to learn.” Proverbs 18:15 CEV**

GET ON WITH LIFE – What is past is past. Remember the phrase, “There is no use crying over

Helping In The Midst of Hurting

May 17

“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”—Rom. 8:28

1. People are unique individuals with different needs.

What feels supportive for one may not feel supportive for another. Do not presume to know what someone needs or wants from you. It's okay to admit you don't know how to help. Consider asking the question "How can I best support you or what do you need from me to feel I am here for you?"

2. Let people be where they are.

Feelings are not good or bad, right or wrong. Life experiences and evolution evoke the full range of normal human emotions. Feeling distressed is not a negative.

3. Listen with a willing ear and a compassionate heart.

Responses like "I understand, I hear you, I'm here for you, my heart goes out to you" communicate attentiveness and empathy.

4. Be conscious of your language and tone of voice.

Phrases beginning with "Do not think / feel / be or you do not have to think / feel / be" express criticism, disapproval and judgment. The statement, "I know exactly how you feel," may be intended to offer comfort. In truth, to

truly know how someone feels you must be in his/her skin. Acknowledging the ability to empathize or relate is inviting and heartwarming.

It might be better to say "I know that what you are experiencing now is very difficult and painful. It is important to me for you to know that I care and I want to be here for you as loving support. So what I can do now to help?"

Supporting someone in distress challenges us to be present, choosing to respond from an unconditionally loving place instead of reacting with "old" conditioned behaviors and responses. Witnessing people's distress can feel personally painful and overwhelming. Here are some tips to help you offer loving support with compassionate detachment.

5. Validate the distress with acceptance, without challenging them to explain or defend their pain.

Honoring the other person's thoughts and feelings shows respect and creates an environment of safety.

6. Resist the urge to find the bright side, point out the blessings of the situation or shift the focus.

Support the process of healing and growth by letting go of the need to control or direct how they think and feel.

Daily Sunshine In The Son

Praise God For: His firmness

Thank God For: saying no when I need it

Ask God's Forgiveness For: my resistance to His Will

Ask God To Help: teens and parents to better communicate

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: open communication

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

Write a love note to God and tell Him what He means to you today.

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Lord, today I thank You for:

Today, Lord, I need

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

Helping In The Midst of Hurting (2)

May 18

“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”—Rom. 8:28

7. Be sensitive to offering unsolicited advice or solutions.

*Praise God For: His Spirit
Thank God For: good fathers*

In distress, people value being heard, listened to and encouraged to "talk about it" without being told what they should or should not do. Well-intentioned comments offered to help may be unwelcome and untimely. When in doubt ask if they are open to suggestions.

*Ask God's Forgiveness For: neglecting time with Him
Ask God To Help: children who miss their fathers
Ask God To Supply Our Need For: strength for each day*

8. Check your internal reactions.

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:
Describe the last time you told someone in pain about the healing love and compassion of the Lord.

Unresolved issues or discomfort impact on the ability to be objective and neutral. Know your limits and boundaries. It's okay to remove yourself from a supportive position. Be honest in your capacity to "be there."

Journal for Digging Deeper:

9. Share your sincere, heartfelt thoughts.

Be who you are, not who you think you should be.

10. If appropriate and welcome, offer loving touch.

Being held, hugged, having a shoulder to cry on or lean on can feel wonderfully comforting and less lonely.

The Power Of Words

"Sharp words cut like a sword, but words of wisdom heal."- Proverbs 12:18

One of the easiest ways to determine what a person is like is to listen to his words. Words betray a person. The Bible says that kind people speak kind words and that evil-hearted people have words filled with harm. People who have learned this find that words spoken either can destroy people or be used to build people up. If your words today were a company, would it be a company of demolition or a construction firm? Just for today, evaluate what comes out of your mouth! See what kind of "company" you are!!!!
What Are Some Ways Words Can Demolish?

THROUGH LIES - Are the words you speak true and honest? Or are you deceptive in your words and business practices? *"The Lord hates every liar, but He is a friend of all who can be trusted." Proverbs 12:22*

THROUGH WORDS OF ANGER - You have heard it before, but counting to ten before opening your mouth has helped many relationships. *"A kind answer soothes angry feelings, but harsh words stir them up." Proverbs 15:1*

THROUGH GOSSIP - Would you say that if they were standing next to you? Would you want someone to say the same about you? *"Gossip is no good! It causes hard feelings and comes between friends." Proverbs 16:28*

WHAT ARE SOME WAYS WORDS CAN BE CONSTRUCTIVE?

THROUGH WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT - Speak words that encourage others. Any fool can tear something down, but it takes a wise man to build up something or someone. *"Kind words*

are like honey - they cheer you up and make you feel strong." Proverbs 16:24

THROUGH WORDS OF GOOD REPORT - No matter how hard you have to look, find something good and talk about it! "If you cannot say anything good, then do not say anything at all!" *"Focus your attention on whatever is true, pure, right, holy, friendly and proper. Do not ever stop thinking about what is truly worthwhile and worthy of praise." Philippians 4:8*

THROUGH WORDS OF CHEERFULNESS - Speak kind words that bring joy and healing to people. *"Sharp words cut like a sword, but words of wisdom heal." Proverbs 12:18*

Praise God For: His strengthening presence

Thank God For: earthly pleasures

Ask God's Forgiveness For: hanging on when I should let go

Ask God To Help: prune our dead branches

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: grace to let go

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

If you are right now facing some seemingly hopeless situations that are keeping you from running your race, think about God's faithfulness to you and then write about your circumstances from that perspective.

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Breaking Through The Sound Barrier

May 20

“Use only helpful words, the kind that build others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”-Ephesians 4:29

You cannot do business without communicating. To get ahead one must continually work on your communication skills. Probably 75% of the problems at work are related to poor communication with your customers, your clients or your coworkers. Poor communication is also the most frequently mentioned problem in marriage counseling.

TO REALLY COMMUNICATE, YOU MUST GIVE UP THREE THINGS:

1. YOU MUST GIVE UP YOUR

ASSUMPTIONS. We get into trouble when we start assuming we understand the meaning of what people say to us. The truth is, everything you hear goes through a filter. Your filter is determined by your past experiences and your unique personality. You may not be hearing what they are *really* saying. Therefore, it's smart (and safe) to ask for clarification. There are six (6) possible messages every time you speak:

- What you *mean* to say **and** what you *actually* said.
- What they heard **and** what they *think* they heard.
- What they say about it **and** what you *think* they said about it.

Proverbs 18:13 says, ***“It's foolish to answer before listening.”***

2. YOU MUST GIVE UP YOUR

ACCUSATIONS. You never get your point across by being cross. Anger and sarcasm only make people defensive...and that kills communication. Here are four common forms of accusation:

- Exaggerating - making sweeping generalities like "You never " or "You always."
- Labeling - derogatory name-calling. Labeling never changes anyone. It only reinforces the negative behavior.

- Playing Historian, bringing up past failures, mistakes, and broken promises.
- Asking Loaded Questions - which really can't be answered, like "Can't you do anything right?"

Ephesians 4:29 says ***“Use only helpful words, the kind that build others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”***

3. YOU MUST GIVE UP YOUR

APPREHENSIONS. Fear prevents honest inside more than the outside. And, while you are at it, stay away from the drive thru.

It's the inside that counts.

Praise God For: being my pillar of strength

Thank God For: the support of friends

Ask God's Forgiveness For: my self-reliance

Ask God To Help: those who have been deserted

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: strong friends

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

List areas of your life in which you suffer guilt and condemnation. Ask God to help you give each of those areas to Him-for good-so that you can be free.

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Daily Sunshine In The Son

Lord, today I thank You for:

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

Today, Lord, I need

Nine Inattentive Listening Imposters

May 21

“Use only helpful words, the kind that build others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.” -Ephesians 4:29

Someone comes needing help with a situation. You begin to listen attentively. Soon your mind begins to wander and instead of listening to the person, your thoughts move on to other things: the pile of work on your desk, meetings, family, the weather outside, the funny shape of the person's nose, etc. You hear the words, but you are not listening.

Research shows that you spend about 40% of your waking hours listening. However, most of the time you are only listening at 25% efficiency. That creates many problems. Fortunately, listening is a *skill* that can be developed. The benefits of learning how to listen are enormous: fewer mistakes, better negotiating, greater wisdom, more friends, less arguments, and much, much more. A recent issue of **Communication Briefings** listed some habits that hinder good listening. See if any of these apply to you.

MIND READER - One will hear little or nothing as they think, "What is this person really thinking or feeling?"

REHEARSER - One's mental tryouts of "Here is what I will say next time" tune out the speaker.

FILTERER - Some call this selective listening - hearing only what one wants to hear.

DREAMER - Drifting off during a face-to-face conversation can lead to an embarrassing, "What did you say?" or "Could you repeat that?"

IDENTIFIER - If one refers everything they hear to their experience, then they will not hear what was really said.

COMPARER - When one is sidetracked into assessing the messenger, one is sure to miss the message.

DERAILER - Changing the subject too quickly soon tells others that one is not interested in anything they have to say.

SPARRER - One hears what is being said but quickly belittles or discounts it. That puts you in the same class as the derailer.

PLACATER - Agreeing with everything one hears just to be nice or to avoid conflict does not mean one is a good listener.

“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.” James1:19
“Listen to instruction and do your best to learn.”
Prov. 23:12

Listen with your eyes. Approximately 80% of communication is non-verbal. Look at people when you listen to them! Listen with your heart. Be sympathetic. Make time to listen to the people around you.

Praise God For: His Holy Spirit

Thank God For: carrying my burdens

Ask God's Forgiveness For: carrying my burdens alone

Ask God To Help: those weighed down by life

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: His strength

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:
What negative thoughts overwhelm you at times?
Write a prayer of faith, asking the Holy Spirit to release you from this burden.

How To Get People To Listen To You

May 22

“Use only helpful words, the kind that build others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.” -Ephesians 4:29

The most common problem at work, or at home is poor communication. Even your best ideas, plans or suggestions are worthless if you cannot communicate them effectively. Every year companies lose billions in potential profits because they ignore great ideas from employees.

Communication is not automatic. Just because someone is **hearing** you say something does not mean they are really **listening**. Fortunately, there are seven skills that you can develop that will guarantee that people will listen to you when you speak. Just follow these guidelines from the Bible:

1. CHOOSE THE RIGHT TIME! Timing is the first key. You may be ready to talk, but are they ready to listen? Never drop a bomb! *“There is a right time and a right way to do everything. Eccl. 8:6 (GN)*

2. PLAN YOUR PRESENTATION. Think it through first. Especially plan your introduction and your supporting illustrations. Do not start with the detail. In TV they move from the long shot to the medium shot to the close up. *“Intelligent people think before they speak. What they say is then more persuasive.” Prov. 16:23 (GN)*

3. BEGIN WITH HIS OR HER NEEDS. A listener is always asking “Why should I listen to this?” and “How will it benefit me?” If you answer those two questions up front, you will have their undivided attention. *“Speak only...according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.” Eph. 4:29*

4. LISTEN FIRST! We get into trouble when we make assumptions. Be willing to hear the other side out first. *“Be quick to listen and slow to speak.” James 1:19*

5. SAY IT POSITIVELY. No one likes to hear bad news. Learn to be both realistic and optimistic at the same time. You are never persuasive when you are abrasive! If you have bad news, say it up front in a factual, non-personal way. Then quickly move into a constructive mode. *“The mature person is known for his understanding. The more pleasant his words, the more persuasive he is.” Prov. 16:21 (GN)*

6. CLARIFY YOUR CONCLUSIONS. Summarize and recap what you've said. Be specific. Restate what you have decided on and what you have not. *“Agree with each other in the Lord.” Phil. 4:2b*

7. END WITH AN ENCOURAGING WORD. Exit lines are important. Even if the discussion was heated and you both took some heavy shots of criticism try to end on a high note. *“A word of encouragement does wonders!” Prov. 12:15 (LB)* Try these principles out this week!

Praise God For: His support

Thank God For: The sensitivity of others

Ask God's Forgiveness For: my disappointment in others

Ask God To Help: the physically and emotionally needy

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: Immanuel

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:
List the names of people you personally know who need God's strength today. Ask Him to strengthen them and let them know in some small way today that He is with them.

Daily Sunshine In The Son

Journal for Digging Deeper:

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Lord, today I thank You for:

Today, Lord, I need

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

Improving Your Hearing

May 23

"He who answers before listening is put to shame." -Prov.29:20

One of the most common causes of frustration and friction at work is that we do not really listen to each other. Too often we talk **at** each other rather than **with** each other.

Research shows that you spend about 40% of your waking hours listening. But most of the time you are only listening at 25% efficiency. That creates many of your problems. Fortunately, listening is a *skill* that can be developed.

The benefits of learning how to listen are enormous: fewer mistakes, better negotiating, greater wisdom, more friends, less arguments, and much, much more.

The Bible says, **"Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry."** If you do the first two, (be quick to listen and slow to speak) the third will be automatic. Three things that hinder our hearing:

- **PRESUMPTION** - when we think we already know it all.
"He who answers before listening is put to shame." Pr.29:20
- **IMPATIENCE** - when you interrupt & jump to conclusions.
"There is more hope for a fool than for a man who speaks in haste." Pr. 29:20
- **PRIDE** - when we are defensive and unteachable.
"The way of a fool seems right, but a wise man listens to advice." Pr. 12:15

You can learn from anyone if you know the right questions!

Let me suggest three (3) "**HEARING AIDS**":

1. Listen with your eyes. Approximately 80% of communication is non-verbal. Facial expressions and body language usually tell the real story. Look at people when you listen to them!

2. Listen with your heart. Be sympathetic. Tune in to the emotions behind the words.

3. Make time to listen to the people around you. Tom Peters calls it "*Managing By Walking Around.*" (MBWA)

I have had people tell me, "**God** never speaks to me!" Oh really? Is it possible that you've been too busy to listen? He wants to talk to you. Tune into Him this week. If you have a Bible, try reading Chapter 1 of the book of James. God speaks to those who take the time to listen! Have a great week.

Praise God For: reconciliation

Thank God For: peacemakers

Ask God's Forgiveness For: strained relationships

Ask God To Help: bring peace to the world

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: tenderness

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

What secret fears do you harbor? Write them down, lift them to God and claim His promise that you *will* trust in Him, no matter what problems you face.

Daily Sunshine In The Son

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Lord, today I thank You for:

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

Today, Lord, I need

Standing Firm While Others Fall

May 24

“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.” - Psalm 37:4

Psa. 1:1-6

One of the biggest challenges in life today is to keep things on an even keel. Life is filled with ups and downs, serenity and turmoil, drudgery and ecstasy, pleasure and pain--sometimes all in the same day. Not only is this true of life; it is true in marriage, business and almost all other relationships. How do you stay levelheaded when all those around you are losing theirs?

WATCH WHOM YOU LISTEN TO - "God blesses those people who refuse evil advice." There are times in our lives we seek advice from other people. There are many sources of advice that are out there - Volumes of books are written about almost every subject from business leadership to familial relations. The question to evaluate all counsel is: Does it square with God's Word? That is the ultimate question.

WATCH WHO YOU FOLLOW & SPEND TIME WITH - "God blesses those people who.. won't follow sinners and won't join in sneering at God " You can tell a lot about a person by finding out who their heroes are. Who is your Hero? Who is your mentor? Who is it you look to and say, "I wanna be like him!" We can look to Jesus Christ and say, "I want to live like Him." Be careful whom you emulate. *"I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."* John 13:15

Be careful who you spend time with. You cannot run with the dogs and not get fleas. You cannot roll in the mud with the swine and expect to remain clean. You cannot soar with the eagles when you have been playing with the turkeys!

"Stay away from fools, or you won't learn a thing." Proverbs 14:7 CEV

CHOOSE TO FOLLOW GOD'S LAWS - "God blesses those people who ... the Law of the Lord makes them happy." What rules do you play by, The World's Rules or God's Rules? The answer will effect the way you raise your children, run your business or treat your spouse. *"Trust in the Lord and do what is right; if you do this God will bless your life."* Psalm 37:3 para

CONCENTRATE ON PLEASING HIM - "God blesses those people whom ... think about it day and night." Whom are you ultimately trying to please? Are you living for 'the here and now' or storing up treasure in heaven? Are your values temporal or eternal?

Whose Blueprint Are You using to Build Your Life? God's or Another's?

Praise God For: being our Savior

Thank God For: salvation

Ask God's Forgiveness For: choosing sin

Ask God To Help: those who don't know Him

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: deliverance from sin

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:
What difficulties have you and God walked through together? Write them down and record your praises for the lessons He taught you during those hard times.

Daily Sunshine In The Son

Journal for Digging Deeper:

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Lord, today I thank You for:

Today, Lord, I need

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

Auditioning Your Ambitions- *The Purge*

May 25

“Delight yourself also in the Lord/And He shall give you the desires of your heart.” - Psalm 37:4

The second movement of faith is known as the purge. Negative thoughts rush in to destroy your desire and torpedo your dream with negative forces. This movement is filled with discordant notes and contradictions. All the destructive thoughts must be purged. Abort all negative thoughts before they can take an embryonic fix in your mind.

Living the faith stimulates positive emotions. In the same way, doubt constantly feeds negative emotions. Doubt is an anesthetic. Skepticism drains the spirit. Unbelief makes us drowsy. Negative thinking turns us into dreary people, fearful of our fears and worried about our worry. What a despairing cycle.!

My faith stimulates positive thinking, and positive thing stimulates me to see all of the possibilities.

Learn 3 simple and natural ways to STOP negative thoughts and reduce stress, worry, tension and stomach acid buildup. You'll stop the negative thought AND step into a more powerful and pleasant place as a result.

1. Listen to all of your thoughts for a day.

Don't try to change anything, just observe when a negative thought comes into your mind.

2. Select one really persistent thought to work on, eg., worry about paying bills.

Ignore the other thoughts for awhile.

3. Each time that thought comes into your mind, say to yourself, "STOP!"

You may have to do this 5, 10 or 20 times before the thought goes away.

4. Notice what's happening when you 'push your STOP button.'

Does the thought stop or persist? Does it diminish or seem smaller?

5. If thinking STOP doesn't work at first, try saying STOP out loud.

That's right, shout it out. Notice what's happening when you say STOP out loud.

6. If saying STOP out loud doesn't work at first, use hand signals for STOP.

You know what that looks like. You command it to STOP like a traffic cop does, as if to say: "I said STOP, you numbskull!!!" And mean it just like a stern cop.

7. Notice what you are thinking now, too.

Are you laughing? Are you embarrassed at talking to yourself out loud and playing traffic cop? Yes? No? Whatever your reaction, try to concentrate on what you're thinking as you do these exercises.

8. While you are doing these exercises, notice which one works best.

Does one method work better for different types of thoughts? Does the traffic cop work best for worrisome thoughts? Does thinking STOP work best for what you call petty thoughts?

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9. Now, use all three methods and find the one that works best for you in any and all situations.

Use these methods for 5 thought-interruptions and you will own a new skill.

10. Your mind can pay attention to one thing at a time only.

If you want to stop any disturbing thought, especially one where you feel helpless, switch to another thought, sing a song aloud or make up anything to otherwise occupy your mind. Laugh at the negative thought and enjoy your win.

Praise God For: His Forgiveness

Thank God For: the Gospel

Ask God's Forgiveness For: not consistently sharing the Gospel with others

Ask God To Help: all receive Jesus

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: renewed strength

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

Write a love note to God and tell Him what He means to you today.

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Lord, today I thank You for:

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Today, Lord, I need

Auditioning Your Ambitions- *The Surge*

May 26

“Delight yourself also in the Lord/And He shall give you the desires of your heart.” - Psalm 37:4

At the core of faith, there is that innermost, indivisible cell called commitment. Faith always commands some decisive action. More often than not, it represents an irreversible decision.

Faith is peeling the orange. It's cracking the egg. It's opening the can of Soda! Faith is delivering the ice. Now you either consume it, or throw it away.

Faith is serving the soufflé hot from the oven! You must eat it, or watch it deflate. What's left cannot be saved or stored. "What is Faith? It is the confident assurance that something we want is going to happen. It is the certainty that what we hope for is waiting for us, even though we cannot see it up ahead."

"Faith is the daring of the soul to go farther than it can see" where reason must stop, faith takes a daring leap into the unknown.

Faith is not a leap in the dark. Faith is a leap into the light. Faith is taking God at his word. Information has been given, accepted as true and is being acted upon.

FAITH SEES THE COMING....
Spring in spite of the current winter
Showers, in spite of the current
drought
Prospects, in spite of the current
circumstances
Solution, in spite of the current
problems
Dividends, in spite of the current
difficulties

Fruit, in spite of the current
barren-ness

“Lord, give us the faith to make the move at the right time in the right way. Protect us from the false security that indecision foolishly promises. Today we shall move from faith and not be mesmerized by fear.

Praise God For: Christ our Redeemer
Thank God For: wise men
Ask God's Forgiveness For: half-hearted
commitment
Ask God To Help: all who come to Him
Ask God To Supply Our Need For: recommitment
to Him

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:
Write down one problem that is causing you to experience a lack of joy. Ask God to give you back your joy and to grant you a willing spirit to sustain you in the days ahead.

Journal for Digging Deeper:

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Lord, today I thank You for:

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

Today, Lord, I need

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Auditioning Your Ambitions- The Splurge

May 27

"Delight yourself also in the Lord/And He shall give you the desires of your heart." - Psalm 37:4

The fourth and final movement is the splurge-you make the leap. You go all out for it. You put everything on the line. You hold back nothing.

The Bible informs us that...

1. "Without faith it is impossible to please him" (Heb. 11:6).
2. We are enjoined to "examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith..." (2Cor. 13:5).
3. The Bible informs us that "Therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith"(Rom.1:17).
4. We are exhorted to "stand fast in the faith" (1Cor. 16:13) and the believer is to "walk by faith" (2Cor. 5:7).
5. Paul affirmed that "the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God" (Gal. 2:20).
6. Jesus advised his disciples, "have faith in God" (Mk. 11:22).

If you believe it, you can conceive it. If you conceive it you can perceive it. If perceive you can achieve it. If you can achieve you will received it!
Believe it!

FAITH'S RECORD.

Faith escorts us to a den of lions and show us an unarmed man sitting in their midst, one who would be a suitable meal to quiet the nocturnal rumbling of their hungry stomachs. Yet, we see them on their best behavior as though they were advance students of the school of etiquette.

Faith takes us on an exciting excursion to the post card picturesque beauty of the Jordan Valley. Bids us to pause a moment to take in its scenic beauty of Palms and Sycamore. Then leads us to Jericho where there are walls pronounced by architect and contractor to be impregnable. We watch in awe as the walls come tumbling down at the sound of blowing horns and marching feet.

Faith then leads us to a battlefield and shows us giants slain by midgets. It takes us to valleys to watch dry bones become standing armies. It takes us to beautiful gates as we watch the lame spring to their feet praising God.

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It was through faith that the
Heroes of faith subdued
kingdoms wrought
righteousness, obtained
promises, stopped the mouths
of lions, quenched the
violence of fire, escaped the
edge of the sword, out of
weakness were made strong,
waxed valiant in fight, turned
to fight the armies of the
aliens.

FAITH....

Believes the unbelievable
Reaches for the
unreachable
Asks for the unthinkable
Hopes for the impossible
Lives for the incredible
Prepares for the
unexplainable

Praise God For: seeing the big picture
Thank God For: putting my world together again
Ask God's Forgiveness For: seeking Him last
Ask God To Help: straighten out the world
Ask God To Supply Our Need For: wholeness

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

Write a prayer asking God to restore His joy to every
area of your life.

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Lord, today I thank You for:

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Today, Lord, I need

Visiting An Empty House

May 28

“Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.” –Galatians 6:18

The house was empty. Except for a couple of crates for a makeshift desk, a lawn chair, a few, the vacuum cleaner, and a change of clothes. The place was empty. Not just empty as in no people around but, empty as in no people, no furniture, no pictures on the wall, no food in the refrigerator, not even a refrigerator. I mean empty. The carpets had been vacuumed. The floors have been mopped. The trash has been removed. The house was empty.

PREVIEW

Not long ago the house was filled with people, a family. Now it is empty. Not long ago there was talking, singing, and laughter. Now it is silent. Not long ago there were children playing in back yard. Now the children are passing by on their bikes and looking at this house as the place where a friend once lived. There are no children here now. There is no television, no radio. The house is empty.

It won't be long before a new family will move in and make that house their home. There will be new furniture, new decorations, new cars in the driveway, and new faces in the neighborhood. This empty house will be full again.

I wondered, as I sat there in that empty house, about the future. Will the people who live here love each other? Will the children, if they even have children, enjoy the neighborhood? Will they invite their friends into this house? Will God be as much a part of the family of the next residents as He was the vacating residents. Will they live here a long time, or will this just

be a temporary resting place? All these questions are beyond my power to answer yet I wonder about them as I sit here in this empty house.

INNERVIEW

An empty house is like our soul. From time to time we clean everything out. We do it once when we initially commit our life to God, but we do it on other occasions when we make important decisions about our level of commitment, or at certain milestones, or when something tragic shakes us causes us to take stock into where we are, who we are and where we are heading. And, like this house where the family has moved away what is left is has been swept clean ready for a new start.

Satan loves it when we clean the house in our soul because he has the opportunity to move in and take up residence while there is nothing to get in his way. If we are not careful to replace what we remove with things of God, Satan will fill our hearts with envy, rage, hatred, lust, and all kinds of evil. But, if we will move in the things of God like forgiveness, hope, joy, peace, grace, joy, and of course, love, there is no room for Satan's furniture and he will move on.

REVIEW

Sitting in an empty house has reminded me of how grateful I am that this house has been only our temporary residence, but the Lord has taken up permanent residence in our heart. He helps me clean house every day. He fills my heart every morning. He turns emptiness into fullness. Because of the relationship that has

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been established through the blood of Jesus Christ every day I have the opportunity to sit in an empty house. I have the opportunity to make a new start. At the close of each day I am able to sweep out the trash, bag up the garbage, set it by the curb, and let someone haul it away. That trash is the sin in my life. That someone is Jesus Christ. Then, once emptied, I do have a choice as to who will come in and take up residence in my soul.

Enjoy a new start.

Praise God For: darkness

Thank God For: creativity

Ask God's Forgiveness For: lack of rest

Ask God To Help: all who need a good night's sleep

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: down time

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

Describe a time in your life when the faithfulness of God lifted you out of a spiritual desert.

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Lord, today I thank You for:

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Today, Lord, I need

A New Person In The Same Old Situation

May 29

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" - 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)

"I feel like a new person!" Those may be the words often spoken after one's conversion experience. They may be the words spoken after making a major decision. They could be the words expressed after the confession of a sin. They may be heard upon completion of a major medical procedure. Parents may say it (or feel it at least) after they receive a phone call with news that their child is safe and well.

For others it is a statement that was spoken once long ago in a far away land in a frame of mind almost forgotten. Life has been rough since then. The newness of life has long since worn off and faded away. There is nothing about their life that feels new, or fresh, or at times even like life. They are tired. They are sad. They are empty. They are looking at the sunrise not as the "first day of the rest of your life," but as one more day in a miserable existence.

PREVIEW

As you read the two previous paragraphs you probably had images of people you know who fit both descriptions. What is the difference? What causes one person to see the sunrise as bright and clear and beautiful and "new every morning," while another sees only the "chasing after the wind" that will follow the sunrise? Certainly the events of the previous day may have something to do with how we feel when the sun comes up. Our attitude and disposition obviously has a lot to do with it. How we feel physically also has an impact on our view on life.

Sometimes a change in scenery, or a change of habit, or a change in life will give us a new outlook on life. Sometimes we need it. Sometimes a major change (sorry to use that word so many times in one paragraph) may be the only thing that will bring about the wanted and needed results. Because we like to do things for ourselves, it is possible to depend on these physical changes too much and too often, when there is something beyond us that has the potential to help us see ourselves differently every day.

INNERVIEW

Take another look at what Paul tells us, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV)

Another section of Paul's writing reminds us of who we can and should see ourselves, "So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.

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You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." (Ephesians 4:17-24, NIV)

Lord, today I thank You for:

REVIEW

When was the last time you said, "I feel like a new person!" and meant it? Are you wishing you could say it today? Maybe it will not require a total makeover of your physical appearance, or that your whole world be turned upside down. It could be that seeing ourselves as God sees us is the answer. Give it a try. You may be a new person waiting to happen.

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

Enjoy being a new person today.

Praise God For: His friendship

Thank God For: childhood friends

Ask God's Forgiveness For: avoiding responsibility

Ask God To Help: the discouraged

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: friends

I pray for the needs of others, especially

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

What situations are you allowing to block God's joy in your life? Ask God to take away the joy blockers from your life and give you courage to conquer them. Find at least one opportunity today to bring joy to a joyless situation.

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Today, Lord, I need

To Know Him Is To Love Him

May 30

“One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life...” -Psalms 27:4

The “one thing I desire”, serious enough to get out of my comfort zone and pursue is to know God intimately and love him dearly. I desire this enough to extend myself and pursue it rigorously. I WANT TO KNOW GOD INTIMATELY AND LOVE GOD DEARLY.

PREVIEW

We love him because he first loved us. How do you know God loves you? He gives us many evidences: God loves you; you're never out of his sight. He cares about every detail of your life. He has good plans for your life. He forgives you; and is lovingly patient with you. God loves you infinitely more than you can imagine.

The greatest expression of God's love was the sacrifice of his son. “God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). If you want to know how much you matter to God, look at Christ with his arms outstretched on the cross, saying, “I love you this much! I'd rather die than live without you.”

INNERVIEW

Since love is the energy of life,
the motive of praise, the
heartbeat of worship, the center
of joy and the life of faith; we
should love Him enough to
please Him. His will must

become our will. I WANT TO OBEY A PLAN THAT Pleases him. I want to belong to a church that pleases him. I want to wear a name that pleases him. I want to worship in a way that pleases him. For after all, He's the...

FOUNDATION that never shakes
TRUTH that never lies
FRIEND that never forsakes
CONQUEROR that never loses
SUPPLY that never quits
FOUNTAIN that never clogs

REVIEW

LIGHT that never dims
DELIVERER that never disappoints
KING that never ages
LORD that never berates
SHEPHERD that never overlooks
BEGINNING that never ends
BEAUTY that never pales
COMFORT that never departs
PHYSICIAN that never 'charges'
STAR that never falls
HELP that never hinders
PRIZE that never withers
JOY that never subsides
MASTER that never intrudes
WAY that never deceives
HOPE that never fades
ROCK that never moves
STRENGTH that never weakens
WISDOM that never misleads

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GLORY that never ceases
BRIDGE that never collapses
REWARD that never depreciates
ANCHOR that never fails
JUDGE that never misjudges

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

Do you doubt God's care for you? Have you been trying to reach your goals without his help? Tell God about it and ask Him to lead you to victory.

Journal for Digging Deeper:

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Lord, today I thank You for:

Today, Lord, I need

Tenderness In A Tough World

May 31

"See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.." – 1 Thessalonians 5:15

How to be a Christian in a non-Christian world has always been the crucial question that confronts sincere believers. The society in which we live can be cold and cruel and from our childhood we have been taught to be tough-skinned. You know the trite old saying, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going."

I have read recently a delightful devotional book entitled HOW TO BE TENDER IN A TOUGH WORLD. This refreshing, confessional and insightful book was written by Denise George, wife of Dr. Timothy George, Dean of the Beason Divinity School at Samford University. The title is the theme and thesis of the work-tenderness in a tough world.

In her preface Denise George outlines four basic ways we can approach life in a tough world.

First, she describes the "FIGHT IT" APPROACH. This is an effort to get tough in a tough world. It is the way of self sufficiency that masks inferiority and insecurity.

The second Approach involves AN IN-DIFFERENT ATTITUDE. When one realizes that being tough enough in the viciously tough world is almost impossible, a sense of apathy becomes the prevailing attitude. Life becomes like lukewarm water, neither hot or cold. This approach to life leaves one with an uncaring and unfeeling attitude.

The third option isn't any better. It is the FUGITIVE APPROACH TO THE WORLD. In an

effort to cope with the pain of living in a tough world, a person may try escape mechanisms such as drugs, alcohol and permissive lifestyles. This is an attempt to shelter or protect oneself in a fantasy world where life is easier to handle.

TENDERNESS IS THE FOURTH AND BY FAR THE BEST APPROACH TO LIFE. Sensitivity, caring, and vulnerability are risky, but also immensely rewarding. The rewards of the tenderness lifestyle include meaningful relationships with God, others, and oneself. The ultimate personification of this way of life is seen in Jesus Christ Himself. I pray that all of us can become more like Christ-tender in a tough world.

- Praise God for:** His excellence!
- Thank God for:** taking no shortcuts in building my character!
- Ask God's forgiveness for:** taking shortcuts!
- Ask God to help:** people pressured by deadlines!
- Ask God to supply our need for :** a commitment to excellence!

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:
How do you feel about your spiritual life? What does it mean to you that Jesus bought you with his life?

Journal for Digging Deeper:
