

# Today is like no other day

# **RANDALL J. BREWER**

MOSES TRANSPORTS

NEXT 4 MILES

# GOD'S BEST

# **RANDALL J. BREWER**

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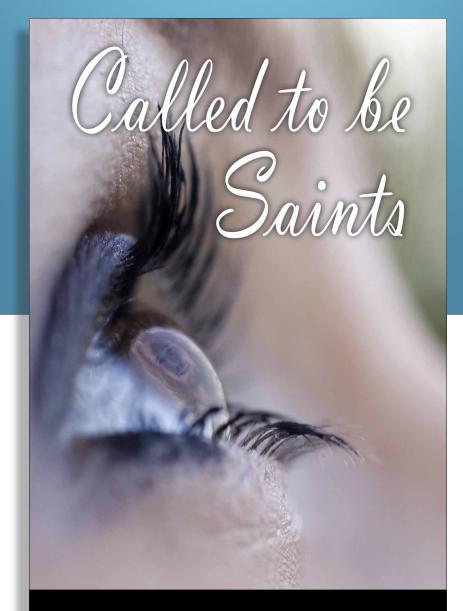


## This book is dedicated to **Goldie Baker**

for all the sacrifices she made while her husband and I turned our dream into a reality.

-Randall Brewer

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The widely acclaimed book by noted Christian author Randall J. Brewer

# BORN TO LOVE, CALLED TO SERVE

The Complete Guide to the true Christian Lifestyle

# RANDALL J. BREWER

www.rjbrewerandcompany.com

The battle is about to begin. The warring teams are on the field waiting for the ball to snap. The referees are attentive to the action about to break loose, making sure the laws of incursion are followed to the letter. The Cheerleaders have the pep squad in a supportive up-roar in the stands. All the parents, families and friends are straining their voices in an encouraging call to victory to the warriors on the gridiron.

The Quarterback gives the call-to-arms to his comrades, and then the object of everyone's attention is firmly placed into his hands as pandemonium breaks loose on the field, and all players are concerned about the final outcome of the ball's destiny. This event is played over and again into the night until a winner is declared. It's all about winning.

Life is certainly not a High School football game, but the similarities are there. We as Christians, have certain rules and procedures to strictly follow in order to win the victory over our enemy, Satan. The devil however, has only one God-imposed rule: he is Divinely restricted from attacking us beyond our defense capabilities. By our own strength, we have no power against this opposing force. But when we follow God's rules of engagement, we gain the power to pull down the strongholds erected against us.

In his book, *God's Best*, Randall J. Brewer illustrates to us through Holy Scripture how to build our spiritual strength, maintain our strength in times of peace, and win our battles, because it is all about winning.

"For this reason you were born." -Randall J. Brewer

Paul Baker, Publisher and Covenant Partner of Randall J. Brewer

## INTRODUCTION THE CELEBRATION OF LIFE by Randall J. Brewer

www.i I am so excited! Today is here and I get to do something I've never done before. I get to live today! That's right! Never before has there been this particular date in time. Never! It did not exist yesterday and it will not be here tomorrow.

Today is the only day in all eternity that we will be able to live on this date in time. The only day! Just as the Lord creates and shapes and molds each individual person, so does He make each and every day. The Bible tells us,

"This is the day the Lord has made..."  $P_{S \ 118:24}$ 

Why did He make this day? So we could,

"...rejoice and be glad in it" and live it to the fullest.

The word "live" is a form of the word "life" and I am truly a lover of life. Just as a sunbather seeks to soak in all the rays of the sun, I also try to soak in all the blessings of life that today has to offer.

I will rise with a smile on my face and I will rejoice and be glad in this day that the Lord has made. I will thank the Lord for the dew on the grass and the rising sun in the eastern sky. I will thank Him for the clothes on my back and for the air that I breath. I will thank Him for everything, especially for the fact that I am able to live another day. In return for the gift of today, I will celebrate it with all that is within me.

There is truly not enough thankfulness in the world. Too many people gripe and complain about too many things. They do not realize that those "things" which they do have can be taken away in an instant. They think "more" is better, yet they are not grateful for what they do have.

> "You fool," the Bible says, "today your soul will be required of you." <sup>Luke 12:20</sup>

Time passes quickly and before they know it their life is over. The sad part is that they have not truly lived.

You see, life comes in the form of a Person. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life." <sup>John 14:6</sup> When I celebrate life, I am actually celebrating Jesus. And when I celebrate Jesus, I am celebrating life! This is the reason He came. Jesus said,

"I have come that you might have and enjoy your life and have it more abundantly." John 10:10

A person who has life in abundance will wake up thankful and will set off determined to make the most of whatever that day has to offer.

D.L. Moody once said that you can spend your life on whatever you want but you can only spend it once. That is something to seriously consider the next time you wake up in the morning. Life is worth living. It truly is. Life is a gift from God and the quality of your life is determined solely by what you do with it.

Life is what you make it and the good life always begins with the love of life. The love of life can overcome whatever pitfalls the day may bring. It can cause a stirring inside of you that propels you up and above the difficulties you may face on any given day.

Jesus! Love! Life! They are all one and the same. If you have Jesus, you have love. And if you have love, you have life. If you have life, you have Jesus! Oh, the glory of it all!

You cannot love life without first loving the giver of life. Jesus

makes life worth living and He is worthy to be praised. That is reason enough to celebrate life. Yes, today is like no other. It is the only day we have.

The question is, "What will you do with it?" Personally, I will rejoice and be glad in it. I will celebrate Jesus, the giver of life.

Yes, life is worth celebrating!

Celebrate

1

any years ago, a world renowned newscaster would always end his program with these words, "And that's the way it is." When hard times come, many believers say the same thing. "That's the way it is. Whatever will be will be." They then go off and have a lousy day and wonder where God is while all this calamity is going on.

These same people are a walking testimony of what the Bible says in Hosea 4:6,

"My people and destroyed for a lack of knowledge."

Surprisingly, the number of people who don't know all the glorious things that's been made available to them is phenomenal. For some reason they've always seen less than what God intended to show them. They put God in a box and continually struggle when it comes to believing a big God for big things. They can't grasp with their mind what is said in 3 John 2,

"I pray that you will prosper and be in health even as your soul prospers."

The Message© Bible says,

"We're the best of friends, and I pray for good fortune in everything you do, and for your good health - that your everyday affairs prosper, as well as your soul!"

Your mind and the way you think is part of your soul, and "soul prosperity" is achieved when you study the Word and fill your mind with the knowledge of God, and all that He desires to give you foremost, which is a good life. Most people would be shocked were they to find out that, more times than not, their hardship came as a result of a lack of knowledge more than the trial itself. There is however, a ray of hope for believers living in the last days...

Hab. 2:14 says,

"For the earth will be filled with the knowledge

of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

Notice it doesn't say "the glory of the Lord" will cover the earth. It says the "knowledge" of the glory of the Lord will cover the earth. How will this prophetic word come into manifestation?

The answer is found in Is. 60:1-3,

"Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the Lord will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising."

The "glory of God" can be described as the radiant, visible, manifestation of the presence of God. Ezekiel saw the glory of God coming in waves rolling in like a tide <sup>Ezek. 47:1-9</sup>. The glory is rolling in like a flood, and a flood can't be stopped. As the world gets darker, the church will get brighter and brighter. Where sin abounds, grace does much more abound <sup>Rom. 5:20</sup>. The glory of God will be seen in our lives when the world is at it's darkest hour. It will be in such manifestation in your life that the unsaved will see it. They will look at you and see that you're the head and not the tail, above and not beneath. In other words, they'll see you living the good life.

We read in 1 Cor. 2:14,

"But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

The Message<sup>©</sup> Bible puts a little more light on this,

"The unspiritual self, just as it is by nature, can't receive the gifts of God's Spirit. There's no capacity for them. They seem like so much silliness. Spirit can be known only by spirit - God's Spirit and our spirits in open communion. Spiritually alive, we have access to everything God's Spirit is doing, and can't be judged by unspiritual critics."

How can the heathen of the world see the glory of God if only true believers can understand and discern things in the spiritual realm? Simple. They will see God doing good things to those who are His.

The natural world can tell when God has been good to somebody. Daily our lives should be a testimony to the goodness of God. Moses asked God in Ex. 33:18,

"Please, show me your glory."

God replied in vs. 19,

"I will make My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will

All will see God being good to you. have compassion."

Moses asked to see the glory of God and God showed him His goodness.

Therefore, the glory of God equals the goodness of God. So when Isaiah says the glory of God will be seen upon you, he is actually saying that the heathen will see with their natural eyes God being good to you! That's the glory! The good life is the route that takes you to the top of your mountain.

Jesus is coming back for a glorious church, a church that is walking in the fullness of the glory of God. We are that generation that will see great manifestations of the glory and goodness of God. God is calling each of us to *come up higher* and to go further than we've ever gone before. God wants us to experience the good life while living in the fullness of all the blessings that have already been made available to us. And, praise Jesus, He wants the world to see it, a world that is forever ready and willing to mock and criticize the church of the living God.

The psalmist asks,

"Why should the Gentiles say, Where now is their God?"  $P_{S.}$ 

It is our responsibility and privilege to let the world see the physical manifestations of God's goodness as we enjoy every day of our lives. Living the good life is not a series of exciting events and emotions where we feel like our bodies are being penetrated by millions of needles. Neither should we only be happy on weekends and vacations.

More times than not, normal every day life means you get up, go to work, come home, play with the kids, eat, do the dishes, mow the lawn, watch a little television, go to bed. You then get up the next day and repeat the same process all over again. But when you're addicted to Jesus, when you are living the good life. You will be anointed by God to live ordinary lives while at the same time being extraordinarily joyful. You'll wake up each morning and boldly declare,

"This is the day which the Lord has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it" Ps. 118:24.

You can rejoice because your name is written in the Lamb's book of life, and you can be happy because Jesus is alive in your heart. That alone is reason to celebrate.

### David prayed in Ps. 51:12,

"Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with Your generous Spirit."

With God's generosity comes a joy unspeakable that is overflowing and Neh. 8:10 tells us that the joy of the Lord is our strength. What an awesome scripture! You can enjoy God so much that you'll have the strength to resist whatever it is the devil brings against you.

Yes, we are to take life seriously, but in Jesus we can have fun doing it. After all, He's the glory and the lifter of our head. Paul says in Rom. 14:17 that,

> "The kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

There is a well of joy inside of you, so tap into it. Train yourself to enjoy the normal activities of the day, things like doing the dishes and mowing the lawn. Life is to be enjoyed and not just endured.

A bad day is a wasted day, so

be determined to enjoy every single day you're alive. Don't look at what you don't have, but rejoice in what you do have. Yes, the other man's grass may be greener, but he's also got a bigger water bill than you have. Think about that the next time you're tempted to get envious of what others have and lose your sense of joy. Be happy and content with what you have and believe that God is working behind the scenes changing things in your favor.

You've only got one life to live, but you can only live it once. So enjoy the journey. God's definition of the good life is found in Deut. 28:1-14. Vs. 2 says,

> "And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the Lord your God."

The word "overtake" means 'surprise' and this verse is saying that when you live the good life, the blessings of God will come on you and He will continually surprise you with things you have not even asked Him for. Verse 11 says,

> "And the Lord will grant you plenty of goods, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your ground, in the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers to give you."

In the mind of God, if you are not in the *over and above*, then you have not yet entered into the good life.

The fullness of the good life is overflow, more than enough, above and beyond what you could ask or think <sup>Eph. 3:20</sup>. The Message© Bible translation of John 10:10 says this,

# The fullness of the good life is overflow.

"A thief is only there to steal and kill and destroy. I come so they can have real and eternal life, more

and better life than they ever dreamed of."

The Message<sup>®</sup> Bible also says in 2 Cor. 9:8,9,

"God can pour on the blessings in astonishing ways so that you're ready for anything and everything, more than just ready to do what needs to be done. As one psalmist puts it, 'He throws caution to the winds, giving to the needy in reckless abandon. His right-living, right-giving ways never run out, never wear out."

Like Abraham, you'll be blessed beyond measure, so that you can turn around and be a blessing to somebody else. Verses 10, 11 says,

"This most generous God Who

gives seed to the farmer that becomes bread for your meals is more than extravagant with you. He gives you something you can give away, which grows into full formed lives, robust in God, wealthy in every way, so that you can be generous in every way, producing with us great praise to God."

Our God is extravagant, so much so that,

"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him" <sup>1 Cor. 2:9</sup>.

Success is the result of steady, forward movement and real success involves helping others. This is the path on which God wants you to travel, and once you get on that path and stay on it, there is no way anybody can stop you from living the good life.

Successful people never quit. Paul tells the church in 1 Cor. 15:58 to

> "Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

The Message© Bible says,

"With all this going for us, my

dear, dear friends, stand your ground. And don't hold back. Throw yourselves into the work of the Master, confident that nothing you do for Him is a waste of time or effort."

Thomas Edison once said,

"I start where other men quit."

People are afraid to expect good things in their lives, because they've experienced so many disappointments and failures in the past. Thomas Edison failed thousands of times, but he did not quit.

In order to live the good life we have to forget about the failures of the past and raise the level of our expectations.

Jesus once asked the blind men, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" Matt. 9:28.

When they said,

"Yes, Lord"

Jesus touched their eyes and said,

"According to your faith let it be to you" v. 28.

Our faith limits *and* determines the amount of God's power that is manifested in our lives. This is why we must think big thoughts, because God is able to,

"Do exceedingly abundantly

above all that we ask or think" <sub>Eph. 3:20</sub>.

We cannot be moved by what's happening around us, but instead will only be moved by the Word of God and the image of the good life that we have on the inside of us. What you see down in your spirit will eventually become so real to you that, no matter what the circumstances look like on the outside, you will be fully persuaded that the good life is your destiny.

You were created to be successful; you were created to live the good life. This always has been and always will be God's plan and purpose for your life. This truth was evident way back in the Garden of Eden. Gen. 1:27,28a says,

> "So God created man in His image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then He blessed them..."

Notice that, the first thing God did to Adam and Eve after He created them was, He blessed them.

The word "bless" means 'empowered to prosper,' and after blessing them God gave the command to "be fruitful and multiply" vs. 28. To be fruitful means to be successful, and this is a direct command from God Himself.

We all know sin entered in and God eventually destroyed the earth with a flood, and started things all over again with Noah and his sons. This was a new beginning to the human race and again the first thing God did was bless them. Gen. 9:1 says,

# "Bless" means empowered to prosper.

"So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth."

Again the command was given to be successful. The same thing happened to Abraham <sup>Gen. 17:2, 6</sup>, Isaac <sup>Gen. 26:22</sup>, Jacob <sup>Gen. 28:3</sup>, and Joseph <sup>Gen.</sup> <sup>41:52</sup>. In the New Testament Paul prays in Col. 1:10,

> "That you may have a walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God."

Yes, you too were created to be fruitful and multiply.

#### Success is a choice, not an accident.

Neither is it a one-time event in your life, but instead is a continuous journey. But you must believe for it. We all face impossible situations but Jesus said in Mark 9:23,

"If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes" (also see Matt. 19:26).

Your faith will only rise to the level of your dreams. In other words, if you think small, you'll stay small. Ps. 78:41 tells us that after Moses delivered God's people out of Egypt,

"Again and again they tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel."

How did they limit God? Verse 42a says,

"They did not remember His power..."

With unbelief they questioned the power of God and His willingness to deliver them.

They asked continually, "Can God do this?" and "Can God do that?" They did not comprehend the good life that was waiting for them across the Jordan River in the land of Canaan, the Promised Land. They thought small and they stayed small. With the exception of Joshua and Caleb, that entire generation died off in the wilderness and never experienced the good life. The same scenario happened in Matt. 13:54-58. Jesus traveled to His home town of Nazareth but, "He did not do many mighty miracles there because of their unbelief."

For sure, unbelief limits the ability of God to bless your life. If you think small, you'll stay small. Of course, the solution to all this is to think big thoughts.

God wants to remove every limitation that would hinder you from living the good life. He does that by enlarging your thinking capacity. This is why Paul prayed in Eph. 3:14-20 that we would be able to comprehend all that God has planned for us. You can live the good life, but comprehension comes first. If you can think it, God can do it. If you can mold it in your thoughts, you'll hold it in your hands.

Sad to say, people don't desire the things of God enough. Mark 11:24 says,

"Therefore I say to you, whatever things you desire when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them."

Desire comes before possession. Here's how you live the good life:

- 1. You see a promised blessing in the Word and,
- 2. You desire it in your heart.
- 3. You then imagine receiving

it in your thoughts.

- 4. Next, you believe you receive it when you pray and,
- 5. In God's perfect timing the blessing will be manifested in your life.

In other words, *if you can conceive it, you can receive it.* Your future is in your hands, or, more accurately, in your thoughts. Like an architect, you can design for yourself a better future by reshaping your thought life. When you think like God thinks your future will match His plan for your life.

Jer. 29:11 says,

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope."

Do you have thoughts of victory and not defeat, success and not of failure, prosperity and not poverty, health and not sickness? Verse 14 says,

"I will bring you back from your captivity."

We are all held captive by our negative thoughts and fears. A person's downfall comes when they can't picture themselves getting out of their present condition.

Prov. 23:7 says,

"For as he thinks in his heart, so is he."

Your life goes in the direction of your most dominate thought. Mentor your thoughts. Be selective about what you think about. Your imagination is a God-given gift and without it you can never receive anything from God. This is why God wants you to think big thoughts! We

# We look at the things which are not seen.

read in Is. 54:2, 3,

"Enlarge the place of your tent, and let them stretch out the

curtains of your habitation; Do not spare; lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes. For you shall expand to the right and to the left, and your descendants will inherit the nations, and make the desolate cities inhabited."

Our God is a God of increase, so think big thoughts! You'll disappoint Him if you don't. If times of hardship dominate your life, we can go to 2 Cor. 4 and Paul will tell us what to do. First, he tells us in v.16 to not lose heart. Don't abandon hope and never give up. We then read in v. 18,

> "While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are

temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

The Message© Bible says,

"So we're not giving up. How could we? Even though on the outside it often looks like things are falling apart on us, on the inside, where God is making new life, not a day goes by without His unfolding grace. These hard times are small potatoes compared to the coming good times, the lavish celebration prepared for us. There's far more here than meets the eye. The things we see now are here today, gone tomorrow. But the things we can't see now will last forever."

Think like God thinks and your circumstances will change. That's a promise from God. When all is said and done, the bottom line is that you must be thoroughly and completely be convinced that God has made the good life available to you.

Paul wrote in Rom. 8:38,39,

"For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Paul was convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt that God was willing and able to create for him a good life. He later wrote Timothy,

> "For I know Whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that day" <sup>2</sup> Tim. 1:12b.

People have settled for too less for too long, but by renewing your mind <sup>Rom.12:2</sup>, you can also be fully persuaded that God wants to take away all your limitations. We all must have a fresh mental and spiritual attitude and come up to a higher way of thinking. It cannot be emphasized enough: we must think like God thinks.

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,' says the Lord. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways."

Ps. 45:1a says,

"My heart is overflowing with a good theme..."

On the inside of you think good thoughts, because out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks Matt. 12:34. It's your heart that gives meaning to your words and it's your words that determine your destiny. Count on it: what you talk about is what's going to come to pass in your life. Words are powerful, so take them seriously.

This is how you fight the good fight of faith. A promise from God gives you reason for expectation, but you must stand your ground and not waver. *Nothing comes easy in the Christian faith.* Living the good life is a fight, but too many people are looking for comfortable Christianity. There is no such thing. To live the good life you must stand your ground and think Godly thoughts and speak Godly words. Heb. 10:23 says,

> "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He Who promised is faithful."

The Amplified<sup>©</sup> Bible says to,

"Seize and hold fast, retain without wavering."

The Message<sup>®</sup> Bible says,

"Let's keep a firm grip on the promises that keep us going."

Verse 35 says,

"Therefore do not cast away your confidence which has great reward."

Is. 55:8 says,

The great reward the author speaks of is a good life and it's worth fighting for. To experience the good life, we must have a "no quit" attitude.

Speaking of Abraham we read in Rom. 4:20,

"He did waver at the promise

Think Godly thoughts, speak Godly Words. r at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God."

A promise from God gives you reason for expectation. Expec-

tancy is the twin brother of faith.

#### Faith believes what it can't see, and expectancy reinforces it.

Faith always expects, so stand your ground and don't waver. We read in Ps. 62:5,6,

> "My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be moved."

You get what you expect.

Jesus said to the centurion,

"Go your way; as you have believed, so let it be done for you" Matt. 8:13.

When Jesus says,

"According to your faith, be it done unto you" <sup>Matt. 9:29</sup>,

He is actually saying,

"Become what you believe."

The word "expect" means 'to look for, to fix the eyes upon, to reach for.' It means to be excited and enthusiastic and is founded on the evidence of God's Word and not just wishful thinking. Paul said in Acts 27:25,

"Therefore, take heart (be of good cheer), men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me."

Remember, the perfect will of God is available to you and it's all based on your ability to comprehend it. The good life is determined by a hunger for God, an unending search for Him, and His will for your life.

To experience the good life you must do three things. You must...

1. See it,

2. Say it, and

3. Seize it.

Prov. 29:18a says,

"Where there is no vision, the people perish..."

You must see in the scriptures

the good life God wants you to have. See it with your thoughts and faith imaginations, and then decree it. Say out loud what you believe.

In 1 Sam. 17:37 David said that the giant would fall. Say what you believe.

2 Cor. 4:13 says,

"But since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, 'I believed and therefore I spoke,' we also believe and therefore speak."

Next, you act on what you believe. David ran toward the giant. Placed before him was a God-given opportunity to experience the good life, and with no fear in his heart, he ran toward his dream.

You, too, must do the same thing. Run to your dream! Seize it! Grab onto it and never let go. That's how you experience God's best.

That is how you experience the good life.

he good life is a life where you can daily experience God's best in everything you do. It's life with an exclamation point (!) after it, and will cause ordinary people to live extraordinary lives.

God has unclaimed blessings waiting for all of us if only we would allow our desire to reach out for that good life that will bring honor to Him for all time.

#### How do you grab hold of the good life?

The Message© Bible says in Matt. 7:7-11,

"Don't bargain with God. Be direct. Ask for what you need. This isn't a cat-and-mouse, hide-and-seek game we're in. If your child asks for bread, do you trick him with sawdust? If he asks for fish, do you scare him with a live snake on his plate? As bad as you are, you wouldn't think of such a thing. You're at least decent to your own children. So don't you think the God who conceived you in love will be even better?"

Jesus said in vs.7,

#### "Ask, and it will be given to you."

Following is an example of a man who did just that. Hidden deep within the endless genealogies of the book of 1 Chronicles is a gem of a prayer that should be grasped and prayed aloud by each one of us. Known as "the prayer of Jabez" it goes as follows,

#### "Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!" <sup>1</sup> Chron. 4:10</sup>.

Jabez was an honorable man <sup>v.9</sup> who asked God to...

- Bless his life beyond measure;
- He wanted his life and everything about it to be successful and wonderful;

- His heart's desire was to be productive, prosperous, and fulfilled in every way;
- He wanted his life to be extraordinary;
- In other words, he wanted to live the good life.

It should be a motivation and encouragement to all of us that God granted his request. Our God is a good God, and He once described Himself as,

"The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth" Ex.34:6.

This is so amazing! The very nature of God is to have extraordinary goodness in so much abundance, that it overflows into our ordinary lives. God's nature is to bless and if He would do this for Jabez, we can have the confidence that He is more than willing to do the same for us.

Paul wrote in Eph. 2:7,8 <sup>MSG</sup>,

"Now God has us right where He wants us, with all the time in this world and the next to shower grace and kindness upon us in Christ Jesus. Saving is all His idea, and all His work. All we do is trust Him enough to let Him do it." He then goes on to say in v. 10 <sup>AMP</sup>,

"For we are God's own handiwork (His workmanship), recreated in Christ Jesus, born anew that we may do those good works which God predestined (planned beforehand) for us, taking paths which He prepared ahead of time, that we should walk in them, living the good life which He prearranged and made ready for us to live".

God wants you blessed and He wants you to be happy all the days of your life. Paul told Timothy,

"Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, Who gives us richly all things to enjoy" <sup>1</sup> Tim. 6:17</sup>.

The Message<sup>©</sup> Bible says,

"Tell them to go after God, Who piles on all the riches we could ever manage..."

God wants to bless you so much that He sent His only Son to live and die so all the world could live the good life and reap the benefits of His ultimate sacrifice.

Rom. 8:31,32 tells us,

"What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He Who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

Our precious Savior, Who loves us so much that He bled and died for our salvation, has made available to those who believe a life of joy, happiness, and victory. It's

Rise to the heights of Christ's love. a life where all our needs are met <sup>Phil. 4:19</sup> and all our desires are fulfilled with glorious splendor <sup>Ps. 37:4</sup>. God has so

many wonderful blessings in store for us that, if we for only a moment could comprehend it all, we'd be overwhelmed with His goodness. Indeed, He is a good God and He wants us to live the good life!

David wrote in Ps. 23:1 NIV,

"The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing."

A few verses later we read,

"Surely Your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life" (vs.6a).

David knew that if he would continue to "dwell in the house of the Lord forever" <sup>v. 6b</sup>, then he would live the good life. Sad to say, many people never really manage to enjoy their lives and obtain from God all that He has made available to them. They spend day after day, year after year, just going through the motions, hoping things will get better. They don't realize that the good life won't come to them by chance, but instead must be vigorously pursued with all they have.

Before people can experience the good life they must first,

"Be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height – to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the goodness of God" <sup>Eph. 3:18,19</sup>.

In the Message<sup>®</sup> Bible, Paul desires that "you'll be able to take in with all Christians the extravagant dimensions of Christ's love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test it's length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! Live full lives, full in the fullness of God."

The word "comprehend" means 'to seize, to grasp, to take hold of, to completely understand.' Living the good life is all based on your ability to comprehend it, and it is determined by an unquenching thirst and hunger for God. People need to open their Bibles and obey the Word, and pursue with aggressive determination and relentless boldness the abundant life that right-fully belongs to them. God has promised to give those who believe for everything they need to live a joy-filled life where they can become the happy, healthy, victorious champions that God, by His eternal grace and favor, has already made them to be.

In order to escape from the shackles of mediocrity, people need to stretch their faith and go beyond where they're at now. God said in Deut. 1:6,

"You have dwelt long enough at this mountain."

There is more God wants us to have, but we first have to get off the mountain we are on. God is ready to take us to the next level, but first we must get new dreams and set new goals.

Christians who desire to live extraordinary lives should refrain from setting ordinary goals such as is common in the ordinary world. When people of the world think of the good life, they usually think of material prosperity, of pleasure and popularity. For some it's a comfortable home that's paid for and having sufficient money for a winter vacation in the sun, plus a summer home on some deserted beach.

The world is after fame and fortune, the latest fashion of designer

clothes, fast cars and big houses, diamond rings, and a membership at a high class country club and golf course. Popular culture today is centered on ones own selfish ambitions and success. People of the world believe that he who dies with the most toys wins.

The cravings of this world is ever consuming, for there is always the next hottest fashion, or to get the latest electronic gadget that you must add to your collection. After all, one must keep up with the neighbors, right?

Sad to say, the goals the world sets are goals which many never achieve. Achievement does not insure happiness and those who fail to achieve their goals are made even more miserable by their failure. Even a casual observer would agree that most wealthy, high-living and famous people are not happy, and thus are not living the good life.

What good if fame and fortune if you're not happy? Yet these same people continue to seek after these worldly things without realizing that they are on a road that will lead to their eternal doom.

The desire to live the good life is not new. It's been the dream of every generation since the dawn of time. It's been the goal of teachers and philosophers, of kings, and common man. Living the good life is a good desire, a Godly desire, but we must take the first step and learn not to make material possessions, pleasures, and fame our goals in life. Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived (next to Jesus, of course) once wrote,

"He who loves silver will not

Living the good life is a Godly desire. be satisfied with silver; nor he who loves abundance, with increase, this also is vanity" <sup>Eccl.</sup> <sup>5:10</sup>

For sure, the pursuit of the good life must originate in the spiritual realm of the heavenly domain, regardless of the physical circumstances in which one might find themselves. Jesus taught in Luke 12:15 that there is more to life than material possessions,

"And He said to them, 'Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.""

The Message© Bible says,

"Life is not defined by what you have, even when you have a lot."

Jesus warns of the folly of seeking after earthly riches Matt. 6:19 but instead encourages us to

"Lay up for yourselves treasures

in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal" v. 20.

The great blessing about living the good life is that once we learn not to make material possessions, worldly pleasures, and self-centered fame our primary goal in life, but to instead make following Jesus and His teachings our main objective, He then steps in and blesses us with an unexpected and abundant portion of these very things. Matt. 6:33 says,

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

Prov. 10:22 says,

"The blessing of the Lord makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it."

What the world cannot give, Jesus can. He offers a peace which things of the world cannot give and a joy that is complete and full <sup>John 15:11;</sup> <sup>1 Peter 1:8</sup>.

The bottom line is that God wants to be first in your life. Paul writes in Col. 3:2,

"Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth."

The Message<sup>®</sup> Bible puts it this way,

"Pursue the things over which Christ presides. Don't shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. Look up, and be alert to what is going on around Christ - that's where the action is. See things from His perspective."

Without a doubt, Jesus is the ultimate and only path to the good life. We read in 1 John 2:15,

"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

Without Jesus, the world is a very sinful and wicked place. It can be described as a community of sinful humanity that possesses a spirit of rebellion against God. 1 John 5:19 says,

"We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one."

Because of it's opposition to God, the world values those things that are contrary to God's will. 1 John 2:16 says,

"For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world."

The attraction of the world and it's sensual pleasures is amplified

by Satan who is head of the world system. He is called the "ruler of this world" <sup>John 12:31</sup> and the whole world is said to be under his power.

The solution to the love of the world is to have a greater love for God. The Christian who seeks daily to please God in everything and who strives for spiritual growth need not fall prey to the seducing temptations of the world. The Message© translation of 1 John 2:15-17 says,

> "Don't love the world's ways. Don't love the world's goods. Love of the world squeezes out love for the Father. It just isolates you from Him. The world and all it's wanting, wanting, wanting is on the way out - but whoever does what God wants is set for eternity."

It goes without saying that nobody will experience the good life without a close, personal relationship with the Triune God. Don't spend your life seeking things that don't have the power within itself to please you. No, seek God Who gives you all things to enjoy. Jesus said in John 1:6a,

"I am the way, the truth, and the life..."

Since Jesus is good and everything about Him is good, this

verse can be rendered,

"I am the good way, the good truth, and the good life..."

The reality of it all is that the "good life" is a person and His name is Jesus. God wants to have an exciting, deep, intimate, and personal relationship with you, but first you must crave, pursue, and go

# The Good Life is a person. His name is Jesus.

after Him with all your might.

Unless you invest your time and energy in seeking Him

regularly throughout the day, you will surely miss out on the good life and all the wonderful blessings He has waiting for you.

Our God is a good God, but He must be sought after to be found. So seek Him on purpose. Seek Him by design. Get up early and spend time with your Heavenly Father and Your savior Jesus Christ. Tell the Holy Spirit how much He means to you.

#### Think about them, talk about them, communicate with them all day long.

The danger of not putting God first is constant. Sometimes we get so busy doing things "for" God that we don't spend the right amount of time "with" God. He may bless you with a new house, but you spend all your time taking care of it. Or maybe He blesses you with a promotion at your job, and now you work more hours a day and most weekends, and when you're home you're too tired to do anything else. You cannot let these "things" come between you and God. If you want to spend time with God bad enough, you will find the time to do it.

For some people it's easier to give money than time but God wants a relationship with you more than He wants your money. Determine in your heart to put God first in everything you do and He'll honor whatever effort you make.

And don't forget Deut. 30:19,20,

"I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them." It's a choice you make so choose life. Bet- ter yet, choose the good life.

A special promise is given to all serious God seekers in Deut. 4:29,

"But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul."

Be more than a Sunday Christian and stop seeking God during times of need, and ignore Him the rest of the time when things are going good. We've got to keep God in the place that rightfully belongs to Him, which is first place in our lives.

If you will give the first portion of your time, and seek Him consistently on a regular basis, it will be the answer to every problem you'll ever have. You cannot stay strong in the Lord if you don't spend quality time with Him. It won't take long to realize that when you truly seek God from your heart and soul. You won't find some form of God or a false religion. Instead, you will find the one true and living God.

You don't have to be educated, famous, or wealthy. It doesn't matter if you are young or old, male or female, lonely or happy, rich or healthy, or completely Bible illiterate. When you seek Him with all your heart you will find Him and He will get you through all the roadblocks of life. God promises that while seeking Him you are never on your own. Hosea 10:12 says,

> "Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, till He comes and rains righteousness on you."

Now is the time to seek the Lord, because He is longing to have fellowship with you. James 4:8 says,

"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you."

Notice who takes the first step. You do! David wrote in Ps. 63:1,

"O God, You are my God; Early will I seek You; My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water."

He says in vs. 6,

"When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches."

David sought God in the morning when he arose and at night when he went to bed, and every minute in between. He sought the Lord nonstop, because he was a man after God's own heart. It goes without saying that when your heart is sold out to Jesus you will do whatever it takes to seek Him out and spend time with Him.

Ps. 84:2 says,

"My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the Lord; My heart and my flesh cry out for the **Intimacy with** living God."

God...comes seeking Him.

Ps. 42:1,2a says,

**g Him.** "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God."

The very purpose of man's existence is to seek God,

"For in Him we live and move and have our being" <sup>Acts 17:28a</sup>.

Intimacy with God and the fullest possible fellowship and partnership with Him comes as you desire and seek to know Him. Prayer and spending time with God is all about desire and passion. David wrote in Ps. 27:4,

"One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple."

The "beauty of the Lord" can also be translated "the delightfulness of the Lord." Yes, seeking and finding God is a pure delight. Jesus prayed to the Father in John 17:3,

> "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."

When you love someone it is only natural that you want to know them more and more. It takes time and effort and desire and determination to know God.

## Being fully devoted to God is a lifelong process.

The Greek word for "devoted" means to 'latch on to and refuse to let go.' Latch on to Jesus and make knowing Him your main desire in life. Nothing will please Him more. And the more you know Jesus the more you will love Him and trust Him and delight in Him. It's what the good life is all about.

God is seeking for those who will seek Him. Ps. 53:2 says,

"God looks down from hea-ven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God." The word "seek" means,

- To desire;
- To examine or explore;
- To seek earnestly;
- To diligently search for;
- To crave;
- To investigate;
- To pursue.

God is worthy of your praise and the more you know Him the more you will reverence Him and be in awe of Him. The word "praise" means 'to place great value on someone,' so when you praise God you are communicating how much you care for Him and value Him. And when you do this, God will reach down and touch your heart and give you the desire to seek and know Him more.

He said in Jer. 24:7,

"For I will set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them back to their land; I will build them and not pull them down, and I will plant them and not pluck them up. Then I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with all their heart."

You should always be seeking

to know Him better, to have a closer, more personal relationship with Him. Your desire should be that you can communicate with God as a child would his or her parent. This is His desire and He is forever ready to draw you into His bosom.

He must, however, be sought after to be found. The good news is that you don't seek Him in vain. If you will seek Him with all your heart you will find Him.

Deut. 30:6 says,

"And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live."

With the Lord's help you are to seek Him continually <sup>1 Chron. 16:11</sup> and wholeheartedly. Jer. 29:12,13 says,

> "Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart."

You need to become like those in the old testament who,

"Entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul; and whoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel was to be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman. Then they took an oath before the Lord with a loud voice, with shouting and trumpets and rams' horns. And all Judah rejoiced at the oath, for they had sworn with all their heart and sought Him

"And you will seek Me and find Me." with all their soul; and He was found by them, and the Lord gave them rest all around" <sup>2</sup> Chron. 15:12-15</sup>.

God rewards those who seek Him diligently. Consider Prov. 8:17, 18,

"I love those who love Me, and those Who seek me diligently will find Me. Riches and honor are with Me, enduring riches and righteousness." Seeking God with all your heart will bring you joy unspeakable.

Ps. 70:4 says,

"Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; and let those who love Your salvation say continually, 'Let God be magnified!"

We also read in Ps. 105:3,

"Glory in His holy name; Let the hearts of those rejoice who seek

the Lord."

Peace and rest will be yours when you seek God above all else. 2 Chron.14:7 says,

"...we have sought Him, and He has given us rest on every side."

Divine revelation will come to you and secrets will be revealed when you seek God. He tells us in Jer. 33:3,

"Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know."

Along with all this will come perception and understanding in all things. Prov. 28:5 says,

> "Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the Lord will understand all."

We have seen that joy comes when you seek God and along with that will come strength and maturity. Ps. 105:3,4 says,

> "Glory in His holy name; Let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the Lord. Seek the Lord and His strength; Seek His face forevermore."

The Lord says in Jer. 9:24a,

"But let him who glories glory in this, that He understands and knows Me..." Let's not forget what Paul said in Eph. 1:17,18,

"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints."

The Message© Bible says Paul asked God,

"To make you intelligent and discerning in knowing Him personally, your eyes focused and clean, so that you can see exactly what it is He is calling you to do."

Prosperity and supernatural provision comes as a result of seeking God. David wrote in Ps. 34:8-10,

"Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him! Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him. The young lions lack and suffer hunger; But those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing."

Uzziah "sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the vision of God; and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper."

Finally, a sense of security will overcome you as you seek the Lord and become wrapped in His loving embrace. Ps. 31:23,24 tells us,

> "Oh, love the Lord, all you His saints! For the Lord preserves the faithful, and fully repays the proud person. Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all you who hope in the Lord."

David taught us to trust in the Lord and be not afraid when he wrote,

> "One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek; That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple. For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; In the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock" <sup>Ps. 27: 4,5</sup>.

No wonder he lived the good life.

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ake no mistake about it, God wants to be your friend. Sad to say, there are not too many people who have this type of relationship with God, but it's available to all of us.

To be friends with God one must first understand what friendship is. Prov. 18:24 says,

"A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."

The Living<sup>©</sup> Bible says,

"There are friends who pretend to be friends..."

There are two types of friends. There are "pretenders" and there are those "who stick closer than a brother." Most of the people we call friends are not friends at all. They'll talk to you, laugh with you, work with you, and play with you. They appear to be friends with everybody, but the Amplified<sup>©</sup> Bible says,

"A person who is a friend to every body in the world is a bad friend."  $^{\rm James\,4:4}$ 

They are there during the good times but are no where to be found when things get rough. There is, however, a kind of friend who will stick by you through any problem, circumstance, and trial. They're there for you during times of sickness, financial woes, marital problems, and any other type of need. David and Jonathan had a friendship like this. They laid their lives down for one another and their relationship went far beyond the bonds of blood kinship. This is the type of relationship God wants to have with you.

There are certain kinds of friendships that you can enter into and be involved in that, when you get into a bad situation, you'd rather get hold of your friend than your own brother or sister. This is the kind of friend that God would like to be with you, the kind of friend that won't run away during times of trouble. God wants to enter into this type of relationship with you and He wants you to enter into this type of relationship with Him.

We need this "stick closer than a brother" attitude with our spouse, other believers, and especially with God. This type of relationship with God goes beyond the normal father/ child relationship. It goes way beyond that. Yes, it encompasses that relationship, but it encircles more than that. You must, however, let God be your friend.

If you don't want this type of relationship with God, He won't force Himself off on you. When Jesus set free the mad man of Gadera, the people asked Jesus to leave and go away from them. They didn't want to be friends with Him. So what did Jesus do? He left. He didn't argue with them and He didn't force Himself on them. God won't force Himself on anybody.

Why did the people of Gadera tell Jesus to leave their presence? People come against what they don't understand. Even today people reject Jesus and don't accept Him with opened arms, because they don't understand Him. They think He's standing over them with a baseball bat ready to clobber them on the head if they trip up and fail. They don't understand that God is a loving God, that He is kind and merciful.

The problem in marriages and most other relationships is some form of misunderstanding. What people don't understand– they will come against. Too many people don't understand God and what He is like, who He is, and how He does things. Because of their lack of knowledge and understanding, they're against having a close relationship with Him.

#### It takes time and effort to understand God and what He wants to do in your life.

Also, most people don't want to make the commitment to do this. The good news is that when you understand that God wants to become your friend then you won't have any problem becoming His.

We read in Exodus 33:11a,

"So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to a friend."

A friend is a person you can talk to about anything, and the Lord talked to Moses as a friend, face to face. Why did God do this with Moses? Because of the desire in the heart of Moses to know Him. Verse 13 says,

> "Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show

me Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight."

Moses wanted to be friends with God. He wanted to know God in a personal way. When he said, "Show me Your way," he was saying he wanted to know God better and have an intimate knowledge of who

## Moses wanted to be friends with God.

He is. He wanted to know God! How did God respond to his request?

"Then the Lord said to Moses, 'I will also do this thing that you have spoken; for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name."" Exodus 33:17

The more you know God and understand Him, the more His grace will be poured out into your life. The question to be asked is this: Does God know you be name? Do you know Him by name?

Abraham is the only man in the Bible called "the friend of God" <sup>2</sup> <sup>Chron. 20:7</sup>. In Hebrew the word "friend" means 'to have affection for' and three times God called Abraham His personal friend. God treasured their friendship so much that He took time out to discuss His plans with His friend Abraham (see Gen. 18:16-33). Abraham had input on what God did, as Moses also did in later years. And because Abraham was His friend, God did everything Abraham asked of Him. This is why Abraham was so abundantly blessed and was able to live the good life. God treasured their friendship and He wants to have the same type of relationship with you.

If you are God's friend you will abide and continually stay in His love <sup>John 15:9,10</sup>. That's a good place to be, for this is where you become the object of God's affection.

This is where Jesus was, as was Abraham. The Bible records that God unloaded His affection and blessings on Abraham and we can enter into the same type of relationship. Jesus said in John 15:15,

"No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you."

Think about it. You are "called" to be a friend of God, and as God's friend you can know everything Jesus knows.

Friendship with God is the reason you were created.

Gen. 1:26a says,

"Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to our likeness..."

Why did God do this? Why didn't He make a monkey in His image instead? Because He wanted somebody to be friends with. God wasn't lonely, but a friend was the desire of His heart. He wanted somebody in His image that He could fellowship with and be friends with.

In the garden of Eden, He came down in the cool of the evening and had fellowship with His friend Adam. They walked together and they talked together. Adam was made in the image of God, and this means he knew how God did things. When you are God's friend He knows how you function and you know how He functions. This gives you something to talk about. When you're friends with somebody their interests become your interest. When you are God's friend, He'll show you things to come. He'll talk to you about His plans. This is why He created you, to be His friend.

It is important to understand that, just because God loves you, doesn't mean He enjoys hanging around with you. You "pal around" with friends. Yes God loves you, but He wants to get friendly with you. You tell your friends your secrets and plans. You visit your friends just to hang around with them. God is your Heavenly Father, but He wants to take it beyond the Father/ child relationship. He wants to take it a step further and this takes time and effort. You don't become friends overnight.

To become friends with God takes,

- Instruction
- Discipline
- Training
- Time, and
- A whole lot of love.

There are no short-cuts. There are things that only time and experience can mature you in. Some things you can't learn in a book.

Friendship with God has many blessings and rewards. Today there are many who love to hang around with people for the crumbs that fall from their table. Friendship with God will give you more than crumbs. It will bring true riches and blessings into your life. It will allow you to live the good life.

In Psalm 15 David gives us some principles for friendship and intimacy with God. Verse 1 says,

"Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill?"

King David had a deep desire to be included on God's guest list, because he placed high value on friendship with God. His spirit was sensitive to the blessing and approval of God. All his life David vigorously pursued God's friendship <sup>Ps. 27:4</sup>. He was a man after God's own heart and

## For you are my Rock and my Fortress.

this is what qualified him to be a friend of God.

**Fortress.** David knew that God chooses His friends carefully and blesses them liberally. Friendship with God gives our life stability. It's like a shelter in the time of storm. Ps. 15:5b says,

"He who does these things shall not be moved."

Another translation says you will,

"...never, never be cast out of course, be fallen in decay."

Yes, your feet will be planted on the Rock of your salvation.

God's friendship will give you a good name. Prov. 22:1 says,

"A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches" (see also Eccl. 7:1).

A person is known by the friends they keep. God's friendship gives your life direction in the midst

of confusion and uncertainty. Ps. 31:3 says,

"For You are my rock and my fortress; Therefore, for Your name's sake, lead me and guide me."

Also, God says in Ps. 32:8,

"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye."

Seek God's guidance for all the decisions you have to make about your destiny. Friendship with God is like being a blind man who gets his sight. God's friendship gives us a reason to live, a reason to get up in the morning. Some people die at age 20, and stop breathing at age 80. For 60 years they work at a job they hate for a boss they envy. Why do they do this? So they can go home and get drunk, fight with their spouse, and fall asleep in front of the television set.

But if you are God's friend, He will have a different plan and purpose for your life.

Jesus said in John 15:16,

"You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may

#### give you."

Let's not forget Eph. 2:10,

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

We live the good life so that we can perform good works unto our Lord and Savior. The Message<sup>®</sup> Bible puts it this way,

"He creates each of us by Christ Jesus to join Him in the work He does, the good work He has gotten ready for us to do, work we had better be doing."

Friendship with God transforms us from being a boring person into a blessing to those we come in contact with. This is all part of living the good life.

Finally, God's friendship will help you finish life well. Ps. 112:5,6 says,

"A good man deals graciously and lends; He will guide his affairs with discretion. Surely he will never be shaken; The righteous will be in everlasting remembrance."

Therefore, if you want stability, a good name, life-long direction, a reason to live and the rich reward of finishing life well, then determine to be a friend of God and make proper life style choices. In every relationship we have, there is an unwritten code of conduct that we must submit to and follow. Realize that it's our life style choices that qualify us to be called the friend of God.

Friendship with God is promoted by clean moral living. David said the person who may dwell in the presence of God in His holy hill is,

> "He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks truth in his heart" Ps. 15:2.

To be blameless does not mean to be sinless. It means to have a manner of life that is upright. Ps. 84:11 says,

> "For the Lord God is a sun and shield; The Lord will give grace and glory; No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly."

Personal integrity is so important and God insists on having a friendship with you that is based on the foundation of truth <sup>Eph.</sup> <sup>4:25</sup>. David continues in Ps. 15:3,

> "He who does not backbite with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor does he take up a reproach against his friend."

Friendship with God is promoted not by gossip or backbiting, but by speaking positive words of blessing to others. James 4:11 says,

> "Do not speak evil of one brethren. He who another. speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of

## evil of one another.

the law and judges Do not speak the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge."

> People all over the world have a need to be loved, and God has assigned to His friends the task of giving it to them. People everywhere crave acceptance, affection, appreciation, approval, and attention. Loving our neighbor as we love ourselves all begins by keeping watch over the words we speak. Paul says in Phil. 4:8,

"Finally, brethren,

- Whatever things are true,
- Whatever things are noble,
- Whatever things are just,
- Whatever things are pure,
- Whatever things are lovely,
- Whatever things are of good report,
- If there is any virtue and,

• If there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things."

For certain, people who keep watch over their tongues are good friends with God <sup>1 Peter 2:1</sup>.

Friendship with God is promoted by choosing good role models. Ps. 15:4a says,

> "In whose eyes a vile person is despised, but he honors those who fear the Lord."

Who are your role models? Immoral actors in Hollywood or drug taking rock musicians? Professional athletes who cheat on their wives and often get arrested for drunk driving? Is. 32:5 tells us,

"The foolish person will no longer be called generous, nor the miser said to be bountiful."

The friends of God honor Godly people, not scoundrels and fools

Psalm 15:4b says,

"He who swears to his own hurt and does not change."

Friendship with God is promoted by keeping your word and the vows you make. Also, God's friends don't hit people when they are down. Ps. 15:5 says,

"He who does not put out his

money at usury, nor does he take a bribe against the innocent."

God's friends don't take advantage of poor people and those who are struggling. Lev. 25:35-37 says,

"And if one of your brethren becomes poor, and falls into poverty among you, then you should help him, like a stranger or sojourner, that he may live with you. Take no usury or interest from him; but fear your God; that your brother may live with you. You shall not lend him money for usury, nor lend him food at a profit."

Friendship with God is promoted by treating people justly. Yes, God loves friends who live by the Golden Rule, those who are a doer of the Word of God and not hearers only. 2 Peter 1:10 says,

> "Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your calling and selection sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble."

The Message© Bible translates Peter's description of the good life this way,

> "So, friends, confirm God's invitation to you, His choice of you. Don't put it off; do it now. Do this, and you'll have your life on a firm footing, the streets

paved and the way wide open into the eternal kingdom of our Master and Savior, Jesus Christ."

God gave this testimony about David,

"I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will" Acts 13:22.

As you can see, your actions are the determining factor as to whether or not you become a friend with God and thus live the good life. It all begins with you.

You can wake up each morning knowing that God wants to be a friend to you that sticks closer than a brother. He sent Jesus to die for you so that you could be His friend.

Sad to say, you can have a relationship with somebody and not be their friend. The reason this is true is that it takes time, effort, desire, and sacrifice to cultivate such a friendship. Too many people don't have or don't take the time to seek God in a proper way. They're always in a hurry doing this and that. They don't seem to realize that,

#### ...if you're too busy for God, you're too busy.

People need to sacrifice whatever it is they're doing and seek God like never before. They need to know Him and Who He is. Moses and David both had a desire to know God in a close and personal way. Abraham was willing to offer up his son Isaac, because he wasn't going to let anything interfere with his friendship with God.

To "seek God" means to have a face to face relationship with Him. This means God has your undivided attention and you have His. Heb. 11:6 says that God,

This is not the time to check out of here. "Is a rewarder of those who

seek

diligently

Him."

What does He reward you with? A good life. Too many people know about God, but don't "know" God. Why? Because they don't seek, crave, and pursue Him with all their heart and soul. God must be sought after to be found. Meeting somebody doesn't mean you "know" them. It takes a face to face relationship to get intimate with somebody, and fellowship is the key to really getting to know someone. When you "know" somebody in a close, personal way you will stick to them like glue. You become one with them and an intimate relationship is the result thereof. Before long, your lives will mingle with one another.

When you know God you'll start conceiving things down in your spirit. You'll get pregnant with a vision that God wants you to live a good life. A miracle is inside of you and it will be confirmed with signs following.

Jesus prayed in John 17:3,

"And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You sent."

Eternal life is a good life and comes when your life is intertwined with God's. It is interesting to note that when you mingle with God, the devil can't tell you apart. You'll look like God, talk like God, act like God, think, love, forgive, walk, and have dominion like God. This is all part of God's plan to give you a good life, and fellowship is the key that will cause this to become a reality in your life.

There are **FOUR** decisions you can make that will help you cultivate a strong, binding friendship with God.

The first decision you can make is to **BECOME A WORSHIPPER OF GOD**.

Paul told the church at Rome, brothers and sisters who were friends with one another, to

"Greet one another with a holy kiss" Rom. 16:16.

To become friends with God we must do the same thing to

Him. How does one "kiss" God? Through praise and worship. Jesus said in John 4 :23,

"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him."

#### 2 Chron. 16:9 says,

"For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him."

If you are a friend of God, He will show Himself strong on your behalf and this will cause you to live a good life. Tell the Lord to search no more. Tell Him you're ready, able, and willing to become His friend.

God is searching for those who will be loyal to Him and become His friend. What do you think will happen when God finds such a person? He'll "buddy" up to you. He'll "pal around" with you night and day. God inhabits the praises of His people <sup>Ps. 22:3</sup>.

The word "inhabit" means 'to settle, sit down, dwell. When you praise God and become His friend, He'll sit down and dwell with you. Let's face it, everybody likes praise. People like praise, cats and dogs like praise, and God likes praise. When a person compliments you, something rises up on the inside of you causing you to respond back to that person in a positive way. You just naturally want to bless them back and this is how God is. So praise God continually because He wants to do something good to you.

During times of trouble back off from the situation and praise God. You don't have to memorize and quote every verse in the Bible concerning the trial you're going through. No, just praise God for Who He is. When you do, God will show up and sit down and dwell with you.

God is forever looking to give something to somebody somewhere, so if you decide to be a worshipper, you'll be right in the center of whatever it is God is doing. It will put you in the secret place of the Most High, a place that promotes and gives to those who dwell there a good life.

#### The second decision you must make to become a friend of God is to **BE DETERMINED TO ALWAYS LIVE BY FAITH**.

Let's face it, we can't please Him without it <sup>Heb. 11:6a</sup>. When you choose to live by faith you've made the decision to please God. Rev. 4:11 tells us that all things have been created for His pleasure,

"You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, and by Your will (for Thy pleasure) they exist and were created."

Why do you think you were

## Faith is a firm conviction, a lifestyle.

born in the first place? You were created to give God pleasure, and your friendship with Him is what

He values most. Never forget, you were created to be God's friend and nothing pleases Him more than when His friends live by faith.

You have faith <sup>Rom. 12:3</sup> and you need to have faith in your faith.

#### Your faith got you born again and that's the greatest miracle of all.

If your faith can do that, it can get you anything else. Begin to actively engage yourself in the lifestyle of faith.

Everything you do should be by faith. Never take a vacation from your faith, but use and apply your faith to everything you do. Faith is the confidence of "knowing that you know", a firm conviction based on hearing the Word of God spoken out your mouth. If you don't have confidence in whatever it is you are doing, then you are not in faith and neither are you pleasing God.

Faith is a lifestyle, so live totally and completely by faith all the time. The just shall live by faith and it is a constant expression that we believe God and what He says. When you believe God with all you got, then your friendship with Him will surely blossom. Faith isn't hard. God is dedicated to faith and He doesn't ask us to do anything that He doesn't do Himself. God lives by faith and when you do what He does, you'll become His friend.

How does God walk by faith? He "calls those things which do not exist as though they did."

The Amplified© Bible says God,

"Speaks of non-existent things that He has foretold and promised as though they already existed" <sup>Rom. 4:17</sup>. *That's faith!* 

Verse 18 says this about Abraham,

"Who, contrary to hope, in hope believed so that he became the father of many nations."

Verses 20, 21 says,

"He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform."

Abraham was a man of faith. In fact, he is called "the father of our faith." Is it any wonder that God called him His friend?

# THREE

The third thing you can do to cultivate a friendship with God is to **MAKE THE DECISION TO OBEY HIM AT ALL COSTS**.

Jesus set the example in the Garden of Gethsamane when He said to the Father,

#### "Nevertheless, not My will but Your will be done."

God called Abraham His friend, because he walked by faith and was willing to obey God even to the point of offering up his own son as a sacrifice (see James 2:17-23). Walking by faith requires actions of obedience. When God told Abraham to sacrifice his son he got up early the next morning. *That's faith*.

When he reached the place where the sacrifice was to take place, he told his servants,

"Wait here and we'll return." *That's faith.* 

Isaac asked, "Where is the sacrifice?" and Abraham said the

Lord would provide one. Abraham obeyed God because he believed that God would raise Isaac from the dead <sup>Heb 11:19</sup>. His actions of obedience proved that his friendship with God meant more to him than the relationship he had with his wife and son.

To become God's friend we must obey Him at all costs, because obedience is the only proof we have that we believe God.

The story of King Saul in 1 Samuel tells the tragic tale of a man who did not obey God with all his heart. He listened to the voice of the people more than the voice of God, and thought he could make up for his disobedience by offering up a burnt offering to God. Samuel confronted him and said,

"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice." <sup>1 Sam 15:22</sup>

Obedience means something to God, and you can never make up with sacrifice what you lose with disobedience. Saul's authority as king was stripped from him and he later committed suicide on the field of battle. He learned the hard way that no matter what the cost, one must obey God rather than man.

And when you do what God tells you to do, you then are in line to be considered God's friend. Consider what Jesus said in Iohn 15:10,

"If you keep My commandments you will abide in my love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love."

Jesus maintained obedience at all costs and had a close relationship with the Father. Let all of us follow His example and do the same.

The fourth thing we can do to cultivate a close friendship with God is MAKE THE DECISION TO **L** BECOME A CHEERFUL GIVER.

2 Cor. 9:7 says,

"So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver."

The Message<sup>©</sup> Bible says,

"God loves it when the giver delights in his giving. God can pour on the blessings in astonishing ways so that you're ready for anything and everything, more than just ready to do what needs to be done."

By becoming a cheerful giver you enter into the realm of God's love. The word "friend" means 'to have affection for' and scripture shows clearly that God showed affection to His friend Abraham.

God loves everybody, saints

and sinners alike, but His affection is manifested toward His friends. God poured out His affection on Abraham, because he was a cheerful giver who was willing to give up his only son in obedience to the Lord's command.

The Amplified<sup>®</sup> translation of 2 Cor. 9:7 says this,

> "Let each one give as he's made up his own mind (not pressured to give) and purposed in his heart, not reluctantly or sorrowfully, or under compulsion, for God loves, that is, He takes pleasure in, prizes above other things, and is unwilling to abandon a cheerful, joyous, prompt to do it, giver whose heart is in his giving."

Truly these verses describe Abraham, and if we would follow his example we, too, can be called "the friend of God". When you make the decision to become a cheerful giver, God will prize you above other things. He'll never abandon you and will be unwilling to do without you.

You'll reach a point where you'll be abiding in His love so much that, God can begin to pour out His affection on you. Why would God do this? Because you're involving fundamental vourself in the motivator of God's life.

We all know John 3:16,

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...."

God is always giving. That's His nature. That's Who He is. That's what He does. When you become a cheerful giver you involve yourself in what He has actively been engaged in since eternity past. When you involve yourself in something He's interested in, in something He likes to do, He'll begin to "pal around" with you. He'll hang out with you. He'll be your friend and you'll be His.

Percentage wise, there are not a lot of people who make giving a lifestyle, thus very few people enter into a personal friendship with God. But when you become a cheerful giver you put yourself in a very valuable position where God is concerned. Now He can use you as a channel through which He can bless others.

The good news is that you can never out give God. Your resources are limited and His are not. And when you become His friend by making the decision to become a...

- 1. Worshipper of God,
- 2. TO LIVE BY FAITH,

3. TO OBEY HIM AT ALL COSTS, and

4. TO BECOME A CHEERFUL GIVER.

God will come down and dwell with you and pour out His affection on you. You will put yourself in the position to receive in abundance the unlimited favor of God. That is the good life. he good life is to bask in the sunshine of the favor of God. The prophet Jeremiah recorded these words spoken by the Lord,

"I will satiate (fill to the full) the soul of the priests with abundance, and My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, says the Lord." Jer. 31:14

God longs for you to be a well-watered garden, flourishing, full of joy, always in blossom, living the good life. We read in Jeremiah 32:40-42,

"And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me. Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will assuredly plant them in this land, with all My heart and with all My soul. For thus says the Lord: Just as I have brought all this great calamity on this people, so I will bring on them all the good that I have promised them."

All things that pertain to life and godliness <sup>2 Peter 1:3</sup> are to be yours so that you can experience the deepest joys and benefits of godly living. This is why Jesus came, and the more you grow in the knowledge and love of God, the more His goodness will be increasingly experienced in your life.

Acts 3:26a says,

"To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you..."

The Lord is good  $P_{s.\ 107:1}$ . He is merciful, kind, gracious, and very patient. And because He died for you, you can live the good life. Jesus came to give us a life of fullness John 10:10. At His birth the angels proclaimed,

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom His favor rests." <sup>Luke 2:14</sup>

God's favor resting on man was the beginning of

a new and awesome reality that was to change history forever. It is God's will for you to live the good life and He wants to amaze you with His favor. The psalmist tells us that the favor of God will be poured into the end-time church like no other generation in times past.

Ps. 102:13 says,

"You will arise and have mercy on Zion; for the time to favor her, Yes, the set time, has come."

'Zion' is symbolic of the church and the psalmist tells us the set time to favor the church has come. It's in the mind and will of God and nothing can change it. When might this "set time" be? The psalmist tells us in vs. 16,

"For the Lord shall build up Zion; He shall appear in glory."

The Lord will build up Zion that's *you* - and favor her just prior to His second coming. In other words, the set time is now!

Is. 30:18 says,

"Therefore the Lord will wait, that He may be gracious to you; And therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you. For the Lord is a God of justice; Blessed are all those who wait for Him."

The set time is now and Paul

tells us in Eph. 2:7

"That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

If God has already been good to you, then get ready because you haven't seen anything yet.

Remember, before Jesus returns there will be a manifestation of the favor of God like no previous generation has ever seen. God has a set time to favor the church and that time is now!

Yes, adversity will come but the favor of God will shine through the darkest clouds of trial and hardship. No matter what Satan tries to do, always confess the favor of God over your life and circumstances. Never forget, this is the season of God's favor. Ezekiel described the good life in Ezek. 34:26,

> "I will make them and the places all around My hills a blessing; and I will cause showers to come down in their season; there shall be showers of blessing."

Seek the showers of God's blessings, for it is His desire to pour forth into your life a torrential downpour. Be overwhelmed with the goodness of God.

Favor makes you achievers

in the kingdom of God. It is the heavenly link to your success and will cause you to live a reigning life. David wrote in Ps. 5:11,12,

"But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; Let them shout for joy, because You defend them; Let those also who

One day of favor is worth a lifetime of labor. love Your name be joyful in You. For You, O Lord, will bless the righteous; With favor You will surround him as with a shield."

The Amplified<sup>®</sup> Bible says God,

"Will crown you with favor."

#### When God's favor comes into a person's life, a zero becomes a hero.

In the book of Esther, the king chose her to be queen. In a single day she went from being a nobody to a somebody. One day of favor is worth a lifetime of labor. With the favor of God operating in your life, there is no way you can be defeated or overcome by the wiles of the enemy. 1 Peter 1:13 says,

"Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." We should live each day anticipating more of God's favor in our lives. Get your thinking in line with God's thinking and receive more of His favor than you ever imagined possible.

The Bible abounds with declarations of the goodness of God. Ps. 34:8-10 says,

"Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him! Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints! There is no want (lack) to those who fear Him. The young lions lack and suffer hunger; but those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing."

God's goodness is available for your personal experience whenever you trust in Him. Peter begins his second letter by saying, "Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him Who called us to glory and virtue." <sup>2</sup> Pet 1:2

God's grace - His ability and His favor - is available to you in multiplied measures. Twice Peter tells us that the process for partaking of the showers of God's blessings simply requires you to grow in the knowledge of God. The Message<sup>®</sup> Bible records Peter's words this way,

"Grace and peace to you many times over as you deepen in your experience with God and Jesus, our Master. Everything that goes into a life of pleasing God has been miraculously given to us by getting to know, personally and intimately, the One Who invited us to God. The best invitation we ever received! We were also given absolutely terrific promises to pass on to you - your tickets to participation in the life of God after you turned your back on a world corrupted by lust."

God desires to bless you abundantly. This means you can have it all. Even Jesus said in John 10:10,

"I have come that they may have and enjoy their life, and that they may have it more abundantly."

The Message© Bible says,

"I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of."

David wrote about this in Ps. 31:19,

"Oh, how great is your goodness, which You have laid up for those who fear You, which You have prepared for those who trust in You in the presence of the sons of men!"

Prov. 22:1 says,

"A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, loving favor rather than silver and gold."

Favor is more valuable than silver and gold, for it can do things money can't buy. Favor will bring you great achievements and great advancements more than you've ever known before. Godly opportunities will come your way if you will first make the choice to seek favor more, than the uncertain riches of financial gain.

The Lord told Joshua how to have good success and favor in Josh. 1:8,

"This Book of the Lord shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that's written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."

It all goes back to knowing God in a personal, intimate way.

Jesus also experienced in abundant measure the favor of God. Luke 2:52 tells us,

"And Jesus increased in wisdom

and stature, and in favor with God and man."

How did this come about? He studied the scriptures and was forever going about the Father's business <sup>v. 49</sup>. Verse 40 says,

"And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of

His grace and God Him? favor will exalt you. Jesus

Him." Remember, Jesus came to earth as a man and

was

upon

had to rely on the scriptures just as much as we do. Luke 4:16 says,

"So He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read."

Notice it was His custom to do this, and as a result of His diligence the grace and favor of God was upon Him. Notice also that not only did He grow in favor with God, but also with men.

Favor with God will automatically guarantee you favor with those you come in contact with. The word "favor" means 'friendly regard shown toward another especially by a superior; approving consideration or attention; partiality; leniency; popularity; in one's good graces; to one's advantage.'

Favor will put you into a social realm where you will receive special treatment from those around you. We read in Esther 2:17,

"The king loved Esther more than all the other women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins; so he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti."

Humble yourself before the Lord and His grace and favor will exalt you. Like Esther, those who have God's favor are overshadowed by a divine plan that dictates their destiny, propels them into their God-given purpose, and causes all things to work together for their good.

God gave Joseph favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison and he was placed over the whole prison. Favor with God gives you access to someone else's power. God gave the Israelites favor in the sight of their Egyptian captors and they enriched them with gold and silver ornaments and precious garments just before their exodus into the wilderness. A young Jewish virgin named Mary was described as "highly favored" and she became the very mother of the Son of God. How amazing is that? When you bask in the favor of God, people will prefer to be around you more than others. You will receive recognition even when you seem like the least likely to receive it. 1 Sam. 16:22 says,

> "Then Saul sent to Jesse, saying, 'Please let David stand before me, for he has found favor in my sight."

Like a spiritual magnet people will be drawn to you, resulting in promotion in whatever you put your hand to do. People will offer you their help, support, and assistance to help in whatever endeavor you are in. That's part of living the good life.

When the favor of God overflows in your life, when you taste and see that the Lord is good, battles will be won in which you won't even have to fight. The battle is the Lord's and you will experience greater victories in the midst of greater odds. Josh. 11:20 says,

"For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that He might utterly destroy them, and that they might receive no mercy, but that He might destroy them, as the Lord had commanded Moses."

The more impossible the battle

looks and the greater the trial, the easier the victory will come. Ps. 44:1-3 says,

"We have heard our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what deeds You did in their days, in days of old: How you drove out the nations with Your hand, but them You planted; How You afflicted the peoples, and cast them out. For they did not gain possession of the land by their own sword, nor did their own arm save them; But it was Your right hand, Your arm, and the light of Your countenance, because You favored them."

Favor is a tool used to defeat the enemy. It drives out the barriers and the giants that are blocking your path to success. Favor will open doors for you and plant you in your own personal promised land.

Favor is the doorway into the blessings of Canaan and supernatural provision. When you learn to tap into God's favor, you will have a tremendous advantage in every day life. Doors will open for you that remain closed for others. Like Joseph you will receive preferential treatment that seems unusual to most people.

However, for those living in the favor of God, it will be no less than what you will come to expect. It only takes one touch of God's favor to completely turn your situation around. Favor can turn adversity into victory, failure into success, and sickness into good health. One touch of God's favor can turn any situation around in an instant of time. This all happens when you discover the power of God's divine favor in your life.

## Choose to be favor-minded.

Y o u ' v e been crowned with favor so you can live with confidence and

boldness, knowing you're a child of the most high God. The heart of God is to pour out His blessings on you. For sure, He wants to amaze you with His favor. Eph. 3:20 says,

"Now unto Him Who is able to do exceedingly, abundantly above and beyond all that we could ask or think."

Notice the words "above and beyond". That's the favor of God, so get in agreement with Him and be more favor-minded. The sooner you do, the sooner you will live the good life. You will succeed more quickly with favor than you will without it.

Don't be afraid to be bold and ask for what you really want, things you wouldn't normally ask for. You wear a robe of righteousness and a crown of favor.

#### When you live the good life, you have a right to receive preferential treatment.

People will go out of their way to help you, and God will step in and assist you and make your every day life easier. Enlarge your vision and expect more of God's favor in your life.

Favor is the difference between your present and your future. Make the decision today to operate in the unseen realm of God's divine favor. Get on the offensive and get favorminded. Every day speak favor over your life.

Favor happens to those who believe and expect it to happen, so choose to believe! Choose to be favor-minded! Choose to declare it every day of your life! Enlarge your vision. God wants to provide you with supernatural advantages. He wants to assist you and make your life easier, so expect more of the favor of God. Live the good life!

In the parable of the sower, Jesus spoke of three levels in which we may experience the goodness of God. Speaking of seeds that are sown He said in Matt. 13:8,

> "But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

There is a thirty-fold good life, a sixty-fold good life, and the ultimate hundred-fold good life. A careful study of the Word also reveals to us that there are also three levels of relationships that we can have with God, and each level corresponds to a level of the good life that we experience in our every day lives.

When we get born again we become a child of God, and when we make the commitment to be used by God for His purpose, we get promoted to being a servant of God. There are "sons" of God and there are "servants" of God. A "friend" of God is a combination of the two. Some people are "sons" of God, but not "servants," while others are "servants," but not "sons".

The truth be told, neither one of these relationships by themselves fulfill totally what God wants to accomplish and do in their lives. That distinction is reserved for the "friends" of God. The better we understand the characteristics of these three relationships the better the opportunity for us to walk in the fullness of the good life.

Believers who call themselves "servants" of God will give you the shirt off their back and do whatever needs to be done. They are always available to do works of service or whatever it takes to get the job done.

The danger of being just a "servant" of God is that people run the risk of being so heavenly minded they're no earthly good. They're so busy serving God that they ignore the responsibilities they have toward their spouse and children. Many times they suffer burnout and some have tragically suffered an early death. Why did this happen? Because they did not have a clear understanding of their rights and privileges as a "son" of God.

On the other hand, there those who have a clear are understanding of sonship, but won't lift a finger to serve God and help somebody else. These people are so earthly minded that they're no heavenly good. Those who are only "sons" of God will receive in their lives the blessing of having a nice car, home, job, and personal wellbeing. They're exercising their rights and privileges as a "son," which they are entitled to from the Word of God. Sadly, they are so caught up in the material blessings that, you don't find these people doing much to advance the kingdom of God.

In order to experience everything that God has to offer, there must be a balance between being a "son" and being a "servant". Some people give their lives completely for the sake of the gospel and don't receive anything in this life for it.

The reason this happens is because they only saw themselves as servants and not sons. They didn't know they had rights and privileges as a son. They didn't know that "all

### God's best and blessing: Divine favor.

these things would be added" to their lives <sup>Matt. 6:33</sup>. They just knew they were supposed to serve God, but if they

knew of the blessings of sonship, then they would have become a "friend" of God and had it all.

However, even though they missed out on the temporary blessings in this life, they'll still receive eternal rewards in heaven which is the 60-fold blessing. On the other side of the coin is the person who partakes of the rights and privileges as a son, but pushes aside the call to become a servant. This person will only receive the 30fold blessing of temporal blessings and will have nothing to show for it in eternity. In heaven the servants will live in mansions and sit on thrones, but a son will only get a palm branch to wave around.

Remember, neither one of these positions by themselves will

cause you to walk in God's perfect will for your life. But the person who has the knowledge of a son and walks in the light of what he knows, coupled together with the heart of a servant, will walk in the fullness of the hundredfold blessing. He'll have the blessings in this life and he'll have the rewards in eternity. This is what happens to the friends of God. This is the good life.

Let us never forget that God's best and ultimate blessing, His divine favor, is reserved for those believers whom He calls "friends." Jesus began His earthly ministry by proclaiming to the whole world that this was the Father's will. We read in Luke 4:17-19,

"And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah, And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.""

Notice the phrase "the acceptable year of the Lord." The Message© Bible says,

"This is God's year to act!"

...and the Amplified translation says this is,

"the day when the free favors of God profusely abound."

Jesus then closed the book and,

"began to say to them, 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Jesus began to tell people two thousand years ago that God wanted to favor them with abundant blessings and He's saying the same thing to each of us today.

We are living in the day of the favor of God. Jesus was reading from Is. 61 and vv. 6, 7 says,

"But you shall be named the Priests of the Lord, men shall call you Servants of our God. You shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory you shall boast. Instead of your shame you shall have double honor, and instead of confusion they shall rejoice in their portion. Therefore in their land they shall possess double; Everlasting joy shall be theirs."

This is a description of the good life. Verse 7 says restoration will come to you twofold. You'll get double for your trouble. Job 42:10 says, "And the Lord restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before."

The favor of God brings restoration and prosperity to the level that others will recognize it and acknowledge that God provided it. Job lived the good life and was highly favored by God. He said in Job 10:12,

> "You have granted me life and favor, and Your care has preserved my spirit."

What was it about this man named Job that made him the receiver of God's immeasurable blessings? Consider Job 1:1,

> "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil."

Clearly he was a friend of God. Even God said,

"there is none like him on the earth" <sup>Job 1:8</sup>.

There is so much we can learn from the life and character of Job, that will shape and mold our lives to the point that we become a friend of God. After the first assault of Satan on his life "Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshipped"  $^{Job}$  1:20.

His world was crumbling around him, but still he had the heart to worship God. He then said in v. 21,

"Naked I came from my mother's

## "Blessed be the name of the Lord."

womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord."

Job had no idea what was going on behind the scenes, and he wrongfully thought this destruction was coming from the hand of God. But he still held fast to his integrity <sup>Job 2:3</sup> and gave honor and praise to his God. Yes, Job had some reasonable complaints, but God knew that in his heart was unshaken confidence. Job knew that,

> "God does great things, and unsearchable, marvelous things without number. He gives rain on the earth, and sends water on the fields. He sets on high those who are lowly and those who mourn are lifted to safety" Job 5:9-11.

His friend Bildad said to him,

"Though your beginning was

small, yet your latter end would increase abundantly" <sup>Job 8:7</sup>.

Job then answered and said,

"He does great things past finding out, Yes, wonders without number" <sup>Job 9:10</sup>.

This is the favor of God! What makes Job stand out is that even when he was not experiencing this favor his heart still clung to his God. He said in Job 13:15a,

"Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."

Is it any wonder that before and after this nine month trial he was radically blessed?

Job had three friends who tried to comfort him, but they weren't very successful with their efforts. In fact, Job says in Job 16:2, "Miserable comforters are you all."

Notice, however, what Job went on to say,

"I also could speak as you do, if your soul were in my soul's place. I could heap up words against you, and shake my head at you; But I will strengthen you with my mouth, and the comfort of my lips would relieve your grief."

In the midst of his trials Job still had the desire to serve God by reaching out to bless his friends. He was a "son" of God and this verse showed that he was also a "servant" of God, thus making him a "friend" of God. This is why he was so abundantly blessed. This is why he lived the good life.

Even though he was in a severe trial, Job knew better days were ahead. He said in Job 17:9,

"Yet the righteous will hold to his way, and he who has clean hands will be stronger and stronger."

He went on to say in Job 19:25,26,

"For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God."

And let us not forget Job 23:10-12,

"But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot has held fast to His steps; I have kept His way and not turned aside. I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food."

With an attitude like that, how could the man not be blessed? Over and over again the book of Job tells us why he was highly favored by God, which caused him to live the good life. We read in Job 29:14,

"I put on righteousness, and it clothed me."

This made him a "son" of God. His desire to be a "servant" of God is revealed in vs. 12,15,16a,

"Because I delivered the poor who cried out, and the fatherless and he who had no helper. I was eyes to the blind, and I was feet to the lame. I was a father to the poor..."

Job spent his entire life being a blessing to other people, and received in return the ultimate favor of God. You can't live the good life without it.

Job's friend Eliha says this about the righteous,

"If they obey and serve Him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures" Job 36:11.

What more needs to be said? The final verse in the book of Job says,

"So Job died, old and full of days" Job 42:17.

This happened because he was a "son" and "servant" of God. This made him a "friend" of God and the receiver of the divine favor of God. Thus he lived the good life. Jabez also was a friend of God and this is evident in the prayer he prayed,

"Oh God, that You would bless me indeed and expand my territory."

To be "blessed indeed" is a blessing that comes on the sons of God. When Jabez prayed for God to expand his influence in the land he was openly declaring, that he was a servant of God. This prayer reveals that Jabez was a friend of God and this is why God granted his request. Like Job, he was blessed with the favor of God and was able to live the good life.

May all of us follow their example.

he world had been turned upside down. Jesus had arisen from the grave and ascended on high. Before doing so, He made it clear to those who followed Him that they were to pick up the mantle and continue the mission to go out and make disciples of all men.

No longer could they be mere spectators to the miracle-working power of Jesus, but were commissioned to go into all the world and do even greater works than He did.

The supernatural did not stop with Jesus, and how amazed the disciples must have felt when they realized that soon this same Messiah would be living in them and working through them.

A short time later those in the upper room were gloriously filled with the Holy Spirit, and now the Lords' followers were taking the world by storm with a supernatural power never before seen since the dawn of time.

Miracles galore were performed and souls were being added to the church daily. The lame man at the gate of the temple called "Beautiful" was raised up and entered the temple walking, and leaping, and praising God <sup>Acts 3:8</sup>.

The whole city was shaken to its' core, and soon the religious Sanhedrin leaders,

"Called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus" Acts 4:18.

Their threats were indeed spoken in vain as the disciples went to their own companions and raised their voice to God with one accord, and asked for boldness and fearless confidence to continue preaching the message of the resurrected Savior,

"And that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness" Acts 4:30,31.

What had been a small group of confused and frightened men just a few days prior to this, were now fearless warriors thriving forward to fulfill the prophecy spoken by Jesus in Acts 1:8,

> "But you shall receive power when te Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

When told to stop what they were doing, they prayed to God for more boldness and more miracles. With much courage they pressed on with the great commission and their enthusiasm and joy carried them forward where in times past they would have run away and hid.

The Message© Bible says in Acts 2:43-47,

"Everyone around was in awe all those wonders and signs done through the apostles! And all the believers lived in a wonderful harmony, holding everything in common. They sold whatever they owned and pooled their resources so that each persons' need was met. They followed a daily discipline of worship in the Temple followed by meals at home, every meal a celebration, exuberant and joyful, as they praised God. People in general liked what they saw. Every day their number grew as God added those who were saved."

Like Jesus they also were turning their world upside down. Acts 4:33 states,

> "And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all."

It takes grace to accomplish what God wants you to do. Life is hard when you try to do it on your own without the grace of God in your life. Your talents and abilities are not enough to do all that God has called you to do. This is why Jesus said in Matt. 11:28,

> "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

When you come to Jesus He'll pour His grace into your life, and what was once hard now becomes easy. Jesus continued in vs. 29,30,

"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

The Message<sup>®</sup> Bible says,

"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to Me. Get away with Me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you

Grace is kindness unearned. how to take a real rest. Walk with Me and work with Me - watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't

lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

The phenominal grace of God is exceptional, outstanding, and unsurpassing. It is kindness not earned, and means "to bend down, to stoop down in kindness" as in a superior reaching down to an inferior. We were saved by grace <sup>Eph.</sup> <sup>2:8</sup> and we are to live by grace. With enough grace we can do anything, be anything, and receive anything.

Great grace was upon those first century believers, and since we are a part of this same church, we must strive daily to walk in that same grace.

Paul writes in Rom. 5:17b,

"...those who receive abundance

of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ."

When Paul says an "abundance" of grace he is using a descriptive measure of grace just like Luke did in Acts 4:33, when he said "great" grace was upon them all. This tells us that grace can be increased and that we can have more grace than we're experiencing right now.

About Jesus, we read in Luke 2:40,

"And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him."

We then read in vs. 52,

"And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man."

The favor and grace that was on the life of Jesus increased, and Peter tells us to,

"Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" <sup>2 Peter 3:18</sup>.

James 4:6 says,

"But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." To grow in grace you must grow in humility. Never take the credit for what God does through you. Don't brag about your faith and how hard you work for God and how many hours you pray. It is the grace of God that gives you the ability and everything else you need to accomplish the opportunities you've been given. Gen. 6:8 says,

"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord."

Grace made all the difference in his life, and like Noah, we also are in the Ark of Jesus. We're safe and sound, and we've found grace and favor in the eyes of the Lord. It is because of grace that we are saved from our sins and not going to the lake of fire. We are not saved by works lest any man should boast <sup>Eph.</sup> <sup>2:9</sup>.

The angel Gabriel said to the virgin Mary,

"Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!" <sup>Luke 1:28</sup>.

Mary was favored and blessed because the Lord was with her, and not because of anything she had done on her own. She was chosen to be the mother of Jesus, because the grace of God was on her life. Mary's humility was revealed in her response, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." <sup>Luke 1:38</sup>

The Apostle John wrote,

"And the Word became 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" <sup>John 1:14</sup>.

Grace is a big word and there are varying degrees of how much grace can be upon you. Great grace was upon the first century church and in Greek the word "great" means 'mega.' This was not a little grace. It was a big grace and it was upon them all. John continues in v. 16,

"For out of His fullness (abundance) we have all received [all had a share and we were all supplied with] one grace after another and spiritual blessing upon spiritual blessing and even favor upon favor and gift [heaped] upon gift" AMP.

This is a stacked grace, grace upon grace upon grace, layer upon layer. You can have so much grace upon you that what was once impossible– is now possible. With more grace, things that were once difficult now become effortless. With enough grace you can receive any miracle and overcome any struggle. You can be what you're supposed to be and do what you're supposed to do. With more grace you can run your race and finish your course. This is why Paul told Timothy to,

#### "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" <sup>2</sup> <sup>Tim. 2:1</sup>.

To grow in grace, you must grow in humility. Exodus 33 shows us what grace is. Moses had been sent to Egypt to deliver the people from bondage, and in the wilderness

they murmurred and complained and often desired to return to their former captors. When Moses went up the mountain to receive the ten commandments, the people foolishly built and worshipped a golden calf. God was now angry for their continual rebellion and said in v. 3,

"Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in your midst, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people."

As he always had done, Moses intervened before God on behalf of the people and he said in vs. 13-16a,

"Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in your sight, show me Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation is Your people.' And He said, 'My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.' Then he said to Him, 'If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here. For how then will it be known that Your people and I have found grace in your sight, except You go with us?'''

The grace of God is the presence of God. John 1:14 tells us that grace and glory go together and "glory" can be defined as 'the manifested presence of God.'

A mark of His presence is that He will give you rest and cause peace to abound in your life. The way of the wicked is hard, but when you have peace you are not frantic or disturbed. You're in the eye of the hurricane, the favor zone, the safe harbor of God's comfort and protection. Acts 3:19b tells us,

"...that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord."

The Message© Bible says God will,

"...pour out showers of blessing to refresh you."

The more grace that is upon you, the more peace you'll have. Moses trusted God and Is. 26:3,4 states, "You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. Trust in the Lord forever, for in YAH, the Lord, is everlasting strength."

David wrote in Ps.5:11,

"But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; Let them ever shout for joy, because You defend (protect) them; Let those also who love Your name be joyful in You."

You can't be in faith and be depressed. Faith always shouts and rejoices, whereas doubt brings hardship and despair. David tells us why we shout in vs. 12,

"For You, O Lord, will bless the righteous; With favor You will surround him as with a shield."

A shield of grace is a spiritual force field that will surround you and protect you like it did Job. Satan said to God,

"Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side?" <sup>Job 1:10a</sup>.

Ps. 30:5 says,

"His favor is for life,"

and we read in vs. 7,

"Lord, by Your favor You have

made my mountain stand strong."

Weakness of spirit causes you to stumble and fall, but grace gives you strength, a spiritual backbone that will cause you to endure whatever the enemy brings against you. In His grace there is life, and you can be firm as a mountain in the midst of distress.

Prov. 19:12 says the kings'

"...favor is like dew on the grass."

Dew can be light as a mist, or it can be as if a heavy rain had fallen. In like manner there are various measures of grace. You can have little grace where you hardly notice it, or so much grace that it's dripping off of you. Prov. 16:15 states,

> "In the light of the kings' face is life, and his favor is like a cloud of the latter rain."

A person who is highly favored walks in a greater degree of grace than others. In their life is grace upon grace upon grace. This is great grace and Heb. 4:16 says we can,

"come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

God helps you with His grace and if you need more help you'll need more grace. Ps. 119:57,58 says,

"You are my portion, O Lord; I have said that I would keep Your words. I entreated Your favor with my whole heart; Be merciful to me according to Your word."

Ps. 89:17 says,

I delight to do your will, O my God. "For You are the glory of their strength, and in Your favor our horn is exalted."

The Message© Bible

states,

"By Your favor You give us victory."

The word "horn" is a symbol of power and the New Living Testament says,

"It pleases You to make us strong."

You can initiate a grace increase and gain more favor by pleasing God. If you'll please Him more, you'll be favored more. Jesus said in John 8:29,

"And He Who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him."

This is why Jesus walked in favor with God *and* man. The

grace of God was on Him without measure, and we can walk as Jesus walked and have the same grace He had. David wrote in Ps. 40:8,

> "I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart."

God takes great joy in those who cheerfully do His will. Like David, an attitude of delightful desire should fill all our attempts to please God, and when we do, even our enemies will be at peace with us <sup>Prov. 16:7</sup>.

In Ps. 41:11 we read,

"By this I know that You are well pleased with me, because my enemy does not triumph over me."

We win in life and are successful because we please God and are favored by Him. Our power of influence, our favor, grows by pleasing Him more and more.

The Bible gives many accounts of people who also walked in favor with God and man, and a study of their lives will reveal to us how we also can walk in great grace.

The book of Esther is one such story and it is all about grace and favor. It is the theme of the entire book, and tells how God raised a Jewish girl out of obscurity to become the queen of the most powerful empire in the world.

An evil plot had been devised by Haman to annihilate all the Jews in the region, and the book of Esther was written to show how the Jewish people were protected and preserved by the gracious hand of God.

The name "Esther" is derived from the Persian word for 'star' and her courage and humility shined forth as she and her wise cousin, Mordecai, set out to counter the threat that had arisen against Gods' people.

The story begins when King Ahasuerus provided a lavish banquet for the people of Shushan, and proudly sought to make Queen Vashtis' beauty a part of the program. When she refused to appear, it was feared that the other women in the kingdom would become insolent if Vashti went unpunished. The king received counsel to depose her and seek another queen which he promptly did.

From every province in the kingdom beautiful young virgins were brought to the citadel for a year of preparation, to beautify the women even more than they already were and the one who pleased the king the most would be the new queen. Esther 2:13 says, "Thus prepared, each young woman went to the king, and she was given whatever she desired to take with her from the womens' quarters to the kings' palace."

These women selfishly took whatever they wanted in hopes of gaining an unfair advantage over the others in this royal beauty contest. Not so with Esther,

"Now when the turn came for Esther...to go in to the king, she requested nothing but what Hegai the kings' eunuch, the custodian of the women, advised. And Esther obtained favor in the sight of all who saw her." Esther 2:17

Esther did not ask for special treatment nor did she feel entitled to receive it. Some people are always demanding things from other people but you can't be gracious to someone who thinks they deserve it. God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Matt. 20:21 tells how the mother of Zebedees' sons came to Jesus asking for special treatment,

"And He said to her, 'What do you wish?' She said to Him, 'Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom.""

This is not how you get

favor from God. This is pride and presumption, and in v. 24 we read,

"And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brothers."

When you expect nothing from other people and dispel the notion that they owe you something, then you are open to receive more

### Serve God with reverence.

grace from God. If people don't ask a lot from you, you just naturally want to do more for

them. Grace is not given to people who are always wanting something. Stop asking people for things with an attitude that they owe you, and in faith ask God instead.

Esther asked for no special treatment and in Esther 2:17 we read,

"The king loved Esther more than all the other women, and she gained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins; so he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti."

It was this same grace that allowed Esther to go into the inner court of the king unannounced and thus put an end to the plot to kill all the Jews in the region. All this happened because in humility Esther asked for no special treatment, and thus gained favor with God and man.

You can't serve God and please Him without grace. Heb. 12:28 says,

> "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and Godly fear."

Nehemiah wanted to serve God by returning to his homeland to rebuild the broken down, shattered walls of Jerusalem. First he needed to be granted permission from the king for a leave of absence from his current duties. Neh. 2:4 states,

"Then the king said to me, 'What do you request?' So I prayed to the God of heaven."

Nehemiah needed a special favor from the king, and in faith the first thing he did was go to God in prayer.

"And I said to the king, 'If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it." <sup>Neh</sup> <sup>2:5</sup>

If you want favor from somebody, show respect, be humble,

and ask in a nice and polite manner. There is a difference between asking and demanding. Nehemiah also wanted the king to give him written permission to pass through the various regions of the area.

"And the king granted them to me according to the good hand of my God upon me" v. <sup>8b</sup>.

#### Rom. 5:1, 2 says,

"Therefore, having been justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

Faith in God puts no pressure on people. Faith doesn't have the need to put demands on people because it is believing God to supply the need. Like Nehemiah, we don't look to people for answers, we look to God.

Daniel was a prisoner in Babylon and he purposed in his heart not to defile himself with the kings' food, which had been first offered to idols.

"Therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. Now God had brought Daniel into the favor and good will of the chief of the eunuchs" Dan. 1:8b, 9.

Daniel requested a favor from the chief eunuch and in v. 12 he said "please." Rudeness can forfeit grace, so if you want favor with God and man you must be polite and gracious. The humble get the grace and the eunuch agreed to Daniels' request at the risk of getting his head cut off.

God can bless you through channels, unexpected so be humble as a lamb and always treat people with respect. Don't act like everybody owes you something, and don't try to manipulate people and call it faith. It's not wise to be asking favors from people all the time, but if the need arises be kind and polite. Say "sir", "ma'am", "please", and "thank you". Stop begging and asking for handouts all the time. Just be kind and nice to people and put your faith in God to bless you with more grace.

Joseph was a man who was highly favored. He was his fathers' favorite son and he received the coat of many colors.

As a lad the Lord gave him two dreams that told of the spectacular favor that was upon his life. This made his older brothers bitter and angry and they sold Joseph as a slave to a traveling caravan who brought him to Egypt.

However, what his brothers

meant for evil, God meant for good.

"The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord made all he did to prosper in his hand. So Joseph found favor in his sight and served him. Then he made him overseer of his house, and

## Be kind and nice to people.

all that he had he put in his hand" Gen. 39:2-4

The presence

of God was with Joseph and great grace made him a prosperous man even as a slave. The favor of God can prosper you in any situation, and it matters not what the state of the economy is or how much education you have or do not have. If you're where you're supposed to be in the plan of God for your life, His grace will prosper you.

Joseph was a faithful man and he was put in charge every place he went. He was loyal and was a man who could be trusted. He did not sin with Potifers' wife, but was falsely accused of doing so, and was thrown into prison.

> "But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

And the keeper of the prison committed to Josephs' hand all the prisoners who were in the prison; whatever they did there, it was his doing. The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Josephs' hand, because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper" Gen. 39:21-23

The Lord dealt bountifully with Joseph and everything he did blossomed. If you want more grace and favor in your life, then be faithful in the little things and God will make you ruler over much <sup>Matt.</sup> <sup>25:21</sup>. Joseph also did not let himself become bitter over all the wrong done to him. He remained faithful and sinned not. We read in Heb. 12:14,15,

"Pursue peace with all men, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord; looking diligently lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled."

Quickly forgive those who have wronged you, because if you become bitter you'll lose your grace, your joy, and your peace. Get in faith, stay in faith, and always remain faithful. God can find you wherever you're at and His grace will cause you to be a ruler in your world. Grace brought Joseph from total obscurity to running the entire nation and the same thing happened to Esther and Daniel. With more grace you, too, can rise up and be a person of influence, all in one day.

You can not earn grace <sup>Rom. 11:6</sup>. You can't do things and expect to be owed grace. It is a free, undeserved, unmerited gift from God. You don't deserve it and you can't demand to get it. You can, however, have the kind of heart that will allow you to receive it in abundance.

David was one of the most graced and favored men in all the Bible. He was a man after Gods' own heart and the Lord was with him and preserved him all the days of his life. He said in 1 Chron. 17:16,

"Who am I, O Lord God? And what is my house, that You have brought me this far?"

A sense of entitlement will disqualify you from receiving the grace of God. David had a humble heart and a whole-hearted desire and passion for God. He wrote many psalms of praise, and danced with all his might when the Ark of the Covenant was returned to its' proper place. He had a heart for God and loved Him with all his heart, soul, and might, and the grace of God was upon him without measure.

Reach down deep inside yourself and give God everything you've got. When you love God with all your heart, you'll serve Him with all your heart. This will make you "accepted in the Beloved" <sup>Eph. 1:16</sup> and great grace will be upon your life. Before long you'll be able to turn your world upside down as well.

The greatest example of how to obtain more grace from God comes from the final words spoken by Jesus before He died on the cross,

"Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit" <sup>Luke 23:46</sup>.

Jesus said this in faith after being forsaken by the Father. He humbled Himself in total confidence that the Father would cause Him to experience great grace and be raised from the dead three days later.

1 Peter 5:5b-7 tells us,

"...and be clothed with humility, for 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' Therefore humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you."

To experience more grace, you

must humble yourself, trust God, and put yourself in His hands. This is what Esther did. Any person who approached the king without first being called could be put to death. She called for a three day fast among the Jews and said,

"My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I

There is something beyond me, working in me.

Esther 4:16b. Esther put

perish, I perish!"

herself totally in Gods' hands and the hands of the

king. When you're at the end of your rope you can receive more grace than you've ever had before. As a result of her humility, great grace and supernatural favor came upon her and the king offered to give her up to half of his kingdom.

Never attempt to exalt yourself, but instead,

"...humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up" James 4:10.

Humility is the surest way to experience great grace.

God is helping us much more than we know. When we are weak His grace makes us strong. Grace will bring you from nowhere to somewhere, and will turn you from a nobody to a somebody. The grace is there and we can't be perpetually ignorant of this favor, especially in the realm of our heavenly call. It needs to be perceived, acknowledged, and understood.

Pride says "it's me' and humility says "it's Him." You can't even breathe without the grace of God, so acknowledge the grace and give God the glory. If you don't the grace on you will diminish more and more. Paul wrote in Gal. 2:9a,

> "and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship."

Paul continually recognized and acknowledged the grace that was upon him (see Rom. 12:3; 15:15; Eph. 3:2). He said in Col. 1:29 <sup>NIV</sup> that he was

"...struggling with all His energy that's working powerfully in me."

He was saying "there is something beyond me working in me" and it was the grace of God. Gods' grace is all you'll ever need to live a victorious life. God told Paul,

"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" <sup>2 Cor. 12:9</sup>. Ps. 84;11 says,

"For the Lord God is a sun and shield; The Lord will give grace and glory; No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly."

Grace is a good thing, and the more you have the more you'll be able to become the person God intended you to be. Paul said in 1 Cor. 15:10,

"But by the grace of God I am what I am; and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

Don't waste the grace that is on you, but like Paul reach out and be a blessing to others. 1 Peter 4:10,11a states,

"As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies..."

Paul wrote in Philemon 6,

"That the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ

#### Jesus."

You are graced and gifted to serve others, and if the grace is not perceived and acknowledged, it will be as if it weren't even there.

Don't squander the gift, but be a good steward of the grace of God on your life. If you'll treasure it, God will draw closer to you and His grace will increase more and more. Before long great grace will be upon you, and you'll be able to use it to its full potential and turn your world upside down. After all, that's what grace is for. od told Moss at the burning bush what the journey to fulfill a heavenly call would be like. Ex. 3:8 says,

"So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey..."

Christians worldwide love that verse. They've got it underlined and highlighted in their Bibles. We all want to live in a place that's flowing with milk and honey. This applies to our homes, our jobs, our health, our possessions, and especially to the vision God places in each of our hearts. This verse, however, doesn't end there.

In most Bibles the second half of this verse is not highlighted and quite frequently people tend to overlook the vital truth contained therein. God said He would lead His people

"...to the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites."

These are the giants and the fortified cities where their enemies dwelled. In other words, fulfilling a heavenly call will be no picnic.

The promised land is symbolic of the fulfillment of your dream and the enemies who dwell there are types and shadows of the problems that we must all deal with.

Many people believe that the Israelites learned about the giants when the twelve spies went across the Jordan River to spy out the land. But no, God told Moses about them back at the burning bush. He wanted everybody to know up front what they'd be up against, and He is saying the same thing to each of us today. This verse can very well be translated like this,

"I will lead you to the fulfillment of your call, the

place of problems and problems and more problems."

This is why so very few people fulfill their call. They refuse to face and defeat the giants that reside in their promised land. Only Joshua and Caleb entered in from that generation.

It has been estimated that two million people came out of Egypt and only two entered in. That's one per million! We may never know what the ratio is today but the Bible does say that many are called but few are chosen.

What's needed today are people who will rise up like Caleb and say with faith and determination,

## *"We are well able to take the land."*

Forty years later Joshua, Caleb, and the next generation did enter the promised land, and the time came when Caleb stood before Joshua and said, "Give me this mountain." Mountains are the place of breakthroughs, and little did he know that Isaiah would later write in Is. 65:9 these words of the Lord,

"I will bring forth descendants from Jacob, and from Judah an heir of My mountains; My elect shall inherit it and My servants shall dwell there."

God's elect. those who serve Him unconditionally, are inheritors of God's mountains. These mountains are peak moments when people are lifted up to divine revelation breakthrough and comes. In the Bible, God spoke with the sons of Adam on literal, physical mountains and in 1 Kings 20:13 the Lord is called the.

"King of the mountains."

In the midst of any mountain range are tall peaks that rise majestically into the air. Between these peaks is a land mass called valleys. Yes, it is a valley, but it's still high up on the mountain. In other words, you can live on the mountain and have your breakthrough even though you're traveling through the valley. And as God's elect, as one of the chosen few, we have inherited the revelations and the truths that were revealed on these mountains.

Ps. 87:1 says,

"His foundation is in the holy mountains."

Mountains are sacred sites and we read in Is. 49:11,

"I will make each of My mountains a road, and My highways shall be elevated."

A mountain symbolizes your calling from God, and on this

mountain is the King's Highway. Your call is a mountain that has to be climbed. The mountain is worth fighting for and you must rise up and fight for what rightfully belongs to you. You must go out and possess your mountain. You can't sit back and wait for things to evolve on their own. You must fight the good fight

## So very few people fulfill their call.

of faith and say with all boldness, "Give me this mountain!"

When you are attacked by the devil, let him know

that you haven't even begun to fight and that you are in the battle for the long haul. It is your destiny, to rise up and claim for yourself the benefits of your spiritual inheritance. Ex. 15:17 says,

"You will bring them in and plant them in the mountains of Your inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which You have made for Your own dwelling, the sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established."

Your mountain, your personal promised land, is a place of promise and revelation that must be climbed and claimed for yourself. As you put one hand and foot above the other, as you begin the climb, dwell continually on Ex. 15:18, "The Lord shall reign forever and ever." Caleb is a good example of a man who possessed his mountain. He wholly followed the Lord and didn't let the bad report of his fellow spies get him to take his eyes off his mountain. He reminded Jacob,

> "So Moses swore on that day, saying 'Surely the land where your foot has trodden shall be your inheritance and your children's forever, because you have wholly followed the Lord my God" Josh. 14:9.

He then told Joshua,

"Give me this mountain" <sup>v. 12</sup> and v. 13 says, "And Joshua blessed him, and gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh as an inheritance."

Why did Caleb want this particular mountain? It once belonged to Abraham <sup>Gen. 13:18</sup> and in Hebron is the cave where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were buried. Later, when David was king over Judah, but not yet over all of Israel, his capital city was Hebron for seven and a half years.

The word "Hebron" means 'fellowship,' and this relates to that special kind of love that fills the hearts of believers one for another and for God. It was a sacred site and now the enemy had built strong fortidied cities on it. He wanted the mountain set free from the control of those who were not children of God. This same passion should burn in all our hearts.

Another of God's holy mountains is Mt. Ararat. The mountains of Ararat rise to as much as 17,000 feet and is the place where Noah's ark rested after the flood <sup>Gen.</sup> <sup>8:4</sup>. It was on Mt. Ararat where Noah saw the rainbow and it was a place of hope and new beginnings.

The ark represents salvation for it was a place of refuge, rest, and safety. The ark was one boat and was three stories high. Likewise, our God is one God Who is a triune being. There is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. There was only one door to the ark just as there is only one door to salvation, the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Also, the ark had no steering mechanism. Noah could not steer and guide the ark and once he and his family entered in, they were totally under the control of God. This is how it should be with all of us.

The ark was also a place of supernatural provision. There was only a small window at the top of the ark, so supernatural light was provided. This light wasn't a continual burning fire, because the flames would have used up all the oxygen in the air and all those on board would have suffocated. Jesus said in John 8:12,

"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

Also, supernatural ventilation was provided. If not, the foulsmelling stench alone would have been enough to unravel the plan of God.

In Acts 2:2, on the Day of Pentecost we read,

"And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting."

The power of God was in that wind and Ps. 135:7 tells us,

"He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; He makes lightning for the rain; He brings the wind out of His treasures."

Last, but definitely not least, the ark was filled with the supernatural love of God. How else could a lion lie down next to a lamb or a wolf by an innocent doe? These animals of the wild did not attack those who fed them and directed them to where they were to stay. Love is a vital necessity for everything we do. 1 John 4:7,8 says,

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love."

Without love, nothing else matters.

Love: necessary	Mt
	should
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Mt. Moriah hould have a becial place the heart of yery born-

again believer, for it was here that Abraham took his young son Isaac to offer him up as a living sacrifice to the Lord. Abraham had a living covenant with a living God, and since,

#### Abraham was willing to offer up his son, then God also had to be willing to offer up His.

Christianity was built on the sacrifice of a Son and Heb. 9:28a says,

"Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many."

Gal. 3:14 tells us,

"That the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

Mt. Moriah brought blessing

to every person on the face of the earth. It was there that Abraham saw the revelation of having a substitute in death. On the way to the sacrifice the teenaged Isaac asked his aging father,

> "Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"

And Abraham said,

'My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.' And the two of them went together" Gen. 22:7b,8.

Notice also what Abraham told his servants earlier in vs. 5,

"Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you."

Twice Abraham confessed that if he would be obedient to God, then a substitute would be provided. Sure enough, after he lifted the knife to slay his son and the Angel of the Lord stopped him,

> "Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in the thicket by it's horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son" v. 13.

We also have inherited the

Abrahamic blessing, because Jesus was a Lamb caught in the thorns which were wrapped tightly around his head. He paid the ultimate price for our sins, and when we believe God we will be delivered up to a state of righteousness in Christ Jesus. Gen. 22:14 says,

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

Many years later Solomon built his temple on Mt. Mariah <sup>2 Chron.</sup> <sup>3:1</sup> where God also had appeared to his father David <sup>2 Chron. 21,22</sup>. Mt. Moriah was a sacred place for them and should also be for us.

"In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came to the Wilderness of Sinai" <sup>Ex. 19:1</sup>.

The peninsula of Sinai has a triangular shape and is 150 miles wide at the north and is 250 miles long. It is a wilderness area with many thorns and thistles growing there. There is a mountain there called Mt. Sinai, and it was on this mountain that God met and talked with Moses and gave him the Ten Commandments. Read carefully the words of Ex. 19:17-20,

"And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire. It's smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder. Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice. Then the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai on the top of the mountain. And the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up."

Moses obeyed. He didn't miss the day of visitation.

God came down and Moses went to the top of the mountain. Mt. Sinai was consumed with the fire of God, and so also should the Word of God burn in our hearts. After His resurrection Jesus appeared on the road to Emmaus and talked with two men who were traveling there. Afterward these men said to one another,

"Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?" <sup>Luke 24:32</sup>. Pentecost was celebrated because God came to Mt. Sinai <sup>Ex. 23:16;</sup> <sup>34:22</sup> and God completed the work in the upper room. Five hundrered people were told to be there, but only a hundred and twenty were present when the fire of God, through the Holy Spirit, came and comsumed their hearts. <sup>Heb. 8:10</sup>.

At Sinai God spoke to the people through Moses, but now He speaks to each of us one-on-one!

Moses didn't miss a day visiting with God. The key is to be attentive to His Words and not to miss the day

of visitation. When God speaks, His people listen!

Many more holy mountains are found in the pages of God's holy Word. Mt. Hor was the mountain where Aaron died and was buried <sup>Num. 20:22-29</sup>. Aaron was a high priest before God, and at Mt. Hor there was a transfer of priesthood. His garments were put on his sons and today we have inherited the privilege and ability to minister to God personally. 1 Peter 2:9 says,

> "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him Who called you out of darkness into His

marvelous light."

Two more mountains are found in Deut. 27 and 28. Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim were found when the Israelites crossed over into the Promised Land. Ebal was a barred mountain, whereas Gerizim was fruitful.

When the Israelites first entered the land, Moses commanded them to erect on Mt. Ebal a stone alter and a monument of stones on which the law was inscribed. The law, with it's blessings and curses, was recited by the people. The blessings were spoken on Mt. Gerizim and the curses on Mt. Ebal.

There was a valley between these two mountains and we read in Joel 3:14,

> "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision."

There is a decision each of us has to make. God said in Deut. 30:19,

"I call heaven and earth as witness today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing, therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live."

Joshua said it all in Josh. 24:15,

"Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Amen.

Mount Nebo was the name of the mountain from which Moses beheld the Promised Land. Although Moses did not cross over the Jordan River into the land

### I can do all things through Christ.

of promise, he was able to see it and beheld it's glory. Mt. Nebo represents hope and promise for

the future fulfillment of God's blessings and the call He has for your life.

#### Faith sees the future and calls those things that be not as though they were. Rom 4:17

You will never know if you've reached your destination unless you first know where you're going. This is the inherited blessing we all can receive symbolized by Mt. Nebo.

For sure, supernatural strength and power from on high will be needed to defeat the enemies in our own personal Promised Land. Paul wrote in Phil. 4:13,

> "I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me."

The intervention of God on your behalf is seen in the story of

Elijah at Mt. Carmel. This mountain was on the Mediterranean Sea, and it was here that Elijah stood against 850 heathen prophets of Baal and defeated them <sup>1 Kings 18</sup>.

In life there is always a showdown between good and evil, and Mt. Carmel shows us that good will always triumph over evil. Yes, there will be giants to defeat in your promised land, but,

"Thanks be to God Who always leads us in triumph in Christ" <sup>2 Cor. 2:14a</sup>.

Sing along with Moses and the children of Israel the song they sang after passing through the Red Sea,

> "I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and it's rider He has thrown into the Sea! The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; My father's God, and I will exalt Him. The Lord is a man of war; The Lord is His name" Ex. 15:1-3.

There are three mountains in the New Testament that all believers must give special attention to.

#### Mount of Olives Where the enemy met defeat

The Garden of Gethsemane was on the slopes of the Mount of Olives. Presses were on this mountain to crush the olives into oil, and it was here that Jesus was pressed beyond measure. Fulfilling the will of God is no easy matter, and Jesus sweat blood in agony. He asked His disciples to come and watch with Him. He wanted them also to pray, surrender, agonize, travail, and become a living sacrifice for the purpose of serving God, but they fell asleep instead.

#### In life, you have to go to the Mount of Olives before you go to Calvary.

The enemy was defeated at the Mount of Olives, when Jesus surrendered His will to that of the Heavenly Father. Not long after this Jesus was taken prisoner where He faced the enemy at Calvary.

The lesson learned here is that you defeat the enemy before you face him. The Mount of Olives prepares you to meet the enemy. Because the disciples slept on the Mount of Olives, they fled when the enemy came to take Jesus away.

#### Mount Calvary The place of crucifiction to self

There are two words that Jesus says to every person born on planet earth: "Follow Me!" Where does He want us to follow Him to? Mount Calvary. Called "the place of the skull," Calvary represents a dying to self. Paul wrote in Gal. 2:20,

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me."

At Calvary your sins are forgiven, wiped away, and remembered no more. At Calvary you receive the benefits of Christ's death, but you also take on the repossibility to be transformed into the image of Christ.

Christianity is not a one-time confession, but rather is a life-style of dying to self and being alive to God. It is interesting to note that, several days after His resurrection, Jesus returned to the Mount of Olives where He ascended to sit at the right hand of the Heavenly Father. He went back to the place of His greatest trial and said, "I have conquered it! I put the pain and agony under My feet." Likewise, don't ever run away from your pain and trial. Face it head on! Go to the place of pain and ascend to the throne room of God where you will rule and reign with Him. Like Jesus you also are seated in heavenly places.

#### Mount Zion Our inheritance

Lastly, there is the greatest mountain of all. Mount Zion speaks of the future glory that is available to all of us. Zion was one of the hills on which Jerusalem stood. David captured it and called it the "City of David." He brought the Ark to Zion and the hill henceforth became sacred <sup>2 Sam. 6:10-12</sup>.

When his son Solomon later moved the Ark to the temple on nearby Mount Moriah, the name Zion was extended to take in the temple.

The word "Zion" means 'fortress,' and those who climb and conquer this mountain inherit a mighty fortress, a kingdom that cannot be shaken or moved.

The tabernacle of David was put on Mt. Zion and it served as a place of worship for the Israelites. It typlified God's dwelling with His people, and the presence and glory of God radiated out of this sacred place. We are called "children of Zion" <sup>Is. 51:16; Heb. 12:22</sup>, because God now lives in the hearts of His people. Ps. 125:1 says,

"Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever."

We are invincible and unshakeable. Satan cannot scale the walls of Mt. Zion and he is fighting a losing battle. On Mt. Zion

"we are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us" <sup>Rom.</sup> <sup>8:37</sup>.

Today, Mt. Zion is a spiritual mountain where all of God's people ascend when they worship God. The glory of God envelopes you when you ascend Mt. Zion with a pure heart and clean hands. When Jesus returns at the Second Coming, He'll rule and reign from Mt. Zion.

Until that glorious event happens, He'll instead reign on Mt. Zion in the hearts of all His people. Indeed, He is the King of glory, and with Him in our hearts we also are partakers of the glory of God.

Hallelujah!

he last days are upon us. In fact, we are living *in* the last of the last days. These are the latest days there have ever been and nobody has ever lived later than where we're at right now.

Paul had a special word for those who are living in the days we are now in,

"But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come" <sup>2</sup> Tim. 3:1.

We live in a very dangerous place and as the Lord's return gets closer and closer, the condition of the world is not going to get any better. It's only going to get worse. The Bible says perilous and stressful times will come, and they will. News channels on the hour, every hour, report robberies and murders and earthquakes and tsunamis all over the planet.

We have grown accustomed to suicide bombings and mass shootings and hijacked airplanes. Things like this happen so much that we think it's normal. There are wars and rumors of wars everywhere. The food we eat and the air we breathe is filled with enough contaminates to kill every man, woman, and child.

The world is not a safe place. It will spit on you, kick you, destroy you, and kill you at any given opportunity. All around us is violence and Paul says,

"Don't be naive. There are difficult times ahead. As the end approaches, people are going to be self-absorbed, money-hungry, self-promoting, stuck-up, profane, contemptuous of parents, crude, coarse, dog-eatdog, unbending, slanderers, impulsively wild, savage, cynical, treacherous, ruthless, bloated windbags, addicted to lust, and allergic to God. They'll make a show of religion, but behind the scenes they're animals. Stay clear of these people" <sup>2</sup> Tim. 3:1-5 MSG</sup>.

Paul knew what he was talking about. To the church

at Corinth he wrote how he had been,

"...in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons frequently, more in deaths often. from the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness - besides the other things, what come upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches" <sup>2</sup> Cor. 11:23-28.

Nothing you do on your own can keep you perfectly safe. You can have five locks on your door and ten guns in your house and fifteen insurance policies. You can have the safest car and always drive the speed limit, but still your enemy roams about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour <sup>1 Peter 5:8</sup>.

The lion is the biggest, baddest predator around, and he'd

kill everybody if he could. The reason he is doing all this seeking is because he can't devour everybody. He would if he could, but he can't. Those who believe and put their trust in God are in the world, but not of the world. David said,

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want"  $P_{S. 23:1}$ .

A good shepherd gets between the flock and the predator and this is why David was able to say in vs 4,

"Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and staff comfort me."

The shepherd's rod and staff comfort you because he uses them to hurt the enemy.

Paul also knew that he served a big God. In his final letter just prior to his death, he told Timothy,

> "But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antiock, at Iconium, at Lystra - what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me."

Not some of them, all of them. God never said life would

be easy, and that you wouldn't be in dangerous and troublesome situations. Paul went on to say,

"Anyone who wants to live all out for God is in for a lot of trouble; there's no getting around it. Unscrupulous con men will continue to exploit the faith. They're as deceived

Jesus must also be your Lord. as the people they lead astray. As long as they are out there, things will only get worse. But don't let it faze you. Stick with

what you learned and believed, sure of the integrity of your teachers - why, you took in the sacred Scriptures with your mother's milk! There's nothing like the written Word of God for showing you the way to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ" <sup>1</sup>Tim. 3:12-15 MSG</sup>.

Paul is saying that you can live perfectly protected by God in the midst of these perilous times to the degree that you are submitted to Him and His word. You can be safe in a crime-filled, disease-filled, and demon-filled world. He'll keep you safe from all hidden dangers and deadly diseases. His faithfulness will keep you, guide you, and protect you.

Not only do you believe and

confess that Jesus is your Savior, He must also be your Lord and your Defender. He saves you more from just sin. Believe that He'll protect you from plagues that strike in the daylight, and demons that lurk in darkness.

> Say out loud, "The Lord is my Protector! He protects me. In Him do I trust. He is my refuge and my strength. A very present help in time of trouble. No disaster shall come near my dwelling."

David was a mighty warrior, because he served a God who was a great Protector. Just prior to killing Goliath he said to King Saul,

> "The Lord, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine" <sup>1 Sam. 17:37</sup>.

He later went on to write in Ps. 4:8,

"I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; For You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety,"

Today's English© Version states,

"When I lie down I go to sleep in peace. You alone, O Lord, keep me perfectly safe."

The prophet Isaiah wrote of Israel's praise for kingdom blessings

and said in Is. 25:4,5,

"For You have been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shade from the heat; For the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall. You will reduce the noise of aliens, as heat in a dry place; As heat in the shadow of a cloud, the song of the terrible ones will be diminished."

- God is rest to the distressed;
- He is strength to the weak.
- He is a shadow from the heat.
- He is a refuge from the storm.
- He is your protection from the enemy.
- He is your safe dwelling place.

Psalm 91 is a song about the protection of God and v. 1 says,

"He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."

Shadows provide protection from the direct heat of the sun. If the heat is severe, the shade reduces what you actually feel. When you're under God's shadow, you will not face the full heat of your difficulties. The Omnipotent Lord will shield all those who dwell with Him. They shall remain under His care as guests under the protection of their host. This protection is constant and it is all sufficient, for it is the shadow of the Almighty.

The way God protects you is that He covers you. The term "under the shadow" is an expression that implies great nearness. It is hard to imagine any expression more perfect in describing the constant presence of God with His chosen ones.

It is from the word "shadow" that God gets His name "El Shaddai." Ps. 91:3, 4 says,

"Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence. He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler."

God will protect you, but you must dwell in the secret place of the Most High. It's a secret to the enemy and as the devil roams about seeking whom he may devour, he won't be able to find you. The Message© Bible says in Ps 91:3, 4,

> "That's right - He rescues you from hidden traps, shields you from deadly hazards. His huge outstretched arms protect you - under them you're perfectly

safe; His arms fend off all harm."

Like a canopy God's protection covers those who are submitted to Him but if you reject God, your enemies will have power over you.

## You must give God the legal right to protect you.

God can only protect you to the

If you reject God, He's not obligated to you.

degree that you are submitted to Him. If you reject Him, He is not obligated to you. Jesus

lamented over Jerusalem and said,

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left desolate..." Matt. 23:37,38

Outside of the secret place are demons and devils seeking to devour you, but we've got a God who protects us and we've got a safe place in Him where the enemy can't touch us.

Is. 31:5 says,

"Like birds flying about, so will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem. Defending, He will also deliver it; Passing over, He will preserve it."

Birds have feathers and wings and like a bird, God will hover over you and cover you and all that is yours. The prophet said in Is. 4:5,6,

> "Then the Lord will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. For over all the glory there will be a covering. And there will be a tabernacle for shade in the daytime from the heat, for a place of refuge, and for a shelter from storm and rain."

When you abide under the shadow of the Almighty you will dwell in safety. Ps. 91:5,6 states,

"You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday."

Fear is insulting to God, because you know better. You know you've got a God who will protect you and keep you. When you give in to fear you are choosing to have more faith in that which can hurt you than in God's power that can protect you. You are not safe from what you are afraid of, for it is a spiritual law that what you fear will come upon you <sup>Job 3:25</sup>.

#### Fear, like a magnet, draws into your life what you are afraid of.

Being afraid opens the door to the problem and puts you in bondage to it. Living as a coward is far worse than dying in faith. If you're not afraid to die, then you're not afraid of the things that will cause you to die. David feared not and ran toward the giant. He once grabbed a lion by the beard and smote him. He later wrote in Ps. 27:1,

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?"

Nobody or nothing can make you afraid apart from your will. You have a say-so as to whether or not you will be afraid and walk in fear. Choose to resist fear and refuse to ever be afraid of anybody or anything!

Ps. 91:9-12 tells of another way that God protects you,

"Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your habitation, no evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in your ways. They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone."

Angels are real, and the Commander and Chief God has ordered them to guard you wherever you go.

- They'll keep you and protect you on your way to work and on your way home, on your way in the front door and out the back door, on your way from your kitchen to your living room.
- They will pick you up in their hands lest you dash your foot against a stone and hurt yourself.
- They can lift cars and buildings and big trees and huge stones.
- They can take on human form, and if you have a flat tire in a snow storm, a stranger may appear out of nowhere and change it for you.

God gave them an order and they will do what God tells them to do.

From the lions den Daniel said to the king,

"My God sent His angel and

shut the lions mouths, so that they have not hurt me..." Daniel 6:22a.

- Angels were sent to rescue Lot from Sodom and Gomorrah Gen. <sup>19</sup>.
- In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus said He could have asked

### Angels are sent from God to help you.

and twelve legions of angels would have come to protect Him <sup>Matt.</sup> <sup>26:53</sup>

- In Acts 5:5, an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought the apostles out.
- Acts 12 tells how an angel was also used to get Peter out of prison where he was bound with two chains between two soldiers.
- Matt. 28:2 states that an angel was involved with the Lord's resurrection from the dead,

"And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it."

Concerning angels Heb. 1:14 states,

"Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?"

Angels are sent from God to help and assist you. The Amplified© Bible says,

> "Are not the angels all ministering spirits, servants sent out in the service of those who are to inherit salvation?"

We don't serve angels, they serve us, and it is wrong to pray to and worship angels. Don't talk to them and try to find out what their name is. In Rev. 22:8, 9 John fell down to worship the angel and was forbidden from doing so. The angel said,

"I am your fellow servant. Worship God."

1 Cor. 6:2 says that one day we will judge angels, so to have the desire to be one is a demotion. There is only one true God and it is Him whom you serve. Besides, angels don't hearken to foolishness, they hearken to God's word. David wrote in Ps. 103:20,21,

> "Bless the Lord, you His angels, who excel in strength, who do His word, heeding the voice of His word. Bless the Lord, all you His hosts, you ministers of His, who do His pleasure."

Angels hear and respond to the voice of God's Word. What if that Word was in your mouth? They would respond to what you say and this means you have a say-so in what your angel does! Angels are powerful and there are billions of them. Ps. 68:17a says,

"The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of thousands."

This means that if half the people on earth was born-again there would be more than 20,000 angels assigned to each person. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in 2 Kings 7:15-17,

"And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, 'Alas, my master! What shall we do?' So he answered, 'Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.' And Elisha prayed, and said, 'Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.' Then the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha."

You are not alone and you are never by yourself. You can walk through the valley of the shadow of death, because you have an angel that goes wherever you go. Ps. 91:7 says,

"A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; But it shall not come near you."

In 2 Kings 19, the premiere military force in all the world came against God's people. They were powerfully outnumbered, but God was their great Protector. He said,

> "For I will defend this city, to save it for My own sake and for My servant David's sake.' And it came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the Lord went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand, and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses - all dead."

One angel did this, and God has assigned one of these angelic warriors to be your bodyguard, to protect you and keep you from harms way. In Matt. 18:1 Jesus called a child to Him and later said in v. 10,

"Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven."

Jesus said they were "their" angels, not God's angels, and you don't lose your angel just because you grew up. These angels are charged by God to take care of you and protect you wherever you go. This is why we read in Ps. 91:5-13

> "Fear nothing - not wild wolves in the night, not flying arrows in the day. Not disease that prowls through the darkness,

## This is not the time to check out of here.

not disaster that erupts at high noon. Even though others succumb all around, drop

like flies right and left, no harm will even graze you. You'll stand untouched, watch it all from a distance, watch the wicked turn into corpses. Yes, because God's your refuge, the High God your very own home, evil can't get close to you, harm can't get through the door. He ordered His angels to guard you wherever you go. If you stumble, they'll catch you; their job is to keep you from falling. You'll walk unharmed among lions and snakes, and kick young lions and serpents from the path."

God can protect you anywhere if you are in the will of God. Prov. 16:7 says,

> "When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with

him."

One example of this happening is found in Genesis 35. God sent Jacob and those who were with him through some hostile territory and v. 5 says,

> "And they journeyed, and the terror of God was upon the cities that were all around them, and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob."

You will be safer in a perilous place if you are in the will of God than you will be in a safe place out of the will of God. If you will follow and obey God completely, then "the terror of God" will be part of your defense. Heb. 10:31 says,

> "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Moses and the children of Israel sang to the Lord about their enemies,

> "The people will hear and be afraid; Sorrow will take hold of the inhabitants of Palestine. Then the chiefs of Edom will be dismayed; The mighty men of Moab, trembling will take hold of them; All the inhabitants of Canaan will melt away. Fear and dread will fall on them; By the greatness of Your arm they will be as still as a stone, till Your people pass over, O Lord, till

the people pass over whom You have purchased" <sup>Ex. 15:14-16</sup>.

Fear and dread shall fall upon your enemies when you are submitted to God. It will shake and paralyze them to the point where they won't follow their original plan to do you harm. God told Moses in Ex. 34:23.24,

"Three times in the year all your men shall appear before the Lord, the Lord God of Israel. For I will cast out the nations before you and enlarge your borders; nei-ther will any man covet your land when you go up to appear before the Lord your God three times in the year."

The men left their homes and because of the terror of God, the enemy did not desire to take their land while they were gone.

The terror of God will fall on those who desire to do you harm and they will flee before you. In 1 Samuel 14 Jonathan and his armorbearer rose up to face an enemy army all by themselves. With faith and courage the son of King Saul said,

"For nothing restrains the Lord from saving by many or by few" <sup>v. 6</sup>.

They approached the enemy's camp, and after killing twenty men,

v. 15 states,

"And there was the trembling in the camp, in the field, and among all the people. The garrison and the raiders also trembled; and the earth quaked, so that it was a very great trembling."

Verse 20b goes on to say,

"and indeed every man's sword was against his neighbor, and there was very great confusion."

The enemy sowed terror and now they were reaping the terror of God. In Judges 7 Gideon with trumpets and lanterns and three hundred men faced down the Midian army and verses 21, 22a says,

> "And every man stood in his place and around the camp; and the whole army ran and cried out and fled. When the three hundred blew the trumpets, the Lord set every man's sword against his companion throughout the whole camp..."

2 Kings 7 tells the story of four leprous men who got tired of sitting around waiting to die so they rose up and approached the enemy camp of the Syrians,

"...and when they had come to the outskirts of the Syrian camp, to their surprise no one was there. For the Lord had caused the army of the Syrians to hear the noise of chariots and the noise of horses - the noise of a great army; so they said to one another, 'Look, the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians to attack us!' Therefore they arose and fled

## A prudent man foresees evil.

at twilight, and left the camp intact their tents, their horses, and their donkeys - and they

fled for their lives" vv. 5b-7.

God can and will do things like this today! He'll charge the angels to cause your enemies to shake and tremble, and they'll flee and leave you alone. Most of the time you won't know this is happening, because you'll be in bed sleeping peacefully because you believe God causes you to dwell in perfect protection.

Prov. 27:12 shows another way submitted believers can escape from the dangers of the perilous times the world is now in,

"A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself; The simple pass on and are punished."

Jesus said the Holy Spirit will show you things to come <sup>John 16:13</sup> and this divine foreknowledge will lead you and guide you and help you be prepared when the attacks of the enemy approach you. The NIV states,

"The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty."

Faith is not to be used just to get you out of trouble. Faith is to be used to keep you from getting into trouble. If you will walk in faith and take heed to the warnings of God, then you will be supernaturally covered by His power and protection, and trouble won't come your way. David said in Ps. 31:3,4,

> "For You are my rock and my fortress; Therefore, for Your name's sake, lead me and guide me. Pull me out of the net which they have secretly laid for me, for You are my strength."

It is better to miss the trap, than to get caught in the trap and need a spectacular deliverance. Take heed to the warnings God gives you. Heb.11:7a says,

> "By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household..."

God saved the entire human race with a warning. Noah responded to the warning and got ready for the flood which was to come. God protected the baby Jesus by giving warnings to the wise men and His earthly parents that Herod was seeking to kill Him,

"Then, being warned in a dream that they (the wise men) should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way. Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, 'Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him" <sup>Matt. 2:12.13</sup>.

Christians should pay attention to the warnings of God and not ignore them. People foolishly do things they know on the inside they shouldn't do. Something told them not to do it, but they did it anyway. You can't expect God to protect you if you ignore the warning. The warning is the protection! God told Ezekiel,

"Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me" <sup>Ezek. 3:17</sup>.

Paul said in Acts 27:10a,

"Men, I perceive that this voyage

will end with disaster and much loss..."

A perception is when you sense something on the inside of you that something isn't right. The owner of the ship ignored this warning from Paul and disaster struck. God gives His people warnings, and you must pay attention to what He says. God warned Adam not to eat of the tree, but he overrode what God said and ate anyway.

Too many Christians ignore the warnings, or else they override the warning. They're not taught to pay attention to what's being said inside their spirit. Don't look for the spectacular and miss the supernatural. God protected Jesus with warnings, so why should you require something more spectacular than that?

Be led by the Spirit and not your intellect or feelings. Prov. 3:5,6 says,

> "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."

The NIV says,

"In all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight." Train yourself to listen to the voice of God in your inner man, because more times than not you will be led by a divine warning from above than by an angelic visitation. And, by all means, do not override the warnings of the Lord!

A preacher and his family had an Asian vacation planned and the

## Train yourself to listen to the voice of God.

Spirit said, "Don't go." They stayed home, but the same day they were to be on the beach enjoying

themselves, a tsunami hit and wiped out everything in its path.

Jesus said to His disciples in Matt. 9:37,38,

"The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

The heart of all believers is to see the lost saved, the sick healed, the distressed relieved, the broken restored, and the discouraged empowered to victory. The laborers are few and we need everybody we've got doing everything we can do.

We don't want you to die before your time and check out early. We don't want to do our part and have to do your part also. So believe God, get healed, be protected, and run your race and finish your course. Ps. 91 ends by saying,

> "Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation" vv. 14-16.

You must be protected in order to be satisfied with a long life. God has kept you year after year, decade after decade. You are now old and completely satisfied. You've done it all and seen it all. You've done everything God put on your heart to do. You've seen it all come to pass and now you're ready to go home to be with the Lord. You're fully satisfied. This is the ultimate inheritance of the obedient child of God.

Abiding under the shadow of the Almighty results in the destruction of every bondage, the removal of every burden, and the fulfillment of every good desire.

There is no life so exciting as the victorious life of the protected believer. good life is a long life. There is, however, much more involved here than the number of years in which you live. A good life is based on the quality of the life you live in addition to the quantity of years you live. What good is living long if you're miserable doing it? No, a good life is a life where you are fully satisfied with every aspect of the life you've been so graciously given.

Jesus said in John 10:10b, "I have come that they may have and enjoy their life, and that they may have it more abundantly."

It is God's will that you live a long fruitful life, a life that is full of years and full of experiences. Ps. 91:14-16 says,

"Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation."

The word "salvation" means 'nothing missing, nothing broken. When this applies to your life you will indeed be fully satisfied and your life will be good.

When you're satisfied, you're full. You don't want any more. It's how you feel after you've had that third turkey leg at a special family gathering. When your time comes to leave this planet, you should be full of life, rich, aged, and satisfied. God has promised us a long life.

Another translation of Ps. 91:16 says,

"I'll give them a long, full life and they'll see how I can save."

God didn't create us to die, He created us to live! If you don't know it's God's will for you to live long, you're handicapped. Know that death is an enemy, and handicapped. Know that death is an enemy, and it is your God-given right to live a long, satisfied life. Ask for long life, believe for it, and expect for it to happen. Be like Job who "died, old and full of days" Job 42:17.

God never promised us an easy life but He did say we could live a long and satisfied life. People who want to die before their time, probably are not living on the level of victory where they should be. If they were living the good life, they probably wouldn't be in such a hurry to get out of here.

One reason people talk about the rapture so much is, because they're miserable in this life. People say "come quickly, Lord Jesus," because they're unhappy, heavily in debt, sick, have a miserable marriage, and are unemployed. This is not the time to check out of here.

## There is a right time to die and this is not it.

Now is the time to rise up to a higher level of victory and press on until you're fully satisfied with your life.

Solomon writes in Eccl. 7:17,

"Do not be overly wicked nor be foolish: Why should you die before your time?" Eccl. 3:1 tells us that there is,

"A time to die"

...and we read in Job 5:26,

"You shall come to the grave at a full age, as a sheaf of grain ripens in its' season."

If you are not fully satisfied, it is not the time to die. We only get to live this life once, and we should have the will and desire to stay down here as long as we're supposed to. Besides, it's none of the devil's business how and when we go. The ultimate desire of our life should be the same as Balaam who said in Num. 23:10,

> "Who can count the dust of Jacob, or number one-fourth of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my end be like his!"

Balaam said that to die like Jacob is what it means to "die the death of the righteous". This, too, should be how we want to die. That being said, how did Jacob die? First, he lived a rich, full life. Gen. 30:43 says,

> "He became exceedingly prosperous, and had large flocks, female and male servants, and camels and donkeys."

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Jacob lived long and tasted all the fruitful seasons of life. He ran his race and saw the fruits of his labor. Before he passed on at the ripe old age of 147, he blessed his sons and when he,

"...had finished commanding his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people" Gen. 49:33.

Jacob was fully satisfied and died the death of the righteous.

One thing that people most need to understand is that, like Jacob, we have a say-so as to when it's time to pass on to the other side. Read carefully the words of Paul recorded in Phil. 1:21-24,

> "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful to you."

Paul said he had a choice as to whether or not to die. He then said it was needful to the Philippian church that he remain alive and not go to heaven, which was far better. Paul is showing us that this is the reason to live a long, good life.

People need you, and we can't get selfish and think only of ourselves. Each of us play a vital and important part in God's plan to bring salvation to the world. There is no such thing as spiritual retirement, and people can be more productive and fruitful in the second half of their lives than they are in the first half.

God has given each of us an assignment to fulfill and we need to stay down here as long as we're supposed to. When things get tough everybody wants to go home, but somebody has to stay and win the battle. This is why we're told to,

"Endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" <sup>2</sup> Tim. 2:3.

By now, conviction should reign supreme in our hearts and mind that it is God's will for us to live a long life.

The question we must now ask is, according to scripture, how long is long? Unfortunately, the devil has deceived many into thinking that 60 and 80 years is old. Even today, when people turn 40 they think they're old. This is foolishness, because when people think that way they'll expect things in their life to go wrong and fall apart. They begin to fear death and you cannot do this and live a long life.

As children of God we should not sorrow as those who have no hope. We need to enjoy life and savor it, count it all joy when trials come, and be happy. We all need to live the good life which is a long and satisfied life.

So, how old is old? How long does a person have a right to live? Most people will answer this question by quoting Ps. 90:10,

> "The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and

we fly away."

People who believe we have a Biblical right to live to be 70 or 80 years based on this verse of scripture, are misinformed and have not rightly divided the word of truth. As with all scripture we must always check the context in which the verse was written.

Psalm 90 was written by Moses and he penned these words when the people of Israel were not pleasing God. These people had just been delivered from the bonds of slavery in Egypt and while in the wilderness, began to murmur and complain against God. They were not living the good life, and because of their rebellion, began to die off in the wilderness.

Even in their rebellious state they were able to live 70 and 80 years, and we read in Num. 14:28,34 that many of them began to die at the age of 60. As you can see, this verse does not say that the bornagain righteous children of God have a right to live 70 or 80 years, but rather was stating the age when the people began to die off in the wilderness.

Understanding that, what then is the maximum age we can live? Get ready, because the answer may surprise you. Gen. 6:3 says, "And the Lord said, 'My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.""

God said we have a Biblical right to live 120 years. Take notice that when this was written, people were living hundreds and hundreds

## There truly is a price to pay for sin.

of years, and to live only 120 years was appalling to them.

Gen. 5 re-

cords that Adam lived 930 years, his son Seth lived 912 years, Methuselah lived 969 years, and Noah lived 950 years. By the time of Noah, the whole planet had become evil and the people were living close to a thousand years. God said, "I'm not putting up with this" and changed the age of man to 120 years. It is because of the sinful state of man that we no longer live hundreds of years like the patriarchs of old. There truly is a price to pay for sin.

Soon after the flood, people began to live only 400-500 years. Every generation after the flood began to die sooner than the generation before. Abraham's father died at 200 and Abraham died at 175. The age limit went down and stabilized at the age of 120. Joseph died at 110, and five hundred years later in Exodus 6 people were dying at the same age.

We need to get our minds renewed and see long life like God sees it. With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day <sup>2 Peter 3:8</sup>. One minute of God's time is 6 months to us. Likewise, one hour of God's time is 42 years to us. This means that 120 years is less than 3 hours to God. As far as God is concerned, 120 years goes by faster than the snap of your fingers.

Don't let anybody discourage you from living a long life. Don't let people tell you it can't be done. Two people in our generation has lived to be over 120 years, so this is a realistic number.

Public record proves that living this long is not beyond the realm of possibility. It is not some fantasy but is a proven reality. It's happening! Worldwide there are over half a million people over the age of 100 and 400 of them are over the age of 110<sup>-1</sup>. God told Moses that the days of man were 120 years and this is the precise age that Moses passed on.

It is not ridiculous to think that you also can live to be 120 years old. In fact, God expects you to. He wants you to live a long, fruitful life. Too many people are dying in their 50's, 60's, and 70's. 60 is not old, it's halfway to 120.

It is foolishness and ignorant to call middle age "old". Change the way you think. When your hair begins to turn gray, don't talk about how old you're getting, but instead talk about how wise you've become.

Moses died at 120 and God had to tell him it was time to go. Before he went home, he first climbed a mountain and saw the promised land from afar. He was strong and his eyesight did not diminish with age. This is the way to go.

Sad to say, too many people die early and before their time. They give up the fight and quit.

So many people are weak and just barely getting by, and the enemy is waiting for them to get a little bit weaker so he can take them and destroy them. He comes to kill, steal, and destroy <sup>John 10:10</sup>, and his plan is to overwhelm you. He has to wait until you're weak, because if you're strong it doesn't do him much good.

Millions of believers don't go to church, don't pray, and don't read their Bible. Day by day they're getting weaker and weaker, when suddenly the devil attacks them and they don't survive. They died before their time.

Life is precious and to live long

you must have a willingness to fight. Joel 3:10 says,

"Let the weak say 'I am strong."

Say out loud,

#### "I am strong and I will live long! No weapon formed against me will prosper! I am more than a conqueror in Christ!"

Let's run the whole race and not allow the devil to steal from us. Many people who are bedridden grow quiet and give up the fight. We can't let this happen! We need to live as long- and as full as we can!

Life is good and you must be a fighter to live, especially to live long. You must rise up in the face of adversity and fight the good fight of faith. Stand up and run your race! Go all the way and receive the prize that awaits you when you cross the finish line. To live a long life, our bodies must be free of sickness and disease.

One way to fight the good fight of faith in this area is to build up your spirit man and be strong in the Lord and the power of His might. Read carefully the words of Prov. 18:14,

> "The spirit of a man will sustain him in sickness, but who can bear a broken spirit?"

A strong spirit will fight off

diseases that try to attach themselves to your body, and will get you through an attack of weakness and bodily pain. The AMP© Bible says,

> "The strong spirit of a man sustains them in bodily pain or trouble, but a weak and broken spirit, who can raise up or bear?"

Just as God is a Spirit, so also

## *Keep your heart with all diligence.*

are you. You are a spirit, you have a soul, and you live in a body. Your spirit can be made

strong and this affects your flesh. When your spirit is filled with the Spirit of God it will give health and life to your body and will overcome the disease. You will be ready for any attack from the enemy, and you will be prepared and you will overcome.

When you are strong in spirit you will be victorious and you will be healed and delivered again and again. A strong spirit will get you through the worst sickness and problem, and you will overcome everything the enemy throws at you. That's the will of God for all of us.

Prov. 4:23-27 tells us how to have a strong spirit.

"Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life. Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and put perverse lips far from you. Let your eyes look straight ahead, and your eyelids look right before you. Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established. Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil."

The life that is within you comes from God to your spirit, and from your spirit to your body. What happens to your spirit affects what happens to your body. If you have a strong spirit you will have a strong body and will be able to live a long, satisfied life.

Your spirit is more important than your body and mind, for out of it flows the issues of life. Read the Word every day and go to church every service. Do everything God tells you to do and you'll get stronger and stronger.

John G. Lake<sup>2</sup> once said,

"The gospel is the strong man's gospel."

You must fight to live! You must learn to resist death day in and day out, week after week, year after year. Do not grow weary! If a doctor says you're sick say, "No, I'm not! I shall not die! I will live and declare the glory of God!"

Nobody can fight for you.

People can encourage you, but they can't fight form you. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and He will strengthen you and reinforce you so much so, that nothing will happen to you that you're not prepared for.

Unbelief irritates the Lord. God is angered by the hardness of our hearts. The first question God will ask you is "Where is your faith?" To the Lord, there is no justifiable excuse for doubting Him. None! It is not acceptable to whine and give up. Ever!

Faith is not for the weak! It's for the strong! If you quit, you lose!!! Keep answering the bell, because the Lord said you'd win the fight. He always leads us to triumph in Christ. Living by faith will give you a strong spirit, and this is the guarantee that you'll live a long life. So don't give up the fight!

Psalm 71 is called the "prayer for the aged". Notice vs. 17, 18,

"O God, You have taught me from my youth; and to this day I declare Your wondrous works. Now also when I am old and gray headed. O God, do not forsake me, until I declare Your strength to this generation."

There is a work to be done in old age. Many people die and leave right at the time when they learn enough about God and are ready to be useful. Ps. 71 does not describe a weak latter life, but is rather a showing of strength, spiritual maturity, and the knowledge of God. Verse 16 says,

"I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of Your righteousness, of Yours only."

Don't ever give up on life, but stay and fight the good fight and finish your race.

Look at Ps. 92:12-14,

"The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree. He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing."

Those who live the good life are not wiling away the years sitting in a rocking chair watching life pass them by. No, they're out there in the world proclaiming the goodness of God. The devil will try to tell you that you are not important, but he is a liar. God has given you a reason to live and a purpose to stay so stir yourself up and give your all to God.

Ps. 18:32,33 says,

"It is God Who arms me with

strength, and makes my way perfect. He makes my feet like the feet of deer, and sets me on the high places."

David also says in Ps. 27:1,

"The Lord is my light and my salvation: Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life: Of whom shall I be afraid?"

Never again say you are weak. Confess out loud...

Don't ask God to make you strong, believe that you are strong!

"I am strong! God is the strength of my spirit, He's the strength of my mind, and He's the strength of my heart and lungs. He's the strength of my blood cells, kidneys, and my immune system. He's the strength of my

arms, legs, eyes, and ears! Yes, He is the strength of my life!!"

Never again say you are weak in any area of your life. The weaker you feel, the more you say,

#### "I am strong!"

How can you tell if you're weak?

- Your spirit will be fearful and anxious.
- You will dread and be

depressed.

- You won't want to do anything; you'll be lazy and have no incentive; no desire; no excitement.
- All you think and talk about is what's wrong, and you think about quitting and giving up.
- You have no vision and feel like there's no use going on.
- You feel like you might as well give up and die.

These are all symptoms of having a weak spirit.

On the other hand, when your spirit is strong there is peace. Ps. 29:11 says,

> "The Lord will give strength to His people; The Lord will bless His people with peace."

- Peace and joy is evidence of a strong spirit.
- The joy of the Lord is your strength.
- When you're strong in the spirit, there's a freshness about you.
- You have confidence and vou're ready to take on world. You'll have the confidence and you're ready to get something done. Your

attitude is that you can do all things through Christ Who strengthens you.

• Like Caleb you'll say, "We are able to take the land! Let's go take it!" Your attitude is "Yes we can! Yes we will!"

Believe that long life is your covenant right. You have the right to stay here until you finish what God has told you to do. How did Paul make it to the end of his course? He fought the good fight of faith. If you have faith, the good days are in front of you. The best is yet to come, so don't ever look back and talk about "the good ole days".

Don't say you're over the hill, but use your time wisely to become all you were predestined to become. People need you and God needs you. You're on the frontlines. You're where all the action is. You're making a positive difference in the world. You're right where God wants you to be.

Paul tells us when it's time to go home in 2 Tim. 4:5,

"But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."

When you fulfill your ministry, when you accomplish it entirely, then and only then will it be time to go to your eternal home.

"For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" <sup>vv. 6, 7</sup>.

Even Jesus didn't die until He mouthed the words, "It is finished" John 19:30.

To die the death of the righteous, you must only leave when your hour has come, when you've finished your race and fulfilled your ministry. Until then, live long and draw your strength from Him which His boundless might provides. Time is passing by quickly and in almost no time at all you'll stand before Him and hear Him say,

> "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of the Lord" <sup>Matt. 25:21</sup>.

Finally, Paul said in Phil. 1:20b,21,

"As always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

To live is to be moved by the anointing of God, and to die is gain. Some people think death is the worst thing that can happen to you. It's not! In fact, it's just the opposite. It's gain! Let's live a long, satisfied life in such a way that God can be magnified by our deaths.

God gets no glory if we die too early and don't fulfill our call. Set your face like flint and be determined to help and encourage everybody you come in contact with. When

# Fulfill your ministry.

God is magnified by your life, He'll also be magnified by your death. This is what it means to live a

good life and to die the death of the righteous.

Come on, you can do it! You can live a long, satisfied life! Yes you can!

Yes you will!

<sup>1</sup>Page 93: Also see <u>www.thecentenarian.co.uk</u>

<sup>2</sup>Page 95: John Graham Lake, (March 18, 1870 – September 16, 1935), usually known as **John G. Lake**, was a Canadian–American leader in the Pentecostal movement that began in the early 20th Century. *Courtesy of Wikipedia.com* 

**Randall J. Brewer** has been faithfully serving the Lord since the day he first bowed his knees before Him in the summer of 1974.

Since that time Randall has stepped through every door that the Lord has opened for him and over time he has been involved with a children's ministry, a teenage street ministry, and has led a Christian singles ministry. He has been involved with an outreach to those in prison and many inmates have been blessed as the result of his efforts.

Randall has also managed a church bookstore, has been the substitute host of a three hour Christian radio program, and has taught Bible classes at church and hosted many home cell groups.

Recently the Lord had him write the eye opening story "Heaven: The Great Adventure" with the promise that it would open doors all over the world, giving those who read the message the incentive to grow closer and stronger in their own personal walk with the Lord. Since the completion of this book, Randall's work has been translated into several languages, and invitations have



come in to teach all over the world.

Randall and his beautiful wife Anne Marie have been bonded together by one God, with one love, for one purpose. They know firsthand the trials and pain that come with having a sincere desire to serve the Lord.

The result of going through many harsh battles is that the Lord has anointed them to lift up and exhort those who are also serving the Lord and going through similar circumstances.

Their mission in life is to encourage all believers to rise up in the midst of their adversity and become all they were meant to be in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

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Their heartfelt prayer is that once you read this book, your life will never be the same.

BACK

CAUTION ! JOSEPH'S BONES