

**The World's Greatest  
Communicator**

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*Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.*

Proverbs 16:24

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## Introduction

God is the world's greatest communicator. He knows what each of us need to hear and works to help us in our lives. He wants to meet us where we are at and help grow our relationship with Him. God uses a variety of ways to speak to us including life experiences. Garrison Keillor puts it this way, God speaks to us, "in ordinary things like cooking and small talk, through storytelling, making love, fishing, tending animals and sweet corn and flowers, through sports, music, and books, raising kids—all the places where the gravy soaks in and grace shines through."<sup>1</sup> In total God can speak to us through His Word, His Son, the Holy Spirit, other believers, nature, prayer, and music. Each of these will be the focus of a chapter in this book.

God speaks to us through His Word. 2 Timothy 3:16 states, *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.* Through God's Word we gain insights into many marvelous truths. **We are more than conquerors through Christ** (Romans 8:37). **We can be anxious for nothing** (Philippians 4:6). **We do not lose heart in our lives because Jesus Christ is our**

**strength** (2 Corinthians 4:16). **The love of Christ compels us in how we live our lives** (2 Corinthians 5:14). **We can forgive as quickly as we are offended. We give abundantly as we have been given. We boast only in Christ. We trust only in God and we lean solely on His power.** These are great aims for our life and truths that God communicates to us everyday that we can take to heart.

God speaks to us through His Son. *In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son* Hebrews 1:1-2a. In one of my other books, *The World's Greatest Mathematics Teacher*,<sup>7</sup> I describe how Jesus is the greatest teacher and mathematics teacher ever. There has never been anyone like Jesus who could communicate well with everyone and teach the Gospel message with such power. Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament promise of a Savior and His life on earth is a clear example for how people can live theirs. Jesus communicated God's love through relationships and genuine care for individuals.

God speaks to us through His Spirit. Jesus said, *"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help*

*you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. John 14:16-17.*

The Holy Spirit dwells within all believers and is our Guide in our lives. We are never alone in this world because the Holy Spirit provides guidance and power for our lives. God can communicate directly to us through our thoughts as we think about how we can better live our lives to give glory to God in all that we do!

God speaks to us through other believers. *Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. 1 Thessalonians 5:11.* God's power is at work when Christians share God's Word with other people. We can gain new insights into the Bible and our lives by hearing from the experiences of other Christians. God often will give Christians circumstances that they can use to help others through advice, encouragement, tough love, or comfort.

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. 2 Corinthians*

1:3-4. When other Christians speak to us, we should listen and properly see how we can apply their experiences with God's Word in our life.

God speaks to us through nature and God's creation. *For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.* Romans 1:20. The first book in this series, *The World's Greatest Engineer,*<sup>3</sup> describes how God did something that only He could do; create the world and all that is in it. No engineer could ever come close to this and it did not just happen by chance or accident. The book goes on to describe the process that engineers go through—ask, imagine, plan, create, and improve—and how these steps relate to the Christian life. God's creation is evident of a master planner and creator.

DNA is a molecule that carries most of the genetic instructions used in the development and functioning of living things. **For humans, our entire DNA sequence would fill two-hundred 1,000 page telephone directories.**<sup>4</sup> The more DNA is explored the more scientists are finding that

each part of the DNA sequence has a purpose.<sup>3</sup> Through the intricacies of the human body and the beautiful magnificent order of nature God communicates that He is a God of the details, that He loves us, and that He cares about all of the details in our lives! That is no accident; that is God's plan at work!

God speaks to us through prayer. *Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.* Luke 18:1. If Jesus needed to pray, how can we do less? Prayer grows our relationship with God and provides hope and encouragement. *Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.* Psalm 25:5. Through prayer we can talk to God openly and honestly. If we listen, God will give us an answer and God has ways of working responses into our lives.

God speaks to us through music. *Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music.* Psalm 98:4. Many wonderful Christian songs are based on Bible verses. Christians have written music to convey to others what their faith in God means and as another means to

convey God's love to others. Music is a gift from God and God can use it to communicate His wisdom to us.

Through all of the ways that God communicates to us, there is no doubt that He is the greatest communicator ever. He is able to reach people where they are and have them hear just the right words, at just the right time. By staying in contact with God through the ways mentioned, we will have His guidance and direction for our lives!

### **Quality Communication Principles**

Effective communication is one of the most important aspects of a person's life to continue to work on improving. Author and business expert, Patrick Lencioni, lists effective communication as one of three virtues of an ideal team player; along with humility and hunger-an inner drive for excellence.<sup>6</sup> People who have good communication skills are interpersonally appropriate and aware. They ask good questions, listen to what others are saying, and stay engaged in conversations intently. They also have intuition around the subtleties of group dynamics and impact of their words and actions.

President Gerald Ford said, “If I went back to college again, I’d concentrate on two areas: learning to write and to speak before an audience. Nothing in life is more important than the ability to communicate effectively.” I heard it once said that 80% of the time people lose their jobs because they can not get along with others at work. It is not because of their abilities. With guidance from God, the world’s greatest communicator, you will grow in your relationship with Him, and in your communication skills as well.

There are a variety of key points for effective communication that also tie into wisdom from God through the Bible. Some of the principles of effective communication from Author, Dale Carnegie, in his timeless book, *How to Win Friends & Influence People*, are (a) Don’t criticize, condemn or complain; (b) Give honest and sincere appreciation; (c) Become genuinely interested in other people; (d) Smile; (e) Remember that a person’s name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound in any language; (f) Encourage others to talk about themselves; and (g) Praise the slightest improvement and praise every improvement. Let’s look closer at a few of these.

Don't criticize, condemn or complain. The Bible says:

*Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, "children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation."* 2 Philippians 2:14-15. If we want to have the best relationships with others, we should keep this advice in mind. When we do have to correct others, it is always good to talk about a mistake that you have made first, in order for it to be more likely that a person will take advice the right way.

Give honest and sincere appreciation. *I thank God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.* Philippians 1:3-5. In these verses Paul is showing thanks that the people of Philippi have partnered with him in the ministry of bringing people to know Christ. These are words that we can share with others, whether it is co-workers, family, or friends. We can thank God for them being in our lives and let them know this. One of the best gifts that you can give someone is to thank him or her for being in your life.

Become genuinely interested in other people. *Since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.* 1 John 4:11. *May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had.*

Romans 15:5. **Pastor, author, and professor David Augsburg**, has said, **“Being heard is so close to being loved, that for the average person, they are almost indistinguishable.”**

The motivation to care for and show love to others comes from God’s love to us. He cared about every individual in this world so much that He sent His Son to earth to die on a cross for the sins of all people. Through Jesus’ glorious resurrection, we are given eternal life! This provides us with great hope, endurance, and encouragement for our time on earth that we can pass on to others. Everyone is important to God and we in turn can show that this is true by showing interest in the lives of others. A simple way to do this is to ask questions about another person’s life or ask them about things they are interested in. *In humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.* Philippians 2:3-4.

*Smile. Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again:*

*Rejoice!* Philippians 4:4. **Christians know that we can have inner joy no matter what our circumstances because God loves us and heaven awaits us.** A simple smile can make a big difference and can communicate that you are happy to see a person. A saying that I like is, "Always smile. It makes people wonder where your joy comes from." There is a great poem by an unknown author that communicates the value of a smile.

#### **The Value of a Smile**

**It costs nothing, but creates much.**

**It enriches those who receive,  
without impoverishing those who give.**

**It happens in a flash and  
the memory of it sometimes lasts forever.**

**None are so rich they can get along without it,  
and none so poor but are richer for its benefits.**

**It creates happiness in the home,  
fosters good will in a business,  
and is the countersign of friends.**

**It is rest to the weary, daylight to the discouraged,  
sunshine to the sad, and nature's best antidote for trouble.**

**Yet it cannot be bought, begged, borrowed, or stolen,  
for it is something that is no earthly good to anybody  
till it is given away.**

**Nobody needs a smile so much as those who have none  
left to give!**

Leadership expert, John Maxwell, lists several other ways that you can become better at connecting with others:

walk slowly through the halls; remind yourself that people are human beings, not resources to be used; put someone else ahead of you; get off your agenda; and put the spotlight on others.\*

One of the best people at doing this was Nelson Mandela, President of South Africa. A businessman named Peter got the chance to meet Nelson Mandela. Mandela showed a perfect example of putting the spotlight on Peter, getting off his agenda, and putting Peter ahead of him. Nelson Mandela was waiting outside of his house to greet Peter when he showed up. They proceeded to go inside to eat, when Mandela asked Peter where the other person was who was with him. Peter commented, "That is my driver." Mandela then went outside and invited him in for breakfast as well.\* A great example that people are human beings and not resources to be used.

Mandela was a Christian and his actions fit nicely with a poem by Hallmark card writer, Amanda Bradley. It is something that we can all keep in mind as we strive to show God's love to others and work on emulating the world's greatest Communicator, God.

## Each Life Affects Another's

We may not always realize that everything we do  
Affects not only our lives but touches others, too.

For a little bit of thoughtfulness  
that shows someone you care

Creates a ray of sunshine for both of you to share.

Yes, every time you show a friend you care and understand,

Every time you have a kind and gentle word to give

You help someone find beauty in this precious life we live.

For happiness brings happiness, and loving ways bring love,

And giving is the treasure that contentment is made of.

-Amanda Bradley-

## **Chapter 1: God Communicates through His Word**

Christian author John Piper tells the story of a March morning in 2007, when he heard God speak to him. There was no doubt that it was God. He heard the words in his head clearly and He knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that God still speaks today. Piper was in northern Minnesota at a staff retreat and around five thirty in the morning could not sleep. No one else was up yet, so he sat down on a couch and prayed. Piper describes what happened next.

As I prayed and mused, suddenly it happened. God said, *“Come and see what I have done.”* There was not the slightest doubt in my mind that these were the very words of God. In this very moment. At this very place in the twenty-first century, 2007, God was speaking to me with absolute authority and self-evidencing reality. I paused to let this sink in. There was a sweetness about it. Time seemed to matter little. God was near. He had me in his sights. He had something to say to me. When God draws near, hurry ceases. Time slows down.

Piper began to wonder what God meant by “come and see.” What did God want to show him or teach him? He was wrapped in the love of God’s personal communication to him. Piper continues with what happened next.

The words came again. Just as clear as before, but increasingly specific: *“I turned the sea into dry land; they passed through the river on foot. There they rejoiced in me—who rules by my might forever.”* Suddenly I realized God was taking me back several thousand years to the time when he dried up the Red Sea and the Jordan River... This is what he meant by “come and see.” God himself was narrating the mighty works of God. He was doing it for me. He was doing it with words that were resounding in my own mind... As I marveled at his power to dry the sea and the river, he spoke again. *“I keep watch over the nations—let not the rebellious exalt themselves.”*<sup>1</sup>

A sense of peace came over Piper. The God who keeps watch over the nations, was speaking personally to him. It strengthened his faith and let him know that God cares about him and is watching over him. It was not the first time

Piper had this experience and he strives to have this experience every day. This is because it is through the Bible that the very God of the universe still speaks to us today. In the experience described Piper was reading Psalm 66:5-7.

*Come and see what God has done,  
his awesome deeds for mankind!  
He turned the sea into dry land,  
they passed through the waters on foot—  
come, let us rejoice in him.  
He rules forever by his power,  
his eyes watch the nations—  
let not the rebellious rise up against him.*

**The Scriptures have great power because they are the very voice of God.** They are His inspired Words that were especially written down so that each one of us could come to the saving faith found only through Christ Jesus our Lord. God invites each one of us to “Come and see” His mighty power and love that is on display in His Word. *Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.* Proverbs 30:5-6. *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so*

*that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.* 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

God can speak to us through His Word every day of our lives. He has endless wisdom to offer in the Bible. The importance of this cannot be underestimated. Christian authors, Greg Hawkins and Cally Parkinson, in their book, *Move: What 1,000 churches reveal about spiritual growth*, state, “Nothing has a greater impact on spiritual growth than reflection on Scripture. If churches could do only one thing to help people at all levels of spiritual maturity grow in their relationship with Christ, their choice is clear. They would inspire, encourage, and equip their people to read the Bible.”<sup>2</sup>

There is advice and council in the Bible for all moments of life. In one of my other books, *Wisdom for Life*, I describe a variety of themes for which the Bible can provide guidance. A few of these include purpose, change, worry, joy, and hope.

### **Purpose**

We are called to love and serve the one true God.

*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul*

*and with all your mind.* Matthew 22:37. *One Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.* Ephesians 4:5-6. There is nothing more important in life than having faith in God. God is all-powerful and all-knowing and is our Creator. He has forgiven us all of our sins and saved us from death through Jesus' death on the cross and His victorious resurrection. There can be no other response than to love and serve Him! We can only be truly fulfilled through Christ; nothing else compares. It is what we were created for: to praise and give glory to God. C.S. Lewis states it this way, "A car is made to run on gasoline, and it would not run properly on anything else. Now God designed the human machine to run on himself. He himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other."

We can feel good about our purpose in life because God has given us all gifts and abilities that we can use to serve Him through our actions and words. *For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.* Ephesians 2:10. Through the talents and interests we have been given we can

put in hard work to develop these gifts so that we can best serve others and show others God's love.

## **Change**

**While change is inevitable in our lives, we can draw strength from the fact that God is constant and unchanging.** *The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever.* Isaiah 40:8. *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.* Hebrews 13:8. God's promises to us are true and trustworthy. God is faithful even when we are not.

Through any change in life—new job, relationship, growing family, moving, graduation, health problem, loss of a loved one, etc.—we can have confidence that God will help and sustain us. *Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.* Joshua 1:9. We do not know what the future holds but we do know who holds the future: God. We can have an excellent feeling of security and hope because of this. My mom has said, "Peaceful living comes from close communion with Jesus in whatever we do."<sup>4</sup> It is truly

peaceful to know that Jesus is with us at all times, cares for us, loves us, and wants to help us.

## **Worry**

**When worry comes, look back on your life for how God has sustained and carried you. Why would the future be any different?** *The Lord will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life. Psalm 121:7. So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10.*

The best way to remove fear or worry is to remember the Lord. *I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. Psalm 121:1-2. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. Philippians 4:6.*

Pastor and author, Max Lucado, states it nicely, “Worry is an option, not an assignment. God can lead you into a worry-free world. Be quick to pray. Focus less on the problems ahead and more on the victories behind. Do your part, and God will do his. He will guard your heart with his

peace...a peace that passes understanding.”<sup>5</sup> With God on our side we can stop worrying about what *might* happen, and instead look forward to what *will* happen. This is because God is our help in the past, present, and future. We know that the blessed peace of eternal life awaits us in heaven! That is our sure and certain hope for the future! Bishop Francis de Sales states how Christians can approach each day, “The same Everlasting Father who cares for you today will take care of you tomorrow and every day of your life. Either He will shield you from suffering, or He will give you unfailing strength to bear it. Be at peace then, and put aside all anxious thoughts.”

## **Joy**

True joy comes from faith in God and the blessed assurance of heaven. *Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you.* Psalm 84:4. *You believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.* 1 Peter 1:8.

Christians know that we are loved by God and that heaven is our final destination. Our time on earth is important to give glory to God and to serve as witnesses to draw more people to saving faith. We can face each day with joy and

gladly do our calling because perfection and bliss beyond compare awaits us in our Father's house! Any problems on earth are only temporary, but being with God in heaven will be forever.

While we will not always be happy, we need not sink in the murky waters of despair for we are buoyed up with the inner joy of God's love for us! *Be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.* 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. Put another way we can have the following mindset: **Happy moments, praise God. Difficult moments, seek God. Quiet moments, worship God. Painful moments, trust God. Every moment, THANK GOD!**

## **Hope**

Biblical hope is not wishful thinking, optimism, nor self-confidence. It is much more than that. It is looking back at what God has done, continues to do and will do. *Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.* Hebrews 10:23. *I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God.* Job 19:25-26.

Christians know that our hope is on solid ground and nothing can shake it. Our future is as bright as the promises of God! Former pastor and author, John Maxwell, describes how great hope truly is.

Hope shines brightest when the hour is darkest.  
Hope motivates when discouragement comes.  
Hope energizes when the body is tired.  
Hope sweetens when the bitterness bites.  
Hope sings when all melodies are gone.  
Hope believes when the evidence is limited.  
Hope listens for answers when no one is talking.  
Hope climbs over obstacles when no one is helping.  
Hope endures hardship when no one is caring.  
Hope smiles confidently when no one is laughing.  
Hope reaches for answers when no one is asking.  
Hope presses toward victory when no one is encouraging.  
Hope dares to give when no one is sharing.  
Hope brings the victory when no one is winning.\*

A Christian's hope is based on God and His grace. This is something that we need to remember every day of our lives.

**God wants to communicate with us our whole life.**

**Through the Bible, we can hear God speak clearly to us.**

**He wants you to know that you are important! Redeemed!**

**Chosen! Saved! Grace defines who you are!**

## Chapter 2: God Communicates through His Son

One of my favorite fiction books when I was growing up was *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, by C.S. Lewis. In the book four siblings enter Narnia, a land of talking animals and mythical creatures, through walking through a wardrobe of an old country house. Aslan, the mighty Lion, is the creator of Narnia and has many devoted followers who know a saying by heart.

Wrong will be right, when Aslan comes in sight,  
At the sound of his roar, sorrows will be no more,  
When he bares his teeth, winter meets its death  
And when he shakes his mane, we shall have spring again.<sup>1</sup>

A white witch named Jadis, though, has staked claim as ruler of Narnia. One of the siblings, Edmund becomes enchanted when he meets the white witch who gives him Turkish Delight candies. He believes the lies of Jadis and goes to her side but realizes that he has made a mistake. Edmund returns to his siblings and Aslan. It is too late though because the white witch demands that Edmund be killed for his betrayal. Aslan meets with the white witch in private and offers himself in Edmund's place, though Aslan

has never done anything wrong. Aslan leaves at night without telling anyone of the arrangement but two of the siblings Lucy and Susan follow him from a distance. The white witch has Aslan bound and humiliates him by shaving his mane. The white witch then proceeds to kill Aslan. Lucy and Susan are distraught at the death of Aslan.

The loyal creatures of Narnia thought that Aslan would be a great military leader and conduct a battle against the witch; instead Aslan allows himself to be sacrificed. The story does not end there and it is worth reading or rereading the book again. C.S. Lewis intentionally wrote the Aslan character to be like Jesus. Jesus came to earth and took the punishment of all humans upon his shoulders. We messed up, but Jesus took our place. Our punishment should have been eternal death for our sins, but instead Jesus, who was the innocent one, suffered and died on the cross for *our* sins. He did not stay dead, however. Three days later He rose again, having defeated death and the devil once and for all. It is because of Jesus' saving act that we are freely offered forgiveness of sins and eternal life in heaven.

C.S. Lewis' book, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*,

is a classic, but is not as good as the basis for the story, the Gospels in the Bible. Through the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, God communicates with us directly through His Son, Jesus. Let's study the "six C's of communication" and see how God precisely communicates to us through His Son.

### **Clear**

If communication is not clear, then people can misread a situation. A woman saw a father shopping with a fussy two-year-old in his grocery cart. "Be patient, Billy," he whispered. "You can handle this, Billy. It's okay, Billy." The woman came up to the father and said, "I don't mean to interrupt your shopping, but I just had to tell you how wonderfully loving and patient you are with little Billy." The man replied, "Actually, my son's name is Patrick. *My name is Billy.*"<sup>2</sup>

When Jesus came to earth, His communication was very clear as to His purpose on earth and He was well-prepared. Jesus came to earth so that God could be glorified. Glorify means to reveal or make clearer the glory of God by one's actions. Through Jesus' actions, He made abundantly

clear God's greatness and the fact that God alone, deserves to be praised, honored, and worshipped.

Jesus was clear that others should take this to heart and live their lives to give God glory. *Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.* Matthew 5:16. As we live out our lives, we can live in a way that gives praise to God. We can strive to be clear to others that we are Christians and that makes a difference in how we live our lives. Others can notice this and we can use it as an opportunity to share about the greatness of God and His amazing love.

### **Concise**

In an age when there are endless amounts of information on the Internet, being concise is valued. People may not read something if it is too long or may not pay attention to it if it is not relevant to their lives. Twitter allows only 140 characters so that people are concise and to the point.

It just so happens that Jesus' most concise statement of His message is perfectly 140 characters. It should be the most tweeted message of all time and is definitely the most

known Bible verse. It has been called the Gospel message in a nutshell and is simply beautiful. *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.* John 3:16.

There is so much power in this one sentence. This sentence changes lives everyday and will continue to for all generations. This Gospel message frees people from the shackles of sin and death. It provides life and hope and pure motivation to show God's amazing love to others because He first loved us so much. This love is a pure, self-sacrificing love that endures for all time because Jesus did not stay dead, but rose again!

### **Concrete**

Showing love through words is one thing, but actions speak louder than words and demonstrate what true love is. Sometimes though showing love in the concrete can be difficult as this joke demonstrates. A newlywed couple had just bought a house and it needed some repairs. The husband decided to redo the driveway. He poured the concrete and smoothed it out perfectly. After he was done, he looked with pride at his excellent work.

He then proceeded to go around to the back of the house to get a hammer to put up some sticks to cordon off the area. As he was walking back his wife pulled up in her car and drove right into the fresh concrete. There were now two large 9-inch wide ruts going through the driveway. The husband yelled at his wife, "Didn't I tell you I was redoing the driveway?" The wife went into the house crying. A neighbor heard the argument and walked over to talk to the husband. The neighbor said, "You know you were a little hard on your wife, don't you think?" The husband replied, "Yeah, I guess you are right. I have no trouble loving my wife in the abstract but can't seem to love her in the concrete."

It was not just through words that Jesus showed His love, but through His actions as well. Jesus healed many people: the blind, the deaf, the lame. He cast out evil spirits from people. He raised the dead. His greatest concrete action though was laying down His life, being nailed to a cross. Jesus took the punishment for all of our sins and shed His blood to save all people. Because of this phenomenal expression of self-sacrificing love, we are freely given the gift

of eternal life in heaven. It is an amazing exchange!

### **Correct**

All other religions teach that humans have to do good works for salvation. Only Christianity has the truth that there is nothing as sinners that we can do to earn salvation. Jesus said, *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* John 14:6. It is only through Jesus that we have the gift of salvation. In response to Jesus' love then we show this love to others. Our loving words and actions glorify God for His goodness and draw others to His amazing love.

The Bible is trustworthy, true, and is God's inspired Word. *Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.* 2 Peter 1:20-21.

Jesus fulfilled countless prophecies from the Old Testament that were written centuries before His birth. With Jesus' crucifixion alone, 29 prophecies were confirmed. Here a few of the prophecies from the Old Testament that were



universe. There is a better chance of selecting one specific atom out of all the atoms in the universe than for the prophecies to be fulfilled by chance. The Bible is truth. *Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.* John 17:17.

**Craig Blomberg, one of the foremost experts on the Gospels states, "There are plenty of stories of scholars in the New Testament field who have not been Christians, yet through their study of these very issues have come to faith in Christ. And there have been countless more scholars, already believers, whose faith has been made stronger, more solid, more grounded, because of the evidence."**

### **Coherent**

Coherent means logical and consistent. Jesus' message to people is very coherent because He can identify with us. Although Jesus is truly God, He is also truly man. He experienced many of the things that other people have experienced. He was tempted like we are but did not sin, overcoming temptation with God's Word. He had friends and family that He cared for. He experienced a range of emotions including sadness and anger. He knew what it was

like to feel tired and hungry. He knew what it is like to be in pain.

Jesus came to earth to help us. He knows what we need and wants to help us with our problems. Hebrews 4:15-16 states it this way, *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

Jesus reassures us that we are valuable in God’s sight. In Matthew 6:25-34 Jesus implores us not to worry about our basic needs because God knows that we need these things and worrying does not make things better. Instead Jesus states the importance of focusing on what matters the most; seeking to stay strong in our faith and grow in our relationship with God. If everyone focused on God’s love and grace then everyone in the world would have what they needed because knowing God is really all that matters. People also would generously provide for all those whose basic needs are not met. There are 780 million people in the world who do not have access to clean water

and many are in need of food. There are great organizations to support this work to provide for others: “Feed my starving children” and “World Vision” are two excellent organizations.

Jesus knows our needs and can always help us. He is our faithful Friend who is with us always and our greatest Treasure! Pastor and author, Max Lucado, described Jesus this way: “I believe that He is a fountain of living water that will never be exhausted. I believe that He is a source of wisdom and strength that will never be expired. I believe that He has grace for every sin. He has answers for every question. He has an authenticity, a realness to Him that can captivate your heart. I believe that He can do for you what no possession can do, what no promotion can do, what no election can do, what no circumstance can do. I believe He can.”<sup>5</sup>

Jesus came to this world to help others; not only with their eternal destination, but also with their daily lives. In response to what Jesus has done for us, we can, in turn, focus our lives on helping others and sharing the Good News of Jesus.

## Complete

Jesus accomplished what He came to earth to do that only He could do. He died on the cross, rose again, and defeated death and the devil once and for all. He took the sins of the whole world on Him. We deserved death. He provided us with forgiveness and grace. In Isaiah 53:5, this was prophesized and Jesus lovingly and graciously endured and fulfilled it. *But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.*

In 1772, Pastor John Fawcett was preparing to leave his congregation in West Yorkshire, England. He had preached his farewell sermon and loaded his wagons for the journey to another church. However, the love and tears from the congregation were too much, and Fawcett ended up staying. Shortly after, he wrote the hymn, *Blest Be the Tie That Binds*.<sup>6</sup> A few of the verses are below.

Blest be the tie that binds  
our hearts in Christian love;  
the fellowship of kindred minds  
is like to that above.

Before our Father's throne  
we pour our ardent prayers;

our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,  
our comforts and our cares.

We share our mutual woes,  
our mutual burdens bear  
and often for each other flows  
the sympathizing tear.

From sorrow, toil, and pain,  
and sin, we shall be free;  
and perfect love and friendship reign  
through all eternity.<sup>7</sup>

Jesus' completed his time on earth. He shared through words and actions an example for how we can live our lives. But Jesus cared and loved us too much to leave us comfortless. Jesus left earth with a great promise He wants all to know. *And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.* Matthew 28:20. Through Jesus, God communicated His great love for us! Christians know that in all of the trials of this life, we can always completely rely on the grace of love of our Lord Jesus Christ. And one day we will live with Him in perfect peace throughout eternity!

## **Chapter 3: God Communicates through** **the Holy Spirit**

In 2012, I moved out to Las Vegas, for a job teaching and doing research at University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Shortly after I moved into my house in Las Vegas I had an experience where I felt the help of the Holy Spirit. It was a Sunday morning, which happened to be my birthday, and I was driving back to my house from church. About a ½ mile away from my home I felt a sense of danger and that something was wrong. I feel that it was the Holy Spirit preparing me for something that had happened. I pulled into my garage and noticed that the door leading into my house was open. I always lock the door when I leave. I entered my house and saw that a window had been broken and my back door was open. I could tell right away that my house had been broken into.

I called the police and they came out to file a report. Anyone who has had his or her house broken into knows that it can be a quite unsettling feeling. You are not sure what has been taken at first and your things have been thrown around. I told the police that I was at church when

this happened. One of the police officers let me know he was a Christian and I am sure, prompted by the Spirit, tried to encourage me. He let me know that this is not a good feeling now, but that you should not get down because they are plenty of good things in life to focus on.

In the room that I used for my office, all of the stuff from my desk and file cabinets had been thrown around the room. One of the signs that I had up on the wall in this room states, "It's a tough world, but we know we're not alone. 'I am with you always.'" Matthew 28:20. It was a good reminder that at times there will be problems that have to be faced, but God is always with us. **Thanks to the police officer I was also reminded that there is a lot of good in this world. There are many Christians, who empowered by the Holy Spirit, are sharing God's love with others.**

A couple of days later I posted the following on Facebook. It is a great reminder that no matter what happens, God is in control and God's love is really all that we need.

Sunday was a memorable birthday. Unfortunately, not for a good reason. While I was at church someone

broke into my house. My laptop and other things were stolen. But, in the midst of the bad things in this world it is good to know that God is in control. His love is enough for me. John 16:33 "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

God has given us the Holy Spirit that dwells within us and the Holy Spirit communicates with us in a number of important ways. *And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.* Romans 5:5. *Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?* 1 Corinthians 6:19.

Christians know that we can rely on the Holy Spirit our whole lives and that the Spirit can guide us, encourage us, help us, remind us, and empower us.

### **Instructs and Guides Us**

The Holy Spirit can teach us things our whole life by acting as a guide for our decision making, as Jesus states, *"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.*

*He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.*" John 16:12-13. I am sure that most Christians have felt the nudge of the Spirit when making a decision at one time or another. How can we know if it is the Spirit guiding us in a decision? It is vital to keep in mind, that the Holy Spirit will never tell us to do anything contrary to God's Word.

Since this is the case, the best way to be guided by the Holy Spirit is to know God's Word intimately. The Holy Spirit will use it to speak to us, to instruct, and to guide us. The apostle Paul had this experience during his writing. He states, *I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit.* Romans 9:1. Paul had an outstanding knowledge of the Old Testament and wrote much of the New Testament. The books of the New Testament that Paul wrote are the inspired Words of God. The Holy Spirit guided Paul in his writings and they are the true Word of God.

The Holy Spirit can guide us in the ways that God wants to use us. The Spirit can help us notice what our interests are, what talents we have been given, and what

situations are brought into our lives in order to show God's love to others. The next time you are nudged by the Holy Spirit to pray for someone or visit someone who is ill, do not delay, but joyfully follow the Spirit's guiding. You will be blessed and so will the person you have helped.

At Pentecost the disciples received the Holy Spirit, and guided by the Spirit spoke, boldly the Gospel message. Of Peter's 431 word message, 250 of the words were from Scripture. We can keep the same in mind as we go about our day. The Spirit instructs us through Scripture as the Spirit did for the disciples. Christians can take heart that this is a faithful promise to the children of God. *For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.* Romans 8:14.

### **Encourages Us**

The Holy Spirit provides us with encouragement throughout the day to persevere in our faith. Jesus has promised us that the Holy Spirit will not leave us. *"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever"* John 14:16. The Holy Spirit can keep us focused on Jesus and what He has done for us in our lives. Because of Jesus' love and grace, we can have great

determination to do our best in life no matter what the setbacks.

Hebrews 12:1-3 has great imagery of a race, and in this race, we can think of the Holy Spirit being along side of us the whole way, encouraging us to keep focused on Jesus and to reach the finish line. *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

In the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona, Derek Redmond had plans to win an Olympic medal in the 400 meter run. At the 1988 Olympic games in Seoul, South Korea, Redmond had been forced to withdraw ten minutes before the race, because of an Achilles tendon injury. Derek's father had accompanied him to Barcelona just as he did for all world competitions. They were as close as father and son could be.

Rick Weinberg from ESPN, described it this way: “When Derek ran, it was as if his father was running right next to him.”<sup>1</sup>

In Derek’s semifinal heat, he got off to a good lead and with half of the race to complete he was all but guaranteed to get into the finals. However with 175 meters to go, Derek heard a pop in his right hamstring. Medical personnel rushed to his side to help as he lay on the track.

Redmond with tears coming down his eyes told the medical crew, “I’m going to finish my race.” In obvious pain, he lifted himself up and started hobbling toward the finish line. Derek’s father, Jim, rushed down from the stands and avoided the security guards to get to his son. Jim yelled out, “That’s my son out there and I’m going to help him.”

Jim reached his son and said, “I’m here, son. We’ll finish together.” Derek proceeded to put his arm around his father’s shoulder and continued to head toward the finish line. The crowd of 65,000 people cheered even louder than they had at any point that day! They shouted words of encouragement as Derek and his father finished the race. Derek did not win an Olympic medal, but inspired countless

viewers to persevere!

It is a fitting example of how the Holy Spirit comes along with us in our lives to help us finish the race of life strong. **At times there can be setbacks and things do not go as we planned, but we can hear the reassuring voice of the Spirit tell us, “I’m here. We’ll finish together.”**

We also can know that we are being cheered on by a community of Christians that want all to come to the saving knowledge of Christ and persevere in this faith until life everlasting in heaven. Pastor Steve Benson, the pastor at my church, growing up, states, “Who can *you* help to encourage not to give up by letting them know that God does not give up on us, and gave everything for us to have eternal life?”<sup>2</sup>

### **Helps Us**

The Holy Spirit helps us, specifically when we might not have the words to say.

*In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God. Romans 8:26-27.*

These are amazing words and reason for great hope and cheer. God's work in our lives is not limited to what we can understand and express with words. **God, through his mighty power at work within us, is able to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.** It is amazing and comforting to know that the Holy Spirit has great power to work within us and to intercede for us!

The Spirit helps us in our weakness. This weakness could be our sinful nature or it could be just times when we are tired, sick, or overwhelmed. In these times we can have peace knowing that the Holy Spirit is with us and is communicating to God for us. Our human limitations are not able to comprehend everything that God knows, but it is good to know that God is not limited by our limited minds.

We can read the words from Philippians 4:6-7 with confidence knowing that the Holy Spirit provides us with help in time of need. *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

## Reminds Us

During the course of a day we all need reminders for certain things. Some people write notes to remind themselves, while others use apps or programs to send themselves reminders.

The Holy Spirit also reminds us of things and it is definitely not something we want to forget. *And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.* Ephesians 1:13. The Holy Spirit within us is a great reminder that we are saved believers. The Holy Spirit brings into our minds the Gospel message.

Jesus states also that the Holy Spirit helps us remember Jesus' teachings as advice and encouragement throughout the day. *But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.* John 14:26. If you have ever experienced a Bible verse or Christian song "float" into your thoughts, no doubt, that is from the Holy Spirit.

## **Empowers Us**

One of the greatest blessings of having the Holy Spirit dwell within Christians, is that the Spirit empowers Christians. *“Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,”* says *the Lord Almighty*. Zechariah 4:6. The Holy Spirit works to empower Christians to live a life in response to the love that God has shown us. Any good things in our life are a result of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives.

The Holy Spirit works in the lives of Christians so that we focus our thoughts, words, and deeds on God’s Word. By spending time in God’s Word it will be clearer what the Spirit is leading us to do. God’s Word is powerful and leads to changed and improved lives. The Holy Spirit uses the time we spend in God’s Word to empower us.

*Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.* Romans 8:5-6.

Galatians 5:22-23 further describes what the mind governed by the Spirit focuses on. *But the fruit of the Spirit is*

*love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.* It is a tall order to keep in step with the Spirit, but the great thing is that it is not all on us. God has given us the power of the Holy Spirit to guide us to keep in step with the Spirit. If we read God's Word daily, talk to Christian friends, worship with a community of believers, pray daily, and watch what we see, hear, and experience there is no limit to what God can accomplish through us!

Pastor and author, Kyle Idleman, asked his Facebook fans to finish the following sentence. By the power of the Holy Spirit...Some of the responses included:

I finally forgave my dad.

I overcame my drug addiction.

My marriage was saved.

We conceived after being told it would never happen.<sup>3</sup>

Every Christian has an individual story of how the Holy Spirit has empowered them to do something that would not have been possible on their own. **The greatest thing that all Christians have in common is the following sentence: By the power of the Holy Spirit I am no longer a**

**condemned sinner but am a freely forgiven child of God through Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior.**

This is what God desires for all people. He would like nothing less than for all people to come to faith and have the Holy Spirit dwell within them. *This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.* 1 Timothy 2:3-4. The whole purpose of the Bible is to bring people to saving faith in Christ and sustain their faith until Jesus comes again, or they are called home. Since the beginning of the world, God has been seeking people out so that they can know Him, His power, His love, and His grace.

Amy Carmichael was a missionary for fifty-five years in India where she opened an orphanage and helped countless children. She states how God would like all to be saved. "God is willing to enter the heart, as light is willing to flood a room that is opened to its brightness." In India, Amy would often travel long distances on hot, dusty roads in order to save just *one* child from suffering.

We know from Jesus' teaching in the Gospels that there is great rejoicing in heaven when just *one* person comes

to saving faith. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we can share God's love with others to help them know Christ as their Savior. We can pray the prayer of missionary Amy Carmichael, that God would have the Holy Spirit work through us.

"Give me the Love that leads the way.

The Faith that nothing can dismay.

The Hope no disappointments tire.

The Passion that'll burn like fire."

## **Chapter 4: God Communicates Through**

### **Other Believers**

God can speak to us through other Christians to provide advice, support, and to help us enjoy life. Christian community and discussion is a needed part of the Christian life. Often others have experiences of how God has worked in their life or knowledge of God's Word that can give us insights into our own lives.

At times, we may be heading down a wrong path and need to be redirected by trusted Christian friends. We may be suffering through an illness, have financial troubles, or have experienced the loss of a loved one and need comfort, support, and encouragement. We may have experienced a reason to celebrate; another year of life, an anniversary, graduation, or birth of a new child and want to share this with friends and family. We may need advice for a variety of situations in life.

For all of these situations, God can use other Christians to speak just the right words at just the right time. Proverbs 25:11 is a great verse that makes this point. Different translations of the Bible, state it slightly different.

*The right word at the right time is like a custom-made piece of jewelry. (The Message). A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver. (English Standard Version). The right word at the right time is like precious gold set in silver.*

(Contemporary English Version). In total, it is a beautiful thing to experience and see when someone is able to communicate effectively with just the right expression. Put another way, *Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.* Proverbs 16:24. Through other believers, God can communicate to us support and comfort, purpose, enjoyment, and the desire to grow in our faith.

## **Growth**

Through other Christians God can communicate with us so that we grow stronger in our relationship with Him. A humorous story makes the point about Christians encouraging each other to regularly do this: A mother went to wake her son up for church. The son would not get up so the mom came in and dumped water on him. She stated, "We are leaving for church in 15 minutes and you are coming." The son replied, "Give me three good reasons I should go to church. The mother said, "One, I am your

mother and I said so. Two, you are thirty-five years old. And three, you are the pastor and have a congregation of people waiting for you.” It does not matter what age we are or who we are, we all at times need encouragement to focus on knowing God better and what He is trying to teach us in life.

In Ephesians 1:17-21 Paul writes to encourage Christians to know God better and His mighty power and strength. *I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.*

Later in Ephesians chapter 6, Paul states the importance of putting on the full armor of God in order to stay strong in the faith. Other Christians can play a big part in ensuring that we stay focused on the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the readiness of the Gospel of

peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. At church, our faith is strengthened by hearing God's Word and we are better able to recall the words with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

## **Support**

Other Christians can be an invaluable source of strength and support. Christians know that God comforts and supports us so we in turn can do our best to support others. *Praise be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.* 2 Corinthians 1:3-4.

There are many great Bible verses that Christians can share with others to provide support based on God's promises. *The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.* Psalm 34:18. *He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.*

*Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.* Isaiah 40:29,31a. *And we know that in all things God works for*

*the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.* Romans 8:28. At times it may be difficult to see how God is at work for good in the midst of suffering. We can not see the larger picture that God does; as we do not know everything that is happening. We can trust though that heaven awaits us and that is a reason for great hope. *I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.* Romans 8:18.

**Billy Graham has been asked hundreds of times why God allows tragedy and suffering. He states, "I have to confess that I really do not know the answer totally, even to my own satisfaction. I have to accept, by faith, that God is sovereign and He is a God of love and mercy and compassion in the midst of suffering."**

No matter what our circumstances are, we can always put our trust in God because He is good, can be trusted, and provides us with salvation. Christians can use God's Word to speak hope and encouragement to others on the phone, in emails or through social media, in cards or letters, in conversations or songs.

TobyMac has a great song about the importance of Christians speaking from God's Word to support others:

Though it's crazy, amazing  
We can turn a heart with the words we say.  
Mountains crumble with every syllable.  
Hope can live or die  
So speak Life, speak Life.  
To the deadest darkest night.  
Speak Life, speak Life.  
When the sun won't shine and you don't know why.  
Look into the eyes of the brokenhearted;  
Watch them come alive as soon as you speak hope,  
You speak love, you speak...  
You speak Life.'

### **Purpose**

Christians can encourage others to know that God has a purpose for them and they have talents and abilities that can be developed and used to give God glory. *For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.* Ephesians 2:10.

When I was in my first job teaching at Trinity Lutheran Junior/Senior High School I led chapel a couple times a year. One time I used a skit, called "The Plink", that I had seen done previously in my schooling days to emphasize that God has a purpose for everyone and without each person doing their part the body of believers does not function as well.

In the skit, there is an excellent engineer who has built a well-functioning machine with each person having an integral part. For the machine there is an on/off switch, a spinner, a jumper, a noise maker, a runner, and a part that says "plink." The engineer was quite satisfied at what he had made and went to bed to rest. While the engineer was resting the parts started to talk amongst themselves. They all were very proud of what they could do as part of the machine, but one part did not join in the boasting. Finally, the other parts asked the Plink, "What do you do?" The plink responds, "I say, 'plink.'" The other parts laughed and told the Plink that his job was not important. Dejected, the Plink decided to leave, because he felt he was not needed.

The next morning the engineer returned to the machine and turned it on. Unfortunately, the machine went haywire and nothing was working right. The engineer inspected the machine and noticed that the Plink is missing. The engineer searched high and low until he tracked down the Plink. The engineer let the Plink know what happened with the machine without the Plink and reassured the Plink how valuable he was. The Plink decided to return to the machine and it worked beautifully once again. All of the other parts apologized to the Plink and stated the importance of each piece.

This skit ties in nicely with Romans chapter 12:4-5. *For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.* The body of Christ is like the machine and God is the engineer that has made wonderful parts that are all vital in the community of Christ. All Christians have been made with a purpose and have talents that they can use to bring glory to God! There are no insignificant people! With God

working through us, everyone can make a difference and show God's love to others.

Pastor and author, Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his book, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community* states: "The physical presence of other Christians is a source of incomparable joy and strength to the believer."<sup>5</sup> Christian community can provide encouragement and affirmation of our purpose in life: to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, and mind and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

## **Fun**

God wants Christians to enjoy their time on earth and Christian community is a great way for this to occur. I was able to go to the Philippines on a mission trip with my church and witnessed a great example of fun Christian community. While we were in the Philippines we conducted vision clinics and also got to be a part of a national sports fest, which was like a national youth gathering. The sports fest had different sports competitions between youth from different cities in the Philippines. There were also songs, skits, Bible study, talent competitions, and fellowship.

The theme of the sports fest was from Psalm 133:1. *How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!* It was a great verse for the event because everyone was enjoying themselves with quality Christian fellowship. The youth had the opportunity to have fun with sports and grow in their faith from being immersed in a dynamic Christian community with so much positive energy!

National gatherings or Christian conferences can be a great opportunity to be reminded of the words from Joel 2:21, *Be glad and rejoice. Surely the Lord has done great things.* Through participation in church activities we can enjoy worshiping and serving the Lord with other Christians. God wants us to enjoy spending time with each other, to encourage one another as we praise the Lord.

God calls us to show His love to others and support each other and this can lead to great joy! In fact, a twenty-year study of more than 4,7000 people found that joy is contagious. People who become happy make it more likely that their friends will become happy. It has been found that happiness travels through relational networks like ripples on a pond. It is so powerful that having a happy friend is

more likely to increase your happiness than getting a \$5,000 raise. So if you do get a \$5,000 raise, give it to a friend. He or she will be happy and in turn you will be as well!

### **Strengthened through others**

Josh Hargis, U.S. Army Ranger, lost both of his legs from the knee down in a raid against an insurgent compound in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan, but he didn't lose his faith. It was not known if Josh was going to survive as he was in a coma in the hospital. Not knowing if Josh would live, his commander awarded him the purple heart with a ceremony in the hospital, though he did not think Josh was aware what was happening, the hope was that it would give Josh strength. While being awarded the purple heart for bravery, Josh managed to raise his hand in full salute. The moment made the military men assembled in his hospital room weep. The photo of Josh's salute went viral and provided hope for many. In turn, many people wrote letters to Josh writing words of encouragement and telling him that they were praying for him.

**It has not been an easy adjustment to make, but Josh and his wife have relied on each other, family,**

**friends, and their faith. He states, “the fact that we have each other, we have our family and friends and a baby on the way, we’re extremely fortunate.”** He has stayed positive through it all and focused on the blessings that God provided.

In our own lives we know that God can use others to strengthen and encourage us. In turn we can provide the needed words and support at just the right time to help others. God wants believers to live in a community. We are made for relationships. First and foremost with God; then in response to God’s love we can be His messengers to help others. By staying in God’s Word and being empowered by the Holy Spirit we can trust that we will have the right words or actions for God to make an impact in the lives of others.

## **Chapter 5: God Communicates through Nature**

Nature is God's creation and through it God can communicate to us truths that are applicable for the Christian life. One of the amazing things about nature is that the communication is non-verbal. It does not matter what language we speak or what country we are from, we can all appreciate the beauty of God's creation, which can be amazing to behold.

I had the good fortune to attend an international conference in Hawaii and was amazed at the views. There were people there from many different countries and when it came time for the sun to set the beach was packed. Everyone just stopped and watched the golden rays of the sun cascade off the blue waters of the ocean as the sun slipped down beneath the horizon. It truly was a great testament to God's creation and evidence of His power and majesty.

Christian writer and poet, G.K. Chesterton, stated the following about how God designed all of creation and continually delights in it.

Because children have abounding vitality, because

they are in spirit fierce and free, therefore they want things repeated and unchanged. They always say, 'Do it again'; and the grown-up person does it again until he is nearly dead. For grown-up people are not strong enough to exult in monotony. But perhaps God is strong enough to exult in monotony. It is possible that God says every morning, 'Do it again' to the sun; and every evening, 'Do it again' to the moon. It may not be automatic necessity that makes all daisies alike; it may be that God makes every daisy separately, but has never got tired of making them.

God created the whole world and set it in motion, including the rotation of the planets that gives us sunsets and sunrises everyday.

Psalm 19, verses 1 to 6, is a great description of how creation is reason for all people to give praise to God.

*The heavens declare the glory of God;  
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.  
Day after day they pour forth speech;  
night after night they reveal knowledge.*

*They have no speech, they use no words;  
no sound is heard from them.*

*Yet their voice goes out into all the earth,  
their words to the ends of the world.*

*In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.*

*It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,  
like a champion rejoicing to run his course.*

*It rises at one end of the heavens  
and makes its circuit to the other;*

*nothing is deprived of its warmth. Psalm 19:1-6*

In total through nature God can communicate to us that He is awe-inspiring, He is a God of the details, and He will take care of us.

### **God is awe-inspiring**

Though there are many more amazing parts of God's creation, the seven wonders of the natural world are especially awe-inspiring. They are the Northern Lights, the harbor of Rio de Janeiro, the Grand Canyon, the Great Barrier Reef, Mount Everest, the Paricutin Volcano in Mexico, and the Victoria Falls located at the border of Zambia and Zimbabwe. I have never gotten to visit any of

these places, but have seen video and pictures of them.

The harbor of Rio de Janeiro has received more attention as of late as the Olympics were held there in the summer of 2016. Many of the shots shown on television had great symbolism as they showed the *Christ the Redeemer* statue looking over the city and the harbor. The statue is nearly two-thirds the size of the statue of liberty and weighs 635 metric tons. With Jesus' arms stretched out wide it is a fitting reminder that He is always with us and also a reminder of the cross. Jesus gave everything including His life, that we could be given the free gift of salvation. Because of this we know that we are no longer judged guilty but accepted as innocent loved children of God.

The fact that God loves us so much is truly a great reason to rejoice and give Him praise. Though Rio had great beauty in the ocean and nature, the *Christ the Redeemer* statue received the most attention. That is the way that it should be. All glory and praise should be given back to the Creator. God deserves our focus. He has redeemed us from certain death and gives us eternal life in heaven. Psalm 96:11-13 gives all praise to God as all creation rejoices in the Lord!

*Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad;  
let the sea resound, and all that is in it.  
Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them;  
let all the trees of the forest sing for joy.  
Let all creation rejoice before the Lord, for he comes,  
he comes to judge the earth.  
He will judge the world in righteousness  
and the peoples in his faithfulness.*

There are many great hymns where the writers have drawn inspiration from nature and marveled at the greatness of God. The hymn, *How Great Thou Art*, was based on a poem written by Carl Gustav Boberg in 1885. He was returning home from church and drew inspiration from nature. A friend describes what Boberg saw after church.

Presently a thundercloud appeared on the horizon, and soon lightning flashed across the sky. Strong winds swept over the meadows and billowing fields of grain. The thunder pealed in loud claps. Then rain came in cool fresh showers. In a little while the storm was over, and a rainbow appeared. When Boberg arrived home, he opened the window and saw the

bay of Monstera like a mirror before him...From the woods on the other side of the bay, he heard the song of a thrush...the church bells were tolling in the quiet evening. It was this series of sights, sounds, and experiences that inspired the writing of the song.<sup>1</sup>

There are certainly times in all of our lives when we have to exclaim that we have a great God! The second stanza of the hymn is especially fitting given the inspiration of Boberg.

When through the woods and forest glades I wander  
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;  
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur  
And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze;  
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee;  
How great Thou art!  
How great Thou art! Then sings my soul,  
my Saviour God to Thee;  
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!<sup>2</sup>

Nature is God's creation and a great testament to God's power and love. He took great care in making His creation and sustaining it. As humans, we are part of God's creation as well. God took great care in making us and He did not abandon us. He rescued us from sin and death and made us heirs of the kingdom of heaven. What is more He continues to sustain, guide, and comfort us our entire lives! What a great reason to sing with joy and proclaim our whole

lives, "How Great Thou art!"

### **God of the details**

God is definitely a God of the details and cares about us down to the very number of hairs on our head. In creation, there is evidence that God takes care of the details as well. **If the rotation or tilt of the earth was off slightly, plant life would not be sustained and the earth would be inhabitable. The earth is just the right size with the force of gravity enabling our atmosphere to hold in place. The moon is the right distance from the earth. If it were closer, tides would completely submerge the continents twice a day. Our atmosphere is about 78 parts nitrogen and 21 parts oxygen. Too much nitrogen would slow down all functions in the body and too much oxygen would also lead to shorter life.**

Thomas Chisholm wrote the hymn, *Great is Thy Faithfulness*, in 1923. The second stanza is a beautiful description of how God is a God of the details and shows His faithfulness for all times.

Summer and winter, and spring-time and harvest,  
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,  
Join with all nature in manifold witness

To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.  
Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!  
Morning by morning new mercies I see;  
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided  
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

Faithfulness means long-continued and resolute loyalty, and unswerving steadfastness. God created the whole universe and is the only one around before and since the beginning of time! He will continue to be with us for all eternity. Christians know that God has a place for us in heaven. The verses from John 14 are a great comfort to know that God has taken care of the details. When we trust in Jesus, as our Savior, God freely gives us forgiveness and eternal life. Jesus said: *“My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”* John 14:2-3.

### **God will take care of us**

In Matthew chapter 6 Jesus reassures us that God will take care of us based on how God takes care of nature. *“Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not*

*much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?"* Matthew 6:26-30.

In creating the world, God has provided for plants and animals so that they have the nourishment and sustenance they need to survive. We are much more valuable to God than plants or animals, because of this we can have confidence that God wants the best for us. It is definitely quite amazing that the all-powerful God that created the whole universe, cares for us. However, it is true beyond a doubt! David had these thoughts in looking at God's creation. *When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?* Psalm 8:3-4.

On my way to a conference in England, I was able to

stop in Manchester and do some sightseeing. I went to the Manchester Museum of Art and was struck by a sign on the wall that stated, "Blessed are they who see beautiful things in humble places where other people see nothing." It is a fitting lesson, that all of God's creation is quite remarkable. It also got me to thinking that we humans are definitely blessed that God has this view about us. God sees each human life as beautiful and values everyone of us. At times we can look down on others or think that others are not important. We can ask God to give us the mindset of Christ and strive to show God's love to everyone. Everyone matters. Heaven is real, but Hell is real as well. Empowered by the Holy Spirit we can use our words and actions to let others know about the all-surpassing grace and love of having Christ as our Savior.

## Chapter 6: God Communicates through Prayer

God wants us to communicate with Him through prayer. Through prayer we can know God better and also have a better sense of direction for our lives. As we go throughout our day, we can pray continually to keep God at the forefront of our lives. God can work through our prayers to teach us important life lessons. **The more we pray, read God's Word, and discuss it with others the better we will be able to hear the Holy Spirit's advice in our lives. Prayer is an integral part of this.**

Often through prayer, God will let us know exactly what we need to hear. A humorous story makes this point. A church had all wood walls on the outside and needed a new paint job. The staff had different people place bids for the job and went with the lowest bid. The man who got the job was about halfway through painting the walls when he realized that he would not have enough paint to finish. He decided to start adding water to the paint to get more out of it, so that he could make the most profit. He got about three-fourths of the way done and realized that he still would not have enough paint, so he added some more water. The night he

finished painting there was a big thunderstorm with torrential rain causing half of the paint to wash away. The painter realized what happened and felt awful. He went down on his knees in prayer to ask God for forgiveness and what he should do. Then almost instantly a voice from heaven said, "Repaint you thinner, repaint and thin no more."

While that was a humorous story, the power of prayer is real and we should pray to God throughout the day. Through the power of the Holy Spirit we can hear directly from God, answers to our prayers or God could use someone else in our life to share wisdom from God with us. God has several reasons for wanting us to have an active prayer life: He wants us to know him better, He hears us, and He wants to help us.

### **He wants us to know Him better**

Some may wonder why is prayer so important? If God knows everything about us and all of our thoughts, then why do we need to pray? These people might think prayer is as useful as a lifeguard at an Olympic swimming event. This is not true though. It is true that God knows

everything about us and our thoughts. Through prayer we can lay our burdens before the Lord. God can communicate truths to us that we need to hear and be reminded of. For example, Philippians 4:6 states, *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.*

God wants to hear our prayers and has promised to answer them. *“Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”*

Mark 11:24. This of course does not mean if we pray for lots of money or possessions that we will automatically be given this. The more time we spend in God’s Word and in prayer, the more our requests will align with God’s will for our lives. We can believe in our requests because we know that they are God-pleasing and can be used to show God’s love to others.

A great prayer to remember is found in Hebrews 13:20-21. *Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him,*

*through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."*

This can be better accomplished by praying continually. This helps us to remember that God is with us at all times. *Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.* Romans 12:12.

Pastor, author and former seminary president, Milt Rudnick, states how prayer changes us. **"We will know Him better, feel closer to Him, trust Him more, and long more intensely to be in contact with Him. God is very real to people who pray often."** Prayer is powerful communication, not because it involves us but because it involves God. God can use prayer to work through us to grow our relationship with Him and to better accomplish His will.

### **He hears us**

It can be frustrating when we have something to say and do not feel like a person is listening to us. With God there is no doubt, He always hears us and is listening intently. *Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.* Jeremiah 29:12. *This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will,*

*he hears us.* 1 John 5:14.

That is quite amazing to think about. The all-powerful God listens to us! When we dial the number we don't have to worry about a busy signal or that the person is not available. No matter what God is doing, He is able to hear us as we pray.

Prayer is so important that Jesus prayed often. He set the example of praying before He taught His disciples to pray. The disciples noticed that Jesus prayed often and requested Him to teach them. **Prayer is the only tutorial the disciples requested.**

*“Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts,  
As we also have forgiven our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from the evil one.*

### Matthew 6:9-13

The first phrase of the Lord's prayer was used quite often by Jesus. Jesus called God, *Abba* or Father over 200 times. This was quite revolutionary at the time, because the term was used rarely for God. New Testament scholar, Joachim Jeremias states, "With the help of my assistants, I have examined the prayer literature of ancient Judaism...The result of this examination was, that in no place in this immense literature is this invocation of God as '*Abba*, Father' to be found. *Abba* was an everyday word. It was a homely family-word. No Jew would have dared to address God in this manner, yet Jesus did it always in all his prayers which are handed down to us, with one single exception: the cry from the cross, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' In the Lord's prayer, Jesus authorizes his disciples to repeat the word *Abba* after him. He gives them a share in his sonship. He empowers his disciples to speak with their heavenly father in such a familiar and trusting way."<sup>2</sup>

**The words, "Our Father" remind us we are welcome in God's house because we have been adopted by**

**the owner.** We can talk to God because He is our loving Father who listens to us! All Christians are a part of the family of God and we know that our Father is always with us.

### **He wants to help us**

Prayer keeps us focused on God and helps give us strength to overcome temptation to sin. God invites us to pray at all times of our life for requests for ourselves or others and to praise God. *Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise.* James 5:13.

My Great Grandma said a lot of prayers both for requests and to praise God for all of the blessings that He had given her. Her husband, my great grandpa, died young, and my great grandma raised 10 kids, 9 daughters and one son, and took care of the family farm. It was not easy, but she relied on God who had helped her in the past and was her hope for the years to come.

We know that God does not always grant our requests, but we can trust that God's will is good and

gracious. He knows what is best for us. When our loved ones die in the Lord, we know that we will meet again in heaven. Christian doctor and author, Ben Carson, knows the power of prayer and conveys this message to his patients and their families. Carson prays each evening to thank God for the blessings of that day and to ask for strength, presence, and wisdom for tomorrow.

Dr. Carson always prays for the patients he will be operating on and for their families. When he visits with patients the day before surgery he says, "If you will say your prayers tonight, and you ask your families and everyone you know to pray, I promise I will say mine. And then none of us will have to worry as much tomorrow." To exceedingly anxious parents he adds, "I know you're going to worry some anyway. But I find when everyone is praying, you don't have to worry quite as much."

Dr. Carson has seen miracles happen that can only be attributed to God at work. He describes how one such patient, Shannon, taught him a valuable lesson.

**"To me, Shannon's story is an amazing example of God doing today what he did back in the Bible**

**times. He brought this child back to life twice, then restored her sight and her hearing. There was no medical explanation for what happened. I know I did not do it.** So whenever I remember Shannon Jones, I am reminded of the lesson I learned from her. That even though I may develop my ability as a neurosurgeon to the highest levels, there is only so much I can do. I have to have a plan of action, I have to be able to articulate that plan, and I need the skills to execute it. But there is always more help available. Once I do my best, I can trust God for the rest.”<sup>3</sup>

One of the reasons that God wants to help us, is because He has things that He wants to accomplish through us. We can ask God to direct our lives and to lay on our hearts people who need our prayers. *And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for the Lord's people.* Ephesians 6:18

**In South Korea, predawn prayer meetings are often overflowed with people. The main prayer request is for the people of North Korea, that they might come to the saving faith of knowing Jesus. Whenever the wind is right, South**

**Koreans release balloons loaded with Bibles to take them into North Korea.<sup>4</sup> All of us can listen to the nudges of the Holy Spirit to how we can help others in our communities and around the world!**

We can be confident that God has promised to be with us and wants to help us. In the Lord's prayer, we say, "Give us this day our daily bread." **Jesus did not give the disciples and us an example for weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly bread. Jesus specifically stated "daily" bread. This way we can realize that each day we need to rely on God.** Every day is better off being with God. It is not just a once a day experience either. God wants us to be in contact with Him all day. When God led the Israelites through the wilderness, the pillar of fire was present at night and the cloud was present during the day. It can be a reminder to us that God is with us always and wants to help us through each and every day! By staying in contact with God through prayer, our day may not have less problems but we will be **better** equipped to handle what life brings!

## Chapter 7: God Communicates through Music

God can use the lyrics of songs and hymns to speak to us to support us, encourage us, give us advice, or to simply praise Him. God can speak to us through music by inspiring Christian song writers through His Word. Johann Sebastian Bach was an amazing composer and musician who took this to heart. Before he would score a sheet of music, he would write J.J. at the very top. It stood for Jesu, Juva. It means "Jesus, Help Me" in Latin. At the completion of every composition, Bach would write SDG. It stood for Soli Deo Gloria, which means "To the Glory of God Alone." Bach stated this mission.<sup>1</sup> "The aim and final end of all music should be none other than the glory of God and the refreshment of the soul."

Unfortunately not all musicians glorify God through their music, so it is important that Christians are careful to what they listen to. Our thoughts, words, and deeds can be influenced by what we hear. Because of this we should stay focused on music that God can use to speak to us and that does not go against or contradict His Word.

Often times Christian music contains phrases or

sentences are drawn directly from Scripture so Christians can reflect on God's Word. God knows the power of music and music is much more powerful when it is based on the Word of God. God can speak to us through this music and use it to accomplish His will. *Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Psalm 95:1. Speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 5:19-20.*

### **Support and Encourage us**

Music can be used to provide us with encouragement and support for our lives. Through music, God can provide us with the strength and positive outlook we need. Psalm 40:3 states, *He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God.* This new song that Christians have is the joy of knowing God and showing God's love to others. God has a purpose for our lives and that is great reason to be encouraged!

When Jesus came to earth, He had a purpose that He

knew ahead of time. He knew that He would have to suffer and die on the cross. But He also knew that He would rise again, having defeated death once and for all! The pain of suffering and dying on the cross was still something that Jesus needed immense strength to endure. Jesus in His last days turned to music to give Him strength.

At the close of the Last Supper that Jesus had with His disciples it is noted, *When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.* Mark 14:26. Before Jesus spent time in prayer at the Garden of Gethsemane He sang to God with His disciples. While we don't know for sure what was sung, some believe it to be Psalm 113 to Psalm 118. Here is a brief summary of the Psalms to see how Jesus drew support and encouragement through music before He knew He would face grave distress and suffering.

The first verse of Psalm 113 is a good summary. *Praise the Lord.* The Psalm focuses on giving praise to God from morning to night for all that He has done. No can match the glory of the Lord. He is the one true God and deserves to be praised.

Psalm 114 talks about how God led the Israelites out

of Egypt and how He provided for them and kept them safe. This reminds us that God takes care of His people and He does not abandon them but wants to help them. In our own lives we can look to the past at how God has sustained us. Why would the present and future be any different?

The first verse of Psalm 115, is a reminder that any good thing is from God and we exist to give Him glory. *Not to us, Lord, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness.* We should trust in the true God because He is our help and shield. He has been and will be faithful for all time and His love is unending.

Psalm 116 focuses on how God has saved us and hears our petitions. *I love the Lord, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy.* Psalm 116:1. Because of what the Lord has done for us, our goal should be to serve Him for He is an awesome God! *The Lord is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion.* Psalm 116:5.

Psalm 117 and Psalm 118 bring back the message to praise God and giving Him thanks. *Praise the Lord, all you nations; extol him, all you peoples. For great is his love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.*

**Psalm 117:1-2.** *Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.* **Psalm 118:1.** God's love is unending. God displayed His ultimate love when He gave His one and only Son to be crucified on a cross so that through Jesus we might have forgiveness of sins and the free gift of heaven.

Some of the final verses of Psalm 118 would have meant a great deal to Jesus before His passion since the verses predicted the suffering that would come next and that it would be for God's glory. Though it would be the most difficult and painful task, Jesus knew that after it was finished and He rose again, there would be great cause for rejoicing! *The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes. The Lord has done it this very day; let us rejoice today and be glad.* **Psalm 118:22-24.**

Every Easter at church is a special time with great music and a full congregation. Just thinking about Easter brings to mind the hymns, "Christ the Lord is Risen Today", and "I know that My Redeemer Lives." We can keep Easter glow all year and have the same excitement, hope, and joy thanks to what Jesus has done for us.

One of my favorite songs is “How Deep the Father’s Love for us.” It is a great expression of the immensity of God’s love is for us and what He sacrificed for us. In response to God’s love we can give glory to God in all that we do and know that God’s love is unending and changes lives for the better.

How deep the Father’s love for us.  
How vast beyond all measure.  
That He should give His only Son  
to make a wretch His treasure.  
How great the pain of searing loss  
the Father turns His face away  
As wounds which mar the Chosen One  
bring many sons to glory

I will not boast in anything, no gifts, no power, no wisdom.  
But I will boast in Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection.  
Why should I gain from His reward?  
I cannot give an answer,  
But this I know with all my heart:  
His wounds have paid my ransom.<sup>2</sup>

We can be brave and trust in God as we experience the ups and downs of life. God will be there to encourage us along the way. It will not always be easy, but we can keep in mind the words of Garth Brooks from the song, “The River.”

There’s bound to be rough waters  
And I know I’ll take some falls

But with the good Lord as my captain

I can make it through them all.<sup>3</sup>

### **Give Advice**

Often Christian musicians write songs based on their own life experiences. These life experiences are not unique to just them and can be sage advice for us as well. In Colossians 3:16 the Apostle Paul states the importance of music in teaching. *Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.*

Several years ago I heard a sermon that focused on music with a repetitive beat. If the same beat is kept constant, it can seem dull and repetitive. If you add a rest here and there with the beat it can keep the rhythm going. The same is true of the rhythm of life. Rest is important to incorporate in our lives and one way to do this is through worship and singing praise to God. Worshiping God through music can refresh us and give us strength to keep on praising God in the rhythm of life.

I had this experience at a Maunday Thursday service

in which we sang, “All to us”, by Chris Tomlin and, “You alone can rescue”, by Matt Redman. These songs got me thinking about those people that do not know Jesus. Many people have a lot of anger, pain, and sadness that could be helped by knowing Jesus. It made me feel really sad for those that do not know Jesus as their Lord and Savior. There is immense joy and hope that comes with being a Christian!

A few of the phrases from these two songs especially stood out to me. “Let the saving love of Christ be the measure of our lives.” “You alone can rescue, You alone can save.” If the first phrase is the mission for our lives, it changes everything. It does not matter what happens in life, if the saving love of Christ is the focus of our life, then we know we have all that we need in life. We do not need to compare ourselves to others and think that someone else has more possessions, a better job, more friends, or has less problems. Instead we view ourselves in light of Christ’s love. From God’s perspective we are redeemed, saved, special children of God. We were made for a purpose and we know that God loves us so much that He wants to spend eternity with us.

The second phrase reminds us that we can rely solely on God. Many people in life rely on their own strength, while Christians know they can rest solely on the strength of God. There is nothing on our own that we can do to earn salvation. It is only through belief in God that we are given the free gift of life. Jesus took the burden of all of our sins and mistakes upon Himself, because only He could free us from sin and death. Looking forward to eternal life brings great hope and joy! It can help to remove any sadness or anger that we have in life and instead motivate us to share God's love with others.

There are many other great Christian hymns or songs that have excellent advice for our lives. The following are just a few insights:

- Look to God's Word for wisdom. "Be Thou My Vision"<sup>6</sup>

Be Thou my wisdom, and Thou my true word; I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord.

- God is in control and will help us. "The Will of God is Always Best"<sup>7</sup>

The will of God is always best and shall be done forever; and

they who trust in him are blest, He will forsake them never.  
He helps indeed in time of need.

- We have nothing to fear in this life. God is with us.

“A Mighty Fortress is our God”<sup>8</sup>

Though devils all the world should fill, all eager to devour  
us. We tremble not, we fear no ill, they shall not overpower  
us.

- Prayer is powerful. “What a friend we have in Jesus”<sup>9</sup>

Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?  
We should never be discouraged, take it to the Lord in  
prayer.

- God’s grace is enough. “Amazing Grace”<sup>10</sup>

Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already  
come. ‘Tis grace that brought me safe thus far, and grace will  
lead me home.

- We can praise God all day for His faithful love.

“Blessed Assurance”<sup>11</sup>

This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the  
day long.

- What we have in Christ, is greater than anything we

have or don't have in life. "The King of Love my Shepherd is"<sup>12</sup>

The King of love my Shepherd is, whose goodness faileth never; I nothing lack if I am his and he is mine forever.

- Life is worth the living, just because He lives. "Jesus Christ is Risen Today"<sup>13</sup>

Hymns of praise then let us sing, Alleluia!

Unto Christ, our heavenly king, Alleluia!

Who endured the cross and grave, Alleluia!

Sinners to redeem and save. Alleluia!

- We can listen to God and in response to His love, serve Him faithfully. "Here I am, Lord"<sup>14</sup>

I who made the stars of night, I will make their darkness bright. Who will bear my light to them? Whom shall I send? Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord?... I will go Lord, if you lead me.

- God is with us our whole lives. "Now Thank We all Our God"<sup>15</sup>

Who from our mother's arms has blessed us on our way with countless gifts of love, and still is ours today.

My mother loves to play hymns on the piano. She also sang in the Praise Choir. Recently she told me, "Every

**time when I am faced with some seemingly insurmountable problem, the Holy Spirit gently floats a Christian song or hymn melody into my head. When I remember the words that go with the melody, I am instantly comforted!”**

### **Praise God**

One of the most important messages that God communicates to us through music is that we should praise Him. *Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts. Psalm 105:2. Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Psalm 150:2,6.*

**In fact, God’s creation gives praise to Him in many ways. It has been found that the electron shell of the carbon atom produces the same harmonic scale as the Gregorian chant. Whale songs can travel thousands of miles underwater. Meadowlarks have a range of three hundred notes. Research in the field of bioacoustics has revealed that we are surrounded by millions of ultrasonic songs. Even earthworms make faint staccato songs.<sup>16</sup>**

The greatest reason we have to praise God is because

we know that through faith in God, death is not the end. We will live forever in heaven where we will continue to praise Him. Ray Palmer wrote, “My Faith Looks up to Thee”, in 1830. Forrest McCann in his book, *Hymns & History*, describes how the hymn came to be.

Having been accustomed from childhood, through an inherited propensity perhaps, to an occasional expression of what his heart felt, in the form of verse, it was in accordance with this habit, and in an hour when Christ, in the riches of his grace and love, was so vividly apprehended as to fill the soul with deep emotion, that the lines were composed.

Christians know that they can have confidence that God will grant the request that is asked for in the last stanza of the hymn. We know that we have a place reserved for us in heaven. This is a great cause to praise God our whole lives!

When ends life’s transient dream,  
When death’s cold sullen stream shall o’er me roll;  
Blest Savior, then in love, fear and distrust remove;  
O bear me safe above, a ransomed soul!<sup>18</sup>

## Conclusion: The World's Greatest Communicator

God is the world's greatest communicator because only He can communicate to us through His Word in so many varied ways. Only God can communicate with everyone in the world as well. His communication is the most powerful and has the most impact. Isaiah 55:11 states, *"so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."*

There are a number of characteristics of good communicators or speakers and God has all of them. Good speakers show enthusiasm. They enjoy what they are doing and express themselves with joy. Quality speakers involve audience participation. They also have amazing memories so that they can connect with whom they are talking to and respond appropriately. Their communication is also personal and heartwarming. It compels people to action.

### **Enthusiasm**

The word "enthusiasm" is derived from two Greek words, *en* and *theos*. *Theos* is the Greek word for God. Enthusiasm is like saying, "full of God." When we have a

close relationship with God, then we are joyful and full of energy! We have a great passion for what we are doing and it shines through in our words, actions, and facial expressions!

God is very enthusiastic about His creation and accomplishing His good and gracious will. In the Old Testament book of Isaiah, chapter 9 describes the coming Messiah. The end of verse 7 is a great phrase to remember, *The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this. Zeal means great energy or enthusiasm in the pursuit of a cause.*

God does not give up on His creation. Though sin entered the world, God desired all to be saved and to live in heaven with Him. This is God's great passion. We are God's creation and were made to give Him glory. *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.* Ephesians 1:3-4. God loves each and every one of us and sent His one and only Son that He could pay the price for our sins. God communicates His

enthusiasm to us through His love in His Word and also through the love of fellow Christians.

The more time that we spend in God's Word, discuss it with others, and pray to God the more enthusiasm we will have for life. Everyone in the world needs relationships and time for communication. Being full of God's power is contagious because God's Word is powerful. Nehemiah 8:10 states, *The joy of the Lord is your strength.*

### **Audience Participation**

God is a great communicator because He does not just lecture at us, but gets us involved. God provides the motivation to love others and calls us to respond to it. He does not just motivate us and leave us by ourselves. His Holy Spirit gives us the right words and nudges us to action!

Ephesians 2:10 states, *For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.* Similarly 1 Peter 4:10 reads, *Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.* God wants us to get involved in His work to accomplish His good and gracious will.

William Borden was an heir to a great family fortune but chose the humble life of a missionary to China because He felt that was what God was calling him to do. When he decided to become a missionary, he wrote in his Bible, “no reserves.” At a later point, he wrote in his Bible, “no retreats and no regrets.” He knew that He was making the right decision. Sadly, he died at a young age, but was able to donate one million dollars to various Christian organizations. **Whatever resources or talents we have been given, we can use to serve others to give God glory. A life lived for Christ is one in which we can confidently state that we have no regrets.**

God has given us all amazing bodies and minds that can be used to serve Him but many do not want to serve God. Similarly, If you give people a rubberband and ask what it can be used for, you will get many ideas, but rubberbands are only useful when they are stretched. That is the same with us; we have to continue to be stretched for God to best use us. God wants us to be involved in His work to reach the most people possible with His love! By being

open to respond when we feel God calling us to speak or act, we can better serve Him and show His love to others.

### **Amazing Memory**

This past year for the opening faculty meeting for the College of Education at UNLV, my dean had prepared a sheet of events for us to decide the year in which they occurred. Though the events were easily recognizable, the years were harder to remember. Everyone got more than half of the years wrong. Here are a few of the items to test your memory: Nintendo introduces the first Gameboy. Facebook was introduced. The first YouTube video was posted. The Macintosh computer was introduced by Apple.

While these are not important details to remember, details about other people are more important. People who are quality communicators have great memories. They remember facts about other people's lives and ask them about these things. They are also good about sharing ideas or events that people might be interested in.

God has the greatest memory ever. He knows everything about everyone and everything that has and will take place. He is able to communicate with us well because

He knows us better than anyone. Peter said in John 21:17, *Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.*

One of the keys to being a good communicator is perspective taking; thinking about what the other person feels and is thinking. Psalm 139:1-3, states, *You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.* God sees the whole picture of people, events, and situations. God can place people in our lives to witness to and the Holy Spirit can direct us to act or speak according to His will. We certainly don't know everything, but God does and we can trust His wisdom.

### **Personal and Heartwarming**

Great communicators are able to make a personal connection and stir emotion in other people. God has done this for many people. He is the world's greatest personal communicator and there are far too many stories to tell of how God has changed the lives of people for the better. Here are just a couple stories:

**Jonathan Edwards, former president of Princeton University, listened to God during His life and strived to grow in his relationship with God. His family has quite the legacy of living in the grips of God's grace. His descendants include 300 ministers and missionaries, 120 university presidents, 60 authors, 30 judges, 14 college presidents, 3 members of congress, and 1 vice president.**

During Jonathan Edwards life he came up with 70 goals that would become the foundation of his faith and practice. Here are a few of his goals connected to *communication*:

I will ask myself at the end of every day, week, month, and year, wherein I could possibly in any respect have done better.

I will in narrations never speak anything but the pure and simple verity.

I will never willfully omit anything, except the omission be for the glory of God; and frequently examine my omissions.

Whenever I hear anything spoken in conversation of any person, if I think it would be praiseworthy in me, I will endeavor to imitate it.<sup>2</sup>

We can have the same focus for our lives as we strive to be better communicators for the glory of God. The last goal especially echoes the sentiments of Philippians 4:8.

*Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.*

Another story shows the power of communication that is personal and heartwarming. An old woman was discussing her impending funeral with her pastor.

"One more thing," she said excitedly.

"What's that?" came the pastor's reply.

"This is very important," the old woman continued. "I want to be buried with a fork in my right hand."

The pastor stood looking at the woman, not knowing quite what to say.

"That surprises you, doesn't it?" the woman asked.

"Well, to be honest, I'm puzzled by the request," said the pastor.

The old woman explained. "My grandmother once told me this story, and from there on out, I have always

done so. I have also, always tried to pass along its message to those I love and those who are in need of encouragement. In all my years of attending church socials and potluck dinners, I always remember that when the dishes of the main course were being cleared, someone would inevitably lean over and say, 'Keep your fork.' It was my favorite part because I knew that something better was coming...like velvety chocolate cake or deep-dish apple pie. Something wonderful, and with substance! So, I just want people to see me there in that casket with a fork in my hand and I want them to wonder 'What's with the fork?' Then I want you to tell them: 'Keep your fork ...the best is yet to come.'"

The pastor's eyes welled up with tears of joy as he hugged the woman good-bye. He knew this would be one of the last times he would see her before her death. But he also knew that the woman had a better grasp of heaven than he did. She KNEW that something better was coming.

At the funeral people were walking by the woman's casket and they saw the fork placed in her right hand. Over and over, the pastor heard the question "What's with the fork?" And over and over he smiled.

During his message, the pastor told the people of the conversation he had with the woman shortly before she died. He also told them about the fork and about what it symbolized to her. The pastor told the people how he could not stop thinking about the fork and told them that they probably would not be able to stop thinking about it either. He was right. So he told the congregation that the next time anyone reached down for their fork, let that remind them ever so gently, that the best is yet to come.

Christians all have their personal stories of how God has impacted their lives! God communicates with us in many ways and so we can be alert to where God is leading us. The more time we spend in communication with God, the more we will know His love and feel joy, hope, and fulfillment in our lives. **The most important thing to remember and communicate to others is God's grace and the free gift of eternal life! Praise God for the things He wants us to do yet on this earth! And praise God the best is yet to come!**



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