

**The World's Greatest  
Provider**

**Dr. Micah Stohlmann**

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*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**

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## Introduction

God is the world's greatest provider because He takes care of all of our needs. In our time on earth we may still experience hardships including health, financial, and family problems. However, God has freely given Christians the only thing that they need; eternal life in heaven. Because of this we have joy, peace, and hope in our time on earth. Having Jesus as our Lord and Savior means that we are blessed beyond belief.

Psalm 84:11 states, *For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless.* Based on this verse it might be easy to think that if a Christian is experiencing troubles then something must be wrong because the verse states, *no good thing does he (God) withhold.* Christians are certainly sinners and so our lives are not blameless. The beautiful thing is that because Jesus paid the price for our sins on the cross, Christians are viewed by God as forgiven, holy, and blameless people. The Gospel message is a proclamation of prosperity that Christians will experience. Prosperity is not defined by earthly standards though. It is not wealth and

health. It is the joy and peace of living life with the Holy Spirit as our constant companion and the blessed true knowledge of a place in heaven awaiting us.

The chapter titles in this book are based on a poem by Annie Johnson Flint that deftly describes the good things that God has promised Christians for this life and to life everlasting. The second half of the poem describes what God provides and each phrase will be explored in more detail in the following chapters: (1) strength for the day, (2) rest for the labor, (3) light for the way, (4) grace for the trials, (5) help from above, (6) unfailing sympathy, and (7) undying love.

### **What God hath promised**

God hath not promised skies always blue,  
flower-strewn pathways all our lives through;  
God hath not promised sun without rain,  
joy without sorrow, peace without pain.  
But God hath promised strength for the day,  
rest for the labor, light for the way,  
grace for the trials, help from above,  
unfailing sympathy, undying love.  
-Annie Johnson Flint

Annie Johnson Flint was born on Christmas Eve, in the year 1866, in the small town of Vineland, New Jersey. Sadly her mother died three years later after giving birth to

Annie's sister. A little over two years later, Annie's father became ill with an incurable disease. The neighbors at the time, Mr. and Mrs. Flint felt compelled to adopt and take care of the two girls. Knowing that the Flints would provide a Christian home and positive upbringing Mr. Johnson agreed. He passed away shortly there after.

Annie was generally cheerful and optimistic. She read many books growing up and enjoyed reading poetry. This might have helped her to key in on the needs of others, as she was very good at perspective taking. One of the most difficult things for her though was patience. She did not like to wait for a thing and often was reminded by others of Bible verses on patience (Galatians 5:22-23; James 5:7-8; Psalm 27:14).

After Annie finished high school and one year of further studies, she became a teacher at the primary school where she had attended. In her second year though arthritis in her body steadily grew worse where she was unable to work and had difficulty walking. Shortly after this, sadly, both of her adopted parents Mr. and Mrs. Flint passed away. Mrs. Flint had arranged before her death for Annie to be

taken care of at a Sanitarium, a place where people with chronic illnesses were provided care. The Flints did not have much money so Annie was only able to stay at the Sanitarium a few months out of the year.

In her suffering she found that writing provided a solace. She began to write poetry and hymns. In later years she always stated that her poems were inspired from the needs of others and not from her own need. One knows full well that she never could have composed as she did to help others without her background of facing so many trials and tribulations in her own life.

The poem, "What God hath Promised", was written to comfort and encourage another person. A tired and discouraged deaconess visited Annie and would tell her troubles to Annie. The deaconess eventually moved out west but would still write to Annie. The deaconess wrote that she couldn't see why God would allow such hard things to come into her life. Annie gave her response with the poem, "What God hath Promised." Annie became convinced that through her weak body and sufferings that God could be glorified. She prayed often that she would be healed but relied on 2

Corinthians 12:9 *My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.* Healing did not come in this earthly life and for thirty-seven years, she was basically helpless. Annie passed way in 1932 at the age of 66 years. Through it all Annie's faith in the goodness and mercy of God never faltered.<sup>1</sup>

Pastor and author, Ravi Zacharias, states that Annie Johnson Flint was one of the best hymn writers in history. He describes further how her life was anything from easy. "She got rheumatoid arthritis till she was twisted up in bed for many, many decades. She had cancer inside of her, she was incontinent and lived on diapers, and blindness started to overtake her."<sup>2</sup> Through all of her pain and suffering her faith only increased. One of the hymns that she wrote was "He Giveth More Grace." The lyrics powerfully state how God is the world's greatest provider and is more than capable of taking care of us through all the times of life.

He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater,  
He sendeth more strength when the labors increase;  
To added afflictions He addeth His mercy,  
To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace.

When we have exhausted our store of endurance,  
When our strength has failed ere the day is half done,

When we reach the end of our hoarded resources  
Our Father's full giving is only begun.

Fear not that thy need shall exceed His provision,  
Our God ever yearns His resources to share;  
Lean hard on the arm everlasting, availing;  
The Father both thee and thy load will upbear.

His love has no limits, His grace has no measure,  
His power no boundary known unto men;  
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus  
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.

For non-Christians it may be hard to imagine anyone going through so much suffering in their life and uttering the last line of verse number 4: He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again. There is a story of a weak, old coal miner whose body had been ravaged by his many years of hard labor in the mines. In his humble home there was a table with a small bowl of thin porridge on it. Holding a piece of bread in his coal-stained hand, he was ready to eat his meager meal. But first he knelt beside the table, joyfully exclaiming over and over again: "All this, and Jesus too! All this, and Jesus too!"

That is an amazing part of a life lived with Christ. The benefits of having Jesus as your Lord and Savior are too many to describe. All Christians have had difficulties in life

and can tell their own story of how God has provided strength or peace. In my first book, *Bible Verses in My Pocket*, I describe problems and suffering that I have had with Crohn's disease. I had surgery to remove part of my intestine, my appendix, and tumors. I ended up losing about 60 pounds, but even in my weak state I felt God's strength and power all the more. It is great to remember that if God brought you to it, He will bring you through it. This of course does not mean that Christians will not experience trials throughout life, but that God will help and sustain us.

In her book, *Jesus Always*, Sarah Young writes what God wants us to remember anytime difficulties arise.

Find joy in me, for I am your strength. It is vital to keep your Joy alive, especially when you're in the throes of adversity. Whenever you are struggling with difficulties, you need to guard your thoughts and spoken words carefully. If you focus too much on all the things that are wrong, you will become increasingly discouraged—and your strength will be sapped. As soon as you realize what is happening, stop this hurtful process immediately. Turn to Me, asking Me to help you with all your struggles. Take time to praise Me: Speak or sing words of worship. Read scriptures that help you rejoice in Me.

Remember that your problems are temporary but I am eternal—and so is your relationship with Me. As you find Joy in Me, delighting in My unfailing love for you, your strength will increase. This is the Joy of the Lord, which is yours for all time and throughout eternity!<sup>4</sup>

It is my hope that through this book God will work in your life to bring hope and encouragement for the trials of life. God is the world's greatest provider and takes care of all of our needs. Though life at times can be difficult, if we keep our focus on God we will have what we need to persevere and live our lives in the midst of God's grace and love. God has promised to provide for us. What a perfect phrase to remember!

## **Chapter 1: Strength for the day**

There can be plenty of reasons why we need strength for the day: too much to do at work or school, an illness or disease, strained relationships with others, a friend or family member going through a difficult time, financial troubles, loneliness, uncertainty about the future, failure, loss of a loved one, and being responsible for others or in a position of leadership. There are many people that have to deal with these problems in their lives. Christians know that God will give them strength for all the days of life. Here is the story of one famous Christian that persevered through all of the above difficulties.

When I was seven years old, my family was forced out of our home because of a legal technicality. I had to work to help support my family. At age nine, while still a backwards, shy little boy, my mother died. At age 22, I lost my job as a store clerk. I wanted to go to law school, but my education wasn't good enough. At 23, I went into debt to become a partner in a small store. Three years later my partner died leaving me a huge debt, which took years to repay. At 28, after developing romantic relations with a young lady for four years, I asked her to marry me. She said no. At 37, on my third try, I was finally elected to the United States Congress. Two years later, I ran again and failed to be re-elected. I had a nervous breakdown at that time. At 41, adding additional heartache to an already unhappy marriage, my four-year-old son died. The next year I ran for Land Officer and lost. At 45, I ran for the Senate and lost. A few years later, I ran for the Vice Presidency and lost. At 49,

I ran for the Senate again and lost. And at 51, I was elected President of the United States.

Who am I?

My name is Abraham Lincoln.<sup>1</sup>

President Abraham Lincoln knew that he needed to rely on God for strength for every day of his life. One of his most famous quotes states well how Christians know that God's strength is sufficient for them. "I have been driven many times upon my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom, and that of all about me, seemed insufficient for the day." Lincoln felt that the Bible was one of the greatest gifts that God has given us. Through the Bible, Christians are encouraged and given strength.

A search on [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com) for the word "strength" brings up 232 Bible verses. Strength is something that God knows that we need and provides this for us. ***God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.*** **Psalm 46:10.** There can be days when everything that is going on is overwhelming, but God promises to help us through our days. A couple of excellent Bible verses to remember are from Lamentations and Matthew. *Because of*

*the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.* Lamentations 3:22-23. *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."* Matthew 11:28. There are a few key points to remember that will give us peace, endurance, and joy as we think about the strength we need for each day: (a) Problems are a part of life; (b) Problems can help us realize the power of God; and (c) Problems are opportunities for God to be glorified.

### **Problems are a part of life**

God intends Christians to live life in a *community* of believers by showing God's love to each other. Through this strength is provided to Christians. Through worship and fellowship, enjoyment, encouragement, and awe of God we can be fueled to joyfully live our lives for Christ. At one time or another in life everyone goes through a difficult time. By being in a community, we can be supported and strengthened. Jesus lived among us on earth, so He knows that life is not easy. Jesus endured many troubles and hardships on earth but has encouraging words for the trials of this life. *"I have told you these things, so that in me you*

*may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” John 16:33.* God is in control! We know what awaits us when our time on earth is complete. Through any failures or setbacks in life we can remember that we are victors through Christ Jesus our Lord who freely gives us eternal life.

The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod publishes a devotional entitled, “Strength for the Day.” It contains hymns, devotions, and prayers to provide to sustain Christians through difficult times. Pastor Matthew Harrison notes that trials and problems should not be seen only in a negative light but as opportunities for God to work in our lives.

“Have you ever noticed in the New Testament that anyone who comes to Jesus asking for His mercy always goes away with His blessing? And on the other hand, anyone who comes to Him touting his own worthiness, or righteousness, goes away empty-handed? Jesus is a friend of sinners, of the weak, the distressed, the sick, and the needy. Illness and trials in life are simply His way of making sure we see ourselves as precisely His friends in just this way.”<sup>2</sup>

In the movie, "God's not dead," different stories intersect around the main story of a college freshmen taking a philosophy class. In one part of the movie a son that has had a relatively problem free life visits his mom who has dementia. The son states, "I don't even know what I'm doing here. I mean it's not like you even know who I am. You prayed and believed your whole life and never did anything wrong. And here you are. You are the nicest person I know. I am the meanest. You have dementia. My life is perfect. Explain that to me."

The mom who previously seemed very unaware responds, "Sometimes the devil allows people to live a life free of trouble because he doesn't want them turning to God. Your sin is like a jail cell except it is nice and comfy and there doesn't seem to be any need to leave. The door is wide open till one day time runs out. The cell door slams shut and suddenly it's too late."<sup>3</sup> We are all sinful people in need of Christ. There are a few people that are able to go through life with relative ease and few problems. However, that can be a dangerous thing if these people think they can rely on themselves. No one is able to earn salvation. When our time

on earth is through, belief in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior is the only path to heaven.

Jesus is close to the brokenhearted, the weak, and the sinful. We are all in need of God's love and grace in our lives. Problems can be a way to help us remember this and focus solely on Christ for what we need.

### **Problems can help us realize the power of God**

When we face problems in life, we can realize that on our own we are not able to do what we would like. We need to rely more on God and Him working through others. Isaiah 40:29 is a beautiful verse to remember during these seasons of life. *He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.* The Bible is full of stories where God provides strength and helps Christians through difficult times. The Israelites were saved from the Egyptians by God parting the Red Sea. Daniel was kept safe in the lion's den. Samson is given strength to defeat his enemies. Paul persevered through many trials and imprisonments. In times in our lives when we face problems we do not have to be distraught but can be taught to seek God. *Look to the Lord and*

*his strength; seek his face always.* 1 Chronicles 16:11. God can use these times to reassure us of His presence and power.

When we realize that we have God on our side it makes all the difference. We can draw great encouragement from this in the midst of any problems in life. Pastor and author, Max Lucado, in one his sermons stated the power that Christians have by belonging to God.

*I read that Christ took up residence in you when you became a Christian. He is a pulsating, living, breathing, growing, expanding presence. I read that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. I read that you are an ambassador of Jesus Christ. I read that you are an heir of Christ. I read that you are the salt, the light of society. I read that you belong to the living God. I read that your name is written in the book of life and no one can erase it. I read that you have been purchased with the most precious commodity in the history of the world. I read that you belong to God.<sup>4</sup>*

The Bible provides us with plenty of evidence of the power of God. God is more powerful than any problems that you are facing. God is with you and has promised to help

you. Do not be dismayed or discouraged when trouble comes your way, but face it with confidence that God will provide the strength that you need and the determination to deal with anything in life. Let us remember what we have. We have the power of the Almighty God residing in us! We have the promises of God before us! We see evidence of God's faithfulness all around us!

### **Problems are opportunities for God to be glorified**

God loves to come through and show Christians that He provides all that we need. Isaiah 41:10 states, *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.* In these times it can be an excellent opportunity to give glory to God because any good thing is from God. Problems are perfect opportunities to praise God in the midst of the storms of life. **We can share with others the difficulties we are experiencing, but also how God is working through these problems or has already gotten us past them.** *If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very word of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things*

*God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 4:11*

There is an old story about two mice that fell into a bowl of cream. One mouse gave up and drowned right away. The second mouse worked hard to escape and turned the cream into butter and walked out. In our own lives we can keep this in mind if taken in the right light. We can be the second mouse, but need to realize that on our own we are not capable of enduring all of the different problems in life. It is only through Christ that we have the strength to continue to work and move forward in life. All our capabilities are due to God who created our bodies and minds. Therefore all of the glory belongs to God!

Some times we can feel that we are defined by our performance, success with relationships or at work. We need to keep in mind, though, that no matter what happens our identity is firmly grounded in Christ. Because we have God's love and saving grace we can be fully confident at all times. In the 2016 summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, two divers from the U.S. discussed how they are victors through Christ no matter what.

David Boudia and Steele Johnson, both Christians, won the silver medal in men's synchronized 10-meter platform diving. After their performance they were interviewed on NBC. Boudia stated first, "**There's been an enormous amount of pressure. I've felt it. It's just an identity crisis. When my mind is on this [diving], and I'm thinking I'm defined by this, then my mind goes crazy. But we both know that our identity is in Christ, and we're thankful for this opportunity to be able to dive in front of Brazil and in front of the United States. It's been an absolutely thrilling moment for us.**"

Johnson agreed and further elaborated. "The way David just described it was flawless – the fact that I was going into this event knowing that my identity is rooted in Christ and not what the result of this competition is just gave me peace ... and it let me enjoy the contest. If something went great, I was happy. If something didn't go great, I could still find joy because I'm at the Olympics competing with the best person, the best mentor – just one of the best people to be around. God's given us a cool

opportunity, and I'm glad I could come away with an Olympic silver medal in my first-ever event."<sup>5</sup>

What a great testimony! In our good times or in our difficult times all glory belongs to God! God will provide us strength for trials and we can celebrate His power at work in our lives! We can stay focused on the words from the Apostle Paul, *I can do all this through him who gives me strength*. Philippians 4:13.

## Chapter 2: Rest for the labor

Everyone needs rest and Jesus has promised this for us! *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”* **Matthew 11:28.** By focusing on God and spending time in prayer, worship, and Christian fellowship we will be ensured to find rest, peace, calmness, and rejuvenation.

This can seem difficult at times due to unending to do lists. Even if you are very busy, rest is key in order to accomplish all that needs to be done. In fact if you take time to rest you will get more done anyway. A study from Stanford University found that productivity declines sharply when the workweek exceeds 50 hours and it drops off so sharply after 55 hours that there’s no point in working any more. **People who work as much as 70 hours or more per week actually get the same amount done as people who work 55 hours.**<sup>1</sup> The most successful people know the importance of rest and shifting gears on the weekend to relaxing and rejuvenating activities. God has the most wisdom, and since He suggests rest, then there is no doubt that it is needed and a quality idea.

## **Ideas for rest**

There are many ways to be able to rest and most are simple ideas. **On days off from work spend time with friends and family.** It will be enjoyable and provide a needed break from work. Rest can be done by simply going for a walk. This can allow time for reflection and to slow down. If possible you can try to do any chores or errands on days when you work. This way, days off can be solely focused on rest and relaxation. Something that can be done everyday is to eat a proper meal. This means no electronic devices and to take one's time to eat by sitting at a table. **Slowing down at meal time, can provided a needed break** and a chance to catch up with others if you have a meal with other people.

Another idea for rest, which may seem counter-intuitive, is to get enough exercise. **If you exercise you will sleep better and feel better.** Getting enough sleep is obviously important for rest. It is better to watch less TV at night in order to get more sleep. With many TV show recaps or highlights on the Internet you will save yourself time and

have more energy from a good night's sleep if you simply look on the Internet the next day for what you have missed.

Other ideas for rest include reading a Christian inspirational book, prayer, and journaling. God provides many positive ways to rest and rejuvenate. He wants us to take care of our bodies so that we can serve others and show His love to others. God has designed our bodies wonderfully, but we must take care of our body and mind.

Even God took time to rest after the creation of the world. *By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done. Genesis 2:2-3.* While none of us can fathom what it would take to create an entire universe, we can take an important lesson from these couple of verses. Set aside time for rest after a major event or project. Even finishing a week of work can be a major event. There are many ways to rest and we will benefit from resting our bodies and minds.

## **Benefits of rest**

One of the most important ways to rest that I have not mentioned yet is to attend church. Hopefully, none of you got the idea that church is a good place to sleep during a long sermon. **Church is a great time to praise God together with other Christians and be reinvigorated for what God calls us to do: to love and serve Him with all our heart, mind, body, and soul.**

Even attending church and worshipping God with our whole heart can be encouraging for others. I attended a church service several years ago where I noticed a man singing his heart out in the front pew of the church. The man used to be a teacher but was unable to work anymore because of the progression of multiple sclerosis. The hymn that was being sung was "Just as I am". The first verse is below.

Just as I am, without one plea,  
But that Thy blood was shed for me,  
And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee,  
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

The fact that this man's faith did not waver was due to the power of God's love. **By worshipping together in a**

**community of believers we can strengthen each other!** God provides us the blessing of worship to communicate His truth and reinvigorate us for His work!

Another great benefit of rest that God provides is peace and calmness. The apostle Paul writes to the Philippian Christians: *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. Philippians 4:6-7.*

Prayer is a powerful way for us to feel peaceful and calm during our day so we do not spend too much time worrying about things. God will hear our true thoughts and feelings and help us with what we need! A couple good prayers for peace and for rest are the two below:

“Lord, it feels like there’s so much to accomplish each day, and sometimes it’s hard to rest. I’m afraid I won’t get it all done. I’m afraid I will fail. Yet you promise to strengthen me. You are the mighty God! Help me to focus on what you can do, not what I cannot. Empower and encourage me. Give me the lasting strength only you can

give. Replenish me so I can live life better and stronger. In Jesus' name. Amen."<sup>1</sup>

"Lord, I am so grateful for rest. It was your idea in the first place! Instead of tossing and turning at night with eyes wide open, I give you my worries and cares, my lists and schedules. With open hands, help me to release all I cling to so tightly. I need rest for my spirit and my body. Let me live from a calm and grounded center as I come to you each day. In Jesus' name. Amen."<sup>2</sup>

God provides for us in so many ways and we can spend time in His Word to be encouraged and reminded of His promises in our lives. The first couple verses of Psalm 23 are great verses for this purpose. *The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. Psalm 23:1-2.* God has given us many simple ways for our soul to be refreshed. We need to be sure to take time to rest by spending time with God and other Christians. By taking care of our bodies and minds we will be better equipped to show God's love to others.

### Chapter 3: Light for the way

God has promised to provide direction and guidance for our lives. He is the light that can direct our paths. In life there are many decisions that need to be made and when we keep our focus on God and stay in His Word we will be better equipped to make God pleasing choices. *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5.*

It is very comforting to know we have the best and wisest guide in order to help us navigate through life. There can certainly be times when things do not seem to make sense, but we can trust that God has a plan. God can use all of our life experiences in ways that we will not fully know or understand until we get to heaven. In our time on earth we can simply trust that God is good. His grace and love are true. He will be with us always and because of this we can trust Him and the decisions that He is leading us to make. God provides His Word as a light for our path and we can keep the following in mind: We read the Bible not for

information but transformation, God's timing is perfect, and God has endless wisdom.

### **Not for information but transformation**

The more time we spend with God's Word the more God can mold us into the kind of people He wants us to be. Isaiah 64:8 states, *Yet you, Lord, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.* We know that God created us, but continues to shape us and teach us our whole lives.

The more time that we spend in God's Word reading, discussing, and meditating on it, the more our desires and thoughts will be in line with what God would want for our lives. Psalm 37:4 describes this, *Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.* When we listen to God then our lives will overflow with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

When people come to the saving faith of Jesus Christ, they are completely transformed! I am sure that you can think of someone who seemed like a completely different person once they came to know and believe in God as their

Lord and Savior. *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!* 2

Corinthians 5:17. The most famous example in the Bible is Saul who became Paul. He went from persecuting Christians to publicly proclaiming the Good News! That is the power of God at work!

When we focus on ourselves our plans can often be self-centered, but when we listen to God and allow Him to establish our steps it will lead to a more fulfilling life and blessings for ourselves and many others through God's love. We have the blessed assurance of heaven and the joy, hope, and love that is poured out into our lives because of this.

### **God's timing is perfect**

Even though God is our light for the way, that does not mean our decisions in life will always be clear. There are often times when we want something in life—a new job, a family, a spouse, a house, new friends, less stress, relief, recovery, or removal from illness or disease. **When it seems like God is not listening, be completely assured that He knows our needs and desires and is working for what is best for us in our lives.** Through any situation in life, we can

continue to rely on God, stay in His Word, and do our best to follow His will for our lives in our decisions.

There are multiple verses in the Bible that state the importance of waiting for the Lord. *Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord. Psalm 27:14. Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him. Psalm 37:7a.* While we are waiting for the second coming of Jesus, the verses can also remind us to have peace about our current situations. No matter what our circumstances, we have God and that is enough. That does not mean that we should not have tenacity to pursue dreams that we feel God is leading us to pursue. **Waiting does not have to be inactivity, but a sustained focus on God through prayer and belief. It is being optimistic about the future, not focused on worry, but on the glorious inheritance that awaits us in heaven and the wonderful life that we can have on earth doing the Lord's work.**

One of the pastors at my church, Pastor Craig Michaelson, preached a sermon on role models and shared about two of his role models that were visiting and who partnered with our church. They are great examples of belief

in God's perfect timing, even when faced with dire situations. Pastor Craig called up the two men, Pastor Nathaniel and Pastor Patrick, who are both pastors in Liberia, as he shared about why they are his role models. During a civil war in Liberia, Pastor Nathaniel, who had done nothing wrong, was tortured and was going to be executed. Miraculously, the door to his cell was left open and he was able to escape to Sierra Leone! While there, he started 50 churches. When civil war broke out in Sierra Leone, he went to Guinea and working with Pastor Patrick starting more churches. When Ebola struck the area, both pastors continued to hold worship services, even though people were warned about not being in large groups for fear of the disease. Both pastors now work in Liberia and Pastor Patrick has started 50 churches in Liberia. Through difficult situations, they have both kept their faith in God and encouraged many others to come to saving faith and to persevere!

Everyone on the earth has a purpose that can give God glory. **God created you for a reason.** Even if we are unsure about how our life will work out, we can be assured

that we are here to give God glory. If you feel that God is leading you to a certain profession or calling and other Christian friends and family agree, do not be discouraged when setbacks occur. See them as learning opportunities and that God is preparing you to make a greater impact for Him in the future.

I recently bought a calendar by the company DaySpring, in which there was beautiful scenery along with Bible verses. At the back of the calendar was an insert written by DaySpring co-founder Roy Lessin. It is an excellent description of Ecclesiastes 3:1. *To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.*

**“Just think  
you’re not here by chance,  
but by God’s choosing.  
His hand formed you  
and made you the person you are.  
He compares you to no one else-  
you are one of a kind.  
You lack nothing  
that His grace can’t give you.  
He has allowed you to be here  
at this time in history  
to fulfill His special purpose  
for this generation.”**

In thinking about how God is the light for our way we can remember Ecclesiastes 3:11 and focus on God’s grace and

love that leads to hope, joy, optimism, and determination to passionately pursue God's purpose for our lives.

*He has made everything beautiful in its time.*  
**Ecclesiastes 3:11**

### **God has endless wisdom**

Though we need to make countless decisions in our lifetime, we can rest confidently in the fact that God is always with us and His wisdom has no limit or end. There are many Bible verses that speak to this fact and a few are listed here.

*Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.*  
**Jeremiah 33:3**

*Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.*  
**Matthew 7:7**

*Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!*  
**Romans 11:33**

*If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.*  
**James 1:5**

At times we may put limits on God, but that is never the right idea. A humorous story makes this point. Children

at an elementary school were lined up in the cafeteria for lunch. At the head of the table was a large tray of apples. A teacher lettered a note and posted it on the apple tray: "Take only ONE. God is watching." Moving along the lunch line, at the other end was a large tray of chocolate chip cookies. A girl wrote a note, which she put next to the tray of cookies, "Take all you want. God is watching the apples."

God provides for us being the light for our journey in this life. All we need to do is listen to Him and focus on His truth. Here are several ideas to help us focus on God: (a) Memorize scripture; (b) Read biographies of great lives; (c) Ponder the testimonies of faithful Christians; (d) Make a deliberate decision to set your hope on Him daily; (e) Take courage in the Lord; and (f) Remember God goes before you and will prepare you for anything in the future.

## **Chapter 4: Grace for the trials**

Grace is sometimes described as the acronym, G.R.A.C.E.: “God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense.” Grace is the free and unmerited favor of God that provides us with salvation through what Jesus Christ accomplished for us on the cross. Jesus died on the cross for our sins, but did not stay dead. Three days later, He rose from the grave conquering death and the devil for all time. God’s grace is undeserved by us and is freely given to us out of God’s great love for us. Because of this we can rely on God’s grace when the trials of life come.

Nelson Mandela is a great example of someone that relied on God’s grace through the trials of life. Nelson Mandela became the president of South Africa but it was through great difficulty that this occurred. Mandela was put into prison because he opposed the South African apartheid system. This system was designed to extend the rule and privileges of the white minority. It ensured that the 14 percent white minority would control the rest of the population. Blacks were excluded from many things

including “whites only” buses, “whites only” hospitals, and “whites only” neighborhoods.

Mandela was in prison for twenty-seven years and surely at times wondered how this was part of God’s plan for him. Mandela and the other prisoners were awakened at 5:30am everyday and had to perform hard labor, crushing rocks into gravel until 4:00pm. God used this time in prison to prepare Mandela for the future. Mandela read widely in prison including Leo Tolstoy and John Steinbeck. He exercised daily in addition to his work with crushing rocks: a hundred fingertip pushups, two hundred sit-ups, and fifty deep knee bends. Mandela became particularly close to one of the prison guards with whom he would discuss Scripture. After twenty-seven years in prison Mandela was released. After his time in prison, Mandela was much more humble, mature, and rational. Many were impressed by his lack of bitterness despite being unfairly imprisoned. Through his experience in prison Mandela developed his art of patience and compromise that would serve him well as president. God’s grace was greater than Mandela’s life of suffering discrimination for the color of his skin. God’s grace was

greater than the trials of twenty-seven years in prison.

**Likewise, God's grace is greater than any trouble you are facing.** It is greater than your needs, because God's grace is all we need to see us through. **God's grace is enough to assure us of His presence, His provision, His power, and His purpose.**

### **Presence**

God's grace assures of His presence with us and that He will never leave us. God created the world and all that is in it. When sin entered the world, He did not give up on humans but loved us so much that He was willing to give His one and only Son to pay for the price of all our sins. This awesome love gives us great confidence that God will be with us our entire lives!

God may not change our difficult circumstances, but He will be with us. He uses the Holy Spirit to encourage, comfort, and console us. Other Christians are also used by God to show that God is with us. God's grace is sufficient for us!

## **Provision**

God's grace is more than enough to meet our needs. Even through difficult situations, He meets our needs because He is our great Helper and Provider. At times He may shield us from further trouble and at all times keeping in mind God's grace is the right course. Life is certainly not always easy, but we know that God will provide what we need.

My family had a springer spaniel/beagle mix, named Lucky, who towards the end of his life became blind and could not hear well. We had a fenced in back yard where Lucky would go outside. At times he became disoriented and had trouble getting back to the house. Sometimes we would try whistling to help Lucky get back to the door and other times we had to go out and lead him back in. Lucky was always very happy when he got back inside.

In our own lives, we all have to go through difficult things. We can trust that God never leaves us. Though at times we may be unsure of how God is working in our lives, we can be assured that He will guide us in different ways. We may not be able to find our way. We may have setbacks

and bump into things but God is watching over us and taking care, just as loving pet owners take care of their pets. **God's grace provides hope, joy, and security for this life and when we safely reach our heavenly home, it will be a time of great rejoicing!**

## **Power**

It is amazing to know that God is all-powerful yet still cares for us. His grace and love provide us a sense of security and identity. We can be confident that God protects and preserves His creation. We are loved, redeemed children of God with a place reserved for us in heaven. Because of this we can confidently go about our day with servant hearts to show God's love to others.

God's grace not only assures us of our place in heaven, but also provides strength for our time on earth. God's favor rests on us. He is there for us. **When we have no strength to go on, God has more than enough.** We need to continually understand that we need God. What we lack in our weaknesses God will provide by His grace. Because of this we can think positive thoughts about our lives and ourselves. The following are common fearful thoughts we

might think and Biblical responses to shift our focus on God's grace and love:

You say, "I'm too tired."---God says, "I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28-30)

You say, "It's impossible."--- God says, "All things are possible." (Luke 18:27)

You say, "Nobody really loves me."---God says, "I love you." (John 3:16)

You say, "I can't go on."---God says, "My grace is sufficient." (2 Corinthians 12:9)

You say, "I'm not able."---God says, "I am able." (2 Corinthians 9:8)

You say, "I can't forgive myself."---God says, "I forgive you." (1 John 1:9)

You say, "I can't manage."---God says, "I will supply all your needs." (Philippians 4:19)

You say, "I'm afraid."---God says, "I have not given you a spirit of fear." (2 Timothy 1:7)

You say, "I'm not smart enough."---God says, "I give you wisdom." (1 Corinthians 1:30)

You say, "I feel alone."---God says, "I will never leave you or forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5)

**You say, “I can’t figure things out.”---God says, “I will direct  
your steps.” (Proverbs 3:5-6)**

**You say, “I’m always worried.”---God says, “Cast all your cares  
on me.” (1 Peter 5:7).**

## **Purpose**

In the midst of trials, we can know that God is good. His actions are purposeful and good even when we cannot seem to see a silver lining we can rely on God’s grace to see us through. Author, Jerry Bridges, in his book, *Transforming Grace: Living Confidently in God’s Unfailing Love*, states it well:

“God never allows pain without a purpose in the lives of His children. He never allows Satan, nor circumstances, nor any ill-intending person to afflict us unless He uses that affliction for our good. God never wastes pain. He always causes it to work together for our ultimate good, the good of conforming us more to the likeness of His Son (See Romans 8:28-29).”<sup>2</sup>

All of us would rather not have to endure difficulties in life, but in times of strife we should always look for the good. If someone saw one random page of Handel’s masterpiece, the

Messiah, they might think it is no good. But when you listen to or look at all 200 pages it is a beautiful composition. In our own lives we can focus on one or two bad things and say it makes no sense. However, we can trust that God has a plan and that He can work good out of any bad situation. At some point we might be able to help others with similar trials. Through difficulties our character and faith can be strengthened.

We can rest in God's grace everyday for we receive strength to endure trials by His grace. Your worst days are never so bad that you are beyond the reach of His grace. And your best days are never so good that you are beyond the need of God's grace. Trust in God at all moments of life. His grace is real and He has a wonderful purpose and plan for your life.

## Chapter 5: Help from above

God provides for us by helping us; whether it is interceding himself or using others to help us. In times of struggles, we often have more than we can handle on our own. It is comforting to know that God will be with us. Psalm 46:1 states, *God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.*

Jesus Himself went through life on earth and knows what we are going through. We can freely and openly ask God for help. *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.*

Hebrews 4:15-16. In response to this we know then that God is our helper and we need not be afraid.

Help from God can come in many different forms. In one of my other books, *The World's Greatest Communicator*, I describe all of the varied ways that God communicates to us. In these different ways God can provide help in our lives including through His Word, prayer, other believers, and

the Holy Spirit. **In this chapter I focus on how God helps us, how He uses other people to help us, and how He helps us through His Word.**

### **Help from God**

At all moments of life we can acknowledge and give thanks to God. Any good thing is from God (James 1:17), so in times of joy or achievements we can give all glory to God. In times of hardship we need not be discouraged, because God is there to help us. Often through our times of weakness we become even more aware of the strength and power of God and how much He cares for us.

Pat Summitt, head coach of the University of Tennessee Lady Vols basketball team from 1974 to 2012, has the most wins in college basketball history with a whopping 1,098 wins. She never had a losing season. Pat knew her limitations and picked her assistant coach early on in part because she had patience and Pat did not, and she relied on God for strength throughout her life. In 2016 she sadly passed away from Alzheimer's disease.

11 months after her diagnosis with Alzheimer's, coach Summitt was interviewed and conveyed how God has been her rock throughout her life.

"Sometimes I wish God hadn't given me so many issues," Summitt stated.

She was asked, "What kind of issues."

"Personal issues."

The interviewer further probed, "Can you tell me about them?"

"I guess they made me who I am. I guess they made me better. One thing I've learned."

"What?"

"How powerful God is."<sup>2</sup>

**Through any difficulty we can trust and rely on God. Our faith can be unwavering because God will help us. Either He will remove the strife or give us unfailing strength to endure it.**

**Help from God through others**

God wants Christians to be a community and can use other Christians to help us. One of the churches that I have attended had a group where people would list their talents

that they would be willing to share with other church members for free. Members could then request help for different things and be matched with willing volunteers. For example, someone who was a mechanic or electrician would be willing to do work for free for someone in need. One time I volunteered to do yard work for an elderly woman. She was thankful and encouraged by the help.

When Christians work together in a community, more people can be strengthened and God can be glorified through the work that can be done. There is definitely strength in numbers as well when we stay unified as a body of Christ. For example, two horses can pull about 9,000 pounds together. How many pounds do you think four horses could pull? It seems reasonable to go with 18,000 pounds but that is wrong. Four horses working together can actually pull over 30,000 pounds. When we work together, God can use in many varied ways to support and strengthen each other so that the love of God can shine through and impact the most people.

There is a poem by Charles Royden that speaks to how Christians are meant to be a community and to serve others:

You cannot pray the Lord's Prayer, and even once say "I."

You cannot pray the Lord's Prayer, and even once say "my."

Nor can you pray the Lord's Prayer and not pray for  
another.

For to ask for "our" daily bread, you included your sister  
and brother!

All God's children are included in each and every plea.

From the beginning to the end of it, it does not once say  
"me."<sup>3</sup>

The model was set by Jesus and the Lord's prayer is a good example for us to follow. Jesus' time on earth was solely focused on others so that God, the Father, could be glorified. He wants us to gladly and willingly help others in times of need.

Isaiah 58:10 was a focus verse for a mission's trip that I went on to the Philippines: *and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will*

*become like the noontday.* “Spending ourselves” can include time, talents, gifts, and building relationships. When we work to provide aid and fellowship to others, then God’s love shines bright. It is not individuals that do this but it is all from God.

### **Help from God through our lives focused on God’s Word**

God’s Word is powerful and transforming. When we spend time reading, discussing, and meditating on the Bible, God can work in our lives to help us. Hebrews 4:12 describes this, *For the word of God is alive and active.* In Acts 20:32 this is described further. *Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.* God’s Word contains the truth and grace that tells us of God’s undeserved favor for us so that we can persevere to life everlasting in heaven.

When we commit to spending time in God’s Word daily and taking it with us, then it changes how we approach each day. The movie, “Courageous”, tells the story of a group of police officers and how they decide to become the best Christian fathers that they can. The police officers

draft a resolution message that they agree to sign. The text is below.

**The Resolution Message:** *"I do solemnly resolve before God to take full responsibility for myself, my wife, and my children. I WILL love them, protect them, serve them, and teach them the Word of God as the spiritual leader of my home. I WILL be faithful to my wife, to love and honor her, and be willing to lay down my life for her as Jesus Christ did for me. I WILL bless my children and teach them to love God with all of their hearts, all of their minds, and all of their strength. I WILL train them to honor authority and live responsibly. I WILL confront evil, pursue justice, and love mercy. I WILL pray for others and treat them with kindness, respect, and compassion. I WILL work diligently to provide for the needs of my family. I WILL forgive those who have wronged me and reconcile with those I have wronged. I WILL learn from my mistakes, repent of my sins, and walk with integrity as a man answerable to God. I WILL seek to honor God, be faithful to His church, obey His Word, and do His will. I WILL courageously work with the strength God provides to fulfill this resolution for the rest of my life and for His glory. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. ---Joshua 24:15"*

The Word of God is powerful and God definitely provides help through it. Our desires will become more inline with God's plan for our lives when we spend time in the Bible. When we surrender our lives to Christ, great things will happen. We will have a 24-7 line of communication and help-line for all of life's problems. God has promised to provide help for us. Our lives may still have problems, but we will better equipped to handle all that life

brings. We can confidently proclaim, with God's help, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

## Chapter 6: Unfailing sympathy

God provides for us with unfailing sympathy in times of grief. He understands what we are going through and pours out compassion, concern, empathy, and care. God's peace can pass all understanding when we have too much sorrow to bear. John 14:27 states, *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.* At times it seems like the world can be a cruel place, but we need to stay focused on God's love and grace for our lives. Christians can support each other to show that God is at work all over the world. Through God's love shown by other Christians we can get a small glimpse at the compassion and sympathy of God. The following story, that I saw on a social media site, is a good example of this that. It is told from the perspective of a taxi driver and the passenger that changed his day:

I arrived at the address and honked the horn. After waiting a few minutes I honked again. Since this was going to be my last ride of my shift I thought about just driving away, but instead I put the car in park and walked up to the

door and knocked.

“Just a minute,” answered a frail, elderly voice.

I could hear something being dragged across the floor. After a long pause, the door opened. A small woman in her 90's stood before me. She was wearing a print dress and a pillbox hat with a veil pinned on it, like somebody out of a 1940's movie. By her side was a small nylon suitcase. The apartment looked as if no one had lived in it for years. All the furniture was covered with sheets. There were no clocks on the walls, no knickknacks or utensils on the counters. In the corner was a cardboard box filled with photos and glassware.

“Would you carry my bag out to the car?” she said.

I took the suitcase to the cab, then returned to assist the woman. She took my arm and we walked slowly toward the curb. She kept thanking me for my kindness.

“It's nothing,” I told her. “I just try to treat my passengers the way I would want my mother to be treated.”

“Oh, you're such a good boy,” she said.

When we got in the cab, she gave me an address and then asked, “Could you drive through downtown?”

"It's not the shortest way," I answered quickly.

"Oh, I don't mind," she said. "I'm in no hurry. I'm on my way to a hospice."

I looked in the rear-view mirror. Her eyes were glistening.

"I don't have any family left," she continued in a soft voice. "The doctor says I don't have very long."

I quietly reached over and shut off the meter. "What route would you like me to take?" I asked.

Over the next hours, we drove through the city. She showed me the building where she had once worked as an elevator operator. We drove through the neighborhood where she and her husband had lived when they were newlyweds. She had me pull up in front of a furniture warehouse that had once been a ballroom where she had gone dancing as a girl. Sometimes she'd ask me to slow in front of a particular building or corner and would sit staring into the darkness, saying nothing.

As the first hint of sun was creasing the horizon, she suddenly said, "I'm tired. Let's go now."

We drove in silence to the address she had given me.

It was a low building, like a small convalescent home, with a driveway that passed under a portico. Two orderlies came out to the cab as soon as we pulled up. They were solicitous and intent, watching her every move. They must have been expecting her. I opened the trunk and took the small suitcase to the door. The woman was already seated in a wheelchair.

“How much do I owe you?” She asked, reaching into her purse.

“Nothing,” I said

“You have to make a living,” she answered.

“There are other passengers,” I responded. Almost without thinking, I bent and gave her a hug. She held onto me tightly.

“You gave an old woman a little moment of joy,” she said. “Thank you.”

I squeezed her hand, and then walked into the dim morning light.

I didn't pick up any more passengers that shift. I drove aimlessly lost in thought. For the rest of that day, I could hardly talk. What if that woman had gotten an angry driver, or one who was impatient to end his shift? What if I

had refused to take the run, or had honked once, then driven away?

On a quick review, I don't think that I have done anything more important in my life. We're conditioned to think that our lives revolve around great moments. But great moments often catch us unaware-beautifully wrapped in what others may consider a small one.

What an amazing story of how one person can touch the life of another with a simple act! When we take the time to see things from another's perspective and empathize with them it can make a big difference!

Scientist and inventor George Washington Carver once stated, "How far you go in life depends on you being tender with the young, compassionated with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant of the weak and the strong. Because someday you will have been all of these."

Just as the taxi driver would not take money for his kindness so we know we do not show God's love to others because we are trying to benefit ourselves. We love others because God has showered His love on us! Similarly, since

we have received comfort and sympathy from God we are equipped to pass this along. *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.*

My Dad has been on hospice for several months with Parkinson's disease. It is a terrible disease that causes anxiety, rigidity, and loss of movement. He is still in good spirits most of the time, however as He relies on His faith in God as His rock through the strife. He also has many faithful visitors from church, family, and the hospice caregivers who provide encouragement. We continually pray for healing from the disease for my Dad, but are confident that, as God wills, he will be healed in this life or in the next!

God continually provides comfort and strength to my Dad and my Dad relies on the promises of God that nothing shall separate him from the love of Christ. *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors*

*through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8: 35, 37-39.*

No matter what difficulties, losses, or hardships we experience---we can lean on the comfort, sympathy, and strength from Jesus to see us through. Jesus is always with us and we can wholeheartedly trust in His promise of the free gift of eternal life in heaven. Even in sadness we can have great joy and hope! "I know that my Redeemer lives! What comfort this sweet sentence gives!"

## Chapter 7: Undying love

Of all the things that God provides us in our lives, His undying love and grace are the most important. God's love is unfailing, unending, unequalled, and indescribable. God loved us so much that He sent His one and only Son to earth to die on a cross to pay for our sins. Jesus gloriously rose again and defeated the devil and death giving us the free gift of eternal life. We can trust in God's love because it is pure and self-sacrificing. God has everything, but still loves us so much that He wants us to be with Him in heaven forever. Corrie ten Boom stated it this way. "The perfect motive is that God so loved the world. The perfect gift is that he gave his only Son. The only requirement is to believe in him. The reward of faith is that you shall have everlasting life."

Knowing that the all-powerful God loves us is a wonderful feeling! As a result of this we have what we need for our life on earth until our work here is done. We can share God's love with others because we have been richly blessed! We can praise His name in good times and bad! **God's love can lead to many amazing things in our life.**

**The following are just three: joy, positive outlook, and eternal life.**

## **Joy**

God's love for us brings inner joy at all times even as we experience a range of sad emotions during our life.

Psalm 30:5 states, *For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime! Weeping may last through the night, but joy comes in the morning.* Philippians 4:4 states how we should approach our lives confident in God's love. *Always be full of joy in the Lord. I will say it again — Rejoice!*

Love makes a huge difference in our lives. When people see the impact of love, they want to experience this as well. I volunteered for Compassion International at a Christian concert not too long ago. Compassion is an organization dedicated to releasing children from poverty in Jesus' name. This is done through sponsoring a child who needs help.

A speaker from Compassion International told about a life-changing experience he had that led him to work for Compassion. He was an orphan and adopted when he was young. He was grateful for loving parents that helped him

grow into a Christian man. As an adult he got the chance to go to El Salvador on a mission trip. There he learned about Compassion by getting to visit a local Compassion center. He was asked with others in the group from his church to deliver some clothes and food to a family who had two children who were being sponsored. When they arrived they saw a metal hut and that there were actually four children there. One of the little girls kept excitedly telling him something in Spanish. He did not know what she was saying, but was able to get someone to translate. She kept saying, "Some people in America love one of my brothers and sisters and someday someone will love me too." That very day, he became her sponsor and started to work for Compassion International.

God's love makes all the difference. When we share it with others they will be filled with joy because God's love and His Word are powerful. Our outlook on life changes when God's love enters our life. It is J.O.Y.-- Jesus, Others, and You.

## Positive outlook

It is interesting that the 1828 Webster dictionary did not contain the word, “pessimist,” but it did contain the word, “optimist.” Christians can definitely be optimistic that their future will turn out to be wonderful and that their time on earth is blessed because of the knowledge of saving faith through Christ Jesus our Lord.

We do not have to be discouraged in life or look down on ourselves. God has made us with a purpose and made us specially to do work for Him. “The Peanuts Movie” features Charlie Brown who struggles with confidence and has a negative outlook on life and about himself. He wants to talk to the red-haired girl at school but can’t seem to work up the courage to do it. At the end of the movie Charlie Brown finally gets the courage to talk to her and is surprised by how she views Charlie. Charlie fears that he is “an insecure wishy-washy failure.” The red-haired girl responds, “That’s not who you are at all. I liked the compassion you showed for your sister at the talent show. The honesty you had at the assembly. And at the dance, you were brave and funny. And what you did for me, doing the book report for

me while I was away. So when I look at you, I don't see a failure at all. You have all the qualities that I admire."<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes we can look down on ourselves and only see our shortcomings. We need to view ourselves in light of God's love. Because of God's love we are forgiven children of God and we are capable of great things that can give glory to God! *For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.* Philippians 4:13. When we start to have negative thoughts, God comes to us and reassures us through His Word, prayer, or other Christians that "I don't see a failure at all. You have all the qualities that I admire."

A Christian's positive outlook on life is not based on wishful thinking, his or her own strength and abilities, financial security, health, or any other worldly standards of success. It is based on God's love that provides great hope. Psalm 147:11 extols this. *The Lord's delights is in those who fear him, those who put their hope in his unfailing love.*

As Christians we can always have a positive outlook of hope as author and former pastor, John Maxwell, describes:

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.<sup>2</sup>

## **Eternal Life**

The most important thing that God provides for us is eternal life in heaven. This alone makes God the world's greatest provider. Anyone that believes in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior will be granted the free gift of heaven. What a wonderful promise based on God's love for humanity!

Billy Graham has said, "My home is in Heaven. I'm just traveling through this world." His life is a fine example of how we respond to God's love and share this love with others. Graham knows all glory belongs to God. A few years ago Graham gathered his pastor and Michael W. Smith to his house to plan his funeral. His one request for his funeral

was that his name not be mentioned. The only name he wanted to be mentioned was the name of Jesus Christ. Graham has preached to over a billion people and filled stadiums on every continent. He gives God the glory for the lives he has touched with the Word of God.

Our time on earth will seem like a short time when we get to heaven. Praising God for eternity in heaven will be an amazing experience. Paul, the apostle, writes in Romans 8:18. *I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.* The Bible tells us that in heaven we have indescribable joy and perfect peace, no pain or sadness, no sickness and no more dying.

Former Senate chaplain, Dr. Richard Halverson, took great care in crafting his benediction that he used at the end of every service. It is a great reminder of how to approach our lives on earth confident in the love and grace of Christ and that our place in heaven is secure.

You go nowhere by accident.  
Wherever you go, God is sending you.  
Wherever you are, God has put you there;  
He has a purpose in your being there.  
Christ who indwells you has something  
He wants to do through you where you are.  
Believe this and go in His grace and love and power.<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Halverson died on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1995. At his funeral, he himself gave the benediction via a recording. It is a fitting to remember that Christians who die in the Lord are not gone forever. We will see them again in heaven. God is the world's greatest provider. He takes care of us on earth and sustains us to life everlasting in heaven. Believe this and go in His grace and love and power!



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