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Words to Grow By

July 2021

Rejoice in the Lord Always!

No matter what it looks like right now,
No matter what it sounds like right now,
And no matter what it feels like right now...

Rejoice!

Many have not understood,
But there is a power in **Joy** that causes **any** negative situation
To turn around for your **good**.

That is why the Bible instructs us to

Rejoice always,

Pray continually,

Give thanks in ALL circumstances;

For this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Women Empowering Women

You Are Somebody!

God looked...and then He created.

He created YOU!

And God looked at you and said, "This is good".

God wants you to appreciate who He made you to be and to develop what
He gave you.

The way you appreciate yourself impacts everything you do.

YOU are a unique blend of talents and giftings and character;

And YOU have a unique destiny upon this earth.

Believe that because...

You Are Somebody! *Genesis 1:27*

We pray that God, who gives hope, will bless you with complete happiness
and peace and that you see the beauty in every new day. *Romans 15:13*

Inside This Issue

Words to Grow By... 1

Women Empowering Women... 1

12 Disciples – Bartholomew... 2-3

A Kind of Love and Forgiveness... 4-5

The Conclusion... 6-7

Trust in the Lord... 8

Tim's Story... 9

Fighting Temptation... 10

What Love... 11

Intellectual Energy... 12

Each Day is a Gift... 12

Word Search... 13

Just for Laughs... 14

Closing Words ... 15

What must I do to be saved?... 16

Write Us... 16





We have been looking at the lives of Jesus' disciples. We began with Peter, then James, John, Andrew, Judas Iscariot, Philip, and Bartholomew. This month we will be looking at Matthew.

Aside from a handful of mentions in the gospels, Matthew is a surprisingly obscure New Testament person. And despite the fact that the church has considered him the author of the Gospel of Matthew, little else was ever recorded about him.

Matthew's Gospel, along with the Gospels of Luke, John, and Mark, are inspired by the Lord God and as a result are an unerring and infallible history of the life of Jesus Christ. Matthew's Gospel is the longest of the four, and several scholars believe it was the first to be written.

Matthew is regarded as one of the "Four Evangelists." This is a title also given to Mark, Luke, and John, the traditional authors of the four gospels. No other Gospel contains as much of Jesus' teachings. Matthew 5-7 is known as the Sermon on the Mount. Chapter 10 includes Jesus' instructions to His disciples as they were sent out to "the uttermost parts of the world." Chapter 13 tells the parables of the kingdom. Chapters 24-25 are the Olivet Discourse.

What do we really know about our brother Matthew? Matthew, Mark, and Luke have parallel accounts about Jesus calling a tax collector to become a disciple. Amazingly, the Book of Matthew calls this man Matthew, and Mark and Luke call him Levi, the son of Alphaeus. The books so carefully parallel each other that it's almost impossible not to imagine they aren't speaking about the same man. They also match both in terms of language and chronological placement. But there are several possible explanations for this difference. Some scholars claim that Levi was this man's tribal name. Which means he belonged to the tribe of Levi and that Matthew was a more personal name. While some others propose this man was originally named Levi, but that Jesus called him Matthew. Like when Simon, who Jesus renamed Peter. And it's also possible that it's simply a matter of him having the Greek name Matthew and the Hebrew name Levi.

Before Matthew became a disciple of Christ, he was a tax collector or what was called a "publican" in the town of Capernaum. Tax collectors were extremely hated by their Jewish culture and society because they worked for the Roman government and made themselves rich by collecting taxes from their own people. Tax collectors often dishonestly collected excessive amounts and lined their own pockets. It is probable that Matthew was "livin' large", since Luke says that Levi hosted "a great banquet to honor Jesus" with many of Levi's fellow tax collectors and other guests."

When Jesus was at the banquet at Matthew's house, with many other tax collectors and sinners present, the Pharisees asked the disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus' comeback is one of the strongest descriptions of God's heart and His gospel to man, "When Jesus heard that, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." Matthew 9:12-13.

The 12 Disciples of Jesus Christ – Bartholomew Continued

by Alywin Mitchell, GMI Writer

When Matthew was called by Jesus, Matthew immediately left his tax collection booth and followed the Lord (Matthew 9:9). He left behind his riches, his job, his security and his comforts. He left his old life for a new life with Jesus Christ.

As a tax collector, Matthew would've most likely been good with money. I would think he'd be perfect to be put in charge of the money bag. But given the reputation of tax collectors back then, that might have been a bad move, which might be why the disciples or Jesus Himself gave the job to Judas Iscariot. But we know now Judas not only stole from the money bag, but he ultimately betrayed Jesus.

In the first few centuries of the church, a myriad of legends sprang up about the apostles. Many of these myths and stories were *pseudepigrapha*, meaning they deceitfully claimed to be written by a famous Christian leader. Some of these stories appeared to be at best, loosely based on reality, giving suspicious and sometimes fraudulent details about how people died and where they traveled.

One of these stories or myths if you will, is found in the book *Acts and Martyrdom of St. Matthew (by anonymous)*, Jesus appears as a young boy to Matthew and tells him to go to the city of Myrna, which is inhabited by "man eaters." When he gets there, Matthew performs miracles and casts out demons. The king repeatedly tries kill him, he eventually had him staked to the ground and set on fire. Instead of killing Matthew, the fire burns down the king's idols and "burned up many of his soldiers." After the king sees this final miracle, the king and his kingdom of man-eaters acknowledge the one true God and put their faith in Jesus. But very little credibility is given to this story.

It's hard to say exactly how Matthew died. There are several conflicting versions about his death. The earliest records say he carried out his ministry in Ethiopia, Persia, Macedonia, and Syria. Heracleon, a commentator on the New Testament, says that Matthew died naturally.

Despite Matthew's reputation among his people, Jesus gave Matthew a prominent position in reaching the world with the gospel. God can use anyone to help Him in His work if they are only willing. We should not feel unqualified because of our appearance, lack of or abundance of education, or our past. Jesus looks for an authentic commitment. The highest calling in our life is serving God, no matter what the world says. Matthew knew that money, prominence, and personal ability can't compare with being a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Do you know the actor Hugh Jackman? He plays Wolverine in the X-Men movies and has been in many other films like The Greatest Showman.



In 2012, he played the main character in the movie Les Miserables, French for “The Miserable Ones.” It is based on the famous book by Victor Hugo, considered one of the best novels in the history of the world. It tells the story of an ex-convict named John (Jean) who has just served a 19-year prison sentence.

When he gets out of prison, John finds that his criminal record prevents him from getting employed and earning money to live. A church leader finds him on the streets, and invites him to come stay in the church for food, wine and a night of restful sleep in a bed.

But John cannot break the habit of poverty-driven theft that landed him in prison. He gets up in the middle of the night, steals the church’s silverware (not the Walmart kind - real, valuable silver), and runs away into the night.

The next morning, the police find John with the bag of stolen silverware and drag him back to the church leader. They proudly declare that they found the thief and mock John, saying that he told the police that the church leader freely gave him the silverware.

“That is correct,” the church leader says, not missing a beat. “But John, you left so early that you forgot these silver candlestick holders too.” The candlestick holders are bigger and more valuable than the silverware, and he puts them into John’s bag. While the police and John are both confused, the police slowly take off his handcuffs and let him go free. The police leave.

Why would someone let another person steal from them? Why would he, in fact, give the thief even more valuable goods to take?

With great compassion in his eyes, the church leader says what has just happened is part of a larger plan. John must use the money from selling the silver to become an honest man. With this act, he says he has ransomed John from fear, hatred, and darkness, and now gives him back to God.

This scene is the turning point of the entire movie. John goes on to do many good things in his life, becoming a business owner who creates jobs, a mayor, an adoptive father, and someone who saves other people’s lives.

Another Story of Extravagant Forgiveness

In many ways, John’s story is based on another story found in the Bible. Have you heard the story of the Prodigal Son? Prodigal is not a word we use these days, but it means someone who spends money recklessly, lavishly, and wastefully.

Jesus told this story in Luke 15. It's about a wealthy man who had two sons. Now any son might expect that, once their rich father passed away, half of his wealth would be left to each son. That was probably the plan.

But the younger son felt entitled and didn't want to wait. He asked his father for his inheritance immediately and then left for another country. He took half of his dad's money and just left.

He didn't have a plan for the money or for his life. He just wanted to spend the money on whatever he wanted. It didn't take long until the entire inheritance was gone. All the money was wasted and he was completely broke. He had to work on a farm, and he was so broke and hungry that he would have given anything to eat the food the pigs were eating.

He finally came to his senses, realizing he could go home. He planned in his head exactly how he would apologize to his father. He was so embarrassed and regretful, that he planned to say, "I don't deserve to be called your son. Take me on as a worker." He rehearsed the conversation again and again on the long journey back, full of sadness and remorse.

But things didn't unfold the way he expected. It was almost as if his father had been sitting on the porch just waiting for him to come back, even though it had been years. His father spotted him from a mile away, flew down the porch and ran all the way to him. He hugged and kissed his son, and didn't even let him give his planned speech.

Instead, he told his workers to throw a huge party to welcome his son home. He got him new clothes and sandals, put the family ring on his finger, and the entire farm crew began cooking an enormous feast of the best foods. He wanted to celebrate because his son had been given up for dead, but was now alive. He was given up for lost, but was now found.

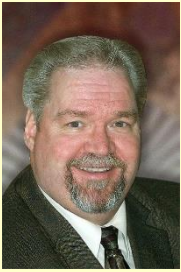
The Real Story

Both of these stories are fictitious. Neither really happened. But both stories are meant to explain something that is as real as the ground we walk upon.

These stories tell us not only that there is a living God, but that He is a good father. He is Love - not just a little loving, but the very source and definition of all love. And He is not just the God of second chances. He's also the God of 3rd, 4th, and 1,000th chances. Our creator never stops loving us, cheering for us, waiting for us, and searching for us to simply come home and be His incredibly loved child. Even when we have stolen, sinned and messed everything up, He never stops looking at us the way a new parent looks at a precious child in their arms.

Grace like this makes absolutely no sense. It's not rational or logical. It's not the way people typically behave when they are wronged or hurt. But then again, God isn't a person. His thoughts and ways are nothing like human thoughts and ways.

Get ready to experience a type of love and forgiveness that makes no earthly sense, whether for the first time today or for the 1,000th time. This is because it's supernatural, beyond anything we can imagine, and the Giver of this love and forgiveness is even today on the edge of His seat, waiting to welcome His sons and daughters home.



Matthew 7:24–29 (NKJV) — 24 “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: **25** and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. **26** “But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: **27** and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.” **28** And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, **29** for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Over 2,000 years ago a world event took place that would indeed change, not only the course of history, but the entire course of mankind! We usually reserve the right to remember this event and somewhat celebrate it during the Christmas season. However, God intended it, not as a season or special day, but a transforming way of life! God’s Word makes a powerful, illuminating summation of this event in the Gospel of John, the third chapter and the 16th verse:

John 3:16 (NKJV) — 16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

According to God’s Word, the reason that God “presented” or “bestowed” His Son to this present age, was out of His love! This summation is further clarified in John 3:17; God’s purpose was not to condemn the world through Jesus Christ, but the “world” through Christ might be “saved”! Throughout God’s Word, this Divine message is revealed and repeated; Believe God or not believe, accept God or reject, choose God, or choose the world, choose God’s Light or remain in the darkness, choose Life in Christ or remain condemned to die in this present age! Imagine, if you would, the prisoner who has received a death sentence, standing before the ultimate judge of the highest court, receiving an offer of commuting his death sentence, pardon for his crimes, release from prison and placed in favorable status in the courts eyes as if the crimes committed were never done! Imagine if you would this prisoner rejecting all those favorable terms with extreme prejudice and happily going back to death row, screaming insults to the judge as he is led out of the courtroom. It is your choice!

Deuteronomy 30:15–20 (NKJV) — 15 “See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, **16** in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess. **17** But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them, **18** I announce to you today that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to go in and possess. **19** I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; **20** that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.”

In Mt 7:24-29 Christ makes a summation of what is known as the “Sermon on the Mount” beginning in Mt 5 concerning 2 builders. One is “wise”, and one is “foolish”. Their designation is because of what they build upon, the foundation of all they build! According to Christ, we either build upon shifting, unstable sand, or we build on a solid foundation such as rock or stone. Our foundation is determined by either hearing and **doing** the “sayings” of Christ or **choosing** not to! Please note that life tests what we build upon regardless. **“Man, if I just give my life to Christ and follow Him, I will be protected and delivered from every bad thing that could come my way!”** All our lives differ. I have read inspiring stories of individuals who started with all the odds stacked against them and rose from all the difficulties of their life to be the envy of many. I have also read those stories of individuals that seemed to be born into every advantage, the so-called “silver spoon” and end their life in depression and suicide, despite all their advantages! Sadly, this has happened even to those professing a faith in Christ!

Jesus Christ tells us the truth! The rain is going to descend, the floods are going to come, the wind blows, and the storms of life will “beat” at our lives regardless. Your storm may seem more severe than someone else. You may think you have more reason to complain than someone else. I can think of no greater contrast than Christ’s story of the “Rich man and Lazarus” in Luke 16: 19-31. The rich man has a great life while Lazarus suffers his whole life. Lazarus is poor, a beggar, sickly, and receives no comfort in his whole existence on this earth, while the rich man “fares sumptuously” every day. Hard to see the storm in the rich man’s life, easy to see the storm in the life of Lazarus. Yet Lazarus possesses something the rich man never has. It is only revealed upon both of their deaths in this present age. As Lazarus dies in this life, he is carried by angels “Abraham’s bosom” (symbolic of paradise to the Jews) and is comforted, while the rich man is buried and awakens in hell and torment. The roles of both are reversed in the afterlife for all eternity. It is fixed and an unchangeable affair!

In Christ’s story, there is never an explanation why Lazarus, obviously a believer in God, never seems to get a break in this present life, or why the rich man, obviously not a believer, continues to flourish. God’s “sorting out” is often performed after this present life. Christ is illustrating the extreme. I can tell you that my life has had its ups and downs. The “downs” have usually been of my own making, by following my own path or “what seemed good in my own eyes!”. I can testify to this, that God has always been good and even when I have botched it all up, God has been there to pull me out of the fire of my own creation. He did not have to, and I certainly never was worthy or deserving of God’s attention. I have found throughout my relationship to God, that He is always faithful to His Word and Promise! I have never deserved or earned what I have received from God, either before or after I came to know Him!

Storms in our lives will come. The storm may seem so severe that survival does not seem possible under the present circumstances. Christ’s message is clear. Look at all my “sayings”, not only hear my “sayings” but do them, build upon them, hold onto them with all your strength! Do not lean to your own understanding (**Prov. 3:5**) but trust in God. God has promised an overcoming victory, not to those who just “hear” the Word and Promises of God, but those who act or build their lives upon them. My “house” stands if I have built upon a sure foundation, God’s Word. My house falls if I have built on anything else. My circumstances need not change. My “foundation” changes all my “perspective” and hope! **With Christ in the vessel, I can smile at the storm!** Resting my life upon the teachings of Jesus Christ, I find the everlasting peace and joy of God. Light, direction and peace are found at the feet of Jesus.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.” - Proverbs 3:5.

When we give our thoughts and words over to the Lord, anything is possible. Miracles can happen, walls can crumble no matter how high they have been constructed.



I don't know about you, but even when things are unbelievably good in my life, the tendency is to let past disappointment and doubt enter my mind. Once trust has been broken, it must be earned. Earning trust may seem like an uphill battle when we are fighting it by ourselves. The great thing is, the Lord will give you His trust if we repent and just ask for it. The Lord wants us to have a relationship with Him first. When we have a good relationship with the Lord, successful human relationships, whether family, friends, or new romances, are possible with hard work and perseverance. We all have a perspective based on past experiences that can cloud our judgement or keep us from receiving the gifts the Lord has intended for us. Have faith that the Lord knows what is best for us and how situations will work out.

Our lives on earth haven't been easy. No matter who we are, or what our circumstances, trials are guaranteed to be a part of the journey. We have made choices that got us where we are today, both good and bad. Each day, we have a choice to make. Do we intend on having a good day and adding value to other's day or do we add drama and cause conflict? We have free will to make good choices.

“The Lord is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him.” – Psalm 28:7.

When we want to be helped, we must trust in the Lord with our heart and soul and boldly sing his praise. If any part of the equation is not present, the Lord's gifts will not be given as we are not ready to receive. Recently, I was reminded that independence doesn't always mean we have everything under control. We need to depend on the Lord and the people He puts in our path. When we have faith in the Lord, we can more easily determine a gift from Him when it is given.

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” – Joshua 1:9

Strength and courage are easy when things are going the way we expect. The true test is when our expectations are not met, or someone makes a decision we disagree with. We shouldn't let a fall back or slip up discourage us from moving forward in the light of the Lord. Only the Lord knows what He has planned for us. As a believer and someone with faith, there is confidence in knowing we are loved, valued and worthy of all the good the Lord has for our future. The Lord will never forsake us and will always be with us as long as we have done our part in accepting Him and repenting for our sins. Have a blessed August.

Timothy Warui's Story

I got out of Lansing Correctional Facility minimum security around the middle of June. It sure feels shorter than that. Life is moving a whole lot faster than I thought I had planned for, but without my preparations, I sure would be like a fish out of the water!

This was my fourth time in and out of the penal system. The most remarkable thing that happened to me this time around was that I quit fighting the system. Not just the law system; I believe life is set up on a system and if you go against the flow, you are going to suffer the consequences. But you don't have to keep doing the same thing expecting different results, a wise man termed that as insanity.



I believe I lost my sanity when I lost my family and gave in to criminal and addictive behaviors to seek solace and get back at the 'unfairness' of the system. I wasn't privy to the fact that there is a balance in this universe and nothing goes without accountability. What I thought I had gotten away with, surfaced at the most unexpected times and as they say, pay back is... When I got sentenced, I was so hopeless, I contemplated suicide in the jail cell but I didn't have the courage to do it. When I got to RDU, I got my one and only DR, a smoking one at that, and that's when the realization that if am going to make it out of prison alive, I needed help.

I was sent to Ellsworth and I started attending callouts at their magnificent Spiritual Life Center. I wanted to try God one more time and I rededicated my life to Him. They had volunteers bringing the word, encouragement and hope, worship leaders in the population that you would never imagine, praise teams and an awesome library; the chaplain was very helpful too.

There was this one call-out that they wouldn't let me attend since I wasn't a member. I had to fill in a Form-9 and all that to attend, and so I did. Ms. Smith was my classification officer and she showed up at my door saying that I had been accepted to BIB and that I had to move to Lansing. This was received with very mixed emotions for I had heard nightmare stories about the place but I was on a quest to seek God and not being comfortable in my circumstances.

I got to Lansing January 2019 with a growth mindset. I was hungry for whatever God had to show me. I immersed myself in the curriculum that was offered at BIB, was a member of other numerous self-help groups, started mentoring younger brothers and sharing my testimony with them.

See, we are here as problem solvers. I quit complaining about how unfair life is and started doing something about it. When you start complaining, you become a part of the problem.

This one time, I was studying the book of James and I believe God was questioning me about what I will do with this newfound faith that I keep proclaiming. James says Satan knows that Jesus exists and trembles. I was shown, that with Gods help, we could do great things, even from prison. We started sending money to Kenyan orphanages until Covid19 struck and I had to stop. God of Wonders...I got an email from them saying that there were guys that kept the trend going! I kept strict records and as of my last tally it was over \$1800.

God has put a wonderful support group around me. I believe and know that my "aha moment" or my paradigm shift was when I threw up my hands and gave it all to God. For a while my plans were not producing any fruit, but death, and I wanted to live.

I went to prison a very confused, angry, miserable, and lost prodigal son. I gained invaluable lessons through all the programs that were at my disposal. I learned so much about me and myself. I thought I knew who I was, crazy! Without a definite identity rooted in God, life was and is meaningless. I found a purpose to live for. I had a lot of baggage from unforgiveness, bitterness from my past trauma, addictions and abusive relationships, but when I let God deal with all that, I was free to start serving Him.

I want to encourage everyone behind the bars that it's not where you are that dictates who you are or what you do. We always have a choice to make; we are responsible for self, and can't NO ONE, NO ONE, MAKE YOU DO WHAT YOU DONT WANT TO DO! Also, not being reactive to life but being responsive, being response ABLE; all it takes is a micro second to change the outcome. Being humble, and random acts of kindness, never fail to make God smile.

I plan on finishing parole in a year and want to come back to offer encouragement and hope to my brothers. I love you all and please give God a chance. He is still working in my life and He never stops amazing me at the wonders He is still showing me.

Fighting Temptation While Incarcerated *by Arron Long*

Hello Brothers and Sisters,

I have been contemplating on what to write about when it comes to being surrounded by temptation while incarcerated. Truth be told, it is a lot easier to get certain narcotics when they are in close vicinity.

I was still a lost sheep when I was incarcerated in prison so I indulged in quite a bit of activities and even though I walked into prison addicted to one substance, I came out addicted to three. That is quite a problem when you are in a correctional facility without any correction in it.

However, though there are links that are broken in the chain known as the system, there is also a calling for those of you who have decided that your walk is now with Christ. This is an ultimate test of where you are on your walk with the Lord. Since narcotics will never leave the cell blocks or the yards of any prison camp, it is up to you to keep yourself fundamentally strong with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as your foundation.

Luckily, I have experience in fighting the devil, in temptation form, while being incarcerated. Mine was when I was in Wyandotte County Detention Center. I was in the inmate worker pod and there were plenty of opportunities, after I was saved, where I was offered drugs that I did on the street for free, inside of jail. This time, I was so strong in my walk, that God gave me three weapons to fight off all temptation. Here are the weapons; He gave me the Holy Spirit when I surrendered myself to Him. Getting saved isn't just saying a prayer, it's making the ultimate decision to always put God at the front of everything in your life while forgiving and letting go of your former life. He gave all of us the Word. John begins his book of the Gospel by saying that God gave us the Word, and the Word was God. I will put multiple scriptures in here to help you stand firm in your walk with Christ. The last weapon is prayer. Prayer should be a constant action done. It is your communication source directly to God and it can also be used in fellowship. Having fellowship with men and or women is also important. You need to surround yourself with good people who are on the same mission as you. Having these will make you stand strong against all temptation and that is how you will stay clean. You will be engulfed and lit by a fire, the Holy Spirit, which no narcotic can destroy. If your foundation is truly with God, then it is so strong that nothing of this world can break you. God Bless and keep praying! Blessings to all.

If You Have
Jesus; You Do
Not Need
Drugs!



1 CORINTHIANS 15:58

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

What Love by Annie

We hear a lot of talk about love. Each of us has different ideas of what love means.

For some the purest love we have ever known was the love of a mother. For others, it might be the love of a significant other, or a sibling, or a friend.

There are many different kinds of love. We don't love our parents the same way we love a friend. And we don't love a friend in the same way we love a boyfriend or girlfriend or husband or wife.

Each kind of love adds a beautiful facet to our life.

Maybe you have never felt truly loved at all. It could be that the only love you've experienced has been the manipulative kind of love. Or conditional love – people who will only love you for what you can give them in return.

What about you? Do you have a hard time loving others?

If you do, it could be for many different reasons. Others could have let you down so many times that you don't trust them. Or maybe your heart has been broken too many times to want to try to love again.

One Person who will never let you down is the Lord. He loves you with an unconditional, everlasting love. The Bible says God is love.

His love doesn't depend on what you have done or what you have not done. He does not love you because of either of these. He loves you because of who He is.

Life experiences might have made you think that just could not be.

Maybe the hardest person for you to love is you. Some of the things you've done in the past make you think there is no way for anyone to love you, much less God.

When you accept the Lord as your Savior, the Bible says you become a new person. Old things have passed away and all things have become new.

But you don't know what I have done.

That's true - I don't. But God does and it does not matter to Him.

The Bible says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9 NKJV)."

So you see, it does not matter what you might have done.

Now that you know God loves you and that He forgives you, you can love yourself. And when you love yourself – in a balanced, healthy way – you can love others.

Please know and rest assured that you are loved today. The Lord loves you with an unconditional, everlasting love.

**AND WHEN YOU LOVE
YOURSELF – IN A
BALANCED, HEALTHY
WAY – YOU CAN LOVE
OTHERS.**

Intellectual Energy by Curtis Wooten

I heard a story about a man who complained about his life. Then was told to speak to those less fortunate than himself. Only to realize that what he was complaining about in the beginning, wasn't worth complaining about in the first place. A man should not compare himself to another, because we are all unique in our own way. I do understand that not comparing is a difficult task, because life is full of competitions. What I have witnessed is that encouragement speaks volumes. **Proverbs 27:17 "As iron sharpens iron, so man sharpens man."**

A personal experience from El Dorado, RDU. In 2016, a man that was a few cells away from me knew about my battles with addiction and asked me to read **Proverbs 31:4-5 " It is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: 5. Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgement of any of the afflicted."** He emphasized that the mind should be clean and clear of drugs and/or alcohol to perform at its best. Therefore I encourage you, to encourage others! Because doubt, despair, and destruction are everywhere. We need our best efforts to inspire, excite, or entice others to shine their lights bright!!

Each Day is a Gift by Anthony Butler

Each day is a gift. Let that sink in.

I know we hear this often. However, pause for a minute and let that sink in.

EACH...DAY...IS...A...GIFT! We get a limited amount of days. I have learned to value each day like never before.

Life has a way of waking some of us up and jolting us into an urgent mode that changes how we move daily. What can I do today? I will forgive someone. I will help someone. I can stop being a bully. I will speak up for myself more. I will write that letter to someone that I have been putting off for years. I will stop condemning myself and start to compliment myself more. I will quit being petty. I will pray and ask God to reveal to me the pure power of obeying him day by day!

Each day is a gift. Let that sink in. I know we hear this often. However, pause for a minute and let that sink in. EACH...DAY...IS...A...GIFT!

How can you live better today?



I H V I F X N R E T N A L N E E R G D R
 N L I V E D E R A D T H O R I C W Q B J
 D B T X H V H I R O N M A N Y T O K J R
 U L T R O N U D E Q B I V B X N L C J B
 P S S E Z S L H Z Y O I J Y T I V Y T L
 I I R E D S K U L L S N N F X U E U B A
 J A C I R E M A N I A T P A C G R S D C
 D C N V C L V G B M K G T X I N I O R K
 J A A A B B J L R L U H S K Y E N S O W
 X T M V L Z E E N F F O S N B P E I C I
 Q W T F G W D Y Z A G L A S D E N L T D
 N O A Z O I M T N R M M N R G H N V O O
 I M B M P E H A O N O R D V L T H E P W
 T A A S J E M B A W L O E Q M B Q R U B
 J N J S F A Y N R G O W O P W V H S S Y
 K M X L U C O E I M P X G F U E F U B D
 N H A Q Q R D P I K O L R Z W S Q R Q K
 L S A F D N I L B O G N E E R G I F I D
 H L H E O T Q B L A C K P A N T H E R A
 L P W W E R D Y F D D Y E J O K E R U R

Ironman
 Spiderman
 Thor
 Silver Surfer
 Daredevil
 Green Lantern
 Dr Doom
 Ronan
 Invisible Woman
 Red Skull

Hulk
 Batman
 Black Widow
 Wolverine
 Black Panther
 Flash
 Green Goblin
 Cat Woman
 Loki

Superman
 Captain America
 Wonder Woman
 Aquaman
 Cyberg
 Ultron
 Joker
 The Penguin
 Dr Octopus

Church Bulletin Bloopers

- Bertha Belch, a missionary from Africa will be speaking tonight at Calvary Memorial Church in Racine. Come tonight and hear Bertha Belch all the way from Africa.
- Our youth basketball team is back in action Wednesday at 8 pm in the recreation hall. Come out and watch us kill Christ the King.
- "Ladies, don't forget the rummage sale. It's a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Don't forget your husbands."
- The peacemaking meeting scheduled for today has been canceled due to a conflict.
- The sermon this morning: "Jesus Walks on the Water." The sermon tonight: "Searching for Jesus"
- Next Thursday there will be tryouts for the choir. They need all the help they can get.
- Remember in prayer the many who are sick of our community.
- Smile at someone who is hard to love. Say "hell" to someone who doesn't care much about you.
- Don't let worry kill you off --let the Church help.
- Irving Benson and Jessie Carter were married on October 24 in the church. So ends a friendship that began in their school days.
- A bean supper will be held on Tuesday evening in the church hall. Music will follow.
- The senior choir invites any member of the congregation who enjoys sinning to join the choir.
- For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs.
- The ladies of the Church have cast off clothing of every kind. They may be seen in the basement on Friday afternoon.
- The eighth graders will be presenting Shakespeare's Hamlet in the Church basement Friday at 7 PM. The Congregation is invited to attend this tragedy.
- Weight Watchers will meet at 7 PM at the First Presbyterian Church. Please use large double door at the side entrance.
- The Associate Minister unveiled the church's new tithing campaign slogan last Sunday: "I Upped My Pledge - Up Yours."
- Our next song is "Angels We Have Heard Get High."

Free cheese
is always available
in mouse traps.

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The Back Pew - Jeff Larson



Reverend Jacobs was both flattered and exasperated when Billy picked him to interview for career day.





The Devil Did Not Make You Do It!

If you are old enough you can remember a comedian named Flip Wilson. One of his signature lines on his weekly variety show was, “The Devil made me do it!” It was like we all had an excuse for sinning. I can’t help it, Satan made me do it.

But according to the Word of God that is not always the case. James writes...

James 1:13-15 NIV ¹³ **When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;** ¹⁴ **but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed.** ¹⁵ **Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.**

The devil may dangle a carrot out there but it is the evil desire to have it that sends us chasing after it. Think about it, why is it that some people are addicted to drugs, some gambling, some food and others sex? Why is it that what tempts one person may not necessarily tempt another? Deliverance starts with admitting *you love your particular sin*. Once you do that God can start the process of delivering you from it. This is a biblical truth that the Apostle John teaches us.

1 John 1:9 NIV **If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.**

If we confess (come into agreement with God) that thing we deal with is **our** sin (we have to own it), then God will not only forgive us, but cleanse us of it. Yep, it can be gone today if you wanted it to. But the problem is that we secretly want to keep some of our sins. If we were to be honest, we would admit that we **like** our sin. Some of us like it so much that we **love** it. Some of us love it so much we are **married** to it. When we deny that our own evil desires drag us away into sin, we are protecting our marriage to it. When we blame the devil for it, we are dodging responsibility so we can keep that thing around.

Go somewhere, by yourself, and say, “Lord I confess that I enjoy (insert your sin here)”, then ask for forgiveness and for Him to cleanse you of it.

Once you start to do this and God starts freeing you, the enemy is going to dangle even bigger carrots in front of you. You are going to start seeing more of what you desire or Satan may bring it in a different form to try and trip you up. You may have to pray for a while until you build your strength and faith. You have to be watchful for Satan’s counter attack against God’s work. The Gospel of Matthew tells us this; Matthew 26:41 NIV **“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”**

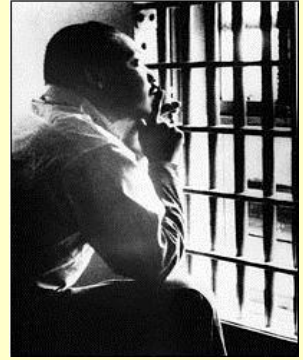
The devil dangles our favorite sins in front of us, because we enjoy and desire them we pursue them and we get caught up. This cycle can eventually lead to spiritual death (eternity in hell). **So when we know better, we do better.**

What must I do to be saved?

If you've never accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, or if you've turned away from Him for a life of unrighteousness, then take a moment and say this prayer:

Lord, I confess that I am a sinner and ask your forgiveness. I believe that your son Jesus died on the cross for my sins and was resurrected with all power. I invite Jesus to be the Lord of my life and your Holy Spirit to come into my heart to guide me for the rest of my days. Amen."

Romans 10:9 says that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.



If this is you, please write Growth Ministries and we will gladly help you start your new life in Christ.

Growth Ministries, Inc., Attn: Executive Secretary, P.O. Box 4375, Olathe, KS 66063

Write Us



We would love to hear from you. If you have a testimony, a prayer request, or a question about your walk with the Lord, send us a letter. We would love to pray or rejoice with you. Maybe you are a writer and you have a spiritual word of encouragement for the readers of our newsletter. We would love to review your article to see if we can use it in our newsletter. We also like to share poems from you more artistic sisters and brothers.

We also ask that you be mindful of what you send to us as there are some things that are prohibited for print:

Inappropriate Verbiage/Profanity

Sexually Explicit Verbiage/Images

Political Opinions

Opinions regarding Social/Systemic Injustices

Demeaning or Offensive Views