

SPIRITUAL INSIGHT FOR YOUR LIFE

# FAITH *for life*

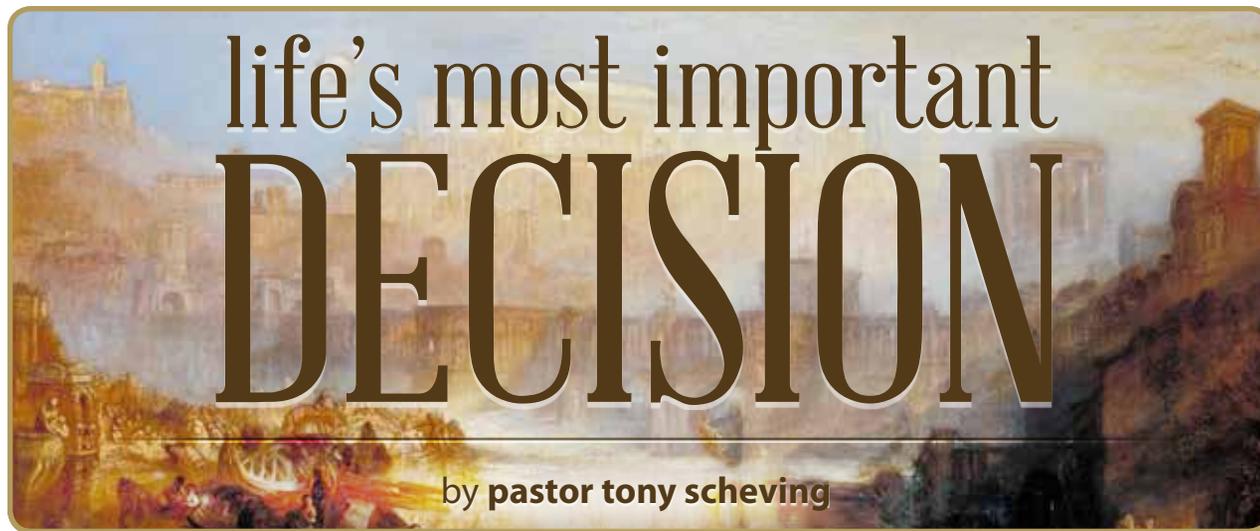
“The **life** which I now live...I live by the **faith** of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Galatians 2:20

Complimentary Copy

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“And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.” Acts 24:24-25

brother as well as three very political marriages, including the granddaughter of Antony and Cleopatra. His reign was one of trouble, corruption and vice. He was one of the most depraved men of his time. For the sake of bribery, he had kept Paul in jail unfairly for two years. Drusilla was the wife of Felix, and at age 19, she was young enough to be his daughter. Drusilla had been engaged to another man, but Felix broke it up and stole her away after a shameful affair. Felix dumped his third wife to marry Drusilla. The story unfolds in the Bible in the book The Acts of the Apostles, chapter 24. It's a classic story of the preacher and the politician.

For some reason, Felix was curious about

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The year was 58 AD. Paul, the apostle, stood trial before a Roman governor named Felix. Felix was a ruthless scoundrel who inherited his seat due to his influential



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## Life's Most Important Decision

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this 'new religion' called Christianity. With Drusilla next to him, he called for Paul, perhaps hoping to be amused by the story about this carpenter from Nazareth who had risen from the dead. Or, perhaps Drusilla, being a Jew like Paul, was curious about this new religion that was spreading worldwide. Regardless, as Paul gave these two the gospel of Christ, they became uncomfortable and sent Paul away. Without knowing it, they had made the most tragic decision of their lives.

The most important decision you will make in life doesn't involve money, an education, a career, your possessions, who you will marry or how many children you will have. The most important decision you will make in life involves your soul. As Paul spoke the truth to Felix and Drusilla, he didn't tone it down. The following is some 'straight talk' about life's most important decision.

## The Ultimate Possession

Jesus said, *"What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"* (Mark 8:36). You are not a body that happens to have a soul...you are a soul living inside of a body. While the word 'body' is found 154 times in the Bible, the word 'soul' is found 473 times. You have a body, but you are a soul. Your body is just a motel that your soul will check out of after a few decades. The Bible says, *"The body without the spirit (soul) is dead"* (James 2:26). When your heart stops beating, your soul will be in one of two places forever and ever. Where you spend eternity boils down to a decision you must make sometime during your life. In the Bible we find people like Ruth who made the right decision (Ruth 1:16), and we sadly find a wealthy young man who made the wrong decision (Mark 10:21). At some point in life we will all find ourselves in the 'valley of decision', deciding what to do about our soul. In the Bible we find a rich businessman who had made a fortune but neglected his soul. Jesus referred to him and said, *"Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast*

*provided?"* (Luke 12:20). According to the Bible, every person must have a time in his life when his soul is converted. God's Word says, *"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul"* (Psalms 19:7).

In our story of Felix and Drusilla, the Apostle Paul didn't speak with them about politics or the weather. He cared enough about Felix and Drusilla to talk about their soul. He talked about sin and the judgment day ahead. He tried to prepare them for eternity, because neither of them had prepared for it. Not only did Drusilla have an immoral past, but her father Herod Agrippa had beheaded James the apostle (Acts 12), her great-uncle had beheaded John the Baptist, and her great-grandfather Herod the Great had killed the babies in Bethlehem in an attempt to destroy Jesus. What would be the outcome of Drusilla? On August 24, 79AD, a volcano on Mount Vesuvius in Italy would erupt burying the city of Pompeii in lava and killing thousands. Drusilla met her death in the eruption along with Marcos the son of Felix. She died unprepared for eternity and lost her ultimate possession...her soul.

## The Utmost Person

When Paul preached to Felix and Drusilla, he spoke *"concerning the faith in Christ"* (Acts 24:24). That took guts, because Felix would have worshipped the false Roman gods like the supreme god Zeus, or Mercury, the son of Zeus, or Jupiter. It's hard to believe that intelligent, civilized, cultured and refined men like Felix could believe in such absurd things. Even today, mankind is incurably religious. The recipients of worship include Buddha, Mohammed, Confucius, Mary, and a long list of others. But Paul spoke to Felix of "faith in Christ." Jesus Christ is the utmost Person.

What sets Jesus apart from all others? First of all, He's God in human flesh. The Bible says, *"Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory"* (1 Timothy 3:16). Secondly, only Jesus has existed forever. According to Micah 5:2, Jesus existed in eternity past. Thirdly, Jesus created the universe and

everything in it. The Bible says, *"By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible...all things were created by him, and for him"* (Colossians 1:16). Buddha, Mohammed or Mary can't make that claim. Fourthly, Jesus is the only one to ever live a sinless life. Mary even acknowledged her sin and need of a Savior (Luke 1:47). But the Bible says of Jesus that, *"He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin"* (Hebrews 4:15). Most of all, Jesus is the only key to finding God. Jesus Himself said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me"* (John 14:6). Jesus didn't say He was one of the ways, or a better way.... He said, *"I am the way."* The Bible says, *"This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life"* (1 John 5:11-12). That poses the question: "Have you received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?"

Jesus said that He came to *"To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me"* (Acts 26:18). Apparently, people are in spiritual darkness and don't know it. They need illumination. Jesus said, *"The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10). No wonder Paul talked to Felix and Drusilla about "faith in Christ." So what does "faith in Christ" mean? It all ties in with the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

The Bible says, *"We have redemption (salvation) through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace"* (Ephesians 1:7). Have you ever wondered why Jesus needed to shed blood on Calvary's cross? God wanted to show us the seriousness of sin, and what was required to pay for it. In the Bible, we find that when Adam and Eve first sinned, God shed the first blood of animals to make them clothes. Later on, in the Bible, their son Cain tried to offer up a bloodless offering of vegetables and God rejected it. When the world was destroyed from the flood, the first thing Noah did after getting off the ark was to offer up a blood sacrifice. Later, we find Abraham offering up a lamb after passing a

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## Life's Most Important Decision

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crucial test of faith (Genesis 22). God was establishing a principle and said, *"The life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul"* (Leviticus 17:11).

After the days of Abraham, we see the sacrifice of the Passover lamb instituted in the days of Moses. That lamb had to be a spotless, innocent, male yearling, because He would be a picture of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who was to come one day. When Christ finally arrived on the scene, John said, *"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world"* (John 1:29). God has always required blood to atone for sin, but Jesus shed the last blood required by God. Today, many sincere people resort to the water of baptism to try and wash sin away; but it never will. It is an unscriptural, man-made tradition. The Bible says, *"Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things... received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot"* (1 Peter 1:18-19). That all poses the question: "What are you trusting in to take you to heaven when you die?"

## Unequaled Plan

Paul did more than just explain the sacrifice of Jesus to Felix. He also explained why it was necessary by exposing Felix's 'sin problem'. Paul reasoned of *"righteousness, temperance and judgment to come"* (Acts 24:25), which caused Felix to tremble. This is called 'conviction'. Felix became uncomfortable about his own sinfulness. Felix had the same sin problem every person has. The Bible says, *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23). An honest look at ourself and society reveals stubbornness, selfishness, lying, anger, dishonesty, cursing, lust, cheating, covetousness, greed, vanity, immorality and a host of other sinfulness. The Bible says, *"The whole world lieth in wickedness"* (1 John 5:19).

In the gospel of Matthew chapter 7, Jesus plainly warned that most people are on the road to hell but don't realize

it. Everything is 'not ok' like most people think. Sin is serious and the Bible says, "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 5:6). Jesus warned about the blind leading the blind and both winding up in hell. Paul wasn't pulling any punches as he spoke to Felix and Drusilla. The first step in being saved is to recognize your sinfulness. Then you must realize you cannot work your way to heaven through baptism or good works. The Bible says, *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast"* (Ephesians 2:8-9). Thirdly, there must be a change of attitude about your sin. Jesus said, *"Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish"* (Luke

***In the year 1550, Hugh Latimer stood before the nasty King Henry VIII as his royal chaplain. Latimer delivered his second straight sermon condemning the king's adultery. All present were expecting to hear, "Off with his head." Instead, they were surprised to hear Henry say, "Blessed be God, I have so honest a servant!"***



13:3). Does God approve of your language, your entertainment, your web-surfing, your humor, your sexual practices, or your overall behavior? Felix and Drusilla had to take an honest look at themselves.

## Urgent Plea

The Bible tells us that Paul reasoned with Felix and Drusilla about their need to repent and be born again spiritually (John 3:3). God says in Isaiah 1:18, *"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."* This is the 'Urgent Plea' of God. None of us has a guarantee of another week of living. The Bible says, *"Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth"* (Proverbs 27:1). For that reason, the Bible also says, *"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation"* (2 Corinthians 6:2).

We all have an unavoidable appointment with death and we never know when it will arrive. We may tie our own shoes in the morning and an undertaker may untie them before the end of the day. Death claims people of all ages. The Bible says, *"There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit...in the day of death"* (Ecclesiastes 8:8). Once you've passed through death's door, it's impossible to come back. There is no changing your fate from that point on. Felix and Drusilla never did anything about the salvation of their souls, although Paul did his part by giving them the truth.

In the year 1550, Hugh Latimer stood before the nasty King Henry VIII as his royal chaplain. Latimer delivered his second straight sermon condemning the king's adultery. All present were expecting to hear, "Off with his head." Instead, they were surprised to hear Henry say, "Blessed be God, I have so honest a servant!" In the same way, Paul was an honest servant of the Lord who gave the truth to Felix and Drusilla. He pleaded with them to make life's most important decision. Sadly, they ignored it and lost their very souls. Have you made that decision yet? ■

*To learn more about making Jesus your personal Savior, please read pages 6-7, or go online to [7StepsToGod.org](http://7StepsToGod.org).*

# when you are spiritually **NUMB**

by cary schmidt

Have you ever been completely bewildered? Emotionally, spiritually, or relationally numb? Wondering where you are in life, how you got there, where God went, and what to do next? Are you there now? You're not alone. But you are vulnerable.

Life's biggest mistakes are often made right where you are right now. SO... before you do the wrong thing, stop, take a breath and consider these thoughts:

- 1. God has not forgotten you.** Wonder where He is? Think you ran far from Him? He's right there and He knows exactly where you are. Turn to Him and wait upon Him.
- 2. God works in the silence.** Often in His Word He is working when men doubted Him the most. Think Joseph in jail. Jonah in the fish. John the Baptist on the guillotine. Elijah in exhaustion. David in hiding. Paul in prison. Or Jesus in the tomb. God works when it seems like nothing is happening. Just wait.
- 3. God brings blessings from bewilderment.** When we refuse to let go of Him, no matter how hopeless we feel, that expresses a special kind of faith that He always blesses. Your thorn is a blessing and God will someday use it in ways you cannot imagine right now.
- 4. God is using even your bewilderment in ways you cannot know yet.** Someday you will look back on how you feel right now and thank God for what He did, what He taught you, or how He somehow made it all worth it.
- 5. God strengthens us through testing times.** Future blessings require you to have broader shoulders. God may be exercising

your faith to strengthen you for His future plans.

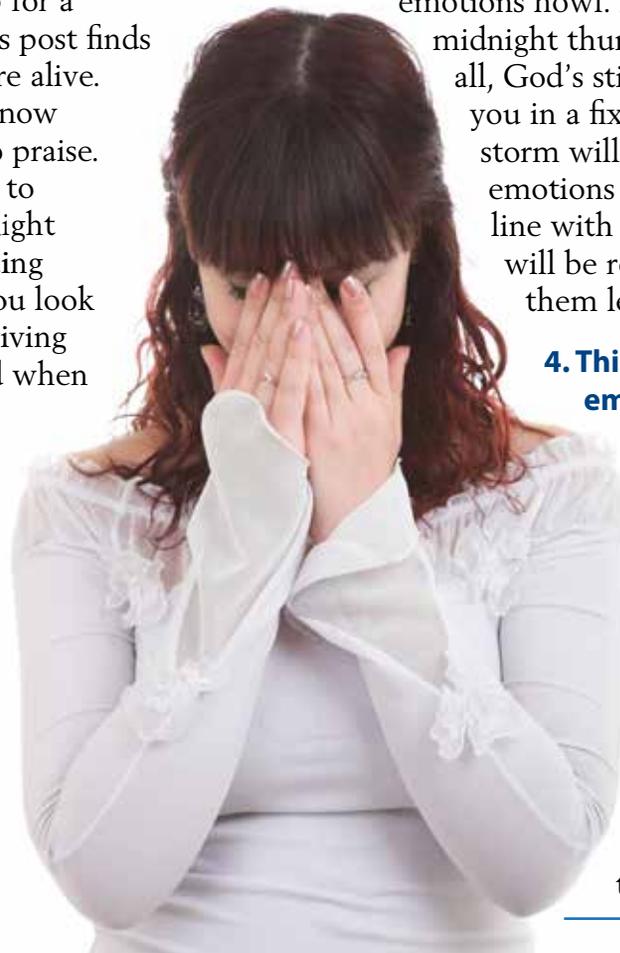
- 6. God blesses us on the other side of testing times.** It's what He does. He rewards faith. He honors them that honor Him. He tests, then He blesses. Don't give up before the blessing.
- 7. God is going to give you the grace you need right now.** You may feel overwhelmed, but stop for a moment. Wherever this post finds you—just pause. You are alive. You are saved (if you know Christ). You are able to praise. You are able to cry out to Him. You have hope. Right now, you are experiencing grace. And as long as you look to Him, He will keep giving you the grace you need when you need it.
- 8. God is with you whether you sense Him or not.** He is not a feeling or emotional experience. He is. He is truth. He is absolute. He is with you right now and always will be. Rest in Him. Accept His presence. Be still and know that He is God.

**9. God is rejoicing over you, not angry at you.** You feel like you've let God down? You think He's probably really put out with you. You're wrong. If you are in Christ, you are in grace—you are COMPLETE in Him. God crucified His son so He could rejoice over you! Accept it. It's true.

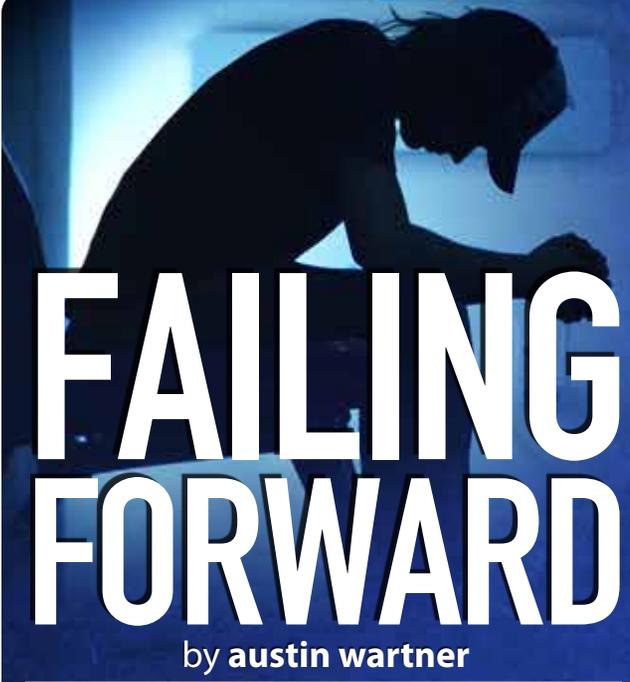
**10. God will get you through.** When isn't the issue. How isn't the issue. In His time and His way—He will. He will! Don't quit, give up, or do something self-destructive. He will get you through!

And here are a few things to do—while you wait on God to know “what to do next.”

- 1. Remember that emotions are liars—feelings change rapidly.** They are too dependent on our physiological chemistry, our diet, our rest patterns, our environment (like even weather!), and our circumstances. Don't trust feelings! They only occasionally tell the truth.
- 2. Hold on to truth over emotions.** Truth makes us free. Emotions deceive us. Go to God's Word and tie yourself off, like a guy tying off to a pillar in a hurricane. Anchor yourself to what God says it absolute and true.
- 3. Listen to God over emotions.** Let your emotions howl. Let feelings rage like a midnight thunder storm. Through it all, God's still small voice will keep you in a fixed, safe position. The storm will pass. Eventually your emotions will come back into line with truth—and then you will be really glad you didn't let them lead!
- 4. Think beyond your emotions.** Do you remember a day you didn't feel the way you do now? Even so, another day will come and you will look back on today, glad the feelings are gone. But the decisions you make today will follow you. Think beyond today's emotions to the long lasting,



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# FAILING FORWARD

by austin wartner

*“For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again...”* Proverbs 24:16

Vinko Bogataj, a former Yugoslavian ski-jumper, took a serious spill off a ski jump while competing in the 1970 World Ski Jumping Championships in West Germany. He landed on his head and was hospitalized for his injuries. He eventually had a full recovery and returned to regular life. At that time, ABC had a sports program called Wide World of Sports which had the famous promo tag, “...the thrill of victory, the agony of defeat...” Shortly after Vinko’s incident, ABC’s Wide World of Sports began to use the footage of his wipe out every time the phrase, “...the agony of defeat...” was mentioned in its commercials. In 1980, ABC planned to produce a special anniversary edition of Wide World of Sports. ABC Producer Doug Wilson interviewed Vinko as part of this special edition. Wilson stated that when he told Vinko he had been appearing on Wide World of Sports for 10 years as part of their promo tag, Vinko responded, “I can’t believe it! I appear on TV 130 times a year!” Vinko’s attitude is a good example of what it means to “Fail Forward.” Failing is a part of life that everyone experiences from time to time. How we handle or perceive those times of failure will either make or break us.

One of the most disheartening feelings we experience happens when we fail. We feel beaten down, discouraged, demoralized and defeated. Often, failure is the forerunner of quitting as we question

whether or not the situation is worth pursuing any longer. The motivation to keep going can evaporate, leaving us doubtful of our desired outcome. The Bible says, *“Hope deferred maketh the heart sick”* (Proverbs 13:12). Maybe you’ve experienced failure in the recent past, whether at work, with people, or in your life activities. Those times can weigh on our spirit, and going forward seems like a greater chore than ever.

With failure being a part of life, the question one has to ask, “Does it have to be so devastating?” The answer is “No”. The Bible says, *“For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again...”* In this verse, God is telling us to “Get up!” when we fail. Failure is not meant to be a stumbling stone, but a stepping stone. Someone once said that the road of success is paved with failures. The famous inventor Thomas Edison conducted over 50,000 experiments attempting to create a storage battery. When asked about that time frame riddled with failures, Edison said he was not discouraged, but instead had found 50,000 things that won’t work. His attitude towards failure made him a success and it can do the same for us.

## The Reality

Failure is part of life. Everyone faces it. It’s not a matter of “if,” but “when.” In fact, God expects it from us. *“For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust”* (Psalm 103:14). God knows we are going to make mistakes. He knows we will sin. When we fall, God promises to be there to pick us right back up (Psalm 37:23-24). If we fail, rise up again. If we sin against Him, confess it, forsake it and forget about it! 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). So many walk through life thinking they need to be perfect, when they never will be. Failure is a reality of life.

## The Results

What does failure often bring? Obviously things we don’t like. Sometimes it brings embarrassment. In the Gospels, Peter boasted how he wouldn’t deny the Lord, but did just that when asked by a little maiden about his relationship to Christ. Peter experienced

great embarrassment as Christ’s eyes met his after denying Him three times. Sometimes failure causes setbacks in life. The Apostle Paul was warned by the Holy Spirit not to go to Jerusalem (Acts 20:22-23). Despite these warnings, Paul went to Jerusalem anyway, and by the time the dust settled, he found himself stuck in a prison for over 2 years. Paul’s failure to listen to God brought a significant setback in his life. These results can often be very frustrating, especially when they appear to be so costly.

## The Reward

Though we do not like to deal with the results of our failure, we can find blessings if we learn how to properly handle them. Success could be right around the corner if we use the failure as a means of going forward, not backward. If you look at the lives of many well known historical figures, you’ll see many cases of people who just wouldn’t quit. In 1905, the University of Bern turned down a man’s doctoral dissertation calling it ‘irrelevant and fanciful’. The man’s name was Albert Einstein. In 1894, an English teacher wrote on a student’s report card, “a conspicuous lack of success.” The student’s name was Winston Churchill. In the late 1970s, a 5’ 11” sophomore tried out for his high school’s varsity basketball team and was cut. The person was Michael Jordan. The list could go on and on, but these people, amongst many others, overcame the failures they faced. We can find a silver lining in our failures. When we do, I believe we will experience success more often. Consider Peter again: he denied the Lord, yet the Lord restored him. Peter went on to preach on the day of Pentecost and about 3,000 came to know Christ as Savior (Acts 2:41). Paul didn’t quit either. He kept going and by the end of his life he wrote under Holy Spirit inspiration, *“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith”* (2 Timothy 4:7). The truth is that failure often teaches us more than success ever will. Success often comes after several failures have taken place. I know good people God has used greatly in the ministry and they themselves claim nobody has made more mistakes than they have. The key is not quitting. We are not failures until we quit. Failure is not designed to break us, but to better us. I’m glad God is the God of the second chance. ■

# HOW TO FIND GOD AND REALLY KNOW HIM

## GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

There are three things that you can know for sure...

**1) That you are going to Heaven.** *"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life"* (I John 5:13).

**2) That your life will be changed when you get saved.** *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new"* (II Corinthians 5:17).

**3) You will never lose your salvation.** *"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."* (John 10:28).

It all revolves around Jesus Christ!

Who is Jesus Christ? John 1:1 says, *"In the beginning was the Word (Jesus), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."* John 1:3 continues, *"All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."* Jesus was God in flesh or God the son who created everything.

He came to earth to save us. *"For the son of man is come to*

*seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10). The first step in going to heaven is to realize we need to be saved from our sin.

How do we get to heaven?... *"Jesus answered and said unto him, verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"* (John 3:3).

There is a difference between a physical birth and a spiritual birth. *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit is spirit"* (John 3:6).

Why do we need a spiritual birth? Man was originally created a three part being in God's image—a trinity. *"And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness: so God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them"* (Genesis 1:26). Man is made up of body, soul, and spirit.

God placed Adam and Eve in the garden. *"And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"* (Genesis 2:16-17). Man ate of the fruit and though he didn't die that day physically, he died spiritually!

When Adam and Eve had children they were now born spiritually dead as well (no longer in God's 3-part image). Genesis 5:3 says *"And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth."* That is why we must be re-born spiritually.

That is also why we have a sin nature. You don't have to teach a toddler to be selfish, lie, steal things, sass back, fight

with siblings, etc...it is also our nature as we grow up.

Most people fail to see themselves as serious sinners. They feel they are a "good person." They are comparing themselves to others, instead of God's standard; the 10 Commandments. Let's see how you rate compared to the 10 Commandments.

#1 Thou shalt have no other gods before me (Exodus 20:3) No one can claim they have never put anything ahead of God (money, career, own self centered goals, pleasure, sports, entertainment, sin, vice, a relationship with another, etc).

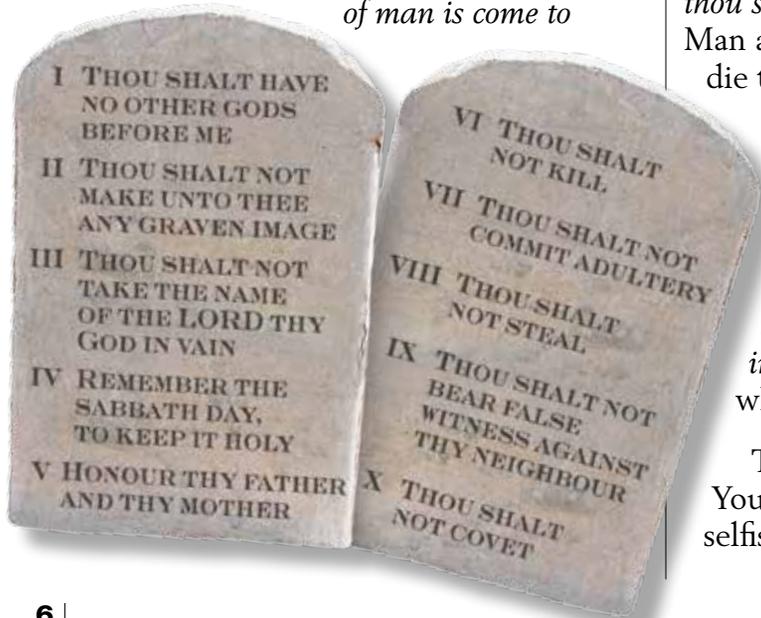
#2 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image (of God) (Exodus 20:4) Many have been guilty of inventing a God of their own imagination and liking... a God who 'suits them.' People want a "God that overlooks sin and takes everyone to heaven." They have improvised and dreamed up a God of their own image.

#3 Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain (Exodus 20:7) Re-read that carefully. God is keeping record of every time you've used His name as a curse word and you will answer for it one day.

#4 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy (Exodus 20:8) Have you always honored the Lord's Day or been faithful in church attendance? (Heb 10:25)

#5 Honour thy father and thy mother (Exodus 20:12). Have you ever disrespected or disobeyed your parents. Have you ever argued with them or dishonored them?

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## How to Find God

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#6 Thou shalt not kill (Exodus 20:13) Although most people have never committed murder, they are guilty of “murder of the heart.” Jesus clarifies this commandment in Matthew 5:21-2; Whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother... shall be in danger of hell fire. Have you ever been mad or bitter at someone?

#7 Thou shalt not commit adultery (Exodus 20:14) While many have never committed adultery, Jesus said; Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart (Matt 5:27-8). Have you ever lusted after the opposite sex? This is adultery of the heart according to Jesus.

#8 Thou shalt not steal (Exodus 20:15) Who could claim they’ve never taken anything that doesn’t belong to them? ... something small or even the boss’s time?

#9 Thou shalt not bear false witness (Exodus 20:16) No one could honestly claim they have never told a lie!

#10 Thou shalt not covet (Exodus 20:17) Have you ever desired anything you didn’t have or didn’t need? Have you ever been discontented, jealous or ungrateful? This is covetousness.

Most people are guilty of breaking all 10 commandments! Many places in the Bible reveal that liars, adulterers, thieves, the covetous, etc will spend eternity in hell! (Rev 21:8, I Cor 6:9-10, Gal 5:19-21). How could you ever expect to get to heaven by “living a good life?”

Romans 3:10 *As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:*

Romans 3:23 *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*

Sin has a penalty... Romans 6:23 *“For the wages of sin is death”* (hell).

We cannot possibly get to heaven by keeping the law (10 Commandments).

The 10 Commandments were given by God to show us how impossible it is to

be saved by doing good works. *“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith”* (Galatians 3:24). The law (10 commandments) shows us that we are condemned and need a Savior.

You will never get to heaven by doing good works. Titus 3:5 says, *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.”* *“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Romans 5:1).

Yet getting to heaven is not automatic just because Jesus died for your sins! Salvation is a gift that must be received. *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God”* (Ephesians 2:8). That means that baptism has nothing to do with being saved. Romans 6:23 explains, *“The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

How does a person know when they are ready to be born again? They know they are ready when they mean business with God, and are willing to repent of sin. Acts 3:19 says, *“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.”* II Peter 3:9 says the Lord is *“not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”* Jesus said, *“except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish”* (Luke 13:5). That means being willing to also turn from false religion or false teaching—anything contrary to the word of God, the Bible.

To repent means to change your mind about your sin, and make Christ the Lord

of your life. Are you willing to turn from your sin and turn to God? Do you believe that Jesus paid the full price on the cross for your sins?

Though God hates sin, he loves you and sent Jesus to die for your sins. *“But God commendeth (proved) his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8).

*“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16).

If God is dealing with you about your need of forgiveness, and you would like to be saved (born again), the final step is to ask God for the gift through a simple prayer. *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”* (Romans 10:13). Notice the promise of this verse from a God who cannot lie. Titus 1:2 says, *“God...cannot lie”*. Do you believe that God will save you simply because He said He would? Christ will save you if you are willing to make him the Lord of your life.

If you know that you are ready, you can pray and ask God to save you in your own words such as: “Dear Heavenly Father, I know that I am a condemned sinner unable to save myself, but I am willing to turn from my sins and make Jesus my Lord and master. I now trust in His sacrifice on the cross to pay for my sins. Please forgive me and save me. Amen.” ■

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# I Have A Question

by Pastor Tony Scheving

## How Often Do You Acknowledge God?

*"I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images" - Isaiah 42:8*

In the fall of 1621, after twelve months of crushing hardships, fifty five Pilgrims and ninety Wampanoag Indians assembled in the woods of Massachusetts to celebrate the first Thanksgiving. Within sight were 40 freshly dug graves of loved ones lost in death over the previous twelve months. Yet the Pilgrims gathered to acknowledge God's goodness to them. Contrast that to an event planned just several years ago by Pastor Earl Cannon of Chicago. Pastor Cannon anticipated a crowd of 15,000 to march in a parade he had organized to honor God. The only ones who showed up were the 214 policemen assigned to oversee the parade. Pastor Cannon said, "I felt like Noah." Most people don't realize the Bible says, *"Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God"* (1 Cor 10:31). This means we should continually acknowledge God and give Him the credit.

### The Definition of Glory

To bring God glory means to admire His awesomeness and splendor. The word 'glory' is found 380 times in the Bible. It speaks of God's authority, power, and prestige. Most people violate the second commandment by "reinventing God" to suit them and their lifestyle. They treat God like they would a peer or a buddy. Many contemporary churches have even gotten into the 'act' by making God 'hip' and cool. The result is a society that is far too casual with God Almighty! We could never begin to wrap our minds around our triune God. He is to be adored and revered. Few things

shape our perspective on life like a proper perspective of God.

### The Direction of Glory

God deserves credit and acknowledgement by virtue of the fact that He created everything. The Bible says, *"The whole earth is full of his glory"* (Isaiah 6:3). Think of the little hummingbird; measuring as small as two inches in length and weighing as little as a penny. It can hover, fly backwards, and even upside down. Though tiny in size, it can dive out of the sky at 60 mph which is faster than the space shuttle proportionately. The hummingbird's wings beat at a rate that makes them a blur to the human eye; more than sixty times a second! This requires an oversized heart that makes up nearly 3% of its body weight to pump the necessary blood. A human as active as a hummingbird would require over 150,000 calories a day! Yet each little hummingbird is a tiny speck in God's vast creation. The Bible says, *"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork"* (Psalms 19:1). When God blinks the rain falls, when God coughs the mountains quake, when God claps His hands the thunder roars! (Psalm 29:3).

William Beebe was no armchair scholar. His extensive knowledge of nature was gained

from explorations into the jungles of Asia and South America, and to the bottom of the ocean in the world's first bathysphere. Beebe had much in common with his friend Theodore Roosevelt, who also loved nature and exploring. Often after a visit at Sagamore Hill, Beebe recalled how he and President Roosevelt would go outdoors to see who could first locate the Andromeda galaxy in the constellation of Pegasus. Then, gazing at the tiny smudge of distant starlight, Beebe would say, "That is the spiral galaxy of Andromeda. It is as large as our Milky Way. It is one of a hundred million galaxies. It is 750,000 light-years away. It consists of one hundred billion suns, each one larger than our sun." After that thought had sunk in, Roosevelt would flash his famous toothy grin and say, "Now I think we are small enough." And the two men would retire, put in their place by the limitless universe. It's noteworthy how astronauts often return from outer space with a new found awe for God. After peering back at the earth from outer space, astronaut James Irwin said, "Seeing this changes a man and makes him appreciate the creation of God." John Glenn stated, "To look at creation from outer space and deny God is impossible. There are no words to describe it. It has strengthened my faith." When gazing at the clear universe from outer space, Neil Armstrong stated, "I felt very small." Edgar Mitchell said, "I got a glimpse of Divinity." These men gave God glory.

***We could never begin to wrap our minds around our triune God. He is to be adored and revered. Few things shape our perspective on life like a proper perspective of God.***

Samuel Morse revolutionized the world with the invention of the telegraph in 1836. He was later asked if there were ever times in his research when he became stumped and didn't know what to do next? Morse replied, "Oh, yes, more than once, and at such times I prayed for more light and wisdom from

God. This is a matter of which the public knows nothing about. When I prayed, the light always came." Morse went on to say, "When flattering honors came to me from America and Europe on account of the invention which

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**Faith for Life**

## How Often Do You Acknowledge God?

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bears my name, I never felt I deserved them. It was solely because God, who meant it for mankind, must reveal it to someone, and was pleased to reveal it to me." In view of these facts, it is not surprising that the inventor's first message was, "What hath God wrought!" Christopher Columbus echoed the same sentiment when he credited God for divine guidance on his voyage to America. May we, in the same way, deflect all glory back to God. This is the direction of glory.

## The Danger of Glory

At the Academy Award ceremony earlier this year, not one actor or director thanked God upon receiving a reward. Any mention of God has steadily fallen from the Oscars over the years since the Jimmy Stewart days. God now gets no glory or credit for even giving an actor the talent to act. What a contrast to what is going on in heaven right now. The Bible tells us the masses of heaven are saying, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Revelation 4:11). Most people are like the woodpecker who was tapping on a tree when lightning hit and splintered the tree into a million pieces. The woodpecker rounded up the other animals to show them what he had supposedly done to the tree.

In the Bible book of Acts of the Apostles, we find a heathen king named Herod who wallowed in self-glorification. He was smitten of God and died of intestinal issues which secular history also attests to. Success can go to anyone's head including a successful businessman with the 'Midas touch', or a successful coach with the winning record, or a skilled physician with steady hands. Imagine a beautiful painting taking the credit for its beauty instead of giving credit to the artist. None of us are exempt from self-exaltation or seeking our own glory. It's so easy to forget to acknowledge God. Michael Faraday, who died in 1867, was one of the most brilliant scientists of modern times. He was a pioneer in electrical discoveries. Faraday received practically no education. In the bookbindery where he worked he stumbled

across a few volumes of science. He read and studied these, and then embarked on the experiments that were to become his religious convictions. When it came time for Faraday to die he uttered these words with his last breath: "I now bow before Him who is the Lord of all." Faraday gave God the glory. Even Jesus told His heavenly Father, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen" (Matthew 6:13).

## The Display of Glory

The purpose of everything is to bring God glory. The Bible says, "But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (2 Corinthians 10:17). God is not glorified by trashy television, trashy websites, or trashy video games. Christians were made to soar above that junk. God is not glorified by trashy movies, trashy humor, trashy activities, trashy conversation or trashy music. Johann Bach the composer said, "All music should have no other end and aim than the glory of God." We glorify God through a proper reverence for Him along with godly living. Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). The Bible says we're going to glorify God forever in heaven, so why wait until then?

In 1808, shortly before the death of Joseph Haydn the composer, a grand performance of his oratorio "The Creation" took place in Vienna. Haydn was present, an old man of nearly eighty years. He was so feeble he had to be brought into the theater in a wheelchair.

This was the last time that the venerable composer made his appearance in public. The audience greeted the old man with great enthusiasm. When the orchestra and chorus arrived at the place where there is a sudden change from a minor to a major key, the choir sang the words "And there was light." Suddenly the crowd rose to its feet and gave Haydn a thunderous standing ovation. The old composer struggled to his feet and mustering up all his strength cried out in reply to the applause of the audience, "No, no! not from me, but from thence, from heaven above comes all!", at the same time pointing upward. He fell back in his chair exhausted and was hastily removed to his home, never again to come before his beloved Austrian public. The Bible says, "Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all" (1 Chronicles 29:11). ■

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# living above see level

by pastor tony scheving



*“Without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” (Hebrews 11:6)*

When we think of ‘sea level’ we might think of Denver which is the mile-high city, sitting 5280’ above sea level. In the Red River Valley, we’re about 900’ above sea level. The Dead Sea is 1388’ below sea level. So what’s the difference between ‘sea level’ and ‘see level’? The world often says, “Seeing is believing”, but a true Christian says, “Believing is seeing.” A true believer lives above ‘see level’. We don’t have to see it to believe it. We know that beyond our world is a world that is invisible and silent to us, which our God inhabits. The Bible says of God, *“Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable”* (1 Peter 1:8). The Bible calls faith the *“evidence of things not seen”* (Hebrews 11:1). There’s definitely an invisible world all around us. As you are reading this, there are radio waves and cell phone conversations floating through the air at certain frequencies, yet they are silent and invisible to us. There is another world that we cannot detect with our five senses. The Bible says, *“For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible”* (Colossians 1:16).

The impala, a medium-sized African antelope, can jump 10 feet high and a distance of 30 feet. Yet it can be kept in a zoo behind a four foot fence! Why doesn’t the impala just jump over the fence? Because, it won’t jump when it can’t see where its feet will land. In the same way, faith can be a problem for many people. Maybe you’re one of those who lives by statistics and must have an explanation with

all the facts and figures. Yet God says, *“The just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him”* (Hebrews 10:38). Apparently, a lack of faith is displeasing to God. After His resurrection, Jesus told doubting Thomas, *“Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed”* (John 20:29). How can a Christian live above ‘see level’? What does God’s Word say about faith?

## The Word’s Analysis

The human species is different from anything in the animal world. Mankind was created to worship... to believe in something higher than himself. Go anywhere in the world, or go back to any ancient civilization and you find this to be true. We were created with a built-in knowledge of God. Those who claim to be atheist have continually flunked polygraph (lie detector) tests when asked if they doubt the existence of God. Their heart says otherwise. Mankind could have never evolved from monkey. We have an incurable desire to worship. We want to put our faith in something. Sadly, many worship absurd things. It’s amazing, the things intelligent people will believe instead of the truth. The Bible says, *“They shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables”* (2 Timothy 4:4). If a person rejects the truth, there is no alternative but fables. Faith is so simple. Jesus simply said in Mark 11:22, *“Have faith in God.”*

People talk about ‘keeping the faith’, but that’s not really faith. Faith is not a leap in the dark. Faith is not a feeling of optimism. Faith is the opposite of feeling. Feelings can be shallow. Faith is the deepest work of God. God doesn’t do His deepest work in the shallowest part of our nature. God’s not against a good feeling, it actually feels good to feel good. But feelings are fickle. Christians aren’t to live their spiritual lives under the emotion of fickle feelings.

The Bible doesn’t tell you to put your faith in your baptism or your church denomination. Real faith is a confident assurance in the promises of God found in the Bible. Faith is believing what God says about the invisible world as well as the future. True Christianity is not based on signs and wonders. Jesus said in Matthew 16:4, *“A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign.”* Some people travel the world to witness some sign or wonder. The Bible says, *“Whatsoever is not of faith is sin”* (Romans 14:23). Faith is the opposite of signs, wonders and emotions.

Faith is also the opposite of calculations. In the gospel of John, Jesus decided to feed a crowd of 5,000 people. He asked Phillip, *“Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this He said to prove him: for He himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little”* (John 6:5-7). Notice how calculated Phillip was. Phillip thought it was hopeless. He had figured out everything, but left God out of the equation. Many today do the same thing.

## Wise Attitude

When Hudson Taylor went to China, he made the voyage on a sailing vessel. As it neared the channel between the southern Malay Peninsula and the island of Sumatra, the missionary heard an urgent knock on his stateroom door. He opened it, and there stood the captain of the ship. “Mr. Taylor,” he said, “we have no wind. We are drifting toward an island where the people are heathen, and I fear they are cannibals.” “What can I do?” asked Taylor. “I understand that you believe in God. I want you to pray for wind.” “All right, Captain, I will, but you

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## Living Above See Level

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must set the sail.” “Why that’s ridiculous! There’s not even the slightest breeze. Besides, the sailors will think I’m crazy.” But finally, because of Taylor’s insistence, the captain agreed. Forty-five minutes later he returned and found the missionary still on his knees. “You can stop praying now,” said the captain. “We’ve got more wind than we know what to do with!”

The Bible says, *“Without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him”* (Hebrews 11:6). Faith honors God and God honors faith. We accept by faith there is a God. The skeptic believes by faith there is no God. All people are believers; some believe there is a God and some choose to believe there is no God. Some are skeptical of God because they can’t figure Him out. At the same time mankind can’t even figure out where the universe ends, the complex workings of the human body, or what makes water wet. The skeptic can’t even explain the origin of the universe (how everything got here!) It takes a lot of ‘faith’ to believe that nothing times nobody equals everything. God told a man named Job, *“Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding”* (Job 38:4). The burden of proof is on the skeptic to prove there is no God, not vice versa. The finite can’t disprove the Infinite (God).

The Bible says, *“The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God”* (Psalms 14:1). It doesn’t say the ‘intellectual’ but the fool has said there is no God. God is the ‘Supreme fact’, and it is supreme foolishness to deny or ignore that fact. It’s also supreme evil. The Bible says *“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God”* (Hebrews 3:12). Doubting Thomas demanded to see some evidence, and the Lord rebuked him for it. Unbelief is not a head problem.... It’s a heart problem. Faith is not unreasonable; it’s just beyond reason.

## Wonderful Appropriation

Faith in God makes great optimists. Years ago in Burma, missionary Adoniram

Judson was laying in a foul jail with 32 lbs. of chains on his ankles, and his feet bound to a bamboo pole. A fellow prisoner said with a sneer on his face, “Dr. Judson, what about the prospect of the conversion of the heathen now?” Judson’s instant reply was, “The prospects are still as bright as the promises of God.” God has always operated by faith.

The Bible says, *“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Romans 5:1). Jesus said He came *“To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me”* (Acts 26:18). We are saved, made a child of God, and receive an eternity in heaven by faith! After we’ve been born again we grow as a Christian by faith is

what God’s Word says. Romans 10:17 say, *“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”*

Faith doesn’t operate in the realm of the possible; faith begins where man’s power ends. When we bypass faith it leads to problems. Worrying is actually a mild form of atheism. Worry is faith turned inside out. It’s saying, “This problem is too big for God.” God does business with those who mean business with Him. When Dwight L. Moody, the great American evangelist of the 19th century, lay on his deathbed, he was reputed to have said to his sons, “If God be your partner, make your plans large.” May God help us to live above ‘see level’. ■

For more information about placing your faith 100% in Jesus Christ, please refer to pages 6-7, or go online to [7StepsToGod.org](http://7StepsToGod.org).

## Life’s Most Important Decisions

*continued from page 4*

devastating impact that wrong decisions will leave. Long after the emotions are gone, the horrific consequences of bad decisions will continue to unfold.

**5. Speak out to God.** God responds to audible requests for His help! Open your mouth, lift your voice, and talk out loud to Him. I know—it feels weird, but it’s a biblical reality that God responds to this kind of flagrant faith!

**6. Speak truth to yourself.** You believe yourself more than anyone else. So talk truth to yourself. Speak God’s Word to yourself. Overpower the internal negative conversation with external truthful conversation. Shout your emotions down with truth!

**7. Surround yourself with stability.** Resist the impulse to isolate yourself. Get around people who will love you, pray with you, and help you keep your head above water until the emotional flood subsides.

**8. Open up to Christian friends.** Let those who love you minister to you. Trust them.

Let God use others to save you and guide you until you regain your bearings in life.

**9. Patiently endure.** The Bible has a lot to say about enduring. It is God’s call for us to sometimes just endure—to patiently, faithfully hold onto Him until He stems the tide of trial. He builds and blesses those who endure.

**10. If you have exhausted spiritual pursuits, don’t rule out professional medical evaluation.** I know this one seems out in left field, but many Christians never want to connect any physiological factor to deep or prolonged emotional struggles. This is unwise. Sometimes emotional despair can be verifiably tied to legitimate physiological conditions, and in those cases, medical solutions can prove helpful.

Spiritually numb? Feeling in a fog? Don’t do something that you will regret once the fog has lifted and truth reveals itself afresh in your heart.

*“For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.”* 1 John 3:20 ■

## Pastor's Perspective



# THE BIBLE'S BLUEPRINT FOR BEATING BITTERNESS

*"He hath filled me with bitterness"*  
— Lamentations 3:15

Has something happened to you that left you feeling bitter? Maybe it was an injustice of some type? Maybe it was connected to your marriage, job, salary, health or just your life in general. The Bible says, *"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice"* (Ephesians 4:31). How is that possible?

Bitterness is an emotional cancer that is slowly destroying many. It's not a matter of circumstances as much as it is a state of mind. No one forces you to be bitter; it is a choice. The Bible says to be on guard: *"Lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled"* (Hebrews 12:15). Bitterness not only spreads like a cancer, but it builds an invisible wall between you and your Creator. A bitter person struggles to believe that God really loves them because of that wall. Their system has been poisoned. The Bible says, *"The heart knoweth his own bitterness"* (Proverbs 14:10). Harboring hate, hostility, malice and animosity in the heart is like trying to store acid in a styrofoam cup. The cup is eventually eaten up.

## The Circumstances

The reasons for bitterness can vary. Some adults are still bitter about their childhood. Maybe their parents failed to spend enough time with them. Maybe the parent was too success oriented or money hungry and focused on the wrong priority. If this is the case with you, it's still wrong to hold that against your folks now that you are an adult. Why ruin whatever future relationship you could now have with your aged parents?

Sometimes people are bitter because of favoritism. Maybe your sibling received more attention or praise than you did, or maybe that sibling got to do the stuff you weren't allowed to do. Maybe that sibling was more academic or athletic than you and received more appreciation than you did. Favoritism among siblings goes way back to Joseph of the Bible, and his coat of many colors.

Maybe you're bitter because of physical or emotional abuse. Maybe you were slapped, kicked or punched, or maybe you were called stupid or dumb. Whatever the circumstance, you still have the scars of bitterness. Worse yet, maybe you were sexually abused. Sadly, this has become the sin of the age which is a sign of the rancid days we are living in. While sexual abuse is wicked, rotten and vile, it is sadly becoming too common.

Maybe you're bitter because a leader disappointed you. It might have been a parent, teacher, coach or boss. You had them on a pedestal, and they let you down. Maybe you're bitter because you could never find approval or praise from that leader. Maybe you're bitter because of unfulfilled expectations. You were passed over and never received that promotion. Perhaps your bitterness is due to a jealousy over someone else's money, looks,

abilities, achievements, or possessions? Maybe you're in a silent competition with another? Maybe your bitterness is due to rejection from someone. Regardless of the cause, you now find bitterness flowing through your veins.

## The Consequences

Bitterness can dry up our spirits to where we can't function spiritually. We find it hard to pray or love or cultivate a relationship with God. Jesus said, *"If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses"* (Matthew 6:15). A cornered rattlesnake will become angry enough to bite itself. This is quite the picture of what malice will do to a Christian. A bitter person can't go forward in life or prosper spiritually.

Modern medicine has even linked bitterness to most illnesses such as

headaches, backaches, ulcers, high blood pressure, strokes and heart attacks. A bitter person will also suffer stress, fatigue and depression. Your enemy may live miles from your bedroom, but they still make your bed a rack of torture. When you hate someone, you

***Bitterness is an emotional cancer that is slowly destroying many. It's not a matter of circumstances as much as it is a state of mind. No one forces you to be bitter; it is a choice.***

unknowingly become their slave. Another consequence of bitterness is that you often become like the person you're bitter toward. The cycle of anger, malice, and resentment continues. No one can destroy you but yourself. Malice and bitterness are forms of self-destruction. Such emotional baggage will weigh you down in life.

## The Comparison

After Abraham Lincoln's death, Mrs. Lincoln asked John F. Parker, the President's bodyguard, "Why were you not at the door to keep the assassin out?"

*continued on next page*

Bowing his head, Parker said, "I became so interested in the play. I did not see the assassin enter the presidential box." Weeping uncontrollably, Mrs. Lincoln said, "Go now. It's not you I can't forgive. It's the assassin." Overhearing his mother, Tad Lincoln said, "If Pa had lived, he would have forgiven the man who shot him. Pa forgave everybody."

There have been many in the past who have overcome bitterness. Paul the apostle was used and abused, but still forgave his persecutors. As Stephen was being stoned to death he cried out for God to forgive his executors. Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers and went through many years of torment, but still forgave his siblings. Of course, our greatest example of forgiveness is Jesus Christ. The Romans and Jews abused Him beyond belief. Even before the nails of Calvary's cross, Jesus was beaten beyond recognition. The Bible

says, "*Many were astonished at thee (Jesus); his visage (appearance) was so marred more than any man*" (Isaiah 52:14).

Jesus knows what it feels like to be confronted with bitterness. The Bible tells us that Jesus experienced the same feelings and temptations as we experience. He "*was in all points*

*tempted like as we are, yet without sin*" (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus didn't hate those who abused him. He hated their sin and responded to it by dying on the cross for that sin. We need to learn to resent the sin and not the sinner.

## The Conquering

Bitterness cannot be conquered until it is first admitted and confessed. God accepts no excuses for bitterness (Proverbs 28:13). Don't seek revenge. Don't even desire revenge. Jesus never sought revenge. Yes, that person did you wrong; and no, it wasn't fair; and

yes, they deserve to pay; but God says, "*Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord*" (Romans 12:19). Trust God and let Him take care of it. While you're trusting God, be assured that God allows such circumstances into your life in the first place. He may be trying to get your attention if you've been ignoring Him. He may be trying to establish a relationship with you through a real knowledge of Him. If you're already a true believer, he may be trying to build and grow you. Have you ever considered thanking God for allowing that injustice into your life? (I Thess 5:18). The Bible says, "*Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good*" (Romans 12:21).

## The Contentment

Paul the apostle said, "*I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content*" (Philippians 4:11). At the time

Paul made that statement, he was in a rotting in a miserable dungeon. Yet, Paul wasn't bitter about his circumstances or mad at God. Paul left it up to God and found contentment instead of bitterness. Maybe you're bitter about your income or possessions.

Covetousness causes bitterness. That's why the Bible warns us to live our lives "*without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*" (Hebrews 13:5).

To overcome bitterness you have to learn to trust God with all past injustices. You have to trust God with what people say about you and what they do to you. The Bible reminds us, "*All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose*" (Romans 8:28). The whole issue is whether you trust God with life's injustices. That is the apex of the Christian life. The Bible

says, "*Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding*" (Proverbs 3:5). Bitterness toward God or another human is another way of saying, "I'm not trusting God!" The Bible says, "*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee*" (Isaiah 26:3).

Bitterness dies hard. It's like a stray dog that keeps following you home. You must realize that God has forgiven you for all the wrongs you've done against Him. God had to crucify His own Son for those sins of yours. The Bible says to forgive as you've been forgiven. In closing, Ephesians 4:31-32 says; "*Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*" ■

by **pastor tony scheving**



### What do you know about Jesus Christ?

Maybe you've heard about His love and compassion toward others. Perhaps you've heard stories about how He healed the sick and fed the multitudes. Or maybe the only description of Jesus that pops in your mind is that of a pacifist, a man who wouldn't hurt a fly; a man whose only purpose in life was to preach peace and good will to all mankind. If this is the extent of your knowledge of Jesus Christ, then you only know half the story. There is another side to Him that many churches are reluctant to expose.

### Let's begin with His mission...

It's true that Jesus Christ taught, among other things, about love and forgiveness. However, this was not His primary objective. He stated His true mission when He said *"For the Son of man (Jesus Christ) is come to seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10). "That which was lost" is referring to us, YOU and ME. The Bible says: *"All we like sheep have gone astray (in rebellion); we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him (Jesus) the iniquity (SIN) of us all"* (Isaiah 53:6). Did you catch that? We are like rebellious sheep that refuse to follow their Shepherd. Each of us tends to go our own way and refuse to follow God. And if you think that description does not apply to you, ask yourself, "When was the last time I purposely resolved to do exactly what God has instructed in His Word, the Bible?" In God's eyes, we are ALL rebellious sinners, condemned for our sins. We are lost and on the way to hell, and therefore in need of a Savior. The Bible says, *"As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one"* (Romans 3:10). *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23). That's why the Bible, referring to His mission as Savior, states that, *"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"* (1 Timothy 1:15).

### Secondly, let's look at His message...

In the gospel according to Mark, the first recorded words of Jesus Christ are not "love thy neighbor" but rather, *"Repent ye, and believe the gospel"* (Mark

1:15). The word gospel means "Good News", and the good news is that, *"Christ died for our sins"* (1 Corinthians 15:3). Jesus sacrificed Himself on our behalf; he took the punishment that we rebellious sinners deserve. Now the choice is up to every one of us. Either repent (change your rebellious attitude) and trust in His death and the blood He shed as payment for your sins; or simply ignore it, to which Jesus says, *"Ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I AM he, ye shall die in your sin"* (John 8:24). If this side of Jesus sounds too exclusive and narrow to you, that's because Jesus said, *"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction (hell), and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life (heaven) and few there be that find it"* (Matthew 7:13-14). He said, *"narrow is the way"* that leads to Heaven. Christ did not teach, "God is a hub on a wheel, and the spokes represent the different ways to Him." There is only one way to heaven and Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me"* (John 14:6).

### Thirdly, let's consider His warning...

If you are depending on your church, good deeds, baptism, or anything else to save you, the result will be a horrible disappointment on judgment day. In fact, Jesus provided a glimpse of that future event. He warned, *"Not every one that saith unto me, LORD, LORD, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied (preached) in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity"* (Matthew 7:21-23). These poor souls assumed they would make it into heaven. They were trusting in the things they did, instead of trusting Christ. During their earthly life they rejected Christ; and in the end, He rejected them and they went to hell. And if you think Christ never taught about hell, think again. Jesus said, *"But*

*I will forewarn you whom ye will fear: Fear him (God), which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear Him"* (Luke 12:5).

Jesus didn't teach that hell is just a 'state of mind' or merely a 'separation from God'. He taught that hell is A REAL PLACE. To those who didn't repent and trust Him to save them, Jesus will say: *"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels"* (Matthew 25:41). In fact, hell is so horrible that Christ warned about the danger of not repenting and clinging onto anything that would keep you from trusting Him. Figuratively speaking, Jesus warned, *"And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: for it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched"* (Mark 9:43).

### Finally, it was Jesus Christ who said...

*"Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"* (John 3:3). Maybe you didn't know it was Christ who used the term born again, but He did. Have you been born again? Can you point to a time and place when you saw yourself as a lost, hell-deserving sinner in need of a Savior? Did you then repent of your sins and call upon Christ to save you? If you can't point to such an event in your life, then you need to get saved. Jesus Christ said, *"Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again"* (John 3:7).

Perhaps, you think everything you just read about this side of Jesus Christ is too negative. Many churches think that is the case, and therefore, wrongly, hesitate to reveal it. However, remember that Christ came to seek and save lost, hell-bound sinners. So, naturally he had to confront them about their sin and subsequent need of repentance. In fact, if Jesus was as agreeable as many churches make Him out to be, then why did the multitudes have Him crucified in the first place? ■

If you have not been born again you can learn how by reading God's plan of salvation on pages 6-7. God bless you.

Psalm 61:2 - *From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I.*

What does it mean to be 'overwhelmed'? The dictionary defines 'overwhelmed' as, "being overcome completely in mind or feeling, to be covered or buried beneath a mass of something." Words that are synonymous would include: defeated, overflowed, overrun, smothered, swamped and stressed out. Certainly, we all have times we feel overwhelmed by life, circumstances and others. Our world is a very stressful place to live at times. The Bible predicted that in the days preceding the return of Jesus Christ, that people would live hectic lifestyles. *"But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro..."* (Daniel 12:4). This running "to and fro" is a proper description of life today with busy schedules, deadlines and pressures. On top of that, we face uncertainties about the future. All these things can cause us to scream, "I'm overwhelmed!" At these times, we feel we don't know where to start, what direction to take, or even what to do. Nor do we usually have the energy to proceed. We're overwhelmed. Henry Kissinger, former Secretary of State once said, "There cannot be a stressful crisis next week, my schedule is already full!" Maybe you feel this way today. Maybe you are dealing with overwhelming things in life. I've got great news; help is available from God in overcoming the overwhelming in life.

## The Reality

Everyone experiences periods of overwhelming feelings. Job said, *"Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble"* (Job 14:1). We all go through seasons when things compound upon us and stress abounds. It's a reality of life. People have a tendency to look at others' lives and think everything looks so great in their world, and not their own. However, we can't always see the inner turmoil that is actually going on. So many can mask their problems, yet if they opened up their heart, they'd probably say like Jacob did, *"...few and evil have the days of the years of my life been..."* (Genesis 47:9). We live in a stressed-out society. The World Health Organization has stated that stress is America's #1 problem. The American Medical Association claims that stress is a factor in 75% of sicknesses today. According to Stressdirections.com, "\$300 billion, or \$7,500 per employee, is spent annually in the U.S. on stress-related compensation claims, reduced productivity, absenteeism, health insurance costs, direct medical expenses and employee turnover." Again, we all live in this world and have to face it. So we must learn to deal with it the way God wants us to.

## The Reason

If being stressed out and overwhelmed is not good for us, why does God allow us to deal with so much of it? The stress itself is not God's fault; it's a part of living in a world cursed by sin. The Bible says, *"For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now"* (Romans 8:22). Sin has birthed the problems, the stresses, and the anxieties we often face. Our feelings of being overwhelmed often come from decisions we have made or others have made that break God's commands. These decisions have an adverse affect on everything. The Bible says, *"For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself."* No person's life is an island. The decisions we make and others make affects lives, and sometimes in negative ways. Who hasn't had stress come into his life due to acquaintances, family or co-workers? No doubt, we've probably caused stress in other people's lives as well.

## The Remedy

Since we all face feelings of being overwhelmed, how do we overcome it? Thankfully, God wants to help. Again, our text verse, *"...when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I."* That rock is God Himself. God is there to comfort our hearts and give us the grace to endure any situation. Jesus said, *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light"* (Matthew 11:28-30). The Lord desires that we bring those burdens to Him. He promises to help carry those burdens by getting into "the yoke" with you and me, and lighten our load. The Bible says that Jesus knows what it feels like to be overwhelmed, as He *"was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin"* (Hebrews 4:15). Christ experienced everything that we go through. As a result, He is very conscientious of our burdens and supplies the needed grace. A preacher once said, "For daily needs, there is daily grace, for sudden needs, there is sudden grace and for overwhelming needs, there is overwhelming grace." Abraham Lincoln once said, "I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go." If we learn to pour out our hearts to God during these times of stress, we'd learn what Paul learned, as he explained, *"My (God's) grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness"* (2 Corinthians 12:9). When we are overwhelmed, God has the opportunity to make His strength that much more real to us. The key is leaning on the Lord, especially during these times. The Bible says, *"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee"* (Isaiah 26:3). Do you have a burden today? Do you feel overwhelmed? Take it to the Lord. He promises to help you overcome the overwhelming in your life. ■

# OVERCOMING THE OVERWHELMING

by Austin Wartner

# what your kids want most

by cary schmidt



## Want to know what your kids want the most from you?

It isn't stuff. It isn't money. It isn't entertainment, toys, clothes, or freedom. It isn't a day at Disneyland, or an expensive vacation. These are the things we try to provide to make up for what we miss. These are the things they ask for on birthdays and Christmas. These are the things that temporarily make us feel like good parents.

What our kids want most, they usually don't ask for. They hope for it—even subconsciously, but they don't usually mention it. They need it more than anything, but they don't even really know it. When they don't get it, their world becomes chaos—emotional, spiritual, relational chaos. Their living becomes confused and frustrated. They chase after shadows and substitutes, and always come up empty.

When they get it, their world comes back into order. Their emotions settle. Their perspective changes. Their hearts soften. Their countenances become whole. Their

sense of belonging returns. Their insecurities diminish. Their stability returns. They become whole again.

What do kids want most? What do kids need most?

TIME with YOU.

Kids who spend quantity and quality time with their parents are very different than kids who don't. When you're kids spend time with you, they are deeply impacted. I've watched this pattern in all three of my kids at all ages. When they are lacking time with me, their world becomes restless and unsettled. But when they have enough time with me, their world becomes peaceful and stable once again.

This past week, I was privileged to spend four days with Haylee. She accompanied me on a preaching trip that afforded us some special memories and quality time together. On one particular day, we had about 7 hours of "just us." The trip was one of the most special times of my entire life, and one of the great delights was getting to fall in love with my little girl all over again. It's not that I ever fell "out of love"—it's just that she and I both needed the time together to renew and strengthen our relationship. Time, life, and busyness has a way of stagnating your family relationships. It takes intentionality to see this and resist the trend. This was our opportunity to do that.

During our few days, I watched something very special happen in her heart. It showed up on her countenance, in her tone of voice, in her spirit, and in her behavior. Everything about her became more pliable, responsive, contented, and peaceful. My wife noticed it within a few moments of us returning home. Time with me changed her—and frankly, time with her changed me too! For me, it was convicting to consider of the power that we, as parents, hold over our children's hearts just by the time we do or don't spend with them.

And so, I took a few moments to list the ways that "time with you" impacts your children. Think about it. Here's the short list of what happens to your child's world when he or she has enough time with you:

Time with you makes life have proper perspective. "If Dad and Mom love me, then everything else will be ok."

Time with you makes hardships have context. "If Dad and Mom are taking care of me, then the tough things in life will work out."

Time with you makes the heart settled and stronger. "Because Dad and Mom love me, I can care less what the world thinks of me."

Time with you makes the soul feel loved and accepted. "Dad and Mom love and accept and like me, and that means I don't need to crave love from anywhere else."

Time with you makes God's presence tangible. "If God is anything like Dad or Mom, then I like God!"

Time with you makes God's heart understandable. "If Dad and Mom understand my heart and feelings, then God must also."

Time with you makes God's love real. "God must love me sort of like Dad and Mom love me! Then I love Him too!"

Time with you makes life's trials endurable. "My trial seemed so big, but everything seems ok when I'm with Dad or Mom."

Time with you makes emotions manageable. "Dad and Mom help me keep a right view of my feelings and the changes in my life."

Time with you makes the spirit rest. "Dad and Mom are for me, believe in me, love me, and care for me—that helps me rest well!"

Think of it this way—time with you does for your kids heart what time with God does for your heart. And maybe, if our kids get enough time with us, they will see God in us and through us—and maybe they will fall in love with Him just as we have! Maybe they too will love Him for life like we do! Wouldn't that be a great reason for spending time with our kids?

Dad and Mom—you are the closest visible, physical expression of the love, heart, and presence of God that your kids will ever experience. So let them experience it! Whatever is pulling you away from giving your children time—it isn't worth it. Make it happen and watch your kids change in ways you could never force. God will honor you for loving them the way He does! ■