

faithbook

inspirational posts from
getting over depression to
help open your eyes to what
God wants to do in your life

GettingOverDepression



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Introduction

This book is a collection of posts from the group, Getting Over Depression on facebook. Inspired on what God has been doing in my life and the life of others whom I love. I believe some of these posts will hit home with you and maybe help you in a situation you might be currently experiencing. Ever since God has led me out of my deep depression He constantly is opening my heart to the things of Him. He has allowed me to serve others in His name and has changed the way I look at things and what my purpose is. He has opened my eyes to the gifts and talents He has given me and is constantly showing me how to use them for His glory.

My prayer is that there is something that you might read that will touch you and draw you a little closer to God and give you a peace that He desires for you.

Love in Christ

Mark Buckley

Beauty is More than Skin Deep

I'm excited, because I'll be leading the Heaven Study at church.

It's a study based on Randy Alcorn's book, Heaven. He goes through scripture showing what the Bible says heaven is going to be like and it answers so many questions you might ask about Heaven. One person asked me, "are we all going to be beautiful there?" I thought about it

and the Bible never says that, but it does say that we

will recognize and be recognized by the people we know here on earth and

if that is the case I can't possibly be beautiful if I look anything like myself.

Then I thought what makes us beautiful or homely

here. It is the way we judge things whether we think someone is attractive

or unattractive. It's our sinful way that makes these judgments not our hearts.

In Heaven we will no longer have sin ruling our lives but God.

We will see others as God sees us. *1 Samuel 16:6-7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."* My nickname for

my wife is Beautiful, because to me she is the most beautiful person I know, because I know her heart. So will everyone in Heaven be beautiful, I believe the answer is yes, because we will see them as God sees them. Now would be a good time to start looking at others through God's eyes, to go beyond the superficial and look at the heart of others. As we get older our

body changes, smooth skin turns into wrinkles, muscles weaken, skin sags our appearance is different, but if we look at



the heart, people become more beautiful and not less. People experience things in their life; they learn to be more generous, more caring, priority changes and their needs might take second place to others, how beautiful is that. I believe I've become more attractive as I've gotten older and definitely not because of appearance or anything that I have done, but I believe some people can see God through my life and there is nothing more beautiful than that. Try today find someone you thought unattractive and look deeply into their heart and see them through God's eyes not only who they are now, but who they can become with the grace of God and if they don't know God today it might be a good day to introduce Him.

Being Content

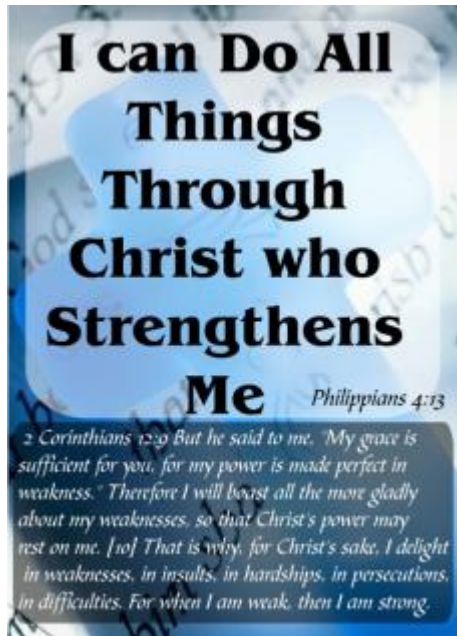
One of the major causes of depressions is discontentment. When you are feeling depressed it's because you are not content with an area of your life whether it is your job (one of mine), finances, spouse, a family situation or any other situation you might not be happy in. We allow our circumstances to take control of our emotional state. Paul wrote in *Philippians 4:11*

*Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: **12** I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. **13** I can do all*

things through Christ who strengthens me. Paul learned how to be content and it didn't matter what his circumstances were. He didn't allow the things of this world to control him. Paul's focus was on

Jesus and his final destination. He didn't let things control him, instead

he controlled the situations. We stay in discontentment or depression because we allow it to fester and take control of us instead of us taking control over it. Has anyone ever asked you how you were doing and you said well under the circumstances not to bad. What are you doing under the circumstances, rise above them. We need to learn how to be content in everything. So how do we do that? We focus and think of why we should be content. First we are children of God and when this life is over we will be in our eternal home. When we learn to praise God even in the worst situation, like Paul, you honor God, stop



and praise God for all of the blessings He has given you, know whatever situation you are in its temporary, but you have life eternal in Christ. This life is a job placement test at best, what we do here and now will determine what we will be doing forever. Learn what you need to do to be content in any state and do it, because you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you.

Witness to Others

The trouble with living in a senior community a month doesn't seem to go by before you someone has passed away. Bob, a gentleman I would talk to on occasion has been diagnosed with cancer. One of my neighbors was the one that informed me and that he was only given a couple of weeks to live and that hospice is taking care of him. I walk by his house every day when I walk my dog and I would stop and pray a little prayer before continuing my walk. God put on my heart that I needed to do something more than pray outside his home, so the next day my wife and I along with our two dogs went to his house. I stood there asking her if I should go in or not, even though God made it clear what His will was. I got up the courage and knocked on the door. Dianne, the lady who has been taking care of him opened the door and her face lit up seeing that someone wanted to talk to Bob. I walked into his room as he lay on the bed. He rolled over on his side. Bob is about six foot tall and I don't think he weighs more than ninety pounds now. He didn't look like the same man I use to talk to. He appeared to be excited that someone came by. I told him I've been thinking of him quite a bit and every time I passed the house I would say a little prayer. He thanked me and said he could use all the pray he could get. We talked for awhile about things that were happening in the park and how people miss him at our little dog park. Bob would go to our dog park, an area where people would bring their dogs while they sat and talked, but Bob didn't have a dog. However dogs would come up to him, but he never had treats, there was just something special about him. Before leaving I asked if I could pray with him and he anxiously said yes. I've learned that when you pray for someone, it's the Holy Spirit's opportunity to talk to that person directly, so I get out of the way and let him take control and he did. It was an amazing prayer about how God loves and sees him. The Holy Spirit told him what can be in store for him and how Jesus is just waiting to hear from him. I'm not sure how longed I prayed, but when I was done tears were rolling off both of our eyes. Bob told me that I really made his day and he

enjoyed our short time together. A week later I went to see him again and Dianne told me that Bob hasn't stopped talking about my last visit and the prayer that was said that day. When I went in to see Bob that day he rolled over and sat up in bed, which I didn't realize he could do. Bob and I talked more about God and heaven. I shared my testimony and about the Heaven Study I was leading at the church, but I could tell he was waiting for me to pray with him again. So before leaving the Holy Spirit took over once again. I don't know why I was so afraid of knocking on that door the first time, what was the worst that could have happened? I'm sure the enemy has something to do with it, but my love for God should have overcome any obstacle. In ***James 2:15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? 17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.*** The most precious thing that we have is time and so often we hoard it for ourselves, but that could be the exact thing that someone else needs. I saw the same neighbor that told me about Bob and he said I see you went to see Bob and he told me how Bob talked about my big prayer. Maybe the Holy Spirit has someone else He would like to talk to. This time there will not be any hesitation about knocking on doors.

The Softball Game

I talk to a lot of people who suffer from depression. It typically stems from some circumstances they experience in this world. People will ask if there is a God why did my spouse divorce me, why did this person die, why is my health so bad and the list goes on. We forget this is Satan's playground ***1 Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*** This is not our home only a temporary stop before getting there. In the book Heaven by Randy Alcorn, a book I highly recommend reading, it describes what Heaven will be like according to the Bible. If we can only focus on where we get to live for all eternity instead of where we are now it will give us strength to live a life that would honor God. I know this hope helps me each day get through whatever trial comes along and there are plenty. I was blessed to do a study at church about Heaven and God put on my heart the following story:

One thing I enjoyed doing was playing softball, but now that I'm older I could barely run to first or stoop down to catch a ground ball. I think about Heaven and can picture a perfect sunny day and there I am playing softball in my new body stronger than I've ever been and at total peace enjoying another wonderful day. I get up to bat and guess who's pitching? It's Jesus with this silly smirk on his face. The crowd cheers and it's not for the batter. The first pitch comes in and it's like one of those cartoons where the ball goes up and down and sideways. It goes by me and I hear strike one. I look out at the pitcher's mound and there is my Lord and savior laughing out loud and I say "really." He nods as if to say okay this one is for real. He pitches it and I hit it to left field and take off to first. I see my wife, daughter and sister cheering me on from the bleachers, my best friend is playing first hoping to get me out, my son-in-law, who first introduced me to Christ, was on second, I round first and notice my dad is center field, my mom was the third base coach telling me to stay on second. I looked around and saw so many people I knew, but then I looked and I noticed the people that weren't there. I didn't see my son who I

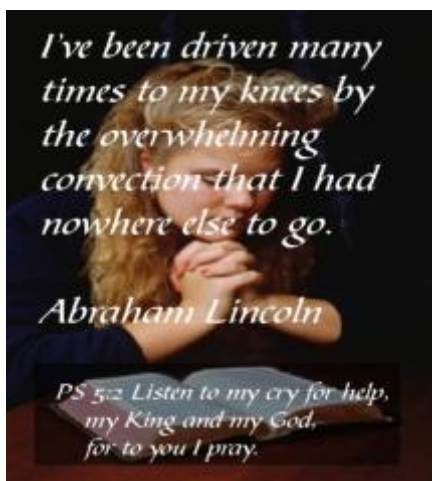
haven't spoken to, my brother or his family, my brother or sister-in-law and their family, my neighbor who lived across the street from me and the more I looked the more people I noticed were not there. God blessed me with the greatest treasure ever and I decided not to share it. I ask you to stop and think of a moment in Heaven you're looking forward to. Close your eyes and picture and feel it. Then look around whose not there, but could have been if only we shared. We'll be going home and there's plenty of room. The only thing we'll be able to take to Heaven is people, let's help bring God's children home.

Don't Leave Unarmed

I've been struggling lately with thoughts of my job, finances, and health. It's been so hard getting up in the morning and going to work, even though the first thing I do is pray and read the Word. Last week the church forwarded me an email from a young man who was suffering from depression. I emailed him back with my phone number and shortly after he called me. Filled with the Holy Spirit I was able to comfort him reciting God's promises. I told him life is one day at a time, God loves and is watching over him, that what he was experiencing was an attack from the enemy and that God must have a high purpose for him otherwise why would he be bothering with him. I gave him the scripture God gave me in my worst of trials "Proverbs 3:5,6: Trust in the Lord with all of your heart lean not on your own understanding, but in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight." I told him it is not our job to figure out the ins and outs of our life but to put those in God's hands and listen for His response. I shared parts of my testimony and answered all of his questions using God's word. It was a wonderful time as I could feel the peace that came over him. My wife who was in the other room was listening and said, "Maybe you should listen to what God puts on your hearts for others." She was right I know the answers, I know where my joy comes from and what I should be doing, but when I leave my house in the morning after reading His word, I leave it behind. I'm like a soldier who goes out to war and realizes he left his gun behind. All he can do is try to dodge the bullets and hide the best he can so he doesn't get shot. He can't attack; he's defenseless without his weapon. That's me I leave my weapon behind and I'm a walking target for the fiery darts the enemy continues to shoot at me and he is a good shot. I don't need the physical book, God has planted His word in my heart, I just need to reach in and use it. I must get up in the morning ready for battle and come up with a strategy to use the one offensive weapon God has given me, His word. I know the enemy's battle plan, he uses it each day and I need to be prepared to strike back, as Jesus did. Remember the forty days in the desert

and Satan saw that Jesus was weak. Matthew 4:3 Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." **4** But He answered and said, "It is written, '*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*' " **5** Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, **6** and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: '*He shall give His angels charge over you,*' and, '*In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.*' " **7** Jesus said to him, "It is written again, '*You shall not tempt the LORD your God.*' " **8** Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. **9** And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me." **10** Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, '*You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.*' " **11** Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.

Jesus was packing and all the devil could do was run. We are in the battle of our life. Come up with a strategy to use God's word and attack each day knowing that He is right there by your side.



Service

I remember when I would take a test in school at times there would be a bonus question or something you could do for extra credit. Unfortunately some Christians consider service as the extra credit instead of actually being the test itself. Our faith is reflected in what we do with what God has blessed us with.

James 2:14-18 What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? 17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. 18 But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. What does our Lord and Savior say about service? ***Matthew 20:26-28 Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. 27 And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave-- 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.*** What is the most important commandment? ***Matthew 22:37 Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'*** What do we have to have to please God? ***Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*** Just a quick recap faith is demonstrated on how we serve, Jesus places service on the top of the list of things we are to be doing, the most important commandment is to love God totally, but we can't do that without faith, which is proven by works. Seems clear we are here to be doing something doesn't it. In Hebrews first it says *He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.* It's interesting the Greek word used in Jesus' teachings in Luke 6 is mishos (mees thous). Literally, it means wages. Everything

else God has given us is gifts, but the rewards for service to Him by serving others are actually our paycheck that will be cashed when we finally get home. I've had people ask me why don't we just go to Heaven once we are saved since we can't lose our salvation and works is the reason. The day we are saved is our first day on the job and we don't retire from that job until it's time to go home. A few weeks ago at church the pastor introduced several people who were going to a mission trip to Africa. The congregation applauded them and sat right back down in their seat, along with myself. I thought Christianity is not a spectator sport, but when we received Jesus as our Lord we were drafted to play. God gave us the gifts, talents and testimony to play our position and we need to be ready to get into the game. I remember when I received Jesus at age 46 the first thing God placed on my heart I needed to be doing something. You have to remember this was a guy that before Jesus didn't do anything for anyone, including my family. I was self centered and the only person I served was me so this was a big revelation in my life. If you're a Christian it's time to punch in and collect your paycheck. This is the only place and time we have to earn the wages God has put aside for us. Once we're home our place in heaven will be established from what we do for Christ here on earth. Don't get short paid but ***Matt 6:19-21 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.***

But If Only

Lately I've been spending a lot of time with my BIO (But If Only). I'm sure we all have those thoughts of how we could have done things differently. I look at my finances and think but if only I didn't buy that, but if only I but more money aside, but if only I took that other job and so on. There are so many other BIO's but if only I didn't say that, but if only I spent more time with my children, but if only _____, but if

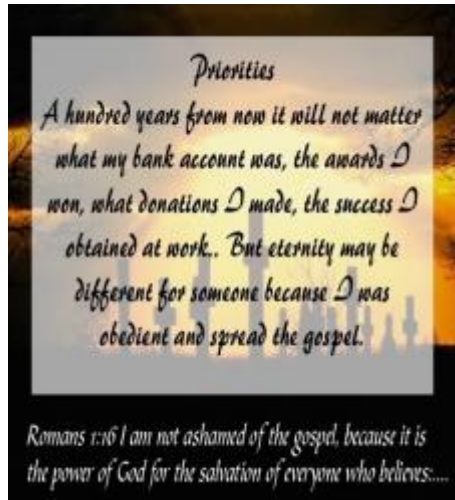
only_____ fill in the blanks. Spending time in the past is like going to the movies for a couple of hours you have no idea what is happening around you because you're focused on what is happening on the screen. That's what BIO's do they

eliminate our present, the only time we are able to accomplish anything. There is a wonderful saying that I keep close to my heart; yesterday is history, tomorrow a mystery, today a gift that's why it's called the present. The enemy tries to steal our present by distracting us with things or possibilities of the past.

Our past should only be a guide post to help us not make the same mistakes again; unfortunately we sometimes make it a hitching post not allowing us to move ahead. Now is the only time we have to make a difference. It's great to plan but when you accomplish that plan it will be in the present, so to plan and never execute that plan is wasted time. If there is something on your heart God is calling you to do, do it now don't

procrastinate. If someone needs your forgiveness as soon as you finish reading this call and give it to them, if you need someone's forgiveness call and ask for it, are you called to a ministry make a call and get the ball rolling, Is there a neighbor that might need some help stop now and go over and ask what you can do, not spending enough time with your children or spouse get up now and talk to them, are you hurting, fall to your knees right now and ask God for relief. I remember as a child how excited I was when I would receive a present especially when I got one for no reason. I remember one time my dad came home from work and for no reason gave my sister and me a little gift, which was very unusual. Mine was a little model airplane, the plane was called a Bee Gee. I've received many

gifts in my life, but for some reason that one stands out as special. This reminds me of the scripture; Matt 7:11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him! God gives us our presents each day and we choose what to do with them, He wants us to enjoy them, but what we do with them is up to us. We can choose to ignore them or use them to glorify God and build up our rewards in Heaven. As soon as you read this your present became your past and I know I'm running out of presents.



Can't Wait to Get Home

I've been talking to a gentleman for some time now. His 21 year old daughter was killed over a year ago, but he still struggles with it. We've had great discussions about Heaven and he told me all he could think about was wanting to go to Heaven now. I told him I think about home every day and why not? Would you rather be in a place that is full of hate, murder, sickness, death, deception and pain or a beautiful place full of love, with a healthy new body, people that you want to spend time with, no more lies and living with your creator that loves you so much? Seems like an easy choice. However from the time you received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior to the time God decides to bring you home is the most important time in your life and receiving Jesus as your Lord and Savior is the most important thing you'll ever do. If God wanted us home as soon as we received His Son, He would have brought us there, but He has given us this marvelous opportunity to glorify Him, fulfill the purpose He has created us for, to show our gratitude for all that he has done for us and build our treasures and earn rewards to have in Heaven. Matthew 6:19-21 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; **20** but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. **21** For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Who else do you now would do so much for you and then whenever you have an opportunity to reciprocate He gives you more. Everything we do and don't do in Jesus name will determine what we will be doing and what we'll have when we get home. Unfortunately so many Christians coast through life without earning anything that will last through eternity. Suppose you are planning this great vacation to Hawaii and you plan on leaving in 3 months, you wouldn't pack your bags and head out to the airport now and wait for 3 months at the gate. You would want to learn more about the things you can do there and maybe work a few hours extra at work to save up some money you can use when you get there. That is what we are called to be doing

and if you need a list of things that you can do to earn some additional treasures, God has put together a to do list you can find in the Bible. Everyone will have a different list and it will be tailored to the gifts, desires and abilities that God has blessed you with. I can't wait to get home, but not in my timing, but His. Embrace this special time in your life you won't get another chance to make the difference God is calling us to make. As I get to know my Lord and Savior better through His word and the works I get to do in His name I see Him differently. One of my favorite scriptures Matthew 25:21 His lord said to him, 'Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' I would picture myself bowing before Him and my Lord saying it why He was standing over me as if in a graduation ceremony with millions of people behind me waiting for their turn, but now I picture myself bowing before Him and then He looks down and lifts me up to my feet and with this wonderfully warm smile on His face He hugs me and says, "Well done my friend let me show you around." Live your life in glory and honor to Him and we'll have a great Thanksgiving feast when we go home.

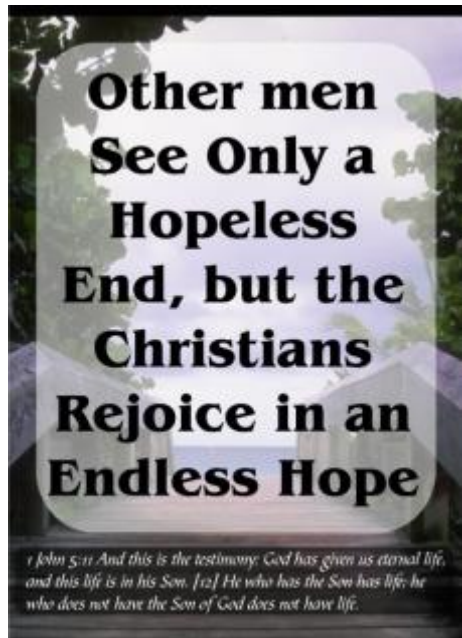


Car Repair Anxiety

A couple of days ago I had a meeting with this wonderful lady. The meeting was planned about a week ago and she asked for counseling because of anxiety. She was having some health problems and one of the side effects of the medicine they were giving here was risk of depression and anxiety. The day I was meeting with her I took my car in for an oil change and later that day I was told about the repairs it needed, about **a thousand dollars, which I didn't** have. I'm sure many of you can relate. So to say the least I wasn't in the mood to help somebody with their anxiety problems when I just received some of my own. However I kept my word and met with her. She told me about the problem that the doctors found with her heart and she hadn't been back to work for a couple of weeks.

As we talked she told me she went into the doctor's for something else when they found the problem. The doctor told her it was good that they found this problem now because it could be fixed, but if it went on to long without being treated he wasn't sure what might have happened. Usually when I counsel someone I just sit back **and listen and pray that**

God would put the words in my mouth to help. I started telling her things that have happened to me that could only be God and that the definition of a coincidence is a miracle God didn't get the credit for. Then out of nowhere I told her how fortunate she was that this had happened to her. That she was blessed with an opportunity to focus on God and not her

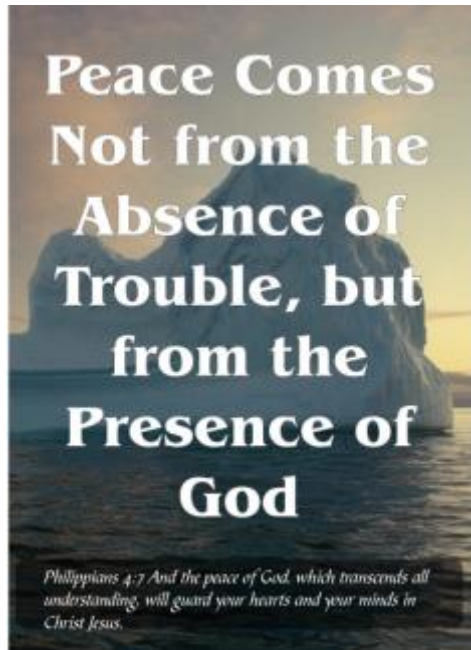


situation. I told her she had time for things that would open her eyes to what God was calling her for. I suggested writing a journal or just a letter to God. To write out her gifts and talents and the things she would like to do. I went on and on about how to spend this precious time she was given. By the time it was over I was so excited about what God was doing. Going back and telling her the stories how God has blessed me opened my eyes on how much He loves me. I pray she was comforted as much as I was. When I got home I wrote a thank you letter to my Lord and I recommend you do the same. Think back at how much he has blessed you and how He is watching over you now. I know it would honor Him.

Changing our Focus

I was counseling another person this last week and it hit me that depression and any other state we are in is based on what we focus on. So why was I so depressed? The doctors had all kinds of reasons from emotional to physical, but I believe it was my focus. Life is like a camera; whatever you focus on is what develops. My focus was on myself. I was constantly looking at things with me as the central focus, no matter what it was. If my family wanted to do something, it depended on how I felt. If there was something I wanted, I bought it. No matter what was going on, I looked at how it affected me. I think that's what happened to Elijah, Moses, Jonah and Job. Their lives were great when their focus was kept on the Lord and all the wonderful things He can do, but when they put their focus on themselves without considering God's plan, feelings of hopelessness and depression came over them. They forgot about what God can do and has done. Instead they focus on their own limited abilities, and they knew their abilities couldn't get them out of their mess. It's not easy to focus on the good and the plan the Lord has for our lives, because we live in a world with so much evil and darkness. If you don't believe me watch the news. It's easier to surrender to the negative things going around us, then to focus on God and our home we will have for all eternity that has none of the sin that surrounds us now.

When I talk to people that are suffering from depression one thing is common and that is they



put their feelings and concerns for themselves above anything else, which is what I did. That way it was easy for people to disappoint them, because they felt they deserved more. What God used to heal me from my depression was to open my eyes to others. Before I never considered others, children were a nuisance, homeless people were bums and the elderly were only people who couldn't drive. When I received Jesus as my Lord and savior He renewed my mind, like the scriptures says. I would watch children in amazement on how they could play and be content. God led me into doing so many outreaches for underprivileged children, children ministry, troubled teens and other outreaches that helped open my eyes to how He sees them. I would do special dinners for the homeless, Thanksgiving, beach barbecues, Easter brunch, banquet for the Poor and I would help in shelters. The elderly, which I'm one of, we did outreaches where the church would help with repairs, did special dinners, visitations and meals at nursing homes. God took the focus off of me and placed it on others. He used others things like reading His word, other Christian authors and even had me write a book. Am I cured from depression? No my focus is easily distracted throughout the day, but the Lord gave me a prescription I need to take once I feel my thoughts stray and that's prayer. I ask Him to open my eyes to the things He desires me to see and to do what He desires me to do. The Apostle Paul had a great way to change your focus: Philippians 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy-- meditate on these things. There is so much we should be thankful in this life and others that can be blessed if we place our attention on them, which glorifies God. Change your focus so you can see the picture God has taken of you.

Count it All Joy

James 1:2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,

You got to be kidding. How can we call it all joy when we go through the trials of this world? The apostles must not have realized what we were going to be going through or they would have thought twice about this verse. Financial hardships, health problems, family difficulties, the loss of loved ones, work issues and the list goes on. Okay

the apostle Paul might have been able to sympathize with us. ***2 Corinthians 11:24-***

27 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes

minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I

was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night

and a day I have been in the deep; 26 in journeys often,

in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my

own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in

the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 in weariness and toil, in

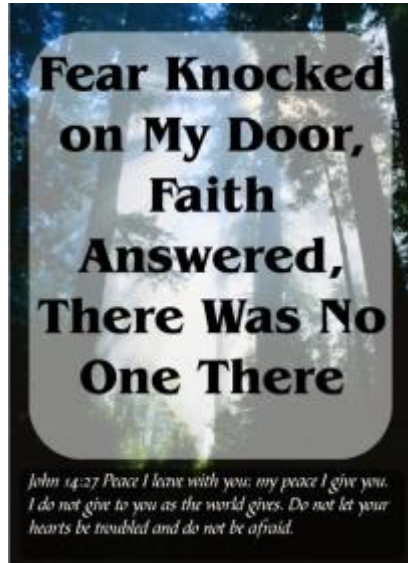
sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness— and he was still able to say ***Romans***

5:3 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; but the other

disciples how hard did they have it. ***1 Peter 4:12-13 Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try***

you, as though some strange thing happened to you; 13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings,

that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. Oh yes they were all persecuted and tortured



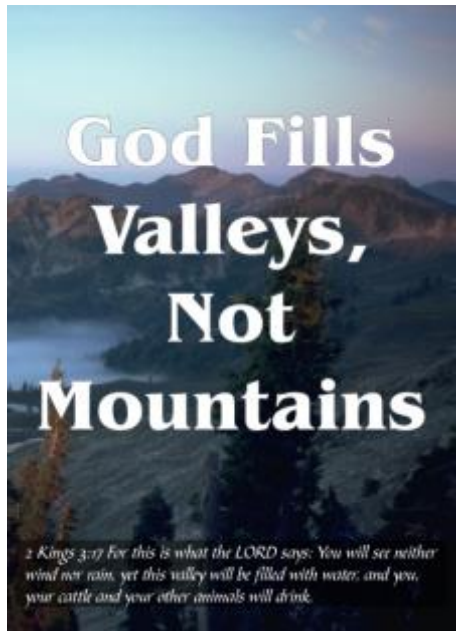
and put to death, except for John he was only boiled in oil and then exiled to an island for the rest of his life. Okay they knew what real trials and tribulations were, so how did they do it how could they still rejoice in the midst of it and why can't I? Jesus said in ***Matthew 5:11-12 "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. ¹² Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*** That's my problem I'm so focused on the trial and this life I can't see the reward. I remember when Teri and I were going to Hawaii on vacation. The weeks before seemed easier at work, because my focus was on my vacation and the fun I was planning on having. As Christians we are all going to be going on the best vacation ever and it will never end. When I was going to Hawaii I looked up where we were going and found out as much as I could about it. What we could do, eat, what we wanted to see, so we would be prepared and excited about our trip. That is what I'm doing now trying to find out as much as I can about my eternal vacation. I look through my brochure, the bible, and other books to get me excited about my trip and that puts this life in perspective. I'm here to glorify God and in return I earn rewards that I can use in Heaven. I believe that is how the apostles looked at this life an opportunity to turn their pain into gifts for the Lord. Imagine when others saw them still rejoicing when they were enduring so much for the Lord, that's what spread Christianity. That's the same with us today if others can see us rejoicing through the suffering we might be going through it will change them. They are going to want to know where our joy comes from and that is our opportunity to point them in the direction of Jesus and changing, reward.. The only thing we can bring to Heaven is people. May we be focused on the best time we are ever going to have and bring as many as we can.

Daily Medication

Someone asked me the other day of God just healed me of my depression. I told them He didn't heal me like He did the blind, leper or lame, but gave me a prescription that I would have to take each day for the rest of my life. I remember when I was going to the psychiatrists how each one told me that I would be taking medication the rest of my life and they were right. Well this is a different type of prescription, one you can take as many times as you need in a day and never overdose and fortunately it becomes habit forming. The prescription God gave me was Bible reading and prayer and I don't think I could make it through a day without them and I don't try.

One issue I have always had was anger. It didn't take much to trigger it and you can ask my children, especially when I was going to assemble or fix anything around the house. My anger would escalate to the point that no one could stand to be around me. I still have issues with anger, but now I catch myself and stop and pray and ask God to take it from me. I still have that

sinful nature as I did before, but God has put it in check if I rely on Him. I read each day and use scripture to stay focused on my Lord throughout the day. I can see why God didn't just heal me completely of my depression he wanted to meet with me each day to guide me to where He wants me to be and as long as I stay on what He prescribed for me I know I'll be fine.



The Terrorist in our Brain

I was reading an article about Robin Williams suicide. The article was written by his wife Susan and it was entitled, "The terrorist inside my husband's brain" I thought what a great description for depression. What does a terrorist do? ***John 10:10 The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.*** A well prepared terrorist would know when to attack, where his enemy is most vulnerable, where he could do the most damage and would be better equipped than his enemy when he comes to attack. The terrorist in our brain is Satan and he is the best at what he does and unfortunately we stand no chance against him alone in this fight. Satan knows when to attack even when he was tempting Jesus in the dessert after everything failed the scripture says, ***Luke 4:13 Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.*** He is watching his enemy, us, and waits for the best moments to attack us. It might be a loss of a loved one, finances, loneliness, rejection of a friend, health or something else that makes us vulnerable. He's patient, but when that moment comes he wastes no time in attacking. We need to realize this terrorist isn't coming from a faraway place, but he lives here. In fact he runs things, he is the ruler of this world, the prince of the power of the air, god of this age, roaring lion, and he has other titles that describes his power. So how do we fight such a strong and well prepared terrorist? As in any battle if we are outnumbered we need reinforcements, we need to defend ourselves for battle and also weapons to conquer our enemy. We need to join the ranks of the only one who has been able to defeat this enemy and that is Jesus. So we need to get ready for battle ***Ephesians 6:10-17 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the***

whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶ above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. ¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Our enemy doesn't need to find us he is always right there in our brain, waiting to attack, be ready and let our commander take charge and fight for us. Have your sword ready at all times and be ready.

Faith

There is only one way to please God and that is through faith. ***Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who***

diligently seek Him. So no matter what we do, if we do it without faith we can't please God. When we look just in the gospel of Matthew how many times did Jesus say your faith has healed you? The friends of the paralytic in Mathew 9:2 when they lowered him in front of Jesus, it was when Jesus saw their faith that He healed him, the woman from Canaan whose daughter was dying it was her great faith, as Jesus said, that healed her daughter, the woman

with the flow of blood in Matthew 9:22 her faith, the blind men in Matthew 9:29 and the list goes on, but the man I want to be was the centurion whose servant was healed by his faith in ***Matthew 8:10 When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!"*** Get it Jesus marveled, he was blown away by this man's faith. You would think of all the people that would have great faith would be is Apostles since they saw all of these miracles but Jesus kept commenting on their lack of faith in Mathew 8:26, 14:31, 16:8 and 17:20. God has made it obvious that we need faith above all things to please Him and if we have faith that the Bible, God's written word, is exactly that can you imagine how we can honor God. First we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us Philippians 4:13, that alone should give us the incentive to live Godly lives, He will never leave us or forsake us, we are created for good works and have a purpose, Jesus has overcome the world, we



are forgiven and will have a new home, God loves us and His promises never seem to end. How can we not want to please a Heavenly Father like this? Find the promises in His word and by faith stand on those. Write down the ones that hit your heart the most and carry them with you and read them throughout the day and by faith trust in them that will please Him. A good acronym of faith would be “Finding Amazing Inspiration, Through Him”, the inspiration of living a Godly life with our only purpose to please our Creator. It’s time for us to step out of the boat and walk on the water focusing on our Lord and there are mountains that need to be moved. It doesn’t take a lot just a mustard seed of faith will do it. So how to we get faith? We can do like the apostles and ask for it ***Luke 17:5 And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith."*** Put like anything worthwhile we need to work at it. We need to read and step out in faith. Do you realize a person that steps out and sees their neighbor is sick and brings over a meal and sits with them to comfort them gets the same reward as the pastor who speaks in front of thousands of people and gets hundreds of conversions, because God isn’t looking for results, that is His department, he’s looking for the heart that has faith in Him. I want to live each day in a way that will bring a smile on my Lord’s face, to please him. My one goal was always to go home and hear the words, well done good and faithful servant”, but I use to hear it has a sergeant would tell a soldier when they did the obstacle course in good time. Now however I picture myself going home and there is Jesus looking for me and He spots me and as soon as he does this great smile comes to His face. He walks over with this subtle little chuckle He gives me a hug and holds me and says, “Well done.” Don’t put off increasing your faith start right now, before the day is through do something that will please Him and thank Him for the opportunity to do so.

Family of Christ

I've been blessed lately with family time. A couple of weeks ago in Ohio I was able to spend time with my daughter, grandson, son-in-law, my sister, my brother and mother along with many of my cousins that I hadn't seen in a couple of decades. When I got home I was able to see my other daughter, grandchildren and son-in-law. Most of us would do just about anything for our families, but that is not the only family that Jesus calls us to love. ***Matthew 12:47 Then one said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You." 48 But He answered and said to the one who told Him, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" 49 And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! 50 For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother."*** The Apostle Paul says ***Ephesians 3:14 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.*** The family of believers will be our family forever, but what do we do for them? We would do just about anything for our earthly family, but what do we do with the family God surrounds us with? I'm as guilty as anyone else as far as reaching out and helping my brothers and sisters in Christ. I greet them at church and if they need prayer I will pray, but when it comes to helping them meet a need they have that's where my help seems to end. I have my family over for meals, support them in whatever they are doing and give when needed, but not so with God's family. Though I give to my family, one thing I don't share often enough is my faith, the most important thing that I have. If I continue to withhold this precious gift there will be family members that I will only know in this place for the short time that we are here and all that I have given will be gone. There will be no celebration or reunion and we will never share in the joy of the Lord in the home that we were created to enjoy forever. I need to open the door of my home and my heart to the family that I will be

spending eternity with
and ask for their help
to bring my whole
family with us. I'm
looking forward to the
biggest family reunion
ever and I pray that
everyone shows up.



Don't Worry About What Others Think

I've have spoken to many people about depression and it's amazing how many have blamed someone else or circumstances for the way they feel or act. Some say their spouse makes them mad, their parents made them feel insignificant, friends have made them feel unpopular, family members made them feel ugly or stupid and the list goes on. When in truth we decide how we feel no matter what people say, how people treat us or our circumstances. I talked to one gentleman and he told me his wife makes him so mad that it takes everything not to hit her. I told him his wife does not have that kind of power over him and if he gets mad it's because it is what he chooses to do. We are responsible and have control for only one person and that's our self. How we act, treat others, forgive, our compassion, our generosity, all depends us. We read stories on how some people grow up in a house full of drugs and violence and some continue in that path while others conquer and go out to help others, same circumstances but different choices.

The greatest example of how we chose to react is Jesus. We all know about the passion of the Christ, Jesus' final moments on this earth and the pain He suffered for us. Next to Jesus' being separated from the Father and taking the burden of our sins, what was the greatest pain He endured? Was it when they hit Him at the counsel (Mathew 26:67) the flogging (John 19:1) carrying of His cross (John 19:17) the crown of thorns (Matthew 27:29, 30) The pounding of the nails (Luke 23:33) The time endured hanging on the cross (Matthew 27:45)?

I think the greatest pain was after the flogging, when Jesus was brought back to Pilate and Pilate said ***Mark 15:12 "What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?" Pilate asked them.*** I imagine Jesus looking up over the crowd as they cried out ***Mark 15:13 "Crucify him!" they shouted.*** What makes it even worse was Pilate was trying to acquit Jesus, but the people He came to save would have nothing to do with that. ***Mark 15:14 "Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!"***

I believe when Jesus looked up He recognized some who showed up for the miracle meal of the five and four thousand and had their full. I'm sure some of the blind that Jesus gave sight to was there what was going to happen to the man that gave them sight, but saying nothing. What about the lepers Jesus healed, did Jesus notice them now walking freely in a crowd that use to chase them away, yelling with the rest of the crowd. I wonder if Jairus was there with his daughter by his side approving Jesus' death or simply looking down in shame?(Mark 5:22) I wonder how he explained that to her? Where was the mother whose son He brought back to life, the friends of the man whose legs were healed right before their eyes as the lowered him in front of the man that was about to be put to death and the disciples, the woman that was healed from the constant flow of blood by touching His robe, I wonder if he looked in the crowd in hopes that he might see just one of His disciples, not even one came back to give their support and remind those in the crowd who they were about to crucify. I believe that was Jesus' greatest sorrow being abandoned and turned against by those that He loved so much. The people He came to save now wanted His death. He could have stopped it right there, the betrayal would have changed His plans and who could blame them. Circumstances had changed the people that He so loved and was going to suffer an unbelievable death for did not want Him, so why go through with it. He loves us and nothing would change that, not even our betrayal. Jesus did not care what people said about Him, circumstances did not change Him, and He stood fast being obedient to the Father. That is what we are called to do be focused on, what our Lord wants. We are called to act and react, glorifying God. If you are concerned what others think, then contemplate on the one that knows you better than yourself, that loves you more than anyone. He died to give you life, because he wants us to be with Him forever. May the thought that He loves you so much give you joy and happiness in this life and the next.

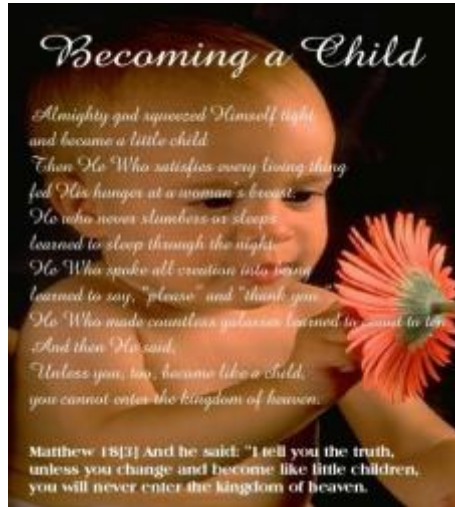
Thanksgiving

Lately I've been thinking of retirement and how financially there is no way to be able to. Along with paying my bills it's the utmost thing on my mind lately. It's amazing how much time we can spend worrying about things that haven't even happened yet and how it steals our joy. God used a book that was given to me by my, now son-in-law, Justin. It's called *Prison to Praise* by Merlin Carothers. Basically the book is about being thankful for what you have and to make thanksgiving the first thing in your thoughts. I remember he gave me that book about a week after I came out of the hospital from my last suicide attempt. I was very down and had no idea what to do next. I suffered from depression my whole life, while constantly thinking the worst could happen. After reading the book I thought I give it a try, because I had nothing else I could do. I focused on all the positive things, like my family's health, still had a place to live, gifts and abilities I had to get another job, my family was still with me during this time and the list continue to grow. I walked my dog and was thankful for her, I was thankful that I could walk, I would look around me and find the beauty that surrounded me and when you look there is plenty. I wasn't saved at the time but started to think who should I be thankful to for all of this? Justin invited me to church and eventually God soften my hard heart and I began my journey. He gave me the scripture: ***Philippians 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;***. Here I am anxious, I'm praying and asking, but the main ingredient is missing, I'm not doing it with thanksgiving. I'm so focused on my problems I'm not seeing all the wonderful things God is doing and has done in my life. As I thought of all the miracles and blessings God has done in my life, I got down on my knees and asked for forgiveness for my lack of faith. Now as I'm writing this I'm thinking how truly blessed I am; I have the most beautiful and wonderful wife, My family is healthy, my grandchildren are all doing well in school, we live in a wonderful house God provided for us, in

an area where the weather always seems beautiful, go to a church that my wife and I are part of and the list can go on. Too often I allow the enemy to take my joy, but I'm thankful my Lord is always with me whispering in my ear how much He loves me. Stop and think of all the things in your life that you should be thankful for then thank the one who makes them possible.

Father's Day

I had a great Father's Day last week when I went to Ohio I was able to see my daughter, grandson and son-in-law, who lives in Kentucky. It's been over four years since I've seen my daughter Danielle. She told me how much she loved and missed me. It was so wonderful to spend time with her. I was able to spend time with Jake, my grandson and took time to talk to him and apologize for not being there for him, seeing his basketball or football games, sharing his academic achievements, straight A's, as he was growing up, He's twelve now. It didn't seem to matter to him he was happy that we were together. I received Father's Day cards from my other grandchildren, Donovan, McKenna and William that said thank you for helping them, that I was the greatest grandpa, thanking me for going to their games, that they loved me and even thought I was awesome. My daughter Erin said that she loved me and that I was the best dad and that her family was blessed to have such a great man in their lives. Then I thought hold on that's not me. I remember who I was before Christ a self centered, angry, depressed and selfish man. What happened when did this change occur? It happened when Jesus moved in and took His rightful place in my heart. He was the one who changed me and softened this old hard heart. He works at it every day so others may see Him through this sinner's life. So my Lord I want to tell you that Danielle loved spending time with you and that she loves you and is glad that you are in her life. That Jake enjoys spending time with you even though you beat him in playing



the bean bag game. Donovan thinks you're awesome, William appreciates you being at his games, Mckenna loves that you are there when she needs your help and Erin thinks that you're the best. Happy Father's Day Jesus.

Feel Good Movies

Last Saturday Teri and I were able to join a group of 150 brothers and sisters from several churches to bless some wonderful people just south of Tijuana. It was a very poor community and everything was done on a dirt road. There was face painting, balloon animals, games, worship band, dentists and even an acupuncturist.

We gave out 500 pair of shoes to the children of this community and prepared 1,000 burritos, tortilla chips, cake and drinks and the gospel was preached. I helped oversee the food preparation and was very involved in what needed to be done. There were some great servants there and everyone was willing to do whatever it took to make it the best. Finally after things were coming together I looked up and there surrounding our makeshift kitchen were hundreds of children. Everyone was having fun and I couldn't count the smiles and hear all of the laughter. Suddenly I started to cry, I'm not sure exactly why it could have been serving with these wonderful brothers and sisters in Christ, or just seeing the fruit of our labor all around or the thought that God could use a sinner like me to make a difference in the lives of some of His children. Maybe it was all three, but whatever it was it felt great.



I talk to people all the time about depression and it's always the same, people are focused on things that have happened in the past or that may happen in the future and they play that horror movie over and over again in their mind. Every time they

watch that horror film they experience all those frightening feelings all over again. God showed me what to do to get rid of those terrible horror films and that was to replace them with some feel good movies. You know those movies that you can watch over and over again and every time they bring joy to your heart and a smile to your face. God has produced some wonderful moments in my life and all I had to do was show up and join the cast. There have been so many wonderful moments I've lost count and all I know that my feel good movies have outweighed my horror films. Last Saturday I added one more to my collection. I can replay them anytime I want, just close my eyes and see those happy children, my new brothers and sisters that I worked alongside of and I don't think that I'll be able to look at a burrito ever again without thinking of that wonderful day. Its show time and God is giving a casting call. Are you going to answer the call or are you going to sit back and watch another horror film? Paul nailed it when he said: ***Philippians 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things.***

Georgia Pastor

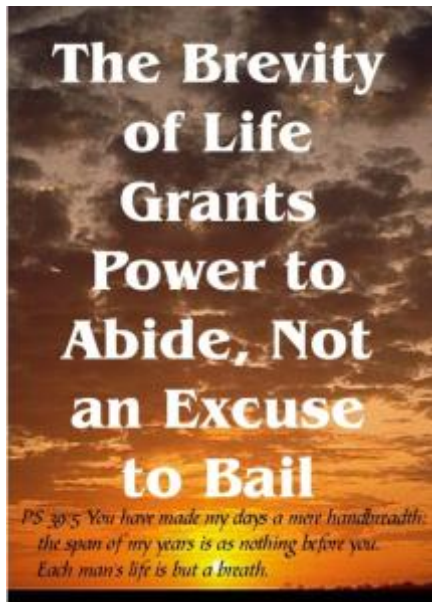
Several days ago someone sent me a post about a pastor in Georgia who committed suicide at home while his 800 person congregation was waiting for him to deliver the message. It was interesting reading the comments others had, one wrote about his lack of faith, another about screening pastors with mental illness, one blamed his congregation that they must have brought too many demands on him. However we forget about our adversary that prowls around like a roaring lion to see who he may kill and destroy. Satan has many weapons he uses on us, but I believe one of his most powerful weapon is depression and what better target to use it on than a pastor.

Satan has been doing this a long time and he is the best, the father of lies and the prince of darkness and there is no way we can win against him by ourselves.

Satan doesn't ask us to worship him as a matter of fact he likes sitting back and hope he doesn't get noticed, all he cares about that we worship something other than God. In

Ephesians Paul tells us to use the shield of faith to extinguish the fiery darts

that Satan throws. So if you are getting hit by fiery darts it's time to turn your shield. There is only one that can win against this enemy and that's Jesus and He wins all of the time. Out of all the battle array described in Ephesians 6 only one was for offense, the sword, the Word of God. If there is something you might be dealing with take out your sword and find the verse that you can stand on and use it. Fill your mind with the things of God and there will be no room for Satan's lies. That is why



Paul said *Philippians 4:8-9 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things. 9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.*

In this pastor's case what happened was the Devil won and it was a huge victory who knows how many souls might be lost because he won't be preaching. Our pastors and spiritual leaders need our help and prayers, we know they fight for us and we need to be fighting for them. Satan can't take our salvation away, but he can try to make us ineffective for God. Let God fight for you it's His desire to show you who's boss.

See You Later Stan

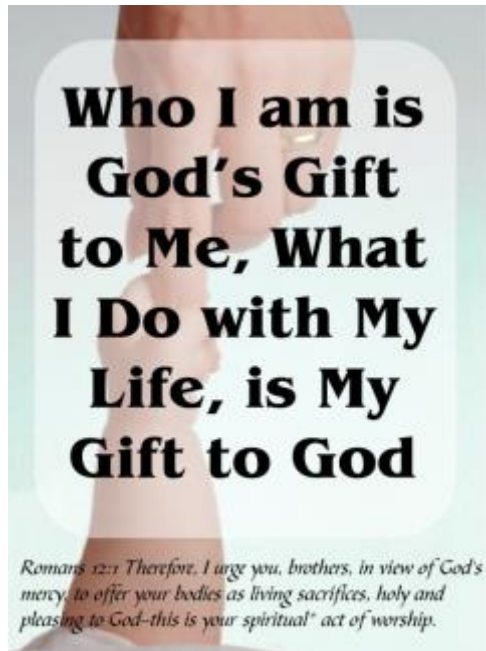
Awhile ago I visited a good friend. His wife called me a couple days before to tell me he was diagnosed with Pancreatic Cancer and was told he possibly only had a few months to live. I met Stan several years ago. I was a coach for small groups at the church we were attending and we held a meeting at my home where only a couple of leaders showed up. Stan and I hit it off with the only common interest being we both desired a closer relationship with Jesus. A little more than thirteen years ago I was living in Kentucky with no work when a great job opportunity made itself available to me in California. The problem was I had no money to live in California. Talking to Stan and asking for prayer for guidance he offered his home. Stan was a private person and for him and his wife to relinquish that and allow someone to live with them was no small offer. I lived with them for about four months and during that time I suffered some serious trials, and God knew I would need the support from my brother to help overcome them. Even when I finally moved out on my own his prayers and encouragement were always with me.

When I got to Stan's home that Saturday, he was lying in bed barely staying awake. Jeannie, his wife told me that Stan was looking forward to seeing me. I looked him in the eyes as he worked up a smile for me and I asked if I could pray with him. I had no idea what to pray for at the time, but God wanted to use me to speak to him and that He did. It was the most powerful prayer I had ever heard as I seemed to step back and allow the Holy Spirit to minister to him. Tears rolled down both of our eyes as I continue to sit by his side. What do I say now? What the Holy Spirit directly me to say was to thank him for being the brother to me that he was. I told him how much I appreciated him, how I wouldn't be where I am without his love, prayers and support and the honor it was to be his friend. Nothing else needed to be said. I left his bedroom and went to talk to Jeannie as we prayed, talked and assured her I would be there when she needed me as they were there when I needed them. Just before I left I went to Stan and looked at him and

told him that he was boring and I was leaving. He looked up at me and smiled and told me to get out of here. Since then I prayed that Stan would not suffer because this type of cancer I was told was very painful and that Jeannie would not have only memories of Stan in this condition as she took care of him. They were married over 55 years. I called the following Tuesday to see how he was doing and his son answered the phone and said they lost him the night before. My first thought was Stan is not lost he just made it home. Our Lord showed Stan and Jeannie mercy by not extending his painful time here on earth and answered the prayers of His children. Now one of my most fond memories of Stan will be that wonderful smile he shared with me that last time we met on this earth. He is not gone, lost or dead. He is just home and I look forward to being with him again and I know that smile is even brighter and more wonderful than ever. Well done good and faithful servant. Don't wait tell those that the Lord has blessed you how much they mean to you. Share your appreciation and love before we go home.

God Doesn't Make Mistakes

It's been over eighteen years since I tried to commit suicide at a beach in La Jolla. I was sitting on a rock looking over the beautiful ocean. I didn't feel nervous, and in a way was glad that I would never have to worry about anything again. As I sat there, I listened to the sounds the waves made crashing over the rocks. I took a candy box full of drugs out of my pocket and opened it. I looked over the ocean, and for the first time in my life I decided to talk to God. I said, "God I understand that I don't deserve to be in heaven for what I'm about to do, but I don't believe I belong in hell either. I've been a good person; there isn't anyone that could say I did anything terrible to them. I never was unfaithful to my wife and I treated my parents with respect. I loved my children and have tried to take care of their needs and raise them right. I know I haven't gone to church much and I understand that I don't deserve to go to heaven. I could also understand why you wouldn't want me there. How about we just end it here? Let me just go to sleep and never wake up and it will be as if I was never here. It would have been better if I wasn't here anyway. What do you say? Is it a deal?" I waited a moment almost expecting a response. Do you believe that the first time I decided to talk to God I told him He messed up? In reality I was saying, you made a mistake, you made me. You did okay with the earth, ocean, mountains and



the universe in general, but when you made me you messed up.”

Have you ever felt like that as if you were God’s only mistake? The message God has put on my heart is that He doesn’t make mistakes. He doesn’t need practice in creating anything and that everything He makes is for His purpose. If you are still here you are where God wants you and that He has a plan for your life, plans for a future and a hope. The problem is that we try to find our purpose in our plans and not His, and it’s not until you surrender to God and allow Him to guide and direct you that you will find out why you are here. He has something specially designed for you. Do you want to know what that is? Ask Him, He’s not keeping it a secret, but you need to seek Him in prayer and in His word. God has proven to me again and again I was no mistake and has allowed me to do unbelievable things and if I had my way on that beach that day there would be people that may have missed the message God has allowed me to share and maybe miss the opportunity of Heaven. Don’t miss the opportunity if God’s plan for your life.

God is Love

One thing that I struggle with, along with so many other Christians, is why would God love us? I know the sinner I am and I know that I am not worthy of this amazing love so why? It's because God is love and His desire for us is to be able to love. It is the most important thing we can do. ***Mark 12:28-31 Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, "Which is the first commandment of all?" 29 Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. 30 And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment.***

31 And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." Over the years as I got into God's word and work I have developed a great love for God, but to love others is next to impossible for me. I have my select few that I love, I love my wife more than anything else, my

children, grandchildren and a select number of friends, brothers and sisters from church, but that is where the list ends. I watch the news and my heart is filled with hate for those who murder, drunk driver, child molesters, wife abusers, most politicians, people that cut me off in traffic, my boss, others that treat me rudely and everyone else that doesn't follow my code of ethics. How can I possibly be called to love all of these people? It's much easier to judge, ignore or dislike them. The secret lies in



the first commandment to love God with *all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength*. I love God, but not in the way that I am commanded to, not even close. To love someone like this He must be first in my thoughts, that I wouldn't do anything without thinking of how He might feel, do only things that please Him, to make sure that I'm in His will always, that doing anything against His will would cause me anguish, that He would be the reason that I live. The second commandment when Jesus says it is like this I believe is the proof that you are doing the first one. If you are loving God the way we are called to the second one is second nature. If we draw close to God we will know His thoughts for us. My wife and I have been married going on twelve years and I love being with her and so many times we'll say something and the other one would say I was thinking the same thing or we will finish each other sentences. We've gotten to know what the other is thinking and feeling, which strengthens our relationship. The same with God the more time we spend with Him and His word the more we will understand Him and literally be able to see things through His eyes. Imagine if we could see others through God's eyes. God loves us all without exception, He doesn't love the things we do for the most part, but he sees what our lives can be if we only would surrender to His love. The first forty-six years of my life there wasn't very much about me to love and even after all of the evil things that I've done in my life and trying to end a life that I hated six different times He wouldn't give up on me. He knew I would be different if I would just walk with Him. My goal in life is to be able to love my Lord the way I'm commanded to do, something I most likely will fall short in doing, but I will keep on trying. Now when I find myself not loving someone the way I am commanded to do instead of trying harder I will go and spend time with my first love and ask Him how He sees that person and what He desires of me that would please Him.

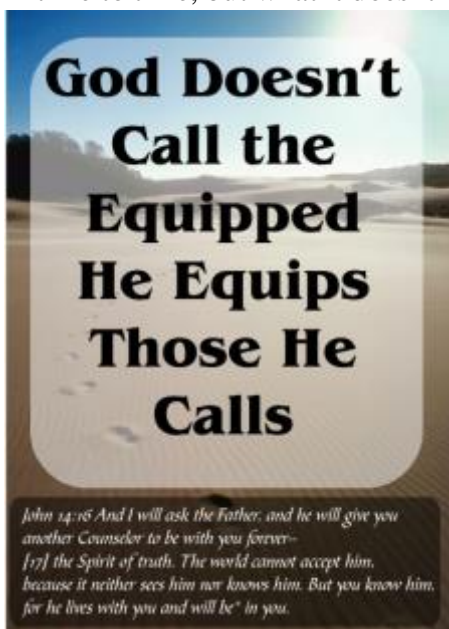
God Speaks to us through His Word

It's been eighteen years since my last suicide attempt before I received Jesus in my life and I remember I had no idea what I was supposed to do. I remember people saying they had heard from the Lord, but I wasn't hearing anything. However things were changing in my life, I couldn't swear anymore, I saw people differently with a kinder heart and I had this desire to serve which I never had before, but still I didn't hear anything from my new Lord. One thing I was told that I needed to read the Bible for direction and God speaks to us from His written word. So every day I would read. I got a daily devotional and it had a plan to read through the Bible in a year and so I began. God used His word to direct and comfort me. The first scripture that hit my heart was ***Jeremiah 29:11*** ***For I know the plans I have for you." Declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*** When you suffer from depression you have no hope or future, so this was truly good news to me. Every day I would say my scripture and it felt as if it was mine, that God wrote it just for me. As we grow closer to God the enemy increases his attacks on us and I found that my mind was wondering away from God and back to my problems. Then God spoke to me again in ***Matthew 4:10*** ***Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'"*** In Ephesians Paul describes the armor of God, six in all, but there is only one offensive weapon and that is our double edged sword, the word of God. This is what Jesus handed me that day, my weapon to defeat my enemy. Whenever my mind would wander away from God I would pull out my sword and attack. I discovered when I wasn't worshipping God I was automatically worshipping Satan. Then came a time when I felt God calling me to Kentucky and I slowly fell back into depression. It appeared everything was going wrong and I couldn't figure out why God would call me somewhere and leave me stranded. I would pray all the time and one day He answered me with ***Proverbs 3:5,6: trust in the Lord with all of your heart and lean not on your own***

understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. That was the one thing I wasn't doing I wasn't trusting. I would question Him and doubt Him, but I didn't trust Him. Then I realize even when I trusted Him in the past I didn't fully trust Him with my whole heart, just the parts I felt comfortable giving up at the time. I was trying to figure out everything on my own, contemplating different scenarios that God might what to play out instead of trusting Him. I didn't acknowledge Him as my Lord and Savior and that He was in charge of my Life, my King and Creator. I have a free will and choices to make and if I make the right choice to follow and trust Him, that He promises to guide me through this life until it is time to go home. It was great, God didn't only put this verse on my heart he wrote it wherever I seemed to go, at church, at a restaurant on the blackboard, it was even someone's email address I needed to contact, people seemed to be repeating it to me wherever I went. I still repeat my favorite verse each day and hear it has if God himself was speaking to me. As God's word says in ***2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,*** If you need to hear from God get into His word He wants to talk to you. I do a daily devotion called S.O.A.P (Scripture, Observation, Application and Prayer) I would highly recommend you trying it, it's been amazing for me when I need to hear from Him. Just read a chapter a day and look for that verse that God is using to speak to you, write down why the verse touched you and then lastly a short prayer thanking Him for speaking to you.

God Uses the Foolish Things

Last Wednesday I taught the first class of the Heaven Study. It was great. I really enjoyed doing it and wished God would allow me to do things like this more often. As I was teaching God put on my heart scripture, stories from my life to share and I had so much conviction in what I was saying it almost brought tears to my eyes. I could never have imagined doing anything like this before I was saved, just the thought of speaking in front of others would scare me. Yet over the years I've given classes, shared my testimony in front of congregations and counseled so many people that I never met before. God almost always puts this scripture on my heart ***1 Corinthians 1:27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;*** . You would think that this might hurt my feelings from time to time, but what it does it reminds me that what I do has nothing to do with me. It's proof that God works through His children. There is a saying, "God doesn't call the equipped, He equips those that He calls." When we step out to do what God calls it takes two major steps one step of love for the Father and the other is trust. Several years ago I went through a terrible time in my life. I felt God called me to Kentucky so I went, but couldn't find work and I felt everything was going wrong. I fell in a deep state of depression and a morning didn't go by that I didn't ask God to take me home. God gave me a scripture and didn't only put it on my heart, but placed it all around me in devotionals, on



walls, license plates and even an email address ***Proverbs 3:5,6 Trust in the Lord with all of your heart and lean not on your own understanding, but in all things acknowledge Him and He will make your path straight.*** This verse helped me get through that time and I still say it sometime during the course of each day to remind me it is not my so called abilities that will get me through, but trusting that God will get me through this life and home to Him. So I encourage you if God is calling you to do something, just do it, that's your part and leave the rest to Him and He will accomplish His will even through the foolish things of this world.

Tithing Our Time

Several years ago I worked in Escondido and almost every time I drove home there was this homeless man begging for money. One day I was feeling a little extra holy and I stopped and gave the man a five dollar bill and even a good God bless you. I was feeling good about myself and thought that I honored God. As I was giving God a spiritual high five He put on my heart why didn't I take him out to dinner? My first thought was that I would never think of doing something like that and the other was it would take up too much of my time. We read in the bible where we are called to tithe ten percent of all that the Lord blesses us with. What is the most valuable thing that God has given us? Time, without it we can do nothing. So if we tithe on our time each day we should be devoting 2.4 hours a day to God or 16.8 hours a week. I don't know about you, but I don't even come close. I might give God an hour a day in reading and in prayer and then there is that occasional outreach or serving at church, but how does He want me to use the rest of the time that belongs to Him? I think Jesus describes how he would like us to use our time in ***Mathew 25:34-40*** ***Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; 36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' 37 Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? 38 When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? 39 Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' 40 And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'*** We can give God the time we owe Him anywhere. At work or home when we put the needs of others above our own, even on the ride home we can listen to worship music and praise God while

we're driving. I remember the greatest compliment I ever received was at work. I was in sales and my associate and I took out a prospective client. We took her to an account we had so she might see how we run our operations. I went and got silverware, a drink and must have done other things I didn't realize. After we dropped her off at her work my associate told me that she said she never met such a humble man. I practically broke down in tears thinking that is what God has called me to be a humble man. I wish I could tell you that it happens to me a lot, but that is the only time that I recall. I believe we desire to do more for our Lord and we have good intentions, however most of the time good intentions are merely missed opportunities to honor God. I can't count the number of times I tried to serve others, but as soon as there was even the slightest difficulty I stopped pursuing it, good intentions though. I still wonder what I might have missed not taking that gentleman to dinner that night. I could have sat opposite of him and saw the toothless smile of Jesus sitting across from me, he might have had a word for me, but because I didn't give God His tithe that night I missed the opportunity of pleasing God and spending time with my Savior. I believe one of the cures for depression is service. I don't know a single time when I served doing God's will that anything else was on my heart but peace and joy. To show you how serious Jesus is about serving the rest of the scripture ***Matthew 25:41-46 Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: 42 for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; 43 I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'*** ***44 Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?'*** ***45 Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.'*** ***46 And these will go away into***

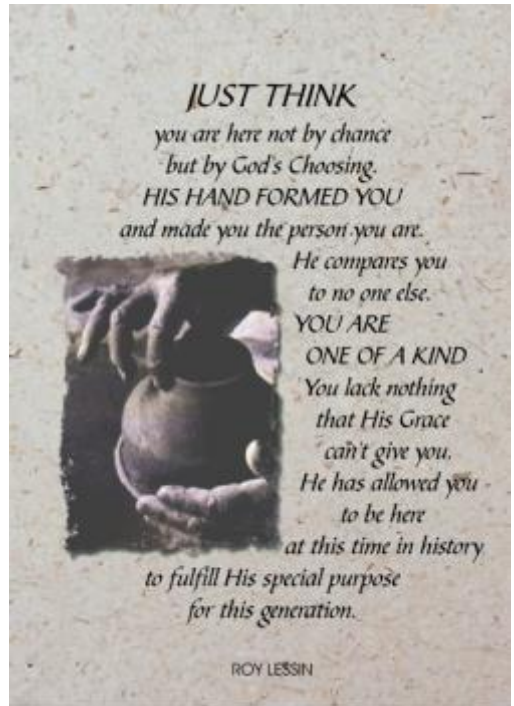
everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

We are called to be on the right side.

God wants to Use us

How is God going to use you to touch someone else? I talked about this one night at church when I shared my testimony for only about five minutes. At the end I went into the lobby and there was a beautiful young lady with tears rolling down her cheeks. She couldn't stop saying thank you as I hugged her and prayed. I gave her a copy of my book and my email address. Later my wife and I had an opportunity to talk with her as she explained her medical condition that she would never be able to have children and the rejection of someone she thought was going to stand beside her for the rest of her life. She asked me what did God want her to do and I told her it was something she was gifted in and enjoyed. She thought for a moment and told me her

best time was in junior high and I said that it might be that God wants her to get involved in a junior ministry at a church. A year went by when we received an invitation to a wedding shower. She was getting married to the leader of the junior high ministry she was part of. I follow her on facebook as she has honors God, went on mission trips to Africa, and a few months after her marriage they adopted a baby. Last Christmas there was a picture on facebook with her and her husband and several children. I wrote to ask who everyone was and she explained that they are foster parents and continue to adopt children. I thought what blessed children to have her for a mother and that they will grow up knowing God's love and Word. I wrote about this today because I came across the email she sent me after meeting for the first time and wanted to share it. It took me awhile to compose myself after reading it again and I'm still in awe that God can use a sinner like me to touch someone else. God plan is to use us



if we let Him. He has a plan for each one of us a plan that will prosper us, not to harm us a plan to give us hope and a future. Seek His will. Below is the letter Ashley wrote to me.

Hi Mark,

This is ___ from Calvary Chapel Oceanside. I spoke to you briefly on Sunday after the first service and you said it would be okay to give you a call if I ever wanted to talk....Well, I want to talk. I want to share my story with you. But I decided to send you an email, mainly because I'm a much better writer than I am when I talk. But anyway, I guess I can date back the beginning of my depression to about 4 years ago when I was 19. I had just been to a gynecologist and given some pretty grim news. I followed doctors orders and found myself in the middle of a girls medical nightmare. But during that time, I also began to date a guy who took very good care of me. I was pretty sure that this man was Mr. Right, the one I had been waiting for. As my medical problems seemed to be getting worse so was my relationship with my boyfriend. It was over. He said I had become too much to handle. My mood swings, the dangerous things he caught me doing (I tried committing suicide by swallowing pills by this point two times I think). When he broke up with me, I was sure that my life was over. The man that I had given everything I had too just left me. There was nothing left to live for. The years I have spent struggling with doctors, and surgeries, and pain was all for nothing. Did I mention that there was nothing left to live for? So, without a second thought I ran to my kitchen and found a bottle of rum, then ran to my bathroom and found a bottle of prescription pain killers. With both in my hand, I turned on the TV in my living room and gulped down both like I was snacking on Doritos and a Pepsi. I passed out...but hours later, woke up. With a wicked hangover and an awful stomach ache, I realized it didn't work. To be honest, I don't quite remember how it happened, what I said, or who I talked to, but I knew I needed help. I got myself to the emergency room and from there was put into a 3 day hold at the nuero psychological ward at UCI. I was given anti-depressants, diagnosed bi-polar, released on that third day, and they said I was cured! As long as I took that medication, depression would never bother me again. But it did....my medical problems were only getting worse. To the point where simple things like walking, tying my shoe, or getting in the car was excruciating pain. I COULDN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE! But then I met a new guy...(a guy who I tried dating but

soon realized we should only be friends) and he told me about this really awesome place called church. I had attended church before and even liked it....but beyond my Sunday visits that was it. So I started attending with him. For Christmas he bought me a beautiful study bible and told me I should read it! The thought of actually reading the bible had never crossed my mind up until that point...he even told me that he thought through God's strength I might even be able to get off of my medication. So I did! He also told me that maybe I should pray...pray for strength, and joy, and maybe even ask the Lord to give my medical team wisdom. So I did these things...and it helped. I felt happier than I had in awhile. But my physical pain was still worsening! And it was the Friday night before I met you this past Sunday that I had told this friend that I didn't want to be a Christian anymore. My new found passion for the Lord is over. I couldn't stand to love a God who watched me suffer. But he asked me to come to church on Sunday anyway. So I did it. Not for me, not for Jesus, but for him. And then you came up on stage....and I cried. A lot. I had been entertaining the thought of a bottle of rum and a bottle of pain killers again. I had been thinking about getting back on my anti-depressants. But you know what? I am pretty sure that God sent you up on that stage for me. I read your book last night. I circled words, underlined scripture, highlighted sentences. I am so excited to be alive. Not because my life is going great. In fact, it's pretty bad right now. I am still sad and I still have medical issues. But for the very first time ever I have given ALL control of my life to the Lord. I read and re-read Jeremiah 29:11 and I actually feel joy! I am not sure what my life holds, where my 'diagnoses' will lead me, and the struggles I am going to face but I quote a very wise man when I say that I will not cheat the world out of the gift God asks me to give. I now know the secret to getting over my depression...I will stop making it all about me. I am going to start making it all about God. I thank God for you. I thank God that you had to go through all of that because your testimony has given me mine. I know that being a true Christian is going to be an uphill battle, but as weak as I am...I'm ready. I would be lying if I said I am so much better, but for the first time I see a light at the end of the tunnel, and that hope is enough for me to keep carrying on. Thank you, Mark...I am now ready to get over depression.

God's Prescription

People have asked me if God healed me of my depression. I tell them not the same as He healed the lepers, lame and blind. What He did was give me a prescription. Something I need to take every day and as often as I need and hopefully it will become habit forming. The prescription is prayer. For me and everyone I have talked to so far depression is a self focused condition. Our thoughts for the most part are about us and it doesn't matter what might be happening around us we only think how it affects us. For example you might have a good friend that is dying from cancer. You can't be depressed for him, you feel sympathy, but when your thoughts turn to depression it is what your friend's death means to you. You won't be able to talk to them, or play golf or have someone to confide in anymore and that is what causes depression. Along with those thoughts add worry, anger and self hatred and it seems depression is the opposite of who God calls us to be. How can you put the needs of others above your own when all you think about is you? How can you love others as you love yourself when you don't love yourself? How are you going to give God your burdens when you can't let go? To be the man God called me to me seems impossible with depression that is why He gave me a way out. When I feel any of those negative feelings coming I go right away to God and ask for direction or forgiveness. He guides me through it every time. So why didn't He just



heal me in the first place, because He loves me and wants to have a close relationship with me. If He healed me would I spend as much time with Him as I do now, I don't believe so, but now each day I must talk to Him a hundred times and He never seems to grow weary of me calling on Him. He has helped me take the focus off of me and place it on what He wants and in turn He has opened my eyes to others, service in His name and the joy that only comes from Him. So it looks like I'm going to live the rest of this life with a thorn in my side like the Apostle Paul, but that's okay as God word says; "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." When you suffer from depression you spend most of your time thinking of all the dumb things you have done and worry about what might happen. There is a saying that has helped me, "Yesterday is history, tomorrow a mystery, today a gift, that is why it's called the present. When I'm spending time with God I'm there in the present with Him, he helps me make right decisions, to treat people better and most important helps me see myself through His eyes and if you allow Him to do the same for you, you will be amazed at the possibilities that await you. We're here for only a short time and God has given us work to do before going home so let's get busy and get it done.

Happy Anniversary

Today is my twelfth wedding anniversary to the most wonderful, beautiful woman I have ever known. It was over thirteen years ago that I met her at church. She is one of those people who serve behind the scenes, you know the first person to come and help with set up and the last to leave as she stays to clean up when everyone else has gone. I was going through one of the worst times in my life and had no direction in where to go. We served in a ministry that fed the congregation during Saturday night service. She noticed how down I was feeling and came over to tell me if I ever needed someone to talk to or spend some time with that she would be there for me. Never in my life did I have anyone reach out like that. I took her up on her offer and we went to breakfast one morning. There was something so special about her and it was a blessing just to be with her.



About our third date we went out to eat and she told me her testimony about how she was betrayed by her ex-husband and family, but she told me with no anger or resentment she was at peace and only thanked God that He got her through those times. I felt ashamed by the way I've acted in the past moaning and blaming when things went wrong in my life, but here was a woman telling me painful things with a loving heart. I continue to love her more and more each day as God reveals more of her heart to me. God put Teri in my life to show me how much He loves me. He knows that I'm weak and that I needed someone special to encourage and strengthen

me. She is always patient, kind, caring, encouraging and loving. So when I think of Teri, I think of God, because there is only one person we both love more than each other and that is our Lord. So Happy Anniversary to my best friend, my love, my companion and the greatest blessing God has ever given me.

Happy Birthday

It's my birthday today and I realize I've used up much more time than I have left. Birthdays always seem to be a time when you look back on your life and this one is no exception. Most of my life was focused on me, I've hurt so many people, especially my family with my selfishness and desire to make myself happy, which I failed miserably at. I've tried several times to end a life I thought was useless, but God wouldn't hear of it. He created me

exactly the way He desired, but gave me that awful gift of choice, awful until I finally used that gift to receive Him as my Lord and Savior.

Then everything changed according to His word ***Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.***

He used all the mistakes, pain, depression and poor choices as a testimony to help others and make my life worth living. Just today I was asked to talk to this young man suffering from depression who wanted to end his life. We went down to the pier and told me how he was feeling about all the anger, worthlessness, betrayal and confusion. It sounded exactly how I use to feel. I took over the conversation telling him how else he must be feeling and he looked astounded as if I was reading his mind. Then I said I've been there and I know what you are going through and I pray you don't continue to make the choices I did. We talked for about 3 hours and before I left I prayed with him. I'm not sure what will happen next he still has his choices to make, but I'm at peace because I did

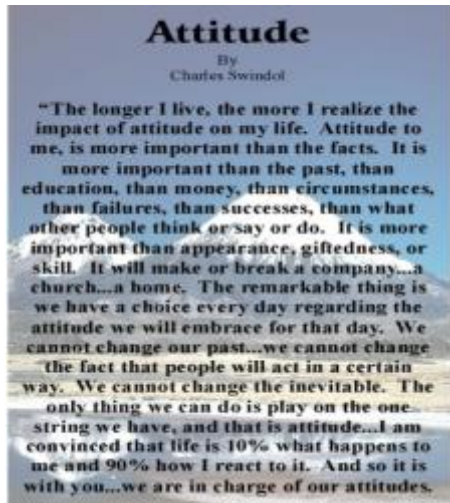


what God called me to do. We are not called to solve problems or force anyone to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior, but we are called to be a light using the gifts and talents God has given us. What a difference one choice can make. God took a life that I was willing to throw away and changed it so that I wouldn't want to be anyone else. I'm blessed to be Mark Buckley and I'm having a very Happy Birthday.

Hearing God's Guidance

The one time I felt God's guidance so strongly to do something was about fifteen years ago. He asked me to move to Kentucky. I knew it must have been God because I didn't want to go. It made no sense to me. He gave my wife at that time the same call. I must have prayed with every pastor at our church and anyone that would pray with me with the same response they felt it was God's calling. I remember talking with my best friend and he told me it doesn't make sense I was doing so well in California and serving God here why would he want me going anywhere else. So we prayed and after our prayer he looked at me and said, "I'm sure going to miss you dude." I gave in and submitted myself to God's calling. My church gave us a going away party and during the service our pastor compared my journey to Abraham's as he followed God's command to go.

Everything happened quickly our house sold in a day for more money than we asked and we moved to Kentucky on faith without having a job there. I left California as a little child who was told by his parents that they were going on a trip, but he would get a present when it was over. I pouted and there was no joy or excitement in my spirit, even though there was no doubt this was God's will. Time went on and I was hoping God would hurry up and show me what He wanted so I could go back home to California, but time went on and my attitude got worse. I couldn't find a job and didn't feel I was accomplishing anything by being there. I began to doubt that it was God's calling and threw temper tantrums about going back. I fell back into a deep depression so focused on me and my desires and not



listening to God's guidance. I made myself and those around me miserable and I didn't care. Even when God's will was made known and He accomplished what He desired through me I missed the joy, because I was so engulfed in my own misery. At one point God scolded me as I deserved and I finally humbled myself before Him, but it was too late the journey was coming to an end and I have been the most disobedient child ever. God made a way and opened doors for me to come back to California and my journey to the Promised Land was over. I never received the present, because of my behavior during the trip, I knew I didn't deserve it anyway. God has called me on some short trips since then, but never a calling as he gave me then; I proved I couldn't be trusted. It was a trial and test that I failed miserably in, but learned a lesson. I know even though I failed miserably that He still loves me and I pray he gives me another opportunity, but I'll understand if He doesn't. When God calls you rejoice for the opportunity to glorify God and look forward to the reward he plans on giving you at the end of the trip. I'll miss the moment in Heaven when what we do here will be rewarded in Heaven. I believe the moment will be brought up and my heart will sink knowing how I let my Lord down and my reward will be put on the shelf forever. Don't miss His calling or rewards, because He loves giving good gifts to His children.

Home Run

Well I'm going to Ohio this weekend where I grew up. People keep saying so you are going back home, but I don't feel like it was my home. I feel where I live in California is more like home, but still something is missing. I feel home should have more significance than just someplace to live. Maybe baseball has a better definition for home. First you need to go through some stages such as first base. You might pass right by or be there for a little before going to the next stage, second base. Again you might have a very brief pause before going on or stay for a little bit. Next stage or base is the same. It's not until you go home, your final destination, then you'll have peace and don't have to worry about someone trying to get you out. People will yell and cheer and congratulate you, that you made it home. Kind of sounds like our home. Our final destination, the reason we went through all of the stages of life we did. Our resting place, home with our Lord. So let's make this life a home run, so that everything we do is with the focus on being home with our Heavenly Father and Lord Jesus. Paul said it was a race so let's run with endurance to get the prize. The more you know about Heaven the more excited you'll be to be at Home.

We are merely Servants

I forget at times we are servants. Several years ago God called me to Kentucky. I didn't know why, but I went. Once I arrived God put on my heart to go to a nursing home. There was one only a mile away so I went and visited with a couple of residents. After my visit God put on my heart that I was to do a fancy sit down dinner for a nursing home and that there would be about 120 guests. The nursing home I visited had about 120 residents, but when I told them of my plan I was rejected, so I thought it must be another nursing home. Time went by and I couldn't find a job and our savings was quickly diminishing. I finally found a job as an assistant event coordinator at the University of Kentucky, which didn't pay enough to make our bills, but it was at least something. Time continued to go by and the savings was gone and I started building up credit card debt and borrowing money from my life insurance policies. One day I was talking to a fellow employee and I was telling him about the vision I had to do a special dinner for a nursing home and he told me about this little one that was nearby, but he thought they only had about 50 residents. A couple of statistics about nursing homes is that seventy percent of people that go into a nursing home never receive a visitor and over ninety percent don't live more than a year once they arrive. I made an appointment with the manager of the home and when I arrived she appeared very excited. She told me that she prayed about having a dinner where the residents could invite someone; she looked at me and said there might be about 120 guests. I started this quest in March and now it's November with the plan to have a special Christmas dinner the second week of December. I had no money to pull this off and asked the pastor of the church I was going to if I could announce my plan to the body for servants and financial help. The response was overwhelming as both volunteers and money was donated. I was able to borrow all the catering supplies from my work and a group of ladies turned a cinder block room into a beautifully decorated dining hall. There were centerpieces and gifts for everyone. The meal for the evening was medallions of filet

mignon on toast points with a rich bordelaise sauce and potato soufflé. Desserts were supplied by a specialty bakery who donated them. Church members were dressed in waiter apparel, including the pastor. It was a wonderful night, yet all I could think about was my financial problems. After dinner one of the ladies from our church came running into the kitchen full of joy saying, "I did it, I did it." I asked what she did and she explained she delivered a meal to one of the residents who couldn't make it to the dining room. Her family was there and she asked why we were doing it and she explained about our lord and Savior and the lady received Jesus for dessert. The next morning we went to church and the pastor told everyone that the lady passed away at 2:30 that morning. A couple of months went by. I lost my job and was on the verge of losing our home. There was no money left to borrow and I was totally lost. I went to my room and cried out like Job to God, asking why He was doing this to me. As I was laying there sobbing it was as if I heard God say, you told me you wanted to do my will, so I gave you an errand. I sent you here to bring one of my children home to me, so why aren't you blessed. You should be crying for joy instead of just crying. I was so ashamed I didn't know what to do so I continued to lie on the floor crying out to God to forgive me. God made a way and opened doors for work and brought me back to California. The thing is he didn't have to. We are called to be servants, we are suppose to serve because our master commands us to. He owes us nothing and we owe Him everything and yet we continue to complain when things don't go our way. He has promised us a new home, where there is no more pain or sorrow, but He has some errands for us to run before going home. Every day I look to see what I truly deserve and I thank God that I don't get it. We'll never be able to out give God, but don't let that stop you from trying.

Trip to Mexico

Teri and I just got back from an outreach we were part of in Mexico. A few months ago we were part of a team of 8 that went down to do a special sit down dinner for an impoverished community of 40 ladies. We did an upscale dinner that was served by the men that touched the hearts of these special ladies. It was put on our heart to do a picnic for all of their families with piñatas, jumpies for the kids and great food for all.

It would have been a typical birthday celebration here in California, but something very rare there. God must have planned the event for this specific time, because there was a couple that were renewing their vows and we were told their families were not saved. It's amazing when God wants you to do something He even takes care of the details. The event went smoothly as the eight of us worked together knowing we were bringing a smile to our Lord's face. We try to pay back just a little of all that God has given us not expecting anything in return, but it never seems to happen, as always God blessed us more then we gave. I can't imagine any vacation that Teri and I could have taken that would bring us more joy then those few days serving in His name. At the end of the event the bride and groom wanted to get us all together to thank us. Since my Spanish is none existent there was an interpreter for the gringo. With tears in her eyes she thanked us, but couldn't understand why we would go all way there and humbly serve them, however she was so grateful to God that there was people like us to show His love to strangers. It took everything for me not hold back the tears or at least I tried. I looked back on my life and how empty it was before I received Jesus as my Lord and Savior and would never imagine doing the things He has allowed me to do. He never gave up on this selfish sinner and He replaced my hard heart with a much softer one. I have a long way to go, but He is patient as He watches me on this journey. I pray that everyone would experience this unbelievable joy of serving others in God's name, life is not complete without it. Jesus told us He had come to give us life

and to the fullest measure. Serving others is just that, life to the fullest.

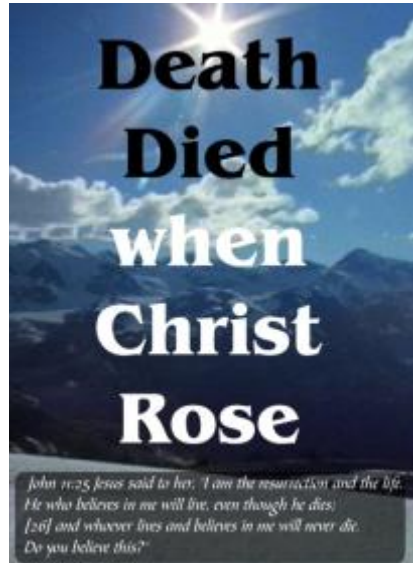
Homesick

My wife and I took a mission trip to an orphanage in Mexico. It was an awesome experience and at the end of each day our group would sit around a campfire for a devotional. The one night I was asked to lead the devotional and God placed on my heart what He wanted me to discuss. I started by going around the group and asking each person, “When I say heaven, what comes to your mind?” I also gave them an opportunity to pass if they couldn’t think of something right away. The first couple of people passed, then the next said Jesus, then another love, but no one gave an answer as if heaven was on their mind.

I explained we had only been there for a couple of days without taking a shower and sleeping in tents and that I was already homesick. I’ve been thinking of a nice hot shower, comfortable bed, relaxing on the couch, going

to the kitchen whenever I wanted to get something to eat and other comforts I missed. Yet I live in a world where sin is accepted, hate outweighs love, sexual immorality is just an alternative lifestyle, pollution, corruption, sickness and lust. This is truly Satan’s playground. I know when my time is up on this earth it will be time to go home. Yet it hardly crosses my mind. How can I get so homesick for a temporary home on this earth and not homesick for my eternal home?

A couple of days after we returned from Mexico I was talking with someone and told them about my devotional on heaven. She asked if I had ever read a book by Randy Alcorn called, “Heaven”. I told her I never heard of it and she loaned me her copy. It was the most amazing and wonderful book, with the



exception of the Bible, that I had ever read. Using scripture the book explains what heaven will be like and it was so reassuring and exciting I couldn't put it down.

When we are depressed we give up hope and even the possibility of becoming happy, because we are unable to imagine that. That is also why we don't think of heaven, because we don't know what it's going to be like. Some of us have images of doing nothing for all eternity in a constant state of peaceful bliss, how boring is that? Some think we will be just spirit beings like the angels, others picture themselves just sitting around worshipping God and others may think we will have a mindless existence and will have no desire to do anything except what we will be programmed to do. No wonder we don't look forward to going home.

Randy Alcorn's book however paints a totally different place, a place where you can't wait to come home to. *2 Peter 3: [13] But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.*

Using scripture the book explains if we were to pass away now we would be with Jesus in paradise, like the thief that was crucified next to Jesus. *Luke 23:43 Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."* This will be a wonderful place, but not our eternal home. Mr. Alcorn explains that our family and friends who have gone ahead will be able to see us, we will recognize people when we get there and we will have a purpose that involves the gifts and abilities God has given us on earth.

The really exciting part for me was when Jesus returns and sets up His Kingdom He is going to make a new heaven and earth. Imagine a new heaven and earth without any sin, brand new with no destruction and we each get to start at the beginning in the presence of God. We will have a new and perfect body. *Philippians 3:[20] But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, [21] who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.* We will recognize our loved ones, we will get to meet people we only read about in history books and

the Bible, we will remember what we did on earth and we will have a job to do, the job we were created to do from the beginning. The book goes into detail of what we might expect in our new home *John 14:[2] In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.* Other questions the book answers are: will we actually rule with Christ, Will there be space and time, will we have the sun, moon, oceans and weather, will we be ourselves, what will our bodies be like, will we eat and drink, what will our daily lives be, who will we meet, will there be animals, will we see our pets again, and so many more questions will be answered.

We will only be here on this earth for a little while longer before going home. I remember when my parents would go on vacation and my sister and I stayed home with our grandparents. We couldn't wait until they came home, because they would bring us back something from their journey. When you get home what will you bring home from your journey to your Father? Will it be something priceless like a life lived for Him, doing His will? I so desperately want to hear my Lord say to me

Matthew 25:21 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

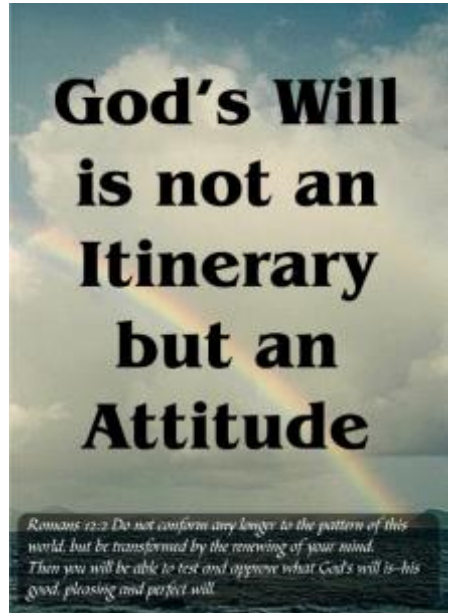
We will get to experience Eden like Adam and Eve, only this time without the sin. When you think about it, it makes sense for God doesn't make mistakes and so many think that the Garden of Eden was a mistake, because of what Adam and Eve did, but how else could God find those who would truly love and trust Him. He choose those who through the trials and tribulations of this life and the sin of this world still said I trust you Father and thank you for the sacrifice of your Son so that I may call this home with you.

One definition for depression could be a lack of hope and so we give up, but knowing about our eternal home can give us a cause to live this life to the fullest for the short time we are here.

I Hate My Job

I hate my job. Most of my life my career was one, if not the most, important thing in my life. During my life I owned restaurants, had my own consulting company, was area supervisor, director of sales and marketing and twice was the vice president of dining services, once for the largest independent food service in the country. About seven years ago the company I was working for sold and my position went away. I desperately was looking for work but along with my vast resume came an old man. I finally got in touch with the president of a company where I was the Director of Sales and Marketing, but times had changed and his company merged with a larger one and he no longer had the control he used to

have. He however was able to get me a job as a unit manager, something I would have done when I was twenty. I had no choice but to take it. Now I spend my weeks waiting for Friday, on Saturday I think I only have one more day off and on Sunday all I can think about is that I have to work the next day. So I don't only spend eight to nine hours at work, I spend hours thinking about something that I don't enjoy. So why do I hate my job so much? For one thing my immediate boss I believe might be the anti Christ, but that's not all of it. The job is beneath me and my experience and I dwell on that so much of the time instead of using those gifts and abilities God gave me in the first place. I went through this dilemma a few years ago with this same company when I was in charge of the Army and Navy Academy food program. My feeling of not enjoying my

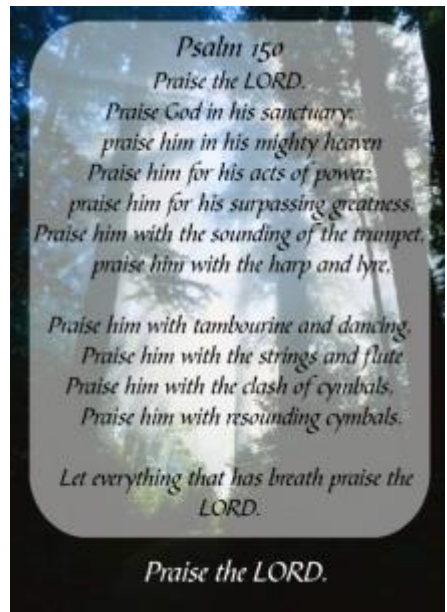


job was evident, even though I felt I was hiding them well. Then one day my customer contact told me he felt that I don't like being there. I remember going home and asking God for forgiveness and He put this verse on my heart ***Colossians 3:23 And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men.*** Even though it was a struggle I changed the way I acted keeping in mind this verse. God used me there for five years. The academy would let me use the kitchen to do outreaches through the church and when the school was closed during Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter we would feed the homeless at Thanksgiving, did a military outreach at Christmas and did a fancy Easter brunch for those in need. Just when I thought I found a home until it was time for me to retire I was transferred to the account I'm in now, which is a further drive and more hours and I went right back to hating my job. I pray each day and one of the things I always pray for is that God would open the door for a new job, something I would enjoy and be able to use the gifts and abilities he has given me. You would think after all these years I would realize God isn't interested in changing my circumstance, he wants to change me. I have a choice whether to dwell on negative thoughts or replace them with all the blessings God has given me and He has given me so many. I've had people tell me how someone makes them so mad and I tell them no one has that power, you have a choice whether to be mad or not. So instead of getting up dreading going to work I have the opportunity to do God's will and be joyful with the hope He will put someone in my path I can serve in His name. Now I'm coming back to my verse Colossians 3:23, but God has put another verse in my life when I ask for a new situation ***2 Corinthians 12:8-9 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*** I know God knows where I am and He desires the best for me and that my real job isn't in making food, it's making disciples. So it's time to get to work and show God's love by being the example he calls me to be.

I'm a New Creation

I think of the change in my life since Jesus came into it. It's true what it says in **2 Corinthians 5:17** *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.* I remember before Christ the angry man I was and how many people I've must have hurt, especially my family. One of my worst moments was when my son was about 16 and he was grounded for something, but asked if he could go over to a friend's house to study. We discovered he wasn't over a friend's house but was out somewhere else. I was so mad I got in my car to find him, wherever he might have been. My wife at that time called me on my car phone and told me to settle down and that my son had come home. I raced back to the house full of anger and stormed into the house. There my wife and daughter stood between me and my son. I don't remember what I was yelling but I couldn't get beyond the barrier they made as I screamed at my son. I had a seizure and fell to the floor thrashing around like a fish out of water. When I finally was able to compose myself I asked my wife and daughter to leave the room I wanted to talk to my son alone. They thought it was safe to leave me since I could barely move. I looked into my son's eyes and told him if I ever kill myself that it would be his fault. That was the man I created without God.

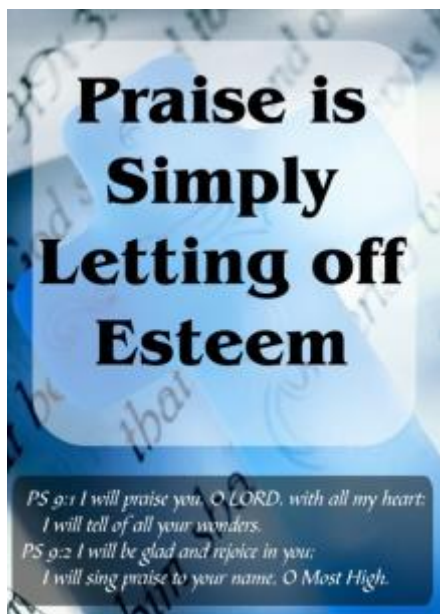
A few years after receiving Jesus as my Lord and Savior I was heading to work about 5:00 in the morning and my tire blew out on the freeway. I was able to get to the shoulder of the road, but



instead of anger my first thought was thank you Lord that You kept me safe. I got out of the car and said thank you Lord that I have a car to drive to work and thank you Lord that I have a job to go to. I opened the trunk and thanked God that I had a spare, and then thanked Him that I had the strength and skills to change the tire and there on the side of the freeway changing my tire I started to sing I love You Lord. I placed the flat tire in the trunk with tears rolling down my cheeks and felt so full of joy. I am a new creation, definitely not a perfect one, but day by day God continues to shape me into the vessel He desires. I'll never be able to make up for all of the terrible things I've done or take away all the hurt I caused, but I can use what I've learned to be a better person and maybe be able to help someone else that is hurting. God loves us the way we are, but loves us too much to keep us that way.

I've Found a Friend in Jesus, He Means Everything to Me

There is an old Hymn called, "I've Found a Friend in Jesus, He Means Everything to Me." Jesus says in *John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. 14 You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. 15 No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.* If this is true why don't we treat Him as one? A friend is someone you look forward to being with, you feel comfortable confiding in him, you introduce other people to him, you have wonderful memories of the things you did together and when you need help he is the one you turn to. I know when I pray I put Jesus on the throne, but far away from me, not where a friend would be or a talk mechanical and not sincere. What friend would tolerate that? I always wait to see when He'll be there for me, but when am I there for Him. Out of all the people that are put in my path how many do I introduce to my best friend and tell them of all the wonderful adventures we have been on together. When things are going well do I invite Him to come along or is it only when the road is rough and I need Him that I even think of Him. My greatest moments in this life is when He was with me, whether serving those less fortunate than me, organizing events at the church, being part of a home fellowship, basically whenever I was doing His will He was right there next to me helping and guiding me making sure



everything went well. Each day I need to spend more time with my friend and instead of getting down on my knees today I'll sit in a chair and slide another one next to me and try to imagine Him sitting there and tell Him about my day and asking Him His opinion of what I should do next, because I've found a friend in Jesus, He means everything to me. If you ever feel alone and find yourself with no one to talk to, pull up a chair and feel the love of your best friend. He'll never leave you or forsake you.

Jesus is Joy

To understand the Bible we need to know the character of God. We know that God is love, that He is compassionate, that He is merciful, forgiving, that He is full of grace, that He is trustworthy, gives us joy and laughter. Laughter? Hollywood and paintings have portrayed Jesus as a sorrowful and pitiful person. I remember seeing portraits of Jesus with no expression on his face, never smiling and then there were the paintings that had his heart outside of his body which freaked me out a little, but that's not the Jesus I picture. If you didn't love and enjoy something why would you bother with it.

One of my favorite accounts in the Bible is ***Mark 10:13-16*** ***13 Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. 14 But when Jesus saw it, He was***

greatly displeased and said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. 15 Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it." 16 And He took them up in His arms, put His hands on them, and blessed them. I don't picture Jesus standing there waiting for the children to sit in a circle as He blesses them. I picture my Lord on His knees as the children come running into His arms while He is laughing and playing with them. So why are we suppose to be like little children? Children are dependent on their parents for protection and care. Children



trust and aren't worried about the things of this world and they enjoy spending time with those who love them. Remember when you were a child and you received a gift that you have been asking (begging) for. Did you simply turn to your parents and say thank you, I appreciate this gift or did you run into their arms with a barrage of thank you's and I love you? Jesus wants us to enjoy the blessings He gives us and especially heaven the greatest gift of all, where we get to spend eternity with Him. When you laugh and enjoy the blessings He gives you on earth I know it brings a smile on His face. Get to know Him personally, His character is all over the Bible, then you can read it with the joy it was intended to bring. I pray the next time you hear the name Jesus it brings a smile to your face, I know when He hears your name it brings a smile to His.

Through God's Eyes

One thing that changed in me when I received Jesus as my Lord and Savior was the way I saw people. Before I hardly noticed people because I was so focused on me, but instead of seeing the homeless as bums I saw them as people that needed help, kids were no longer a nuisance but little people that I needed to spend some time with and the elderly were no longer a hazard on the road when I was in a hurry, but people that had a wealth of knowledge and experiences that they wanted to share. God gave me glimpses of how He sees us. One year I was playing Santa Claus for the CARE (Child Abuse Recovery Education) Ministry at the church. I was playing Santa when I overheard this one lady thanking one of the elves for allowing her to feel normal that day. She was excited and wanted a photo sitting on Santa's lap. She had a great big smile as they took the picture. She waited for the picture to print and as she saw the picture her expression of joy went to sadness. The lady was missing most of her back teeth and when she smiled you could notice it. She asked for another picture, but this time there was no smile. She went as before to wait for the picture. By this time I was done with pictures and walked over to her. She was comparing the pictures that were taken and I leaned over and said I think you have a wonderful smile. She turned around and looked at me with tears in her eyes she hugged and thanked me. One of the great things of being Santa was before lunch was served I had the opportunity to tell the true story of Christmas and about the greatest gift of all, our salvation. With heads bowed down I asked if anyone would like to receive their gift that day and to give their life to Jesus. Hands went up and as I looked throughout the room there was my new friend with her hand raised high and as I saw her she looked up and smiled. I will tell you that was one of the most beautiful smiles I had ever seen. God allowed me to see her through His eyes for that moment. I believe God gives us those opportunities so we can see how he sees us, with love, compassion, caring and as His children. Well never look better as when we are seen through His eyes.

Mexico Mission Trip

Last weekend Teri and I and about 55 other servants went to Mexico for a one day mission trip. We went to a small town East of Ensenada to a little church with a mission to bless about 250 children and their parents. We brought backpacks with school supplies, piñatas, face painting, actors did a play, and for lunch hotdogs, chips and a drink. It was a long day starting at 5:00am and getting home by 8:00pm, but what a wonderful day.

It was great being with my brothers and sisters in Christ and serving together to make a special day and special memory for all. I've counseled several people that were suffering from depression and what was common in all cases is that their thoughts were always negative whether about themselves, people in their life, circumstances that surrounded them or a little bit of everything. They walk around with these negative thoughts and memories along

with worries of what might happen and they live without hope of something better. I know this because that is exactly how I lived my life before Jesus. What Jesus did for me was to get me off the couch and to give some of that precious time that He gave me to others and in return He would give me something new to replace those negative thoughts that I lived with for so many years. He gave me new experiences that helped replace those thoughts that were destroying my life. In ***Luke 6:38 Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.*** When we think of giving rarely do we think of the most precious thing we have and that is our time.



When we give God our time as an offering to Him, He takes it and uses it in a way we could never do on our own. He multiplies the blessings, not just to us but others that He places in our path. Those memories are now stored in our heart and can be used anytime we desire. During that mission trip we saw hundreds of children laughing and playing, received more hugs than you can count and when we left that little village on the bus it was as if the whole town was in their yards waving goodbye to us. There are a lot of things I'll probably forget, but the times I gave to God are etched in my memory and at times I sit alone and close my eyes to bring them back to life. The best part will be when we arrive in Heaven and we have to give an account of our lives to God, those same special moments will be brought up by Him, because they were also etched on His heart.

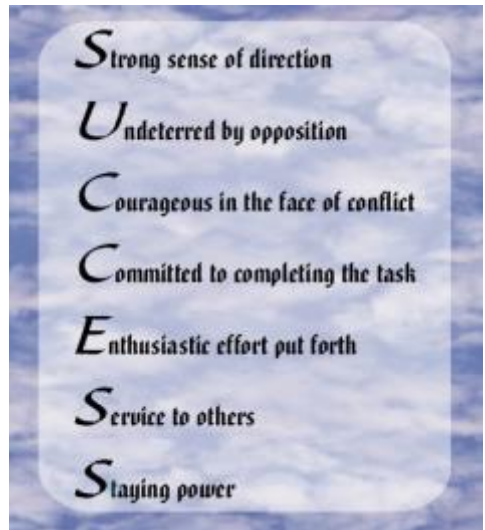
Mikey

It's been eighteen years since I've received Jesus as my Lord and Savior. He has guided me along the path of getting over my depression and walks with me each day. However there are days of struggle when I focus more on me and my problems than God's plan for me. When I catch myself I look back on some of the wonderful things God has allowed me to do in His name and it reminds me I have a purpose for being here.

One of those times was when I played Santa Claus for an organization called CARE which is Child Abuse Recovery Education. We would hold a Christmas Party for about 200 children and some mothers.

Because of the abuse some of these children have had, only Santa was allowed to hold them. I was having a ball as I reached out and lifted children up on my lap, hugged them and asked them what they wanted for Christmas. As I looked down the line I saw a young boy about 5 years old, red haired and what appeared at first to look like freckles. As he got

closer you could see the freckles where scabs, it appeared someone burned his freckles off with a cigarette. When it came his turn to sit on Santa's lap I couldn't reach out my hands, but instead from a distance I asked what he wanted for Christmas. He looked up at me and said, "Santa I want a hug." My arms went out so fast to Mikey, that was his name, and I hugged him so tight. Mikey stayed with Santa all day passing out candy and toys to the other children. When it was time to go back on the bus Mikey came up for one last hug and to tell Santa he loved him. I told him I loved him to and took off my gloves and



glasses and gave them to him. I said never forget your loved more than you know.

I think of that time often because it reminds me I can't be a mistake if God can use me to touch someone else. There are so many other moments like that where God uses the foolish things of this world to make a difference. If you're feeling that maybe things would be better without you God doesn't think so or he wouldn't have created you. If you can't find your way out of a situation you have a guide that will lead you out. You are created perfectly for a purpose. There are no mistakes when it comes to God.

Using Our Sword

A couple of weeks ago I talked about Ephesians and the armor of God and that the sword (God's Word) was the only offensive weapon we had to battle with. About thirteen years ago I was in a major battle. We moved to Kentucky and I felt that the Lord called us there. It seemed like everything was going wrong and I couldn't find work and we were about to lose everything. I couldn't understand why God would do that. Then He gave me my sword it was in ***Proverbs 3:5, 6 "trust in the Lord with all of your heart and lean not on your own understanding in all your ways acknowledge him, and He will make your paths straight."*** It was amazing it seemed everywhere I went I saw a reference to that scripture. Even though I didn't know then, God had a plan for me. I needed to go through those trials to fulfill a bigger purpose and all I needed to do was to trust Him and allow my Lord to do the work. I thought I would give you a couple of weapons you can use in whatever situation you might find yourself in. I pray you fight the good fight.

(Resentment- I can't forgive) ***Phillipians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.***

(Fear-insecurity) ***2 Timothy 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.***

(Anxiety) ***Philippians 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;***

(Discouragement-I'm ready to give up) ***Galatians 6:8 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.***

(Isolation-I'm all alone) ***Hebrews 13:5 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."***

(Guilt) ***Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.***

(Failure) ***Romans 8:37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.***

(Stress-Overwhelmed) *John 16:33 These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."*

(Weary) *Psalms 27:1 A Psalm of David. The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?*

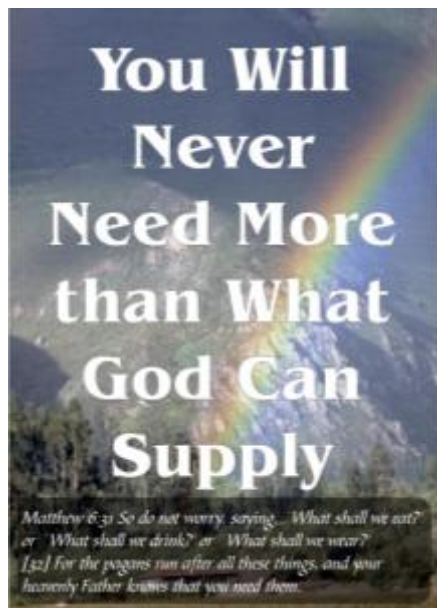
(Opposition-Under Attack) *1 John 4:4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.*

(Confusion-I don't know what to do) *James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.*

(Lack of Faith) *Philippians 4:19 And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

Military Appreciation Dinner

Last Sunday we had our Military Appreciation Dinner that we have been planning for few months. My pastor came to me a while ago and asked what outreach was first on my heart and without hesitation I said a special evening for wounded warriors. He told me to go for it and hooked me up with the pastor that oversaw the military connection at our church. Have you ever had a vision of doing something, but when it came to reality it wasn't even close to what you were hoping it would be? My vision was for a special sit down dinner with entertainment, for home fellowships to host a table bringing their own china and serving these brave people. The pastor started with the guest list and called to tell me that there really wasn't very many wounded soldiers in the area and asked to expand the guest list to active military. Of course I said we want to honor our military. The room we were going to use would seat 112 people or 14 tables to host. As we got closer we sent an email to all of the home fellowships. I got ready with a list knowing I would have to turn some people away once I filled the quota of tables. The email went out and no responses at first and then the pastor over the invitations informed me we only had about 25 guests coming and the dinner was a little over a month away. I told the pastor maybe we should just cancel it since I had only a couple of tables being hosted and hardly any guests. He told me to wait a little longer. Just a couple of weeks before the event I had enough hosts to host 9 tables and the guest list grew to about 70. As I received the guest list I



realized most of it was not active military, but members of our church that were veterans and my heart sank lower. The day had come my wife and I shopped for all of the food and prepared the dinner, a lady in our church made these great homemade desserts, the hosts of the tables did a great job and the room looked beautiful, we hired a comedian and had worship music during dinner. The people who showed up to serve were excited for the opportunity and everything was going smooth. We started to serve dinner starting with a choice of salads and our servers would come back with the orders for the tables with a choice of prime rib, chicken Marsala or salmon with a raspberry chipotle glaze. As we finished serving I asked is this all of the tables to find out a third of our guests didn't show up even though we confirmed the reservations the week before. We cleaned up and went home. I was confused I had no doubt this is what God wanted, so why didn't go has I planned? God put on my heart that was the problem it was my vision and my plan, his will was that I would do the dinner. My job was over once I committed to do what God had asked me to do. There were no other rewards for organizational skills, great food (which it was) or even a servant's heart, my job was done when I obeyed God's request. I forgot about that during the process because after I told God I'll do it, it was all about me and what I wanted and I lost the true vision which was to do it in glory and honor to my Lord. God put on my heart this scripture: ***Matthew 14:28-31 And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." 29 So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. 30 But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" 31 And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"*** That was me I was willing to step out of the boat but when the guest list wasn't what I wanted, people didn't step up to serve as I thought they should, people didn't show up my focus wasn't on Jesus any more it was on the wind and I began

to sink. I like Peter heard those troubling words "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" I don't know why God called me to have this dinner maybe someone who came needed to know someone cared enough to do this for them, maybe someone serving never served before and this will open the door to more service for them or maybe God was teaching someone a lesson on obedience or maybe He just wanted to have dinner with His children. It doesn't matter the reason God had a plan and I'm on a need to know basis and I didn't need to know. The event was a huge success, because it pleased God and there is nothing more important we can do as His children then to honor our Father. This scripture has been on my heart for awhile and so many Christians find joy and comfort in it, including myself: ***Matthew 25:23 His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'*** I've been thinking though if we aren't doing anything why would Jesus say well done?

My Day with Jesus

I've been thinking a lot about Heaven and the one thing that I look forward to above everything else is seeing Jesus. There have been times on this earth that I've felt closer to Jesus than others, but there was one day I felt as if I could reach out and touch Him. It was several years ago and we were going to do a special dinner for the lady's ministry it started out to be 300 and ended up being over 550 guests. I decided I was going to take off work that day and prepare all the food. The menu was wild rice stuffed chicken breast with a Marsala mushroom sauce, fresh salmon with a lemon caper glaze and prime rib with fresh green beans, pasta primavera and rosemary potatoes as accompaniments. The day came and I got up early to start. The day had its trials. First I timed myself making just one stuffed chicken breast and after my calculations it would take all day just to do that, the local health inspector showed up because he had complaints about the food service at the church and needed to do an inspection and then no one told me that the oven I needed to use for the prime rib that the thermostat was broke and no matter what temperature it was set at it went as high as it can go, about 550 degrees. However I started the day knowing that my Lord wanted me to do this and He knew there was no way I could do it alone so He signed up as my sous-chef. From the beginning He was there working right alongside me, we sang worship songs and I must have talked His ear off as I rambled on. When I was doing the chicken breast it was as if He stopped time and I finished way before I thought I could possibly have. We ended up talking to the health inspector and told him what we were doing and had an opportunity to share my testimony and my love for God. Everything checked out fine and he was on his way. I had the prime rib in the oven for only half an hour when I saw the smoke and turned off the oven. It looked a little charred and I just let it set in the oven until I could free up some other oven space. This is where Jesus showed off, before I placed the prime rib in the other oven I checked the temperature and the temperature was just right. When we served the prime rib at the dinner it was perfect, I've

never made prime rib as well as it turned out that night. The men who were serving that night, a little over fifty, started arriving about four. I was blessed with a couple brothers that had experience in food service and they took over the dining room and led the rest of the men, freeing me up to stay in the kitchen. Everything turned out great. When the men took the food to the sanctuary, where the dinner was being served, I found a quiet place outside behind the building. I fell to my knees prayed and thanked my Lord for an awesome day and allowing everything to turn out so well. I broke down and cried and told Him how much I loved Him. That's when I felt is arm around my shoulders and it felt like He drew me close to Him, then He lifted me up to my feet and we walked to the sanctuary where dinner was being served. This was the first time I saw the sanctuary set up for this dinner and it was beautiful. What made the evening even more special was several ladies were invited from shelters for abused women. These women, who only knew of men to be abusive, were humbly served by godly men whose only objective was to please them. They had the opportunity to sit and talk with other women who showed the love of God to them. What a special evening that must have been for them. I saw my wife from a distance talking to the ladies at her table and she appeared to be having so much fun, I love to see her laugh. Everything was under control so we headed back to the kitchen to start cleaning up my mess. About half way there I felt His strong carpenter's arm around my shoulders again and it felt like He said, "This was great we need to do this again." He left me to finish, but what a glorious day it was. Next Saturday my wife and I will be taking a mission trip to Mexico, where they will be handing out about 500 pairs of shoes, have games for the children and I'm overseeing the food of course. We're making 1,000 burritos and not in a kitchen but on a dirt road. In this community the houses are a couple pieces of plywood, even the church is old tires, plywood and a tarp for a roof. I use to worry about doing large events, but not anymore, because I know he'll be there. "We get to do it again." His word tells me that He came to serve and serve he does. How can you not love Him?

Not My Job

Last week someone from the church called and asked if I would call this gentleman that was suffering from depression. I called and made arrangements to meet him at his home and that we would go somewhere to talk. When I got there it was a converted hotel and his room was maybe 10 foot by 10, just enough room for a bed and a chair. He talked about all the terrible things that had happened to him, how he just wanted to end his life, his failing health, his wife that he wasn't allow to contact and the government conspiracy which seemed to focus on him being miserable. I prayed to myself as I listened to all he had to say, and he had a lot. I took him to a restaurant that was nearby for dinner and finally was able to speak when he began to eat. I explained my only answer was Jesus, because He was the one who saved me and that I had no other miracle cure. He explained how he gave God a chance in the past and that he was raised Catholic and he said something I've heard before. He told me that he was told if he did good and believed in God that his life would be full of happiness. I told him I've read the Bible several times and never read that, as I matter of fact I said, God's word says that we will have trials and tribulations, but He promised He would never leave or forsake us. I told him we were not created to live in this place and for the first time he agreed with me. I told him this time we spend on this earth is like a job placement test to see what we are going to be doing when we get home. When we receive Jesus as our Lord and Savior that is the assurance we are going to the place we were created for and what we do with our life afterwards will determine the rewards we will receive when we get there. He listened a little bit while he ate and for a moment I thought God was using me to get through to him. However after dinner on the walk back to the car he started all over about the government conspiracy, how he just wanted to end his life, his health problems and all of the mistakes he had made during his life time. It was getting to the point where I was beginning to slip back into depression myself. I finally stopped him and asked what can I do to help. He thought for a moment and said

that is a good question, but he had no answer. I told him I give a class in Getting Over Depression and my first thing I say is, the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. I asked him if he was willing to change is daily routine and I gave him several suggestions such as reading the Bible, going to church, praying, volunteering somewhere to help others, joining a men's ministry. Every suggestion had a reason why he couldn't do it. I dropped him off at his home and asked if I could pray with him. I prayed and told him to think of how I could help him. I left feeling I just wasted a couple of hours of my life and that I let God down since I didn't appear to help. Then God put on my heart that when I called him back and met him at his house, I did what I was called to do. I was reminded the final result is not up to me and the words I spoke came from the Holy Spirit and all He needed from me was to show up so he could use me. The gentleman has called me a couple of times on the phone and I almost dread picking it up, but yesterday he called and asked about the men's ministry at church and that he felt he needed to find some new friends. I gave him the number of the church and found out he really called. Whether he goes or not is not up to me, but I still have one more job to do now and that is pray. To intercede on his behalf and to ask God to soften his heart and draw close to Him. Our jobs as Christians are not to fix problems or people, our jobs are to be servants God can use when He calls us and to be available when He does.



Trusting God

Each day I post a daily devotion on my web site, “gettingoverdepression.org”. They are journal entries I made over the years using the acronym S.O.A.P. (scripture, observation, application and Prayer) I would read a chapter in the Bible find a verse that spoke to me and write a journal entry using the soup template and the one I posted back in October 2007 and really hit my heart and I wanted to share it.

Date 10/19/07

Why Like This?

Scripture: *Romans 9: [20] But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'" "*

Observation: I know most of my life I hated myself and couldn't figure out why God would make someone so imperfect as me. I remember the last time I tried to kill myself I told God He made a mistake by making me. I'm still imperfect yet with the love of God I can see how He can use me and why I was created the way I am. I was looking at myself through my eyes and not His.

Application: I need to know I am a creation of the Master and to focus on what He wants of me and not what I want. I'll only be happy performing the duties I was created for and not trying to do the things I wasn't.

Prayer: Dear Lord guide me each day to fulfill the purpose you have created in me in glory and honor to you. I urge you to try this simple journaling technique it's amazing how God will speak to you through it.

Only What God Thinks Matter

I've been counseling a young lady suffering from depression and her outlook is the same from almost everyone I have spoken to. She allows what people say and do to effect her emotions. I can't tell you how many times I've heard; this person makes me so angry, that person makes me feel worthless, if only this person would treat me better I would be okay and the list goes on. In actuality no one can make you feel or act any way, it's our decision in how we handle how people treat or speak to us. The only person we have control over is us. Circumstances do not affect us, how we decide to handle them does. There is nowhere in the Bible where it says to trust others, it only calls us to love them. ***John 13:34 A new***

commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. One of the worst abuses

I can think of is child molestation or abuse and yet some of these children grow strong and help others while others live their life in quiet isolation. So what's the difference in these situations? It's who are you listening to, is it the voice and opinion of someone else or are you going to go to the only opinion that matters? There is only one person that you should be listening to and taking His advice to heart at all times and that is God. What does God think of you, He loves you more than anyone can possibly love you. ***1 John 4:10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*** He is here to help us get through this life. ***Matthew 11:29-30 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*** He'll always be there for you

Hebrews 13:5-6 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be



content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." 6 So we may boldly say: "The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" I've found most people don't set out to hurt us, but they are sinners, just like us and they don't know what to do or say, that is why God calls us to simply love. The young lady I was counseling was getting some of her low opinions of herself from a close family member. We talked and I gave her the same advice the Bible gives about love. So she went home that night and gave a hug to the person that has been hurting her and he told her do you think that will make anything better how about giving me some respect instead. She was devastated and left the house crying. When I talked to her I explained you can't react to someone else's reaction. He may not have given you the response you were hoping for but believe me you honored God and pleased Him and that is all we are called to do. I told her to live her life for an audience of One. I told her this is not going to be easy and she couldn't do it on her own she needed Jesus in her life to guide her and that God has a plan for her life. ***Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you plans to give you hope and a future.*** Those are God's plans for us, but we need to constantly inquire what we are suppose to be doing to be on the right path and follow God's plans for our life. We need to be in prayer every day and in His word to know what we should be doing. One day when we are home the only thing that will matter is what we did with the life God gave us. There will be no more pain or sorrow when we reach Home and everyone around us will be loving and focused on our God and the only words we'll hear will be loving and encouraging. So while we are here, for this short time, let's set the goal to hear these words from our Lord, "Well done good and faithful servant, welcome."

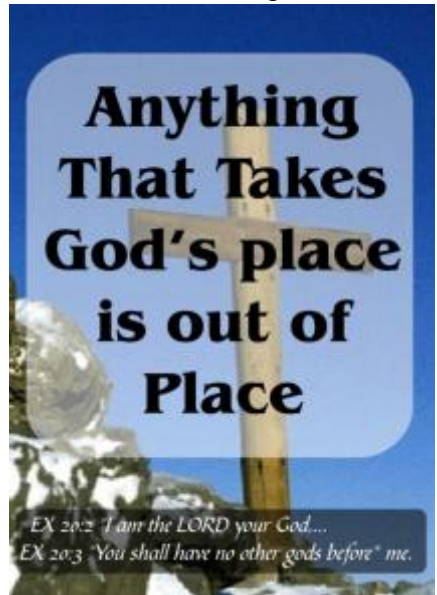
Our Choices affect others

About six months ago a dear brother in Christ, Butch, was in a terrible car accident. A woman decided to drive the wrong way on the 78 and hit him head on. Butch was in the hospital for five months and suffered multiple injuries; he now has more metal in his body than a Smart Car. Not only Butch, but his wife Sammie went through pain that is almost unimaginable, along with family and friends.

A choice caused this terrible event to happen. The lady for some reason chose to drive the wrong way on the road early that morning and her choice didn't affect only her life but the lives of others.

Isn't that what we see on the news? Someone chooses to bring a gun in a nightclub to kill others or a movie theater, a suicide bomber chooses to strap a bomb on and walk into a crowd of people, a drunk driver decides to get in their car. Our choices affect so

many other people. My life is made up of poor choices that changed the lives of those around me. Attempting suicide six different times, be admitted to mental hospital, poor financial choices, uncontrolled anger, caring more about my needs than my family's. I changed people lives for the worse most of my life. Once when my daughter was a teenager her boyfriend broke up with her and she was devastated, so she took a bottle of aspirin and pills to take her life and only through the grace of God did she survive. Why would she take such drastic actions for something so insignificant, because that is how her dad handled his problems. Our choices don't only define who we are but change those close to us. The biggest choice we'll ever make is; will we receive Jesus as our Lord and savior and allow



him to guide us through this life until He brings us home, but it doesn't stop there. God gives us choices to make every day and He wants to be part of each one. Our lives can bring death and despair to others or it can encourage and save lives by the choices we make. Do we put someone down or do we share Christ's love with them, do we ignore someone in pain or do we show them love and concern, do we take part in this world or obey God, do we give in to the lust in our heart or pray for strength to glorify God. So many choices and to make the right one we need to get the advice of our heavenly Father who never makes mistakes. Choose the Lord you'll never go wrong. Butch has choices to make does he wallow in his pain or use it for God's glory? He chose the later, he and his wife praised God and trusted Him through this whole process. Facebook posts showed their faith in God to get Butch through this and it did. The choice to post these amazing words throughout this ordeal were inspirational to so many and brought others closer to God. I know it did for me. Thank you Butch and Sammie for choosing Christ over adversity.

Retirement

Well I'm going to be 65 years old and I can't get use to waking up every morning and looking in the mirror and seeing my grandfather looking back at me. It's getting close to retirement and I'm not sure what I'm going to do without that daily regiment of getting up and going to work. Teri and I have been thinking what we're going to do. I've taken a couple of vacations. Once we went on an Alaskan cruise and wasn't impressed as a matter of fact I spent most of the time thinking of what I could have done with the money we spent. A couple of years ago we went to Hawaii, which was very nice and we enjoyed the time we spent there, but again it was soon forgotten. So I thought what did we do that really brought us joy and the memory still does? A few years ago Teri and I and several people from our church went on a short mission trip to an orphanage in Mexico. As usual Teri and I were in charge of the meals. We slept in tents at night, very cold nights I might add. There was no running water for showers and you couldn't drink the water that was there. We arrived on a Friday afternoon and our first meal would be that evening. We got everything set up that we brought with us and got the food. We thought we would do a tradition cook out with hamburger, hot dogs and all of the trimmings. It's amazing how much we take for granted. These kids, about 60, were amazed and we told they could have all they wanted. A little girl about 5 years old had 3 hot dogs and 2 hamburgers and she couldn't stop laughing. As I was cooking I saw all my friends playing and eating with the children. The next day we made Breakfast, French toast, bacon, sausage and eggs, lunch was marinated chicken and for dinner that night spaghetti and meatballs. All the children called me chef and I couldn't count the hugs I received. We left on Sunday as the children gathered around us and sang and laughed. Each child hugged us good-bye and thanked us. About a year ago we went back to Mexico to do an outreach for about 50 women. They lived in a very poor part of Mexico and they built this community for their children. A dear sister in our church wanted to do something special for them

and contacted me. We decided to have a special dinner for them at this small church. There was about 10 of us and guess who did the food. We had it on a Saturday night after the women were finished working in the fields. The room where the dinner was being held was transformed into a beautiful dining room, wonderful gift bags were made for each lady and the men served the ladies, which was unheard of in this community. We made a special salad, chicken piccata, sautéed green beans, herb coated roasted potatoes with cheesecake for dessert. The women arrived in their best dress, most likely their only one and sat down and were pampered, something they never experienced before. At the end of dinner they introduced the chef and his faithful assistant. All I saw was tears of unbelief as they thanked and hugged us. It was a night none of them would forget, the chef included. All my best memories and joy are revolved around service to others. It's when I'm doing what Jesus would do that I experience the fullness of this life and a joy I can't describe. So I may be retiring from my job soon, but I'll be starting a new job. A job that will fulfill the purpose God had created me for, bring me more joy, will have eternal rewards and I'll be working for the best boss ever. As I talk to others about depression and look back at my own life I can see the definition of depression is the absence of hope and vision. My hope is that I put a smile on God's face each day I'm here and a vision of using the gifts, testimony and talents God has given me to touch the lives as many as possible. Here is to finishing well.

Rewards of Tribulation

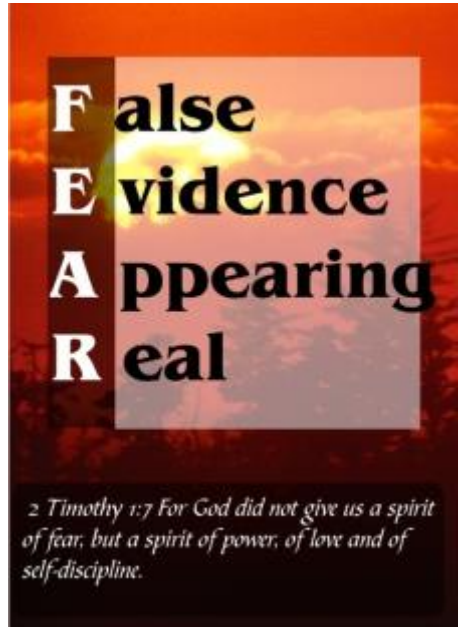
This last week I received an email from someone who was suffering a debilitating disease and has been homebound already for six months and not sure how much longer she will be suffering. She wrote;

“So if God wants us to live & be healthy, why do some people stay sick? why does it take a long time for others to get well? I can't blame those people with incurable diseases if they commit suicide, because some illnesses are just too painful to bear! So the fact that I can't commit suicide, that means I'll just be miserable for the rest of my life. There's no reason to enjoy life if there's pain all over your body. right?”

I wrote back to her saying;

“There is no scripture to my knowledge that tells us that God wants us to live and be healthy. We were created for something much better than this world. I believe the short time we spend here is simply a job placement test, if you will. What we do here will determine what we will be doing for all eternity.”

After trying to commit suicide six times I realize that suicide is Satan's way of saying, “Quit.” He's telling us God must not care, because you are going through this, You must not be worth much if He allows you to suffer, where is God, Just give up so the pain will stop and other things that will take our faith and hope away. I truly feel in my heart the more Satan attacks you the more he knows God has a plan for your life and he'll do



anything to try to stop you, but when you reach out to God He'll guide you through. All the scripture tells us what we do here on this earth will determine what we will be doing on the New Earth for all of eternity and when we experience the trials and tribulations of this world it is actually an opportunity to earn rewards that will last forever. The Bible tells us we will be ruling and reigning with Christ and our positions in Heaven will be determined on how we live this life on earth. I believe the people that will have the opportunity of reigning over kingdoms in the new earth will be those who glorified God through the hardest trials. I will be honored and with joy to serve under someone who endured a debilitating disease and through it all gave glory to God and opened the eyes to others to His grace or a Christian from China who suffered persecution, torture and death without giving up His faith. These are the people who are making a difference in this world for the next. At times even good fortune may be more difficult to show the love of Christ to others. For instance a person gets a promotion in their work and decides to buy a bigger home for their family and gives God the praise for that promotion. God appreciates the realization that all good things come from Him, but I don't believe there is a reward in this praise. However if that person lays that promotion before God and asks my Lord how do you want me to use this to glorify You, cha ching, their rewards in Heaven increased more than the square footage of a new home. To be able to do these things take faith and . ***Heb 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*** This is a time to build up your treasures. Peter summed it up perfectly;

1 Peter 1:3-12 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you

have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of your souls. 10 Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, 11 searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. 12 To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven--things which angels desire to look into.

Satan's Powerful Weapon

Depression is one of Satan's most powerful weapons and we forget we are in a battle with Satan. We forget he roams around like a lion seeing who he can devour. Satan is more than happy to sit back and make us believe everything that goes wrong is our fault. Satan has been doing this a long time and he is the best, the father of lies and the prince of darkness and there is no way we can win against him in our natural selves. Our only hope is Jesus, he's been beating Satan since the beginning. If you were worried about making your house payment and someone kept telling you don't worry about your house payment, don't even think about it.

What would you most likely do, think and worry about making your house payment. We can't just not think about things, we need to replace those negative thoughts with positive ones. So instead of not thinking about your house payment think of all the difficult times God has gotten you through, how much he loves you, your eternal home with Him, the purpose you were created for, the memories of the times you served in His name and let God take control and let Him deal with the enemy. That is why Paul said ***Philippians 4:8-9 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things. 9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.***



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Satan can't take our salvation away, but he can try to make us ineffective for God. Let God fight for you it's His desire to show you who's boss.

Jesus Taught Me to Pray

This Wednesday will be the last Heaven study class that I've been teaching. It has been so awesome to be able to teach this class. God brought some wonderful people together and I looked forward to being with them. The thing I enjoy most is that I feel closer to God than any other time during the week. I try to empty myself so that God can fill me with what He desires to say and it's as if I'm sitting with everyone else listening. This last week I shared the time when I was just saved and I was told the church was going to build a food service, which is something I do professionally. I asked to see the plans and a meeting scheduled for me to give my recommendations. I sat with pastors and elders, about 20 in all and I explained my plan, which saved the church about \$500,000. Everything was going great until the end when one of the pastors asked me to close in prayer. I was a Christian for only a couple of months and I've heard others pray, it was as if they were reciting the bible and speaking so holy that I wasn't sure if I qualified to hear the words. I didn't want to say no so I went ahead and spoke the worst prayer ever recited. I sounded like Porky Pig on speed and when I was finished I looked up and all the others weren't sure what to say or do. I got out as quickly as I could and ran to my car. I started driving home while crying over this terrible prayer, telling Jesus how sorry I was for letting Him down. It was as if Jesus was sitting in the passenger seat laughing. He told me prayer is a heartfelt talk with God saying how you feel there are no magic words just come humbly before Him, I love you and just want to hear from you.

I'm reading a book from my favorite author, Max Lucado, *Before Amen*. He tells of a time he was picking up his children from school when he made an observation of the fathers who were there picking up their children. He listened as children saw their dad waiting and yelled "Yippie!", another yelled "Ice Cream", another "Pop! Over here! Please push me on the swing." I heard requests, "daddy, can Tommy come home with

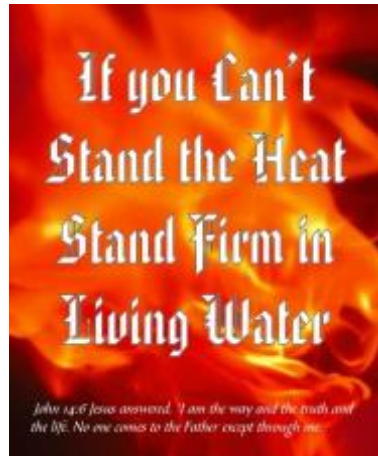
me?" Questions: "Are we going Home?" and heard excitement: "daddy! Look what I did!" He said one thing he didn't hear was: "Father, it is most gracious of thee to drive thy car to my place of education and provide me with domestic transportation. Please know of my deep gratitude for your benevolence. For thought art splendid in thy attentive care and diligent in thy dedication.

I pray differently and I love talking to Abba. Luke

18:17 Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it."

The Pit

It's been several years since God has delivered me from the pit of depression however I still feel this rope tied to my ankle with the other end still in the pit. Lately I've been feeling the constant tug on this rope where the enemy and his dominions are trying to pull me back in. So many things continue to happen in this life, I now have to wear hearing aids because of severe hearing loss in my right ear, there is a constant ringing in my ears called Tinnitus, I need knee replacement surgery, rheumatoid arthritis is spreading through my body, I'm in a job that I'm struggling in, family members criticizing the way I live my life and the list continues to grow. The demons who seem to pull the hardest are the "what if demons" they're the ones I hear over the ringing in my ears of the things that might happen, what if you won't be able to work how are you going to support yourself or if my health continues to



deteriorate am I condemning my wife to a life of taking care of me instead of the other way around? The rope is being pulled so hard lately I'm lying on my stomach finding things to hold onto so I don't get pulled in. I remember living in the pit and I can't go back to that life again. Have you ever been there or are you there now? Why would God allow this to happen? As I ask this question I can hear His voice and I look up from my struggle and there He is standing right before me with His hand out to help pull me away again. I was so busy looking for things to hold onto in this world I forgot to look up. He was always there telling me that he would never leave me or forsake me (Deuteronomy 31:6), that with Him there is nothing I can't do (Philippians 4:13) not to worry (Matthew 6:25) that He is greater than the ones pulling on that rope (John 16:33). I spent

some time remembering how He has pulled me out in the past, how he has used the gifts and talents that He has give me to help others and how there is more to do before going home. I asked if he would please cut the rope so I would stop being pulled **2 Corinthians 12:9** *And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.* I was reminded that I was not alone on this journey and that He wanted to accompany me in hopes that I would draw closer to Him and during those times that I feel being pulled back in that I would always look up and grab onto His hand, because he will always be there. So I know this journey will be filled with even more trials and tribulations and the road I travel will become even rockier, but I won't be alone and He will get me through until it's time to go home. **Matthew 6:25-34** **"Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? ²⁸ So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; ²⁹ and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow**

will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day *is* its own trouble.