

A photograph of a woman in a blue long-sleeved shirt lifting a young child in a blue dress with yellow polka dots. They are outdoors, with a bright sunset or sunrise in the background, creating a warm, golden glow. The woman's arms are raised, supporting the child from behind. The child's arms are also raised, and their hands are near the top of the frame.

Getting Over Depression

*By
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G.O.D. WORKBOOK

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.

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Introduction

Welcome to *Getting Over Depression*. I believe things happen for a reason and there is a reason you're reading this workbook, whether for yourself or someone else. If you keep an open mind and more importantly an open heart, it will be revealed to you. I believe you will discover the times you feel most fulfilled and full of joy will be the times you're helping someone else because that's the way we were truly made. There is power in fellowship as it is written:

Matthew 18:19 "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. [20] For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

This world was not designed to be survived all alone. The way to enjoy life is to fellowship with others and depend on God. How many times do you put off getting together with friends or family because you feel that it's just too much trouble? Then you say you need time to relax. You need to check your definition of the word "relax." If relax is to you is what it used to be for me, sitting down and watching TV or just laying around doing nothing by yourself, then maybe we should not be relaxing. I know now if I'm with people talking, laughing and sharing experiences that's relaxing and enjoying life.

Life is like driving in California—you get where you're heading a lot faster when you have someone else with you. So we can think of this class as the carpool lane of recovery. The focus of this group is not on our problems but on the solution to our problems. Most of us, if not all of us, are here because we can't seem to let go of our problems. We will start with the rules of this group.

1. The first rule is to be truthful. We can't help each other if we are not telling the truth. We need to be honest with ourselves, and more importantly, with God.
2. Do not be embarrassed or afraid to say something. What could possibly happen except you may find the answer to your question? This needs to be a safe place for everyone.
3. We must have respect for one another and we are here to help one another. We are not here to judge or criticize but to share with each other a similar experience we went through. So whenever we are talking, start the sentence by saying, "When I..."
4. This is not a lecture or a seminar; this is a group meeting and in a group meeting your input, questions and solutions are needed. We can only be successful if we work together.
5. This is not group therapy we are not going to focus on the problem, but rather focus on the solution.
6. From time to time I will ask if anybody has experienced a certain situation. A real response is needed if you have had that experience or feel similarly. I ask that you

please raise your hand and don't be embarrassed. On the other hand, don't raise your hand just because you see most of the others doing it.

7. No vulgarity; this is a house of God and we need to respect that and others.
8. Even though this is a group for depression we need to be upbeat and alive.
9. Everything Is based on God's word and we will be using scripture to guide us through each lesson.



I realize this may be very different from what you're used to; you may be thinking this is weird and not what you are expecting. All I ask is that you stay and come back a few times. For this short time you need to be present and focused. Don't worry about what happened yesterday and what might happen tomorrow.

Matthew 6:25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? [26] Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? [27] Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?"

Right now you're safe and surrounded by some great people who are going through some of the same things you are going through. We now have the opportunity to make our lives better as well as the lives of people around us.

I'm not sure what will work for you as far as getting out of depression, I just know God took my hand and led me out of it and I'm supposed to be telling you what He did for me. I can tell you for a fact, He took me not just out of depression but God has given me such a wonderful outlook on life that each day is great. I was at the point that it was more comfortable being depressed than trying something new.

Definition of Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result. Starting today you need to start doing something different. You don't have to change your life or the way you been doing everything, but change something. Read your Bible more, start a journal, memorize scripture that will help you when you get in trouble, serve others, join a home fellowship or just pray more and let God lead you.

Journaling

Another tool that helped me stay focused and hear God clearer was SOAP. SOAP is a journaling technique that I was taught. It stands for Scripture, Observation, Application and Prayer. What I would do is read a chapter in the New Testament and see what verse God puts on my heart. I would then write that verse under Scripture. I would then date, give the journal entry a title and then number that entry as a heading. Next I would look at the scripture again and write what it meant to me that day and that would be my Observation. Next I would write how I'm going to apply what I just learned and how I was going to change to grow closer to God and that would be my Application. Last, but certainly not least I would write down a prayer to ask God to direct me in my new path. There was always something special for me when I put things down in writing. You'll be surprised how little you have to concentrate; the words will come to you as if someone else was writing it for you.

I put down an example out of my journal to help get you started. Do yourself a favor and make a commitment to do this for thirty days and see what God has to say to you.

Date 3/12/12

I Need to Follow Jesus

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Scripture: Luke 14: [27] And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

Observation: I'm not carrying my cross fully. I need to submit fully to my Lord, yet I don't put Him first in my life. I get so caught up in this world and in myself at times I leave Jesus out and give Him only a fraction of what He deserves from me. I'm only here because God wants me here and this life I'm using is His. Not mine.

Application: I need to live this life as His. It's not when I have time for my Lord, but that all the time I have is His already. I need to submit fully to Christ's authority and live a life of righteousness that will be pleasing to my Savior.

Prayer: Dear Lord you have blessed me so much and I know I don't deserve any of it. All I have is yours, including the precious time you allow me to have. Show me how to use everything for your glory.

Mark's Testimony

I was raised in Ohio most of my life, and several years ago I was visiting California. I was at the cove in La Jolla, and felt as if something was calling me. I stood there for over an hour looking out over the ocean, and knew I belonged in California. I finally figured out why I was so depressed; I wasn't living in California! Without preparation and on an impulse I moved six months later. Well, for some reason, things still weren't going right and less than a year later I found myself without a job, and on the verge of losing my home. One day I decided it would be for the best for everyone if I was no longer here, just like Elijah. It seemed the longer I focused on myself the more I hated what I saw. I remember waking up in the morning and despising my

reflection I saw in the mirror to the point that I would talk to myself and tell myself what a terrible person I was.

Have you ever had those types of moments? _____ If yes, explain one: _____

I didn't even try to defend myself from me. I took a bottle of pills that should have been more than enough to do the job, and headed back to the beach where I had fallen in love with California. This was now my sixth suicide attempt. The first time I hired someone to kill me (the person went to the wrong place), another was by electrocution (a phone call stopped me at the last moment), was going to shoot myself (Someone stopped me and found the gun), and a couple of overdoses (not quite enough I guess). If you're still here, God's not done with you.

I looked out over the ocean and wondered in amazement at its magnificence. I walked around looking for a rock to sit on. As I sat there, I listened to the sounds the waves made crashing over the rocks. I took the pills out of my pocket and opened the bottle. I looked out over the ocean, and for the first time in my life, I talked 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 have been a good person; there isn't anyone that could say I did anything wrong to them. I never was unfaithful to my wife, I treated my parents with respect, I love my children and took care of their needs and raised them the best I could. I know I haven't gone to church much, and like I said, I understand that You probably don't think I deserve to go to heaven and neither do I. How about we just end it here, let me go to sleep and just never wake up and make things as if I was never here. What do you say God, is it a deal?" I took the entire bottle of pills and with the bottle of water in my hand, I swallowed them all. Do you believe that the first time I decided to talk to God, I told Him He messed up? I said, "You made a mistake; You made me. Oh yeah, you did a great job with the ocean, mountains and universe but You must have been having an off day when You created me."

Have you ever felt as if you were a mistake? _____

Have you ever told God He messed up? _____

After taking the pills, I sat there and asked God for another favor. "Please God," I said. "I don't mind dying, but please just don't let it hurt." I ignored God all my life, and now I start asking for favors. As I sat there wondering what was going to happen, all of a sudden, things started to spin. I started to feel pain in my head and I said, "I asked for no pain God," as if we really made a deal. I started to shake uncontrollably and it felt as if my heart was going to explode. My heart was beating so heavily I could feel the beat in my hands and feet. The pressure in my head was so severe I thought my eyes were going to pop out of their sockets. I pleaded with God to make it stop! By now everything on the beach appeared to be moving and then it became dark and I died. Well, in a way I died; I was dead in the life I had created without God.

This happened about 9:30 in the morning and what appeared to have happened was that I sat on that rock all day staring into the sun. You see my face was badly burned but not the top of my head. My arms were laying on my legs, because my arms were burned and you could see where my arms had been laying. Around 6:00 that evening I fell off the rock and someone passing by saw me and called the police. I was taken to the hospital where my family was called in and told they were not sure if I was going to make it and if I did, I might have severe liver problems and they were not sure how much brain damage was caused. I was in a coma for several days and awoke with no side effects except no one was really sure how much brain damage I had, but then they wondered about that *before* the overdose.

Do Christians Suffer from Depression?

Can a faithful and growing believer get depressed? According to a recent poll one out of every five people suffer from depression. I'm not talking about the times when someone might feel a little down, but severe depression, to the point where people need to seek the guidance of counselors and medication.

The definition found in the dictionary for depression is, "A state of general emotional dejection, despair, sadness, hopelessness and sometimes suicidal tendencies."

Psalm 25:17 The troubles of my heart have multiplied; free me from my anguish.

Some of the numerous weapons Satan uses are: lies, deceit, greed, desperation, and feelings of self doubt, hopelessness, and rejection. He uses these fiery darts to aim at a target, and the bull's eye is depression. If Satan hits that bull's eye, it can lead to separation from God, hopelessness, the desire for death and in extreme cases suicide. So do Christians suffer from depression? The Bible shows that some of the most righteous were the ones that suffered from depression. David was impatient in the psalms (Psalm 13:1-2). As Moses led the people out of Egypt he was overwhelmed (Numbers 11:14-15). Jonah was angry (Jonah 4:1-3), Job suffered loss (Job 10:18) and Elijah exhaustion (1 King 19: 4-5). When we look at the lives of some of these righteous men, we can identify several factors that lead to depression. We also discover several ways to respond to it.

The Bible gives us some examples of people who had reached a point in their lives where they would have preferred being dead or wished they had never been born.

Note Elijah's account in 1 Kings 19:1. This was shortly after Elijah had challenged the prophets of Baal to have their god bring fire to burn their sacrifices. All day the prophets of Baal called on their god but to no avail.

1 Kings 18:27 At noon Elijah began to taunt them. "Shout louder!" he said. "Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened." [28] So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. [29] Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention

Then it was Elijah's turn; he poured water all over his sacrifice and called on the One and only True and living God.

1 Kings 18:36 At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. [37] Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again."

The Lord brought fire down to burn the sacrifices. Elijah put to death 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah. How does a person go from seeing one of God's great miracles, and then fall into a deep depression, so deep that he no longer wants to live?

1 Kings 19:1 Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. [2] So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them."

1 Kings 19:3 Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, [4] while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." [5] Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep.

Have you ever felt like you have had enough, and you don't think you can take anymore? You become afraid, you are full of hopelessness, and you don't know how you can possibly make it through another day.

Have you ever felt this way? _____

If yes, please explain: _____

Although depression can occur without an apparent cause, one major trigger is loss. Job was a God-loving man who lived a righteous life, and in just one day, he lost everything he had. Do you remember he was sitting at the table, and messengers kept coming in telling Job he lost his donkeys and oxen, then he lost his sheep and servants, next his camels, and finally his sons and daughters? He still held strong to his faith and trusted in the Lord, then his body became inflicted with terrible sores.

Job 2:7 So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head. [8] Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes.

Then Job's buddies showed up, and they weren't any help at all and in Job 10:18 as Job is talking to God he says:

***Job 10:18 "Why then did you bring me out of the womb?
I wish I had died before any eye saw me.***

***Job 10:19 If only I had never come into being,
or had been carried straight from the womb to the grave!***

***Job 10:20 Are not my few days almost over?
Turn away from me so I can have a moment's joy***

***Job 10:21 before I go to the place of no return,
to the land of gloom and deep shadow,***

***Job 10:22 to the land of deepest night,
of deep shadow and disorder,
where even the light is like darkness."***

Have you ever said, "I wish I was never born"? _____
It's amazing how we can feel so bad at one particular moment and disregard an entire lifetime of blessings.

Have you ever gotten mad and depressed because things didn't go your way? _____
Have you felt as if God doesn't care so why should you? _____ Look at Jonah's words.

Jonah 4:[2] He prayed to the LORD, "O LORD, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. [3] Now, O LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live."

How about Moses "a friend of God?" Wow, what a title. Here is a man who actually talked to God, saw all the miracles as God worked through him and yet his faith and strength was no greater than ours at times. We all come to a point where we can't take it anymore because we are so focused on what we can do instead of what God can do through us.

Numbers 11:[11] He asked the LORD, "Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you that you put the burden of all these people on me? [12] Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant, to the land you promised on oath to their forefathers? [13] Where can I get meat for all these people? They keep wailing to me, 'Give us meat to eat!' [14] I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. [15] If this is how you are going to treat me, put me to death right now--if I have found favor in your eyes--and do not let me face my own ruin."

The one thing Elijah, Moses, Jonah and Job had in common was that they were all believers in God, and they knew God. However, I never knew God. At age nineteen I was diagnosed as having a seizure disorder, and the diagnoses in the years that followed included bi-polar disorder, chemical imbalance and manic depressive. Over the years I was treated with just about every

known antidepressant imaginable, and hospitalized several times for depression, attempted suicide five different times, and as a last resort given electro-shock therapy.

God answers us all differently when we call on Him. When He finally answered Job, He was a little upset to say the least, and let Job have it. He told Job in so many words, how dare you question God's motives and plans for your life?

Job 40:2 "Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? Let him who accuses God answer him!"

Even though God was upset with Job, He gave him a chance to repent, He restored Job's life and made him prosperous. God gave him twice as much as he had before and even blessed him with seven sons and three daughters.

For Elijah God sent an angel to restore and comfort him. The angel fed him and gave him rest so God could help him get his mind back on the right track. I believe during that time, Elijah remembered all of the great things the Lord had done, and realized that there was nothing He couldn't do. With the help of God, Elijah was able to restore his body and his mind and rebuild his faith so he was better equipped to move on.

For Moses God sent help.

Numbers 11:16 The LORD said to Moses: "Bring me seventy of Israel's elders who are known to you as leaders and officials among the people. Have them come to the Tent of Meeting, that they may stand there with you. [17] I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take of the Spirit that is on you and put the Spirit on them. They will help you carry the burden of the people so that you will not have to carry it alone.

For Jonah He took the time to explain himself, which He doesn't have to do.

Jonah 4:10 But the LORD said, "You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. [11] But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?"

What my God did for me was a series of miracles one right after another. I compare God's love to professional wrestling. Have you ever seen tag team wrestling? It's when there are two people on a team, one is in the ring fighting, and when he gets in trouble, he reaches out to touch the other one so he can come in and take over and save him. All they have to do is reach out and touch and their partner jumps right in. Somehow, that selfish prayer of mine was close enough to make contact with my Savior and He jumped in to save me. God was going to show me that He doesn't make mistakes. Everything He creates is for a purpose. He used several people to get that message to me. He took the focus I had on myself, and aimed it toward others who needed me. He brought other people into my life to guide me. One thing I did when I was so badly depressed was keep everyone out of my life.

Have you ever done that? _____

It seems that when you need people the most, you turn your back on them and don't want them around. One of God's greatest gifts is companionship and fellowship with each other. How many times does our Lord reference in His Word about loving each other and helping each other?

John 13:34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. [35] By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Romans 12:9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. [10] Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.

1 Peter 1:22 Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.

1 John 4:[11] Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. [12] No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

He didn't create us to handle this life alone; we can't. We need God to succeed and He blesses us with people around us.

It's been over thirteen years since the Lord led me to Him. I'll never forget the day I sat in that chair and raised my hand to give my life to my Savior, Jesus. God used so many people to lead me in the right direction.

So how did He do it? He helped me take the focus off of myself. He took the burdens I carried all my life, He lightened my load and gave my life meaning and purpose. He put the Holy Spirit within me and changed me.

2 Corinthians 5:[17] Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

I've talked to so many Christians about the change in their lives that happened when they received Jesus as Lord and Savior and each one had something different that changed within them. I remember one of the first things that happened was I couldn't swear anymore and when I heard God's name used in vain I would get a sharp pain in my heart. But the one thing that really changed was the way I looked at people. I rarely even noticed or cared about them at all I was so wrapped up in my own life, but now things were different. The homeless were no longer disgusting to me but unfortunate, the elderly were no longer insignificant people I needed to pass on the road and children were not a bother, but a blessing.

I lived by the beach in a small apartment and started work early so I would get up at 2:00 a.m. and walk along the beach and pray. I noticed so many homeless people sleeping on the park benches and my heart went out to them. So each week I would purchase several gift cards to the nearby Dairy Queen and place them in a card I made that had Proverbs 3:5,6 on the front and John 3:16 inside with the words, "May God continue to bless you and keep you safe, for He cares and loves you." While the people were sleeping I would place the card next to them and quietly leave. I would also volunteer to help any ministry feed the poor and homeless and I led the Thanksgiving Dinner at the church I was located.

Is there a moment you remember where you reached out and helped someone or a group of people? _____ If yes, describe that time: _____

One day I was going through a very tough time in my life and had no direction regarding what God wanted me to do. I was heading for work when I saw this homeless man who stood at the corner each day walking towards the tracks where he slept. It was early Sunday so there was no traffic on the road and God put on my heart to stop and give him some money. Like Jonah I didn't want to stop and made excuses to myself. I was going the opposite way and there was no way to turn around. Besides, I had my own problems and I was running late. One thing I learned was that God doesn't see our problems the same way we do and had me turn around anyway. I stopped and in my wallet I had a twenty and a one-dollar bill in my pocket and looked up to see which one He wanted me to give, as if I didn't know. So I ran over to the man and got his attention. I said, "I feel I'm supposed to give this to you." Pretty heartfelt don't you think? As I handed the money to him I began to walk away and he stopped me and said, "What's your name?" Startled I turned around and said, "I'm sorry, my name is Mark." The man looked at me and said, "Wow, that's my name too." As I looked into his face for the first time I noticed his eyes were bright blue and his toothless smile warming as he said thank you. I said, "God bless and take care" as I left. I walked back to my car wondering what had just happened and realized my anxiety was gone and proceeded to go to work. I never saw Mark again, but I'll never forget him.

Hebrews 13:[2] Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.

I start each day thanking God for all He has given me, and all of the ways He has blessed my life, and the list continues to grow. To avoid Satan's fiery darts I put on the armor of God and use my sword to be victorious. Before I do anything, I ask God what He wants me to do. Now when I look around, I see things in a totally different light.

There is a great quote by Albert Einstein, "There are two ways to look at life, one as if there are no miracles, and the other as if everything is a miracle." Choose the latter.

Six things you should do when you get depressed -

1. Recognize what is depressing you. Is it real, or are you worrying about something that may happen or maybe even something imagined.

Psalm 42:5 Why are you downcast, O my soul?

Why so disturbed within me?

Put your hope in God,

for I will yet praise him,

my Savior and [6] my God.

2. Spiritually reorder your thinking and identify distorted thinking. Remind yourself God is in control and you're not alone.

1 Kings 19:15 The LORD said to him, "Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. [16] Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. [17] Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. [18] Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him."

Jonah 4:10 But the LORD said, "You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. [11] But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?"

Romans 8:31 What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?

3. Replace negative thinking with honest prayer. Talk to God and tell Him how you're feeling. Job, Moses, Elijah and Jonah all talked to God wanting in despair, pouring out their feelings.

Job 7:11 "Therefore I will not keep silent;

I will speak out in the anguish of my spirit,

I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.

4. Do not alienate yourself from others; share your feelings and ask for help.

Colossians 3:12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. [13] Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

*Ecclesiastes 4:9 Two are better than one,
because they have a good return for their work:*

*Ecclesiastes 4:10 If one falls down,
his friend can help him up.
But pity the man who falls
and has no one to help him up!*

5. Keep your focus on God and allow Him to fulfill His plan for your 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.

6. Give your burdens to God; let Him fight your battles.

1 Peter:[7] Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

I know it's hard to give up control of anything, let alone your whole life, but never cease to believe that none of us can even begin to imagine greater plans than the plans God has for our lives.

1 Corinthians 2:[9] However, as it is written:

*"No eye has seen,
no ear has heard,
no mind has conceived
what God has prepared for those who love him"*

Changing Our Focus

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. 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.

When you find yourself depressed what are you focused on? _____

God sometimes waits until we have messed up our lives so bad, and we are in the absolute worst situation we have ever been in, to come and pull us out. For some of us, that's the only time we are willing to let God work in our lives, when we finally have messed things up so bad we give up. That's what finally happened to me.

As I stated before my focus was always on my needs and feelings. I was always searching for peace and happiness, and believe me, I went to every store imaginable and didn't find it. During the course of my life I have had thirty-two jobs, lived in twenty-two places in twenty-nine years of marriage and couldn't even count the number of cars and toys I bought looking for peace of mind. I would have done just about anything to change the state of mind I was in.

Have you ever felt that if you could only change something, or have something, it would change your life? _____

Our life is what we focus on. If we focus on what is wrong in our life that will be what we notice but if we focus on the good things, more good things will come our way.

Philippians 4:8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

Satan doesn't have us focus on him. Instead he distracts us with doubts, worries, basically his fiery darts. He wants to get our focus off of God, that is his target, because he knows we need God's help to get through this life. We need faith in knowing that God will always be there and that He is in control.

Ephesians 6: [16] In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

Have you ever bought a car or an outfit and all of a sudden you notice that car or outfit everywhere you go? Does that mean all of a sudden there are more of those cars or are you just more aware of them now? You will be amazed when you change your focus toward God because you'll start seeing Him everywhere, in the people you meet, in your surroundings and even in yourself. You will reap what you sow. If you sow positive and loving thoughts that is what you will reap and if you sow negative and depressing thoughts that will be your harvest.

JOB 4:8 As I have observed, those who plow evil and those who sow trouble reap it.

Depression is caused when our main focus is on ourselves and how things affect us, not others. When our focus is on us we start picking on ourselves such as why am I so fat, why can't I do this, why am I so stupid, etc. The only cure for depression is to put God first in our thoughts then others and then ourselves.

Romans 7:[24] What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Romans 8:5 Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. [6] The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; [7] the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. [8] Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. 1 Peter 1:[6] In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. [7] These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Depression has a tendency to make you look at the negative things around you, and the negative things in you, in others and in your circumstances. Sometimes we look for the worst in others in order to make us feel better about ourselves. We'll look for the worst when people are talking to us, trying to find that negative thought or idea. Then these are the feelings we focus on during the course of the day which makes it worse and engulfs our whole day. Sometimes we will look for people that are unhappy in hopes that we will feel better in comparison and usually all that happens in our minds is that we confirm life is terrible.

One major cause of depression is the feeling of failure. Failure is a feeling that we determine for ourselves. It is up to you to decide if you failed at something. Success in life is a result of good judgment, good judgment is usually the result of experience, and experience is usually the result of bad judgment.

What do you think we could do if we knew we couldn't fail? _____

Wouldn't you attempt to do just about anything? _____

We all have rules that determine how we feel. For instance, you have rules to determine whether someone loves you or not. For example for you to feel love that person must call you each day, send you flowers, want to do what you want to do, act a certain way and so on. These rules determine how we feel about other people and how we will react in a certain situation. We need to change our rules so we can get the most out of each situation. We need to set our rules so it is easy for us to feel good and difficult for us to feel bad. God has set rules for us to follow and they are easy rules that can make us feel good at any time. We have rules that determine if we succeed or fail and we need to change these rules.

What is your rule for feeling happy? _____

The other thing that controls how we react to situations and the decisions we make is our beliefs. Beliefs can hold you back or empower you.

For you to feel successful what do you believe has to happen to attain this? _____

What do you believe love is? _____

What do you believe about God? _____

Whatever you believe, whether it is true or not, whatever you choose to believe is true to you. Your beliefs are the floodgate that opens up your power and possibilities.

Matthew 21:[22] If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.

How we feel is determined by the questions that we ask ourselves each day. If you ask questions like: Why does this always happen to me? Why don't people like me, Why can't I do this? Why am I so stupid?, your brain will find answers even if it has to make them up using past references and the answers will not make you feel good. In the same way, if you ask yourself these questions you will receive the answers. For example:

How did I get so blessed to have the life I have?

What can I do today to add to my joy?

What am I happy about in my life right now?

What can I do today to make God proud of me?

How can I help someone else today?

You will get the answers because inside your spirit lies the answers. If you ask yourself questions leaning on God for the answer, He will always lead you to the right answer. The question that has made me aware of what is happening around me and has enriched my life is "What does God want me to learn and do right here and now?" So every place I go and in every situation I ask myself this question and the answers are remarkable. I'll ask myself that question when I talk or meet someone. "What does God want me to learn from this person" and I find myself listening intently to what that person has to say instead of having my mind wander. As a result, I've learned so much from others.

Make up three questions you can ask yourself that would get you in a good state of mind:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Now ask these three questions each morning before doing anything else. Maybe write them down and put them on the mirror at home so when you wake up the first thing you see are the questions.

Philippians 4:8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things.

We will never be totally complete all the years we live. There should be a sign on all of us that says "Under construction." Depression is caused when we are so concerned about how imperfect we are instead of how God wants to use us.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 - To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. [8] Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. [9] But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. [10] That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Romans 8:26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot

express. [27] And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

God believes the best in us and depression is when we don't believe the best about ourselves. Just remember how much He loves us.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,^[a] that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Depression is a state of mind and can be changed instantly. Have you ever been so involved in something and then someone asked you a question and you totally forgot what you were thinking? Have you ever been totally depressed and someone said something or you saw something that made you smile and for a moment you got out of that state of depression? Some people that have a hard time controlling their state of mind use alcohol or drugs to help them change the state they're in. With God we can change our state of mind at any time; all we need to do is focus on Him and His love for us.

1 Peter 5:6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. [7] Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

One way I tried to stay out of depression was to buy things. I always felt if I only had this, I would be happy. After going bankrupt two times in my life I never found anything that I bought that made me happy for any period of time.

Matthew 6:[20] But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. [21] For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

I feel that is why so many celebrities like Whitney Houston, Michael Jackson, Demi Moore and the list goes on suffer from depression to the point of suicide. See so many people say if I can get this then I'll be happy and not be depressed any more. Well for most people we may not attain that goal so it's something we are always striving for, but the wealthy can get just about anything they desire. So for them if they feel a thing will fulfill them and they continue to obtain those goals and it doesn't make them feel fulfilled they might finally get tired of trying.

Matthew 19:23 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

If you truly want to get rid of depression, take the focus off of yourself by going to a retirement center, visiting someone, helping your neighbor, volunteering in your community or reading the Bible. When you do something for someone else and you get that great feeling inside, where do you think that feeling comes from? Why do you think you feel so good? You are doing what God has designed you to do.

Ephesians 2:[10] For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

The Lord wants us to be successful and enjoy our life and we can do that with the power that comes from God.

***Psalm 35:27 May those who delight in my vindication
shout for joy and gladness;
may they always say, "The LORD be exalted,
who delights in the well-being of his servant."***

Eight questions to help determine how you perceive yourself:

1. How successful am I?
Low-1 2 3 4 5 -High
I would be more successful if _____

2. How significant am I?
Low-1 2 3 4 5 -High
I would be more significant if _____

3. How fulfilled am I?
Low-1 2 3 4 5 -High
I would be more fulfilled if _____

4. How satisfied am I?
Low-1 2 3 4 5 -High
I would be more satisfied if _____

5. How happy am I?
Low-1 2 3 4 5 -High
I would be happier if _____

6. How much fun am I having?
Low-1 2 3 4 5 -High
I would have more fun if _____

7. How secure am I?
Low-1 2 3 4 5 -High
I would be more secure if _____

8. How at peace am I?
Low-1 2 3 4 5 -High
I would have more peace if _____

If your success, significance, fulfillment, satisfaction, happiness, joy, security or peace are not grounded in the Lord, you will never experience them to the fullest.

The following sources of suffering are not caused by God, but allowed by Him. Each one of these, with the power of God, can be overcome just by changing our focus to Him.

1. Our heart and attitude
2. The nature and behavior of others
3. The world we live in
4. Spiritual forces, Satan

We need to stop beating ourselves up. We need to stop calling ourselves names and start calling God's name.

Who influences our perspective?

1. Those around us (society)
2. Family and friends
3. Circumstances
4. God

We want to improve our circumstances but are unwilling to improve ourselves. God does not want our circumstances to change. Every time our circumstances change, He wants us to stand strong keeping our focus on Him.

1 Corinthians 15:58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

How Do We See It?

How do you read the following letters?

G*O*D*I*S*N*O*W*H*E*R*E

Did you read, “God is nowhere” or “God is now here”? Like everything else in life of any significance, the way we see things is always dependent on how we look at it.

The only person that can make you feel the way you feel is you. If someone comes up to you and yells at you, that person doesn’t get you upset you allowed yourself to get upset. You have full control on how you are going to react to any situation. Nobody can make you happy or unhappy; it is how you decide to accept that situation at that time. If we allow people to decide how we are going to feel or how they treat us we are totally out of control.

What do you get when you squeeze an orange? _____

If people squeeze us what will they get? _____

Discipline

Discipline - The definition is delaying immediate gratification to obtain a more desired outcome.

Below are six key areas to achieving personal discipline:

1. Master my moods

***Proverbs 25:28 Like a city whose walls are broken down
is a man who lacks self-control.***

2. Watch my words

***Proverbs 13:3 He who guards his lips guards his life,
but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin.***

***Ephesians 4:29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only
what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those
who listen.***

***Matthew 12:[34] You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good?
For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.***

3. Restraining my reactions

***Proverbs 19:3 A man's own folly ruins his life,
yet his heart rages against the LORD.***

***Proverbs 16:32 Better a patient man than a warrior,
a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city.***

4. Stick to a schedule

To be successful at anything takes time and you don't have time for everything.

***Psalms 40:1 I waited patiently for the LORD;
he turned to me and heard my cry.***

5. Manage my resources

***Matthew 25:[15] To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to
another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. [16]
The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and
gained five more. [17] So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. [18] But
the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his
master's money.***

Matthew 25:19 "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. [20] The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.'

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!'

Matthew 25:22 "The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.'

Matthew 25:23 "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!'

Matthew 25:24 "Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. [25] So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.'

Matthew 25:26 "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? [27] Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.'"

Matthew 25:28 'Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. [29] For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. [30] And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

6. Maintain my health

1 Corinthians 6:[19] Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; [20] you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

The ABC's of Developing a Personal Discipline Plan:

A. Acknowledge a lack of discipline

Romans 7:[15] I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. [16] And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. [17] As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. [18] I know that

nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. [19] For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing. [20] Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

B. Believe God will help you

Philippians 2:[13] for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

*Psalms 46:1 God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.*

Hebrews 13:6 So we say with confidence,

*"The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.
What can man do to me?"*

C. Commit to God's Word

Joshua 1:[8] Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

D. Decide in advance that God will work out His plan

*Proverbs 16:9 In his heart a man plans his course,
but the LORD determines his steps.*

E. Enlist the support of others

*Ecclesiastes 4:9 Two are better than one,
because they have a good return for their work:
Ecclesiastes 4:10 If one falls down,
his friend can help him up.
But pity the man who falls
and has no one to help him up!*

*Proverbs 27:17 As iron sharpens iron,
so one man sharpens another.*

F. Focus on the rewards of obedience to God

Hebrews 11:24 By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. [25] He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. [26] He regarded disgrace for

the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.

James 1:12 Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

START the Change from Depression

Stop Making Excuses

Proverbs 28:13 He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.

Take Personal Account

Luke 18:13 "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

Act in Faith

Hebrews 11:[6] And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

James 2: [26] As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

Refocus My Thinking

Isaiah 26:3 You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.

Trust God to Help Me Succeed

Proverbs 3:5,6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, but in all things acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight

To do the right things we must challenge ourselves to do the following four things everyday:

1. Choose to end your condemnation. Choose not to sin but to be obedient to God.

John 15:[10] If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. [11] I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

Romans 8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, [2] because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

2. Seek the lasting things of God and focus on Him.

Matthew 6:[33] But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

3. Allow the Spirit to speak to you - listen.

John 14:25 "All this I have spoken while still with you. [26] But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

4. Hold on to how much God loves you and receive His love.

Romans 5:[8] But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

WRITE DOWN SOME STEPS YOU ARE GOING TO TAKE TO HELP YOU OVERCOME DEPRESSION

Five Human Needs

We all have needs and research has come up with the top five. It is interesting even though worldly researchers have outlined these needs they are also biblical and when met we have peace and grow closer to God.

1. **The need for certainty.** Nothing can take away certainty; you have to give it up. You have to have the feeling of not being certain. The best way to be certain is to have faith; faith is the ultimate power (You need to be certain that you are here for a reason.).

Hebrews 11:1: Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

2. **The need for growth.** If you do not grow you become bored and complacent. I think God gives us this need so we expand ourselves and try new things. Without this emotion we probably would never try anything new. God put us here to personally grow and to help others and by doing so we are serving our Lord. Everything alive either grows or dies there is no in-between. Everything is made to serve a purpose and if it doesn't have a purpose it dies.

Colossians 1:[10] And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,

2 Peter 3:[18] But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

3. **The need for significance or the need to be needed.** Significance is a feeling of purpose and the feeling that we are unique in some way. God has made us all different, with different gifts, under different situations to make us unique for a purpose. And until we give our life back to God we will never discover that purpose. This is the driving force in our lives to be significant. Unfortunately, Satan knows it and will use it against us. For instance, instead of improving ourselves, we tear everyone else down to make ourselves look better. Violence is another way we can seemingly become significant. If someone comes up to you with a gun that person becomes very significant in your life at that moment. Sometimes being sick makes you significant because of the attention you receive from others. Another way is to be around people who are socially popular and significant to others. For example, I am so proud of my sister and find myself sometimes using her fame to make me more significant to others. We become so involved in trying to be seen as valuable to others that we forget we are already significant to God. God made us for a purpose and that purpose isn't to build ourselves up, it's to build up the Lord and people around us. When we do that in God's name we acquire that feeling of significance knowing we serve our Lord.

*Psalms 139:13 For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.*

*Psalm 139:14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.*

*Ephesians 1:[5] he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in
accordance with his pleasure and will—*

4. **The need for connection and love.** This is almost the opposite of significance. Significance is usually viewed as standing alone and being unique and above others. Satan again knows this need and it can be obtained in negative ways: sometimes when you are sick or getting sympathy you feel loved. Even a violent act will get you connection. Why do you think kids join gangs? It provides them a feeling of connection and belonging. Ways we make connection is spiritually, sexually, through nature, through pets, joining a group, team sports and other things that make us feel as if we belong.

Psalm 133:1 How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!

5. **The need to contribute.** The need to go beyond ourselves. God did not make us to serve ourselves; we are created to serve Him and others. Everything must serve the greater good or it will not last including you. Think about it. Aren't you most happy when you know you are doing the right thing?

Colossians 3:[23] Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, [24] since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

What Do You Want?

Very similar to the five top needs are the results of a national survey that was taken and the question asked was: What do you desire most out of life? The six top answers to this question were:

1. **Security** - Definition: freedom from danger, risk, care, anxiety, or doubt; well-founded confidence.

Philippians 4:[19] And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

2. **Appreciation** - Definition: an expression of admiration, approval, or gratitude.

1 Thessalonians 5:[11] Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

3. **Understanding** - Definition: the power of comprehending; *especially*: the capacity to apprehend general relations of particulars.

*Psalm 111:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;
all who follow his precepts have good understanding.
To him belongs eternal praise.*

*Proverbs 4:7 Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom.
Though it cost all you have, get understanding.*

4. **Friendship** - Definition: the quality or state of being friendly.

*Ecclesiastes 4:9 Two are better than one,
because they have a good return for their work:
[10] If one falls down,
his friend can help him up.
But pity the man who falls
and has no one to help him up!*

Galatians 6:[2] Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

5. **Purpose** - Definition something set up as an object or end to be attained

*Proverbs 16:4 The LORD works out everything for his own ends--
even the wicked for a day of disaster.*

*Ephesians 5:15 Be very careful, then, how you live--not as unwise but as wise, [16]
making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. [17] Therefore do not
be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.*

6. **Closer relationship to God**

James 4:[8] Come near to God and he will come near to you.

Everything we need is within us now. The Lord has given each one of us the ability to accomplish anything we want. The Holy Spirit lives in us and with faith we have no limits. We have a choice; we can become pitiful or powerful or we can become better or bitter.

Fellowship

God wants us to look out for one another, have fellowship with one another and in return He gives us peace, happiness and joy. We know this is true because of that feeling we get inside when we help someone else. We will also do more for others than ourselves. Wouldn't you work harder to support someone you loved than you would work for yourself? If you are playing a game wouldn't you try harder if you were part of a team? Of course!

When Jesus sent out His disciples, He sent them out by twos so they would strengthen each other. God does not mean for us to live this life alone, He has surrounded us with people who care and can help us accomplish the things He wants done in our lives.

When God wants to speak with me He typically uses someone else to talk to me, so I need to be attentive to what others say. We are all part of one body.

Philippians 2:[4] Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Galatians 6:[2] Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

John 15:[12] My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

Proverbs 3:27 Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act.

Hebrews 10:[24] And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. [25] Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

***Ecclesiastes 4:9 Two are better than one,
because they have a good return for their work:
10 If one falls down,
his friend can help him up.
But pity the man who falls
and has no one to help him up!
11 Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm.
But how can one keep warm alone?
12 Though one may be overpowered,
two can defend themselves.
A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.***

- There are five key elements we need to possess for Godly fellowship.

1. Sensitive

Philippians 2:[4] Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

2. Supportive

1 Thessalonians 5:[11] Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

Proverbs 15:1 A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

3. Sympathetic

Romans 12:[15] Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.

4. Straightforward

Proverbs 27:6 Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.

5. Spontaneous

Galatians 6:[10] Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Modeling is a practice to imitate someone who has obtained the things you want in your life and model what they did to get them. I feel part of God's plan for us is to model one another. The Lord wants us to fellowship and take care of each other. That is why He sends us all on different paths in life so we can learn from each other. Several times in the Bible it discusses our testimonies and how we need to share them with each other. If we would learn from each other we wouldn't have to make the mistakes ourselves. The person we should all try to model is Jesus Christ - "W.W.J.D" (acronym for "What Would Jesus Do?").

2 Corinthians 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, [4] who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

Hebrews 6:9 Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case--things that accompany salvation. [10] God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. [11] We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. [12] We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.

John 13:[15] I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

John 13:34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. [35] By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

It really made me think. What if you looked at other people as if they could be Jesus? Could you walk by Him without at least smiling or saying hello? Would you argue with Jesus? Would you treat Him differently if He came back another race than yourself? Would you say something spiteful to hurt Him? Would you boast and say you were better than Jesus? If He needed food or clothing would you give it to Him? How do you think it would feel if you hugged Jesus? I will tell you I was not comfortable hugging any man or woman. I felt very awkward. Yet now when I hug a family church member, it feels great, I feel accepted and loved much like I would imagine it would feel when hugged by Jesus.

Matthew 25:34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. [35] For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, [36] I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

Matthew 25:37 "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? [38] When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? [39] When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

Matthew 25:40 "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

Adversity

Who and what we focus on will determine how adversity will be handled in our lives.

1. Myself: the consequences of going against the principles of scripture.

Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. [8] The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. [9] Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

2. Satan: has no power or authority over my life circumstances outside of the permissive will of God, and is always limited in duration.

Matthew 4:10 Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.' "

Matthew 16:23 Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

Job 1:[7] The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?"

Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it."

3. God: allowed and used in our lives to build Christ-like character and helps us become what can be attained no other way.

Ephesians 5:1 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children [2] and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

1 Timothy 6:11 But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. [12] Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

John 12:[26] Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

Benefits of adversity

1. Prevents pride in my life.

2 Corinthians 12:7 To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. [8] Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. [9] But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. [10] That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

2. Increases dependence on God

***Psalm 37:39 The salvation of the righteous comes from the LORD;
he is their stronghold in time of trouble.***

***Psalm 37:24 though he stumble, he will not fall,
for the LORD upholds him with his hand.***

***Psalm 18:2 The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer;
my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge.
He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.***

3. Keeps who I am in perspective

***Psalm 100:3 Know that the LORD is God.
It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.***

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

***Psalm 95:6 Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker;***

***Psalm 95:7 for he is our God
and we are the people of his pasture,
the flock under his care.***

4. Strengthens and deepens my faith

James 1:12 Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

John 14:[12] I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

5. Prepares me for greater service

John 15:[16] You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

Ephesians 2:[10] For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

When solving a problem spend 20% of your time on the problem and 80% of your time on the solution.

I'm sure you have heard people say there are no problems just challenges. So why do they feel like problems? There are five questions you can ask yourself to make a problem more like a challenge and get the answers you are looking for.

1. What is great about this situation or what could be great?

2. What does God want me to learn from this challenge?

3. What am I willing to do to make it the way I want it?

4. How is this situation going to make me a better person?

5. How can I do what is necessary and enjoy the process?

These are all questions that can be answered through prayer. God knows the answers and wants to tell you and all you have to do is ask. If you don't ask God, Satan will be more than happy to give you his answers: "There is no way you can get out of this." "Lie your way out." "Hurt someone else to resolve this problem." "Give up" and so many more answers.

Spiritual Warfare

In spiritual warfare, the chief area of attack is our own self-worth. We must realize that Satan is real and he is working on us each day. Some of the thoughts we have are not a flaw in our mind or character but the work of the devil. The bad things and problems in our lives are not caused by God, but sometimes the way we perceive these events are influenced by Satan. Once we realize it is the work of Satan in our lives that is sometimes causing our troubles, we will have to ask God to fight the battle for us.

1 Peter 5:8 Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

John 8:[44] You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. [45] Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! [46] Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me? [47] He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God."

Here are some victory verses in the Bible to encourage us in our battle with Satan.

1 John 4:4 You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

Luke 10:[19] I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.

James 4:7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Romans 8:[38] For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, [39] neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Ephesians 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Ephesians 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. [11] Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. [12] For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. [13] Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. [14] Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, [15] and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. [16] In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. [17] Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. [18] And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Satan has limited powers that are working towards our discouragement, harm and destruction. God will give us the power to overcome any obstacle Satan puts in our lives. Whether we are victorious or not will be determined by whether we decide to fight the enemy alone or with God.

One major way we get hurt and hurt others is by what we say, and once it's said it can't be taken back. We ourselves may apologize for it but it takes a long time to heal that kind of wound.

That is why we must think before we speak. This is a powerful tool Satan uses against us as often as he can. If an argument starts, end it as fast as possible.

Ephesians 4:29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

Proverbs 21:23 He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from calamity.

Proverbs 15:4 The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.

Another tool Satan uses is lies. Once someone is lied to it takes a long time for them to trust you again or for you to trust someone who lies to you. Remember, if you lie to someone you are dishonoring God.

Proverbs 12:22 The LORD detests lying lips, but he delights in men who are truthful.

Psalms 120:2 Save me, O LORD, from lying lips and from deceitful tongues.

An emotion that feeds depression in our lives is anger. Anger fuels the emotion when someone has done us wrong which gives us a reason to be depressed. Anger keeps that emotion alive along with all the memories. Until we give this anger up and forgive, God won't bless us.

Ephesians 4:[26] "In your anger do not sin" : Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, [27] and do not give the devil a foothold.

Matthew 5:23 Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, [24] leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

We need to avoid temptation, but when we are depressed it is easier to fall into temptation.

1 Corinthians 10:[13] No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

We know what's right yet oftentimes we will do the wrong thing. Why? It's because we have a sinful nature. The Bible teaches that both God and Satan have a plan for our lives. Only Satan tempts us and it is only with God's grace that we can avoid this temptation. Some of the things we have a hard time controlling are lying, anger, eating, drugs, sexual desires, bad habits, spending, drinking, procrastination. Emotions that cause us to do the wrong thing are: confusion, frustration, discouragement and defeat. Paul said it best in Romans.

Romans 7:[15] I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. [16] And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. [17] As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. [18] I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. [19] For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing. [20] Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

7:21 So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. [22] For in my inner being I delight in God's law; [23] but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. [24] What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? [25] Thanks be to God--through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

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

Fear is our darkroom where we develop negative thinking or our worst case scenarios. The Bible states the only thing we need to fear is God and that is a good fear. By fearing God it guides us on the right path. Feed your faith not your fear. Fear is **F**alse **E**vidence **A**ppearing **R**eal.

Luke:[5] But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him. [6] Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. [7] Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

*Isaiah 41:10 So do not fear, for I am with you;
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you;
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

Rejection is another powerful emotion. We must realize no one can reject us unless we allow it. If we are feeling strong about God and ourselves no one can hurt us. The feeling of rejection is our feeling, not someone else's, and we can change our feelings in a moment.

What is fear and worry?

- Fear and worry are like interest paid in advance on something you won't own.
- Worry gives a small thing a big shadow.
- Worry is simply the misuse of God's creative imagination.
- When fears rise in our minds we should expect the opposite.

- What you fear about tomorrow is not here yet.
- Most of our fears can be traced back to a fear of others.
- People would worry less about what others think of them if they only realized how seldom they do.
- Too much analysis always leads to paralysis.
- Worry is a route that leads from somewhere to nowhere, never let it direct your life.

2 Timothy 1:[7] For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

***Psalm 27:1 The LORD is my light and my salvation--
whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the stronghold of my life--
of whom shall I be afraid?***

***Psalm 56:4 In God, whose word I praise,
in God I trust; I will not be afraid.
What can mortal man do to me?***

***Psalm 37:7 Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him;
do not fret when men succeed in their ways,
when they carry out their wicked schemes.
Psalm 37:8 Refrain from anger and turn from wrath;
do not fret--it leads only to evil.***

There Is a Reason

I am convinced everything happens for a reason. Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you responded with something like, "What are the chances of that happening? It must be one out of a million." I believe the chances are one out of one or one out of the One.

Sometimes we have to get so low and weak for God to actually get our attention so He can work in us. We are so determined to do things on our own without God and until we humble ourselves and let Him take the reins, we are no good to ourselves or others. That is why we are constantly undergoing trials and tests in our life. The only way we can pass these tests is with the grace of God.

2 Corinthians 12:[9] But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. [10] That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

1 Peter 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, [4] and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, [5] who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. [6] In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. [7] These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. [8] Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, [9] for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

1 Peter 4:12 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. [13] But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

The first time I went to church, the sermon was about giving our problems to God, how He loved us and all we had to do was believe in God and trust in Him to take care of our problems. In the past I was trying to take care of my problems myself and wasn't doing a good job at all. The pastor said Jesus died for us because He loves us so much that He wants to take those burdens from us. When he said that Jesus loves us so much that He suffered and died, a strange chill went through my body and I started to cry. That was the day I started giving the burdens I could never carry to Him

Finance

Financial problems can cause depression and depression can cause financial problems. Here are some things we need to remember to help us avoid financial troubles:

1. God owns it all and we are expected to faithfully manage and make the most of all that God has entrusted in us.

Psalm 24:1 The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;

1 Corinthians 4:[2] Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.

Deuteronomy 8:[18] But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.

2. Plan your spending.

Proverbs 21:20 In the house of the wise are stores of choice food and oil, but a foolish man devours all he has.

3. Return ten percent back to God.

Malachi 3:8 "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' "In tithes and offerings. [9] You are under a curse--the whole nation of you--because you are robbing me. [10] Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.

Leviticus 27:30 A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD.

Deuteronomy 14:22 Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year. [23] Eat the tithe of your grain, new wine and oil, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks in the presence of the LORD your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name, so that you may learn to revere the LORD your God always.

1 Chronicles 29:14 But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.

Proverbs 3:9 Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops;

Before I became a Christian, I would go to church and justify the amount of money I gave in the offering. I would think to myself, “Well, I will be at church about an hour or so – my tithe being about the same price as a movie ticket, and I had two kids, so twenty dollars should do it for the offering.” I mean hey that’s twenty dollars that the church wouldn’t have had otherwise, I justified to myself.

Before becoming a Christian I wouldn’t have given two hundred dollars to any charity including church in a whole year. While in Ohio I was earning a six-figure income annually and yet went bankrupt twice, and both times I was working. I never had money in a savings account or owned stocks or bonds. Although I earned a good salary our assets never exceeded our debts. I now live in California with a higher cost of living and I make a little more than half of what I used to make in Ohio. One morning as I was praying and thanking God for all the things He has done for me, I thought am I obeying God? I was praying and trying to do what was right but what sacrifice or act of faith had I made to prove my love for the One that loves me? I felt the spirit talking to me. I decided, starting the following Sunday I would begin to give ten percent of the gross I made, which you wouldn’t think would be easy to do when the government has already decided you’re going to tithe thirty percent to them. Yet, I felt the Lord deserved the ten percent of the one hundred percent He gave me. It wasn’t the best time financially, I thought, but there would never be a best time so I made the commitment.

It was difficult giving when I felt I was giving my money to the church and it wasn’t until I realized I was making a commitment to God, who has taken care of me all my life, that it really made sense to me. Tithing is truly a sacrifice and an act of faith. We are taking something that is dear to us and giving it to God and saying Lord, here I trust You and I know You will take care of me. Tithing is not for the Church, tithing isn’t even for God; tithing is for us. It is one of the few sacrifices we can make to show God that we trust Him.

Thanks to God, my wife and I own a nice home in Oceanside, we have some money in a savings account, and our bills are all caught up. I went from ten credit cards which had over twenty thousand dollars charged to them, to one, which I pay off each month. If you are an accountant and trying to figure out the math, you are not going to find the answer on a calculator. God didn’t let me win the lottery; what He did was show me all the wonderful things He has already given me and gave me peace. I was never content with my situation before so I would buy things to make me feel better. The purpose of life is not a new car, stereo, television or better home, pool, motorcycle, clothes and so on. I was trying to fill a void in my heart with material things. There must have been something I could have bought that would do it. God gave me the contentment that I spent a lifetime trying to buy. Now if you ask me what I want, I can honestly tell you I have all that I need, and have had since I opened my heart to Jesus.

Philippians 4:10 I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. [11] I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. [12] I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. [13] I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

As I said earlier, tithing isn't for the church, even though I'm sure your pastor appreciates it, it's for us. When my wife and I give, we ask the Lord to please accept this gift, this gift of faith and obedience and we know He will provide for us. It is an unusual gift because we are giving a portion back of what He has already given us. Imagine washing your car, doing yard work or cleaning your house and there is your four-year-old son or daughter right next to you helping the best that they can. They're working as hard as they can because they want to help you, they want to be like you and they want your approval. When they're done you go over to them and say "Thank you for being such a good son (or daughter) and helping daddy. Here are ten dimes for helping me." Your child takes the money and says "Thanks, dad." He then gives you back one of those dimes and says "Here dad, this is for you - for being such a good dad." How important is that dime to you now? You could very easily keep that dime forever, or at least the memory of that moment. When God said He made man in His own image, He wasn't talking about appearance, He was talking about His heart.

This testimony is coming from a man who would be reluctant putting a ten or twenty dollar bill in an offering, but now sees it as an honor to be tithing and also partnering with the church. Make a true investment in your life, one that will give you the greatest return on your money. As our Father promised us:

Luke 6:[38] Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

1. Save for the future.

Proverbs 21:20 In the house of the wise are stores of choice food and oil, but a foolish man devours all he has.

2. Enjoy what God has given you.

Hebrews 13:[5] Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what You have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

3. Remember money and things do not bring happiness, even though that is the reason we want them.

Matthew 6:19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. [20] But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. [21] For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6:24 "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Luke 12:[15] Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

Habakkuk 1:5 Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. [6] You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it."

Proverbs 18:11 The wealth of the rich is their fortified city; they imagine it an unscalable wall.

4. Add no new debt and pray before you purchase.

Psalms 37:21 The wicked borrow and do not repay, but the righteous give generously...

Enjoy Your Present

“Yesterday is history, tomorrow a mystery and today a gift - that is why it is called the present.” This simple saying changed my life. I normally didn’t receive my present because I was too busy living in the past wondering if I did something different then, how much better my life would be now.

I could waste hours just contemplating different ways of living my life over. If I wasn’t thinking about the past I was wondering about the future, worrying about what would or would not happen in my life.

Worry is a worthless and harmful emotion. Worry is not planning. The definition of worry is mental distress or agitation. Yet as harmful as this emotion is I spent a lot of my “presents” doing it. Every minute you think about the past or worry about the future is a present you didn’t receive.

Did you know:

- 40% of our worries never happen
- 30% of our worries concern the past
- 12% are needless worries about our health
- 10% of our worries are insignificant or petty concerns
- 8% of our worries are legitimate concerns

At Christmas how many of your presents never got opened? Have you ever had a present you didn’t open? Now think over your last week. How many presents didn’t you receive because you were living out yesterday or tomorrow? Everything that isn’t right now is not real, it’s only a thought. The only thing you can experience is right at this moment.

One thing about the present - it turns into the past and it’s over. There is nothing you can do to change what just happened. Wouldn’t it be great if we were computers, then if we did something wrong we could go to file, edit and undo? The only thing the past is good for is to learn from. The past is a lesson, even though some of us try to make it a college education.

It’s not easy receiving your present. I challenged myself. In the course of a day I wondered how often I could stay in the present. No matter how great it was enjoying my present I constantly caught myself slipping back into the past. I still will find myself driving in the car and trying to stay in the present and then notice an expensive car. Then all of a sudden I would think *if only I could afford that car*.

Remember when your parents told you or you told your children to share their toys with others? That is what I started to do with my present, sharing it with others to get the full joy from it. One day I was playing with a friend’s 4-year-old daughter. Have you ever noticed a child play? They have no inhibitions, they’re not worried what might happen tomorrow, they are just enjoying that moment. Have you ever heard a small child ask what time it is? So for that

moment I was part of her life I didn't think about anything else except being with her and enjoying the moment together.

Something I really enjoy doing is watching a movie. It's something that totally engulfs me and I don't think about anything else. A movie is a dark place and you can watch a movie unaware of the people surrounding you. I could get so involved in the movie it was if I was really there. I would catch myself yelling, in dramatic movies when I knew the murderer was right there warning the likely victim. One of my favorites was the Rocky movies. It was to the point I didn't even need to see the movie, just the music took me to another place. I remember exercising and running on the treadmill playing the music just to keep me going. It didn't just change my attitude it changed my appearance. I felt I was Rocky knocking out Apollo Creed. I was totally lost in the moment.

We all have our own movies; as a matter of fact, Blockbuster doesn't carry half the movies we create in our heads. We think "I can't believe I said that" or "Where am I going to get the money for that?" or "I wish we were still together" or "If I had it to do over again..." or "I'll never be able to do it" and many other box office hits. For a lot of us we keep playing the same movie over and over again in our heads. Even a great movie we can see over and over, but eventually we'll stop watching it. However, the movies we ourselves create we'll see over and over and over again but sometimes in our movies the scenes have a way of changing. Every time I saw a favorite movie where something went wrong it was like living it over again. So I continued to torture myself time and time again and as I tortured myself I lost more and more of my present.

I finally got tired of watching my old movies, went outside and breathed the air, enjoyed my surroundings, watched children play, started talking to people and enjoyed the time I spent with my wife. I learned my present only lasts a moment. I learned not to worry about what I didn't have and enjoy what I did have. I also learned if I enjoy all of my present to the fullest my future will take care of itself.

I used to be able to destroy my whole day by messing up one thing in the morning. I would stew about it all day long. Is there anyone that can relate? Now no matter what I may say or do or how bad I mess up, I realize it's done and in the past. Instead of tearing myself down by saying how stupid I was I began to ask myself the question, "What does God want me to learn from that?" One day I was going to a meeting and halfway there I forgot my cell phone and I knew I needed it. Normally I would have gone crazy and turned around swearing at myself and sometimes hitting myself because I did such a stupid thing. Now I give it to God. I turned around and thought to myself I need the phone and if I'm late, I'm late. I got to the meeting a little late and found out the meeting was delayed. So I still had to wait about fifteen minutes and where I would have been upset about that in the past, I took the time to thank God that He took care of me and kept me safe. How would you like to have that feeling? How would you like to have the feeling that when you're driving and someone cuts you off, instead of getting mad and upset, you take a moment to thank God you didn't get into an accident.

I leave you with this last thought. If you went to the doctor's and he said you only had a week to live what would be the best way to live it? Worrying about what you should have done,

worrying each day about the last or enjoying every moment you're still alive? The present is a gift you only get once. Enjoy your gift.

We are so busy making a living we don't take time to make a life.

"Yesterday is history, tomorrow a mystery, today is a gift and that is why it is called the present."

What does this saying mean to you? _____

Remember, the past does not equal the future. If we tried to do something in the past and failed, it does not mean we can't do it now. The next time you try, do it with God's help and love.

Desire in its Latin form means "of the father." So our desires should line up with God's will for us, which means it is already there and all we need to do is have faith that we will receive it. Faith is seeing the future in advance and working to bring it into the present.

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

James 2:[26] As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

Matthew 9:29 Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith will it be done to you..."

Hebrews 11:[6] And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Remember God's:

Goodness to me in the past

List three times God has shown you goodness:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Presence with me in the present

Exodus 33:14 The LORD replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

*Psalms 145:18 The LORD is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.*

Promises made to me for my future

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.

So Why Are We Here?

The only thing you can bring to heaven is people.

God has made it clear that our purpose in life is to bring others to Jesus. Jesus sent His disciples out to preach the gospel to the whole world. God's plan for us is the same, to bring others to the saving knowledge of Jesus. God has given us gifts and talents to use to accomplish that in our life. God's plan is no secret and He will guide our paths.

Jeremiah 1:5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
before you were born I set you apart;
I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."*

Matthew 28:[19] Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Gifts that we each have:

1 Corinthians 12:4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. [5] There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. [6] There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

God's purposes are sure

Romans 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. [29] For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. [30] And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

The hard part is not getting the Spirit into us, but to flow out of us.

Definition of Success: Knowing God's will and then being right in the middle of it.

God Can

At church someone gave me a God can. A God can is a can with a slit in the top where you write down a problem you are having and place it in the can. The can is made so it doesn't open so you can't get the slip of paper out, as it should be. The front of the can states "When I can't...God can" and believe me when I say He can.

2 Chronicles 20:15 ...`Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's.

1 Peter 5:[7] Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Jeremiah 32:17 "Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you.

***Psalms 34:4 I sought the LORD, and he answered me;
he delivered me from all my fears.***

Before I became a Christian I had no idea what the phrase "born again" meant. I thought it was some weird cult. Now I understand the first time I was born I was trying to live my life my way on my terms with my abilities, but when I was born again I started my life over living for God, on His terms, with His love, using His abilities, believing in His Son Jesus Christ. Everyday in my prayers when I ask forgiveness for my sins I always ask God to forgive me for living 46 years of my life for myself and promise Him I will live the rest of my life for Him. That's what I call living.

John 3:3 In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. "

Galatians 2:[20] I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

1 Peter 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, [4] and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, [5] who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. [6] In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. [7] These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. [8] Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, [9] for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

When conflict comes into our lives

1. Don't underestimate the problem or God's power to turn it around.

Romans 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

2 Corinthians. 1:[9] Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. [10] He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us,

2. Don't exaggerate the problem or resign yourself to defeat.

2 Corinthians 4:[8] We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; [9] persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

Matthew 6:25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?"

3. Don't wait to see if the problem will fix itself, but go to God for guidance.

***Isaiah 42:16 I will lead the blind by ways they have not known,
along unfamiliar paths I will guide them;
I will turn the darkness into light before them
and make the rough places smooth.
These are the things I will do;
I will not forsake them.***

4. Communicate my hurts, hopes and needs with others.

James 5:[16] Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

5. Dedicate myself to God and determine to win the battle in His power.

Joshua 24:14 "Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness.

Isaiah 17:[47] All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands."

2 Chronicles 20:15 He said: "Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the LORD says to you: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's.

No matter what we do we will have difficulties in life. Our life here was never meant to be a joy-ride, but with God's grace we can overcome any situation.

John 16:33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

To get rid of depression we must have faith, the faith that God can help us in any situation, the faith that tells us we can do anything with God. We must always work on strengthening our faith.

Philippians 4:[13] I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Romans 10:[17] Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

So How Do We Know God Can?

1. Because Christ has transformed our past and secured our future, we can live in each present moment with joy and peace.

2 Corinthians 4: [6] For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

2. When we prepare our hearts for the Holy Spirit's work and align our minds with His, we set the scene for His perfect will to be done on our lives.

2 Corinthians 10: [3] For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. [4] The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. [5] We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Hebrews 10:19 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, [20] by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, [21] and since we have a great priest over the house of God, [22] let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. [23] Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

3. We will never find lasting security in anything of this world, but we can completely trust in the Lord's plans and rely on His promises.

PS 33:4 For the word of the LORD is right and true; he is faithful in all he does.

***PS 33:5 The LORD loves righteousness and justice;
the earth is full of his unfailing love.***

***PS 33:6 By the word of the LORD were the heavens made,
their starry host by the breath of his mouth.***

***PS 33:7 He gathers the waters of the sea into jars;
he puts the deep into storehouses.***

***PS 33:8 Let all the earth fear the LORD;
let all the people of the world revere him.***

***PS 33:9 For he spoke, and it came to be;
he commanded, and it stood firm.***

***PS 33:10 The LORD foils the plans of the nations;
he thwarts the purposes of the peoples.***

***PS 33:11 But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever,
the purposes of his heart through all generations.***

4. The God we hope in is both a triumphant Warrior and a compassionate Sheppard.

***Zephaniah 3:17 The LORD your God is with you,
he is mighty to save.
He will take great delight in you,
he will quiet you with his love,
he will rejoice over you with singing."***

***John 10:14 "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me-- [15]
just as the Father knows me and I know the Father--and I lay down my life for the
sheep.***

5. To fear that anything is greater than the power and wisdom of the Lord is simply foolish.

JOB 42:1 Then Job replied to the LORD:

***JOB 42:2 "I know that you can do all things;
no plan of yours can be thwarted.***

***JOB 42:3 You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?'
Surely I spoke of things I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me to know.***

JOB 42:4 "You said, 'Listen now, and I will speak;

*I will question you,
and you shall answer me.'*

***JOB 42:5 My ears had heard of you
but now my eyes have seen you.***

6. We can rest in our Creator, without whom nothing would exist.

Acts 17: [27] God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. [28] 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'

7. God knows our hearts and situations perfectly. Regardless of what we perceive, the Lord is always at work to accomplish His purposes.

2 Chronicles 16 [8] Were not the Cushites and Libyans a mighty army with great numbers of chariots and horsemen? Yet when you relied on the LORD, he delivered them into your hand. [9] For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. You have done a foolish thing, and from now on you will be at war."

***Psalms 33:13 From heaven the LORD looks down
and sees all mankind;***

***Psalms 33:14 from his dwelling place he watches
all who live on earth--***

***Psalms 33:15 he who forms the hearts of all,
who considers everything they do.***

***Psalms 33:16 No king is saved by the size of his army;
no warrior escapes by his great strength.***

***Psalms 33:17 A horse is a vain hope for deliverance;
despite all its great strength it cannot save.***

***Psalms 33:18 But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him,
on those whose hope is in his unfailing love,***

***Psalms 33:19 to deliver them from death
and keep them alive in famine.***

***Psalms 33:20 We wait in hope for the LORD;
he is our help and our shield.***

*Psalm 33:21 In him our hearts rejoice,
for we trust in his holy name.*

*Psalm 33:22 May your unfailing love rest upon us, O LORD,
even as we put our hope in you.:*

8. If we resist anxiety and wait expectantly for God as our Source, we will discover supernatural strength and joy that will shape our lives.

*Psalms 46:7 The LORD Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.
Selah*

*Psalms 46:8 Come and see the works of the LORD,
the desolations he has brought on the earth.*

*Psalms 46:9 He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth;
he breaks the bow and shatters the spear,
he burns the shields with fire.*

*Psalms 46:10 "Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth."*

Ephesians 1: [17] I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. [18] I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, [19] and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, [20] which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, [21] far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. [22] And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, [23] which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Seven ways to overcoming life's greatest challenges -

1. Come to Jesus with all your heart and soul.

Hebrews 4:[16] Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

John 6:[37] All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.

2. Believe the word of God for your particular situation, above all other circumstances

Acts 27:[25] So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me.

3. Persevere no matter what the obstacles.

James 1:12 Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

4. Worship God even in your darkest hour.

***Psalms 62:8 Trust in him at all times, O people;
pour out your hearts to him,
for God is our refuge.***

5. Pray these three simple words: "Lord help me."

Matthew 15:25 The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said.

***Psalms 138:3 When I called, you answered me;
you made me bold and stouthearted.***

***Psalms 116:6 The LORD protects the simplehearted;
when I was in great need, he saved me.***

6. Expect Jesus to answer your prayer.

Matthew 15:28 Then Jesus answered, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

7. Remember to give thanks to God.

***Psalms 107:8 Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love
and his wonderful deeds for men,***

The Lord wants us to enjoy our life and He has set it up so that we can do so. He has given us so much and the emotions to appreciate the things He has given us. Think how you feel when you see a little baby, a sunset, the ocean, a landscape, when you laugh and the way you feel when you give of yourself. These have all been given by God to help us draw nearer to Him.

***Ecclesiastes 11:8 However many years a man may live,
let him enjoy them all.***

Philippians 4:[11] I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.

To grow in faith is asking God not to bless what I'm doing, but to let me do what He is blessing.

A prayer to receive God's power: "Lord, I am willing to receive what You give, lack what You withhold, relinquish what You take, suffer what You inflict and be what You require."

Letting Go To Let God

1. The best shortcut you can ever take is to do what God says.

Deuteronomy 30:[16] For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.

Job 36:11 If they obey and serve him, they will spend the rest of their days in prosperity and their years in contentment.

2. Retreat to advance.

1 Peter 5:6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

3. Those who see God's hand in everything, can leave everything in God's hands.

Nehemiah 9:[6] You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you.

God promises to meet all my needs if I:

Philippians 4 [19] And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

1. Ask for his help.

Isaiah 30:19 O people of Zion, who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. How gracious he will be when you cry for help! As soon as he hears, he will answer you.

James 4:[2] You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God.

2. Learn to be content in whatever the situation.

Philippians 4:[12] I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

3. Care for needs beyond my own.

***Proverbs 11:25 A generous man will prosper;
he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.***

4. Manage faithfully all that God has entrusted into my care.

1 Corinthians 4:[2] Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.

5. Trust Him today for my tomorrows.

Matthew 6:[33] But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

No matter what happens in our life we are never alone. The Lord is always with us no matter what and all we have to do is call on Him. When you believe, this will be one of the greatest comforts you can possibly have. Just imagine our Creator, God is always there for us and He wants us to call on Him.

Hebrews 13:[5] Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said,

***"Never will I leave you;
never will I forsake you."***

***Isaiah 41:10 So do not fear, for I am with you;
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you;
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.***

John 14:[14] You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

Isaiah 30:[21] Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

***Isaiah 42:16 I will lead the blind by ways they have not known,
along unfamiliar paths I will guide them;
I will turn the darkness into light before them
and make the rough places smooth.
These are the things I will do;
I will not forsake them.***

When we get so depressed we feel there is no way out and everything seems hopeless, this is when we need to give it to God and He will show us the way. Four things we need to do when we can't see the way out of our depression:

1. Pray for God to reveal and make a way.

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

Matthew 21:[22] If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."

2. Meditate on what God's Word says.

***Psalms 119:15 I meditate on your precepts
and consider your ways.***

3. Obey what He says to do.

Philippians 4:[9] Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me--put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Matthew 7:24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. [25] The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

1 John 3:[22] and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him.

4. Know and trust in the promises of God.

***Psalms 84:12 O LORD Almighty,
blessed is the man who trusts in you.***

***Psalms 37:3 Trust in the LORD and do good;
dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.***

***4 Delight yourself in the LORD
and he will give you the desires of your heart.***

***5 Commit your way to the LORD;
trust in him and he will do this:***

***Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;***

***6 in all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make your paths straight.***

*Psalm 40:4 Blessed is the man
who makes the LORD his trust,
who does not look to the proud,
to those who turn aside to false gods.*

*Psalm 125:1 Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion,
which cannot be shaken but endures forever.*

*Isaiah 26:3 You will keep in perfect peace
him whose mind is steadfast,
because he trusts in you.*

God promises if we trust and give our life over to Him He will guide us and lead us out of depression.

1 Peter 1:[8] Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,

Hebrews 10:[23] Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

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

2 Corinthians 5:[17] Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

Philippians 4:[13] I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Isaiah 30:[21] Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

*Psalm 48:14 For this God is our God for ever and ever;
he will be our guide even to the end.*

*Proverbs 16:9 In his heart a man plans his course,
but the LORD determines his steps.*

*Isaiah 28:26 His God instructs him
and teaches him the right way.*

*Psalm 37:23 If the LORD delights in a man's way,
he makes his steps firm;
24 though he stumble, he will not fall,
for the LORD upholds him with his hand.*

***Psalm 27:13 I am still confident of this:
I will see the goodness of the LORD
in the land of the living.***

***Psalm 27:14 Wait for the LORD;
be strong and take heart
and wait for the LORD.***

***Psalm 32:8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you and watch over you.***

***Isaiah 42:16 I will lead the blind by ways they have not known,
along unfamiliar paths I will guide them;
I will turn the darkness into light before them
and make the rough places smooth.
These are the things I will do;
I will not forsake them.***

***Psalm 25:5 guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my Savior,
and my hope is in you all day long.***

***Habakkuk 3:18 yet I will rejoice in the LORD,
I will be joyful in God my Savior.***

***Psalm 68:3 But may the righteous be glad
and rejoice before God;
may they be happy and joyful.***

***Romans 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love
him, who have been called according to his purpose.***

There are people who believe if they love God now and put up with the torture of living on earth they will have eternal life. Kind of like an endurance test. According to His Word that's not why God has us here. He has given us the opportunity to love the life we are living right now if we just would believe in Him and allow Him to take care of our problems as it is written:

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. [12] Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. [13] You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

God has all the answers and He wants to guide us if we would just let Him:

Isaiah 30:[21] Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

***Psalm 48:14 For this God is our God for ever and ever;
he will be our guide even to the end.***

***Proverbs 16:9 In his heart a man plans his course,
but the LORD determines his steps.***

***Isaiah 28:26 His God instructs him
and teaches him the right way.***

***Psalm 32:8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you and watch over you.***

***Isaiah 42:16 I will lead the blind by ways they have not known,
along unfamiliar paths I will guide them;
I will turn the darkness into light before them
and make the rough places smooth.
These are the things I will do;
I will not forsake them.***

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

***Psalm 25:5 guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my Savior,
and my hope is in you all day long.***

The reason we are depressed is that we are confused, we have lost our faith. I was praying to God one day and I heard His voice. Now I had only been a Christian for a few years, so if I was sitting there and someone told me that God talked to them, I would have had a very difficult time believing them. I was talking and telling God I was confused “I know we have a freedom of choice but a freedom to do what? What is my part in all this, what is it I’m supposed to do?” What He put on my heart is that my choice is *am I going to believe?* “Are you going to have faith in me? If you do believe and have the faith necessary to live your life the way I meant it to be lived, you made the right choice.” When you make a decision and you take it to God in prayer He will tell you what it is He wants you to do. The answer is in your heart, you’ll know what it is you are supposed to be doing and what you’re not. You know what’s right and what’s wrong. You know in your heart if you should be yelling at somebody, talking about someone or scolding your children. You know when you’re gratifying your flesh instead of your spirit. Believe me it doesn’t make you weak to say, “Please Lord take this burden from me and guide me in doing the right thing.” Our problem is that our self pride and self respect gets in the way and we want to do things the way we want to do. That’s our choice and believe me it’s never the right choice. I always thought the way I would be judged was on my decisions and the outcome of each situation that arises in my life. I went bankrupt, I can’t handle my life, I need medicine to cope, I kept changing jobs, I wasn’t a good father, I wasn’t sure how many strikes I had against me but I was sure I was out. How should I do my job? Do I buy a house? Do I get married? What do I

deserve? How do I handle my finances? How do I, I, I, I. Not until I gave my I's to God was I able to see. If God wanted to judge us on our ability to make decisions He would have given us all the same gifts and made us the same so we had a fair chance, but, instead He made each one of us unique. What He did was give us each the freedom of choice, a simple choice, believe and love me or don't. That is one thing we can all do equally, have faith and love the Lord. When you do believe and have faith the decisions are so much easier because the choices are now limited to what is right. Give your problems to God and God will take them from you. He is saying trust in me and don't worry.

Matthew 6:[34] Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

God did not give us the emotion of worry or fear; we did that with the help of Satan. It is written,

2 Timothy 1:[7] For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

The most depressing times are when you find yourself alone. yet with faith you're never alone; your best friend Jesus is always with you. We are going to have trials and tribulations, and that's our test here on earth. It's not how we ourselves deal with them but Who are we going to depend on to get us through them that counts. God is saying, "Are you going to believe in Me? Are you going to put your trust in Me or yourself?" The only thing on this earth that can totally destroy us is ourselves. We may live to be 80 or 90 years old, but compared to eternity, it's just a moment in time.

God made us in His own image and that includes emotional image also. Our Father expects from us the same thing we expect from our children. We love our children but we expect them to do certain things. We have our rules for our children and our Father has His rules for us. His basic rule is to love and obey Him. As parents isn't that what we want? The only difference is we can't guarantee that if our children obey us that their lives will be wonderful, that they will be with us forever and we can't tell them we have all the answers, but our Heavenly Father can.

Deuteronomy 7:12 If you pay attention to these laws and are careful to follow them, then the LORD your God will keep his covenant of love with you, as he swore to your forefathers.

Matthew 7:24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. [25] The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

John 15: [10] If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.

Improving Your Self-esteem

To be able to love yourself you must first become a person you could love. What if you met a person who was kind, gentle, put other people's needs first, and was generous and loving. Would that be someone you could love? You know who that person is? Jesus. As we draw closer to Him we become more like Him. Imitate the one you love – who loves each of us unconditionally.

Self-confidence is based on your self-concept, who you think you are. The number one factor in my self-concept comes from what I think and what the most important person in my life thinks about me. The most important person in your life should be God and He loves you. It is a fact that He sacrificed His only Son for us, He made us, and God does not make junk.

*Lamentations 3:22 Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed,
for his compassions never fail.*

*23 They are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.*

Ephesians 2:[4] But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, [5] made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved.

Keys To Increasing Confidence

1. Discover your gifts and talents and use them.

Romans 12:[6] We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. [7] If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; [8] if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully..

2 Timothy 1:[6] For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

2. Avoid comparing yourself to others.

Galatians 6:[4] Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else,

3. Invest your life in a worthwhile purpose.

Matthew 16:[25] For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.

4. Identify where your confidence comes from.

***Psalms 3:3 But you are a shield around me, O LORD;
you bestow glory on me and lift up my head.***

***Proverbs 3:26 for the LORD will be your confidence
and will keep your foot from being snared.***

5. Seek the source of lasting confidence.

***Jeremiah 17:7 "But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD,
whose confidence is in him.***

One of the first impressions we make is what we say and how we say it. How many times have you said something and wished you had never said it? Even though you may have apologized for it you still made that lasting impression. God tells us how important it is to speak from the heart and to watch what we say. You can become depressed by saying the wrong thing to someone else. Have you ever said something that you knew was wrong and it bothered you for a long time?

If so what was it?

Matthew 12:[34] You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.

***Proverbs 21:23 He who guards his mouth and his tongue
keeps himself from calamity.***

Ephesians 4:29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

Psalms 19:14 May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Your perception of yourself will determine how other people perceive you. If you have a positive attitude about yourself it will show in the way you walk, talk and treat others.

Hebrews 10:35 So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded.

How To Build Confidence

1. See yourself from God's perspective.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Psalm 139:13 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

Psalm 139:14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

2. Get around positive people. (other Christians)

1 Corinthians 15:33 Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character."

3. Eliminate negative self-talk.

Job 9:20 Even if I were innocent, my mouth would condemn me; if I were blameless, it would pronounce me guilty.

4. Don't try to please everyone.

Proverbs 29:25 Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe.

5. Make God the priority in your life.

Matthew 22:37 Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' [38] This is the first and greatest commandment.

Seven Attitudes of Achievement That Spell SUCCESS -

Strong sense of direction

Philippians 3:[14] I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Undeterred by opposition

Romans 15:[20] It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation.

***James 1:12 Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.
Courageous in the face of conflict***

1 Samuel 17:45 David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. [46] This day the LORD will hand you over to me, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. [47] All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands."

Courage in the face of conflict

***Psalms 31:24 Be strong and take heart,
all you who hope in the LORD.***

***Isaiah 43:2 When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you;
and when you pass through the rivers,
they will not sweep over you.
When you walk through the fire,
you will not be burned;
the flames will not set you ablaze.***

Committed to completing the task

Acts 20:[24] However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me--the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.

Enthusiastic effort put forth

Nehemiah 8:10 Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."

Service to others

Ephesians 6:[7] Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men,

1 Peter 4:[11] If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

1 Chronicles. 11:[17] David longed for water and said, "Oh, that someone would get me a drink of water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem!" [18] So the Three broke through the Philistine lines, drew water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem and carried it back to David. But he refused to drink it; instead, he poured it out before the LORD. [19] "God forbid that I should do this!" he said. "Should I drink the blood of these men who went at the risk of their lives?" Because they risked their lives to bring it back, David would not drink it.

Such were the exploits of the three mighty men.

Staying power

Gen. 32:[24] So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. [25] When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. [26] Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak."

But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

Traits to help you be successful -

1. Never stop learning.

Proverbs 19:8 He who gets wisdom loves his own soul; he who cherishes understanding prospers.

2. Re-establish wholehearted commitment.

2 Chronicles 25:[5] He sought God during the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God. As long as he sought the LORD, God gave him success.

3. Never stop listening to others.

Proverbs 16:20 Whoever gives heed to instruction prospers, and blessed is he who trusts in the LORD.

4. Stay focused.

Luke 9:62 Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

5. Never stop depending on the Lord.

***Proverbs 3:6 in all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make your paths straight.***

6. Never forget the grace of God.

Ephesians 2:[6] And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, [7] in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

Romans 5:[17] For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 8:[9] For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

John 1:[16] From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.

Self-Doubt (definition) Hidden fears, doubts and insecurities that affect confidence, effort and a sense of well-being.

2 Timothy 1:[7] For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

Some reasons for self-doubt -

1. General fatigue (emotional, physical and spiritual weariness)
2. Seeming failure
3. Unfounded fears
4. Unrecognized success
5. Fear of rejection
6. Bad choices

7. Past failures
8. Negative influences
9. Low self esteem
10. Lack of Faith
11. New experiences

The Sow/Reap Principle

1. I get if I sow

2 Corinthians 9:6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. [7] Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. [8] And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

2. I get what I sow.

Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.

3. I get after I sow.

Ecclesiastes 11:1 Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again.

Galatians 6:[9] Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

4. I get more than I sow.

Luke 6:[38] Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

2 Corinthians 9:10 Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. [11] You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

What Others Think

One of the other reasons we sometimes feel inadequate is that we are more concerned about what other people think of us than what God thinks of us. I used to constantly beat myself up because of my appearance because I was concerned what other people would think. We need to look at ourselves the way God looks at us.

Isaiah 16:7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

Galatians 2:6 As for those who seemed to be important--whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not judge by external appearance--those men added nothing to my message.

If you could have any car what car would it be? Why would you want such an expensive and prestigious car? Would it be to impress others? Would it be so you could feel successful in the eyes of others? To acquire that feeling of significance? How do you feel about a person who has that kind of wealth who can afford the things that you can't? Do you feel jealous, envious or would you just want to trade lives with that person? Now how do you feel when you see someone that seems to be happy all the time, always positive, kind, considerate and giving? Wouldn't you envy that person more than you would the person that has the wealth? What you really want is to be happy, full of joy, feel good about yourself, no worries and to love and be loved. You see, we can all have that and we can have it immediately. God has given us that ability through His grace and all we have to do is ask for it and live in a way that would serve Him.

We Are All Different

Write the answers to the following questions:

1. What is the most important thing in your life?

2. Who is the most important person in your life? _____

3. What has to happen for you to feel loved? _____

4. What has to happen for you to feel happy? _____

5. What has to happen for you to feel depressed? _____

God has given you gifts and talents. He has placed you in his family and given you unique gifting that you can call your own. Nobody can be you as effectively as you can. God made you on purpose, for a purpose. God has a job for you to do that nobody else can do as well as you can. Out of billions of applicants, you're the most qualified. You were born an original, don't die a copy. God loves you the way you are, but he loves you too much to let you stay that way.

Romans 12:[2] Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Galatians 6:[4] Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, [5] for each one should carry his own load.

Attitude of Gratitude

One of the cures for depression is to have an attitude of gratitude. Be thankful for what you have and don't worry about what you don't have. The first book someone gave me when I got out of the hospital from my last and I do mean last suicide attempt was *Prison to Praise*. Basically the book was about thanking God each day for everything you have in your life. You soon begin to realize all the good things God has blessed you with and maybe begin thanking Him for the trials in your life. It is true we learn from our mistakes and once we realize that those too are blessings, we can see them in a different light. In a story about a Nazi concentration camp one of the women who was there would thank God each day for everything that she had. One day all the women in the quarters contracted lice, but Corrie ten Boom thanked God instead for the lice. One of the other women yelled and asked her if she was crazy. How can you thank God for lice? A few days later troops of German soldiers went into the camp raping and killing women but they didn't go into the quarters of those women because it was known that they all were infected with lice. Two years ago if someone told me to be thankful for my lice I would have called them crazy too. But God has bigger plans when we trust and praise Him!

Thanking God was one of the main turning points in my life. I started telling God what I was thankful for and that minute began turning into a couple of minutes and each time I prayed it would get longer and longer because I became more aware of what God was doing in my life. Another person gave me a book by Stephen Covey entitled, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* and another gave me motivational tapes from Anthony Robbins and Zig Ziglar. You might think that isn't very spiritual, but all of them had the same messages: Be grateful for what you already have, be a giver, treat others well, put your family first and they all referenced the importance of God and having faith. If He wanted to God could have sued them for plagiarism by copying the lessons from the Bible.

During depression it's hard to think of things we are grateful for because we are so focused on the bad things happening in our lives. One of the most important things to do when depressed is to thank God for His blessings in our lives. Here are a few examples:

1. My pulse – being alive!

Psalm 139:16 your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Psalm 3:5 I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the LORD sustains me.

2. Daily provisions

Matthew 6:25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? [26] Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? [27] Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life ?

Matthew 6:28 And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. [29] Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. [30] If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? [31] So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' [32] For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. [33] But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. [34] Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

3. His protection

Proverbs 1:33 but whoever listens to me will live in safety and be at ease, without fear of harm."

4. Personal possessions

Psalms 37:25 I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.

5. People that have made and are making a difference in my life

Proverbs 27:17 As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.

6. The problems I'm having

Romans 5:[3] Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; [4] perseverance, character; and character, hope. [5] And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

7. Pleasures I am experiencing

Psalms 84:11 For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless.

8. God's plan for my 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.

9. God's peace in my life

Philippians 4:[7] And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

10. The place prepared for me for all eternity

John 14:1 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. [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. [3] And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. [4] You know the way to the place where I am going."

Attitude Truths

1. My attitude at the beginning of a task is the greatest determining factor of its outcome.
2. My attitude determines other's attitudes towards me.
3. My attitude affects my perspective of difficulties.
4. My attitude can turn a difficulty into an opportunity.
5. My attitude is often the only difference between success and failure.
6. My attitude can get me hired or fired.
7. My attitude not my achievements will bring me the greatest satisfaction.
8. My attitude changes when I want it to change.
9. My attitude is contagious.

Webster's definition of the word content is: "An inner peace and satisfaction where one is not disturbed or disquieted in whatever state or circumstances they are in." Most of us are depressed because we are not content in life. We are constantly trying to change who we are, where we are and how we feel. Contentment is an inner trait that is learned.

Some reasons we are not content:

- We listen to the world tell us what we have to do to be content.
- Dissatisfaction for what we have.
- Comparing ourselves with others.
- Wanting more and never being content with what we have.

Philippians 4:[11] I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.

Hebrews 13:[5] Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

Proverbs 14:30 A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.

1 Timothy 6:6 But godliness with contentment is great gain.