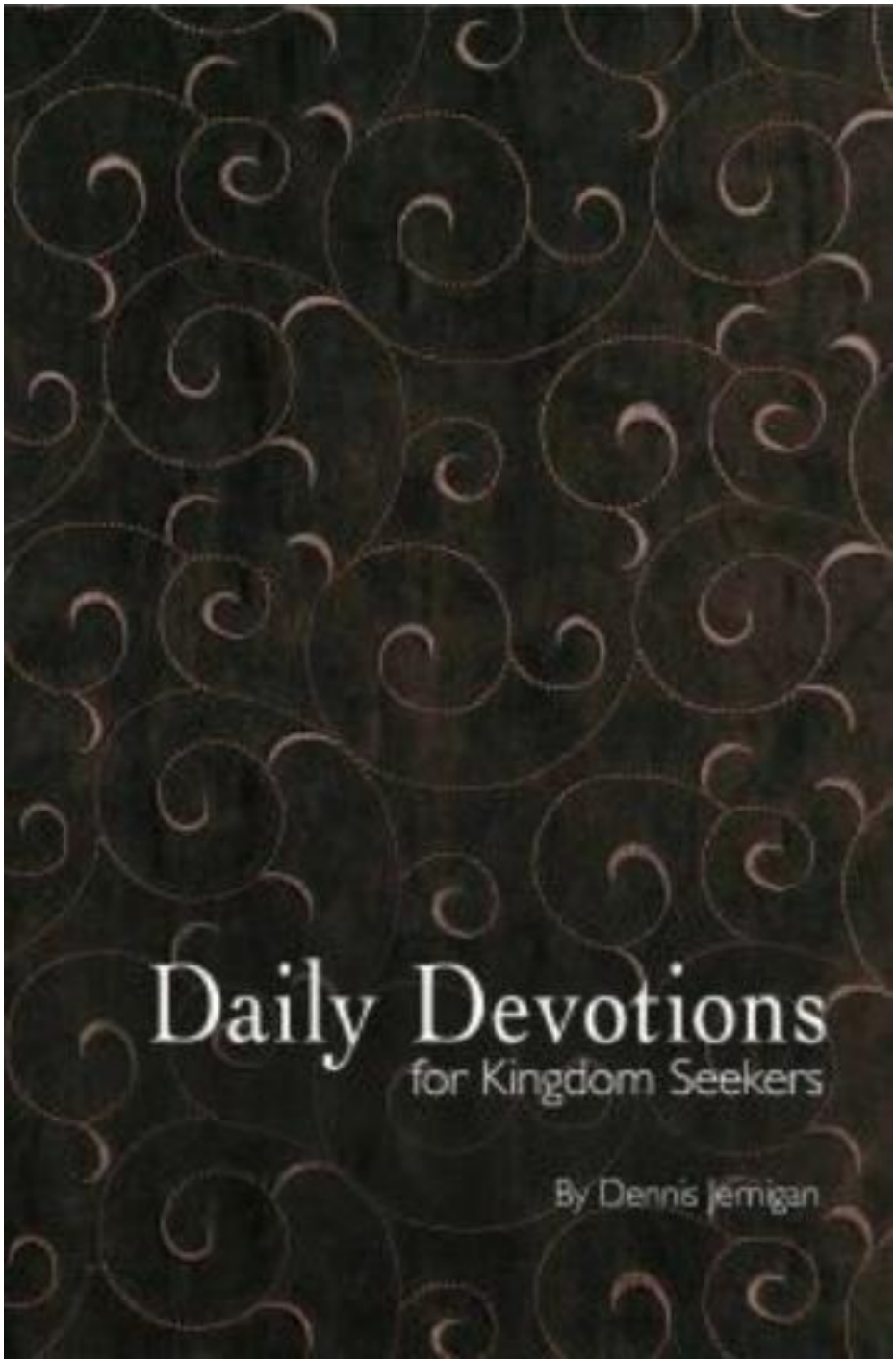

Daily Devotions
for Kingdom Seekers
By Dennis Jernigan

Daily Devotions
For
Kingdom Seekers

Dennis Jernigan

Inspired by the music from the Dennis Jernigan recording KINGDOM COME

Who is Dennis Jernigan?
Dennis Jernigan is a Kingdom Seeker. On November 7, 1981 he was given a brand new identity…and walked out of his old homosexual identity and into the Kingdom of God. He began to seek Jesus – the King – and not a ministry…yet ministry has flowed out of his life in world-reaching ways. His songs are sung in tens of thousands of churches around the world each and every week. His story is read and heard and recounted to thousands each month via YouTube, Facebook, DennisJernigan.com, and his many speaking/concert engagements.

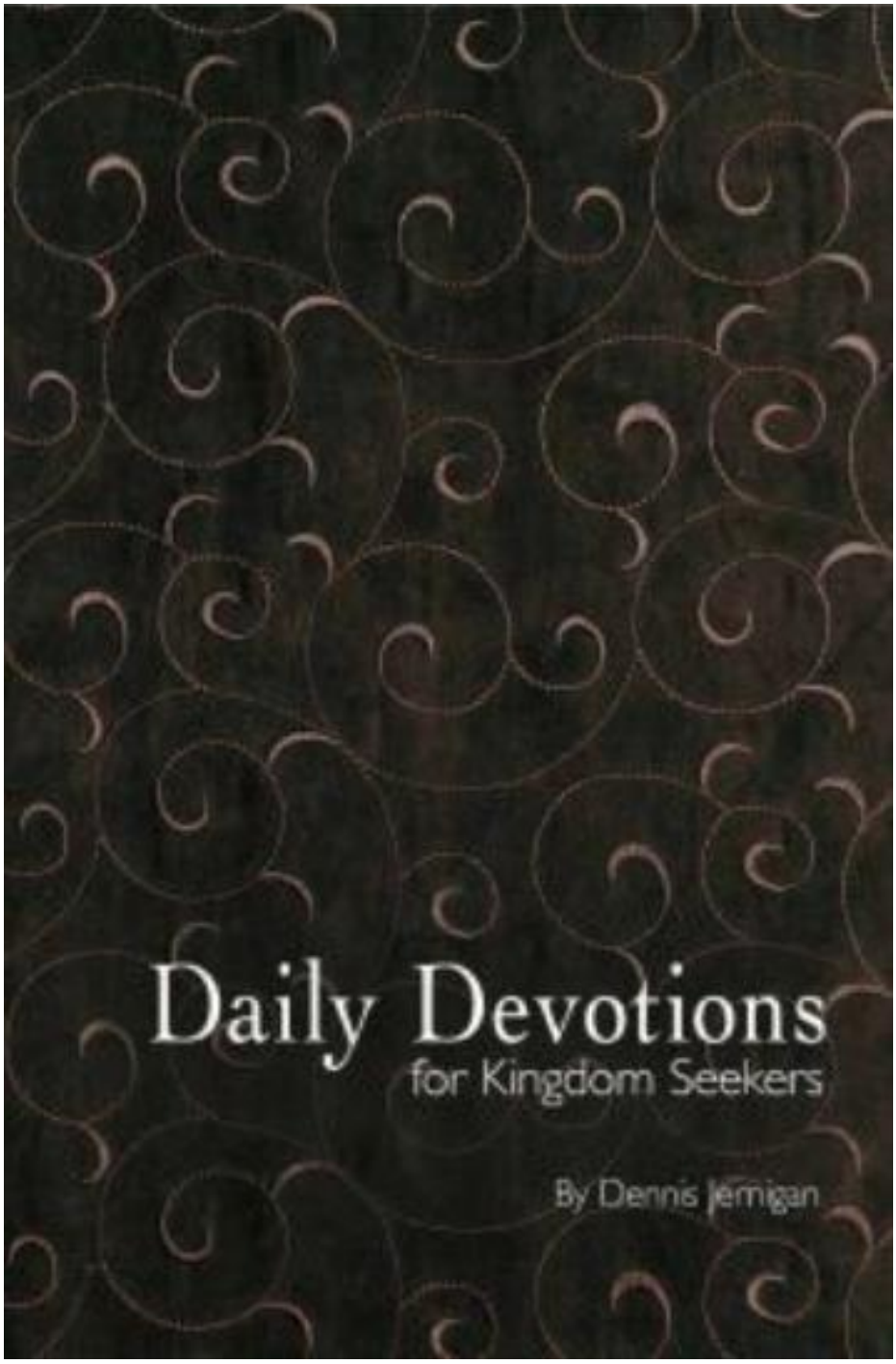
Jernigan currently serves on the Board of Directors for Exodus International, the world's largest ministry to those who struggle with unwanted same sex attractions/homosexuality. Each year between 350,000 and 400,000 men and women seek help from the resources available through Exodus International. Dennis is very humbled by this opportunity yet very proud to serve with the brave men and women of the Exodus affiliated ministries.

Through the years, Dennis has been privileged to work with the likes of Dr. James Dobson, Steve Farrar, Anne Graham Lotz, James Robison, Beth Moore, Max Lucado, and Andy Comiskey and has recorded with Annie Herring, Matthew Ward, Alvin Slaughter, Rebecca St. James, Travis Cottrell, Charlie Hall, Natalie Grant, Ron Kenoly, Christie Nockels, First Call, and Twila Paris.

Dennis Jernigan's mission statement can be boiled down to this:
"THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD."
Luke 4:18-19 NASB

Jernigan lives with his wife, Melinda in Muskogee, OK where they have raised their nine children. They are members of Church 418 where Jernigan serves as Minister of Worship and Praise.

To book Dennis Jernigan for ministry, call:
1-800-877-0406 or simply email us at mail@dennisjernigan.com


Daily Devotions
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Other Ministry Products Available from Dennis Jernigan:

Recordings – available at www.dennisjernigan.com or on iTunes
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Giant Killers
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I Will Be There (supports CareNet, a national organization of Pregnancy Care Centers)

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Dennis Jernigan – Live in Worship
I Salute You – patriotic DVD

Books -
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Giant Killers – Crushing Strongholds, Securing Freedom in Your Life
This Is My Destiny – Finding Your Identity In Christ
A Worshipper's Guide to Creativity, Song Writing, and Ministry
A Worshipper's Guide to the Holy Land – with CD Songs for the Journey
Help Me to Remember – For Those Who Grieve…How to Find Comfort in Sorrow
Victim to Victor – eBook available for download at www.dennisjernigan.com
A Mystery of Majesty - eBook available for download at www.dennisjernigan.com

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Dedication

This book is for every person who understands his or her need to seek first the Kingdom of God by seeking first the King. To all who desire to see the Kingdom come in every aspect of their lives. To Kingdom Seekers…

For Melinda, Israel & Dani, Annē, Hannah & Ash, Glory & Shaun, Judah, Galen, Raina, Asa, and Ezra…and all Jernigans yet to be born! Thanks to Danny & Joanna Dunlap for serving us so faithfully in the Kingdom; to Kevin & Janece Jones for believing with us to see the Kingdom come in Muskogee, OK; to all those who have supported me and helped me be the Giant Killer, Overcomer, and Kingdom Seeker God has called me to be…and it has taken many to get me here to this place I call freedom; to Jack Taylor for reminding me to see the BIG, BIG Kingdom picture; to Jerry Wells who first taught me and encouraged me to pray in the Kingdom manner; to Larry Lea for teaching me how to 'tarry for an hour'; to Dean and Jeanie Briggs for just being there…no matter where you are; to Trish Pfeifer for standing the test of time and for helping me do what I do with such a servant's heart; to Glory Thompson for diving right into the midst of this ministry and keeping me headed in the right direction…and for being such an awesome daughter; to Dennis Disney for helping keep me focused; to Tom Hopkins for faithful friendship and constant prayer; to Steve Griffin for faithful friendship and encouragement; to Reggie May for faithful friendship and SCUBA; to Shaun Thompson for your servant's heart and for being such an awesome son-in-law; to Dani and Israel for serving me in the midst of their own ministry needs; to Annē for being faithful and for being such a good example to your sisters; to Hannah for walking in the deep places and for dreaming; to Ash for being Hannah's knight in shining armor; to Judah for serving me in seeing this project through; to Galen for your joy; to Raina for still walking with me arm in arm; to Asa for being so focused on your dreams; to Ezra for your sense of humor; to Melinda for helping me be who I am.

How to Use This Book

This book is designed to help you meditate on God's Word. Each devotion was born from my heart amidst my own struggles to seek first the King and His Kingdom. I have been praying the Lord's prayer for many years now, specifically asking the Lord to bring forth His Kingdom in every area of my life. In the process I have overcome a past of homosexuality, anger, pride, fear, rejection, and despair. I have learned to walk in the reality of who I am in Christ. I have learned to walk in grace through any and every circumstance by incorporating a Kingdom point of view as the filter of my mind. I am a Kingdom Seeker…a Giant Killer…an Overcomer.

Because of all God has done for me, I want to help others find the same freedom and depth of intimacy with Christ I have come to know. Several things about this book:

• Each day's devotion begins with the phrase from one of my songs. Listen to the song daily until time to move on to the next song and its devotions. Memorize it. The words and melody will serve to help you meditate throughout the course of the day on the truth of God's Word as revealed through each day's devotional reading.
• Read the devotion and then answer the question(s) as you go about your day.
• Read the Scripture and take the concept of that Scripture and apply it to your thought-life as you go about your day.
• Listen to the song again at the end of the day if you like. Expect to hear from the Lord even as you sleep and, thus, fill your mind with all the Lord has revealed to you during the course of the day. God's Word says this:
…He gives to His beloved {even in his} sleep. Psalm 127:2b
All songs can be found at www.dennisjernigan.com for downloading. Most are from the recording Kingdom Come. Of course, you can read and apply the truths found in the devotionals without listening to the music. I have simply found MUCH freedom from being able to sing a song filled with truth as I go about my day…and again as I go to sleep.

Above all, my desire is that this book would prove to be as useful a tool to your heart and soul as it was to mine in the writing. I have lived every word of this and can verify that seeking the King is the most profitable thing I can do with my life. Now, go and be a Kingdom Seeker…by seeking the King!

In His Love & Grace,
Dennis Jernigan

Matthew 6:33
Zephaniah 3:17

Listen to: I BELIEVE
Words & Music: Dennis Jernigan
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Verse
O, I believe there is a God
And He is here with me!
And I believe that He is fierce
And He is faithful!
O, I believe He is a mighty God of victory!
And I believe that He is strong
And He is able!
I, I want to serve a God like You!
Yeah! Yeah! Yeah!
I, I want You to know that I love You!
Yeah! Yeah! Yeah!
Yeah! Yeah! Yeah!
Yeah! Yeah! Yeah! Yeah!
Chorus
And I believe that He is strong
And He is faithful!
And I believe that He is good! So good!
And I believe You have redeemed me
And I'm grateful!
And I, I love You!
And I believe Your love is deeper
Than the ocean!
And I believe Your love is faithful! True!
And Your amazing love
Has set my heart in motion!
And I, I love You!
Bridge
Nothing can separate me from Your love!
Nothing can separate me from Your love!
Not death! Not life! No depth!
No height! No ocean deep!
No mountain high! high!

January 1

"…Oh, I believe there is a God and He is here with me…"

I would not have survived had I not found a Firm Foundation. For too many years I allowed myself to be blown about by every new prevailing wind that came my way. That's what happens when we do not have a place to anchor our soul. When I had reached the bottom of seeking to have my needs met on my own terms, the Lord met me there with the reality of His presence. I no longer had to seek my affirmation, gain my acceptance, or seek my destiny in ways that never satisfied. All my needs were met deeply and profoundly in knowing Jesus Christ. Problems and temptations did not cease to exist in my life. I simply now had someone who understood and someone who would walk every step of the way with me. He is here and He is a Solid Rock where I find refuge in the storms of life.

Take time to look for signs and reminders of His presence with you today.

God [is] our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.
Psalm 46:1 KJV

January 2

"…and I believe that He is fierce and He is faithful…"

There have been many times in my life where I have had to literally fight my way out of a bind physically…times when it seemed no one was willing to step into the fray on my behalf. There have been many times since I was given a new identity that I have had to face mocking and ridicule because of my stand…but no one seemed to stand up in my defense. For those reasons I have often found it difficult to believe I was worth fighting for, but reality is that Jesus Christ thought I was worth fighting for – worth His life! Reality is that He fiercely stood in the gap for me…stood between me and the enemy…defeated the very forces of hell on my behalf…bore the ravages of my own sin…paid my debt…and continues to go to bat for me on a daily basis. My God is jealous in His love for me. He is faithful to defend me and carry me through.

Take time today to meditate on the ferocity of His great love for you.

God is jealous, and the LORD avenges; The LORD avenges and is furious.
The LORD will take vengeance on His adversaries,
And He reserves wrath for His enemies; The LORD is slow to anger and great in power,
And will not at all acquit the wicked. Nahum 1:2-3

January 3

"…Oh, I believe He is a mighty God of victory…"

No one likes to lose…especially me! I believe God has put it into the heart of every man to be an overcomer – to be victorious. Without Jesus I based my very identity on how well I performed – on whether I was victorious or not. Due to my sinful outlook on life, I constantly walked around in a state of personal defeat because I had no concept of what true victory looked like. I could not overcome temptation. Jesus could. I could not overcome my failures. Jesus could. I could not overcome my human weaknesses. Jesus could. When the Lord led me to repentance by His great love – a love that did not depend on my performance or lack thereof – He showed me what true victory looks like. When I am weak, then He is strong. He is God. I am not. He is my Father. I am His child…therefore I am victorious because HE is victorious!

Take time to walk in victory through faith – regardless of what your eyes can see. Either we are victorious through Him or not. Think on your victory today.

…I take pleasure in [my] infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.
2 Corinthians 12:10 KJV

January 4

"…and I believe that He is strong and He is able…"

As I grow older my body can no longer do what it used to do. Intellectually, I knew this day would come. Realistically, I felt I could delay the process through exercise and being wise with what I put into my body. Reality is that aging takes its toll regardless of how well we treat our earthly body! In fact, running daily for years (which made me feel good and kept me healthy on several levels) has caused my knees to wear out. Three surgeries later, I can no longer run! It is this process that has caused me to remember just how dependent upon the Lord for His strength I truly am. My physical frailty causes me to rely on Him to get me through. My emotional frailties and mental weaknesses cause me to trust the strength of His emotions and His thoughts. My spiritual being, unlike my physical body, does not age in the same way. The more I exercise my spirit, the more of His strength I gain. When I cannot, He can. When I am unable, He is very able.

What areas of your life do you need to see God's strength today? Dwell on His strength today.

And God [is] able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all [things], may abound to every good work…
2 Corinthians 9:8 KJV

January 5

"…I want to know a God like You…"

While I was growing up struggling with same sex attraction, I had such an intense desire to be known – to be valued simply because of who I was. My belief is that this is one of the deepest basic human needs…simply to be known. To be known gives one the feeling of worth. To be known brings the security of not being alone. To be known is one of the foundational stones of our existence – part of our identity. That need to be known comes as a result of being created in the image of God. He desires that we know Him. The break in our connection came as the result of our sin. Jesus came to reconcile mankind to God. My greatest satisfaction in life has come through the understanding that my God knows me…and has come as I have sought to know Him.

Meditate on the truth that knowing God and allowing yourself to be known by Him brings abundant and meaningful life.

That I may know him…
Philippians 3:10 KJV

January 6

"…Yeah! Yeah! Yeah!..."

My wife and I have nine children. As parents, one of our main concerns was teaching our children to obey…because obedience learned early helps ensure learning the boundaries that will keep a child safe from harm later in life. When trying to train our children to obey we also learned early on that obedience was instant or it wasn't really obedience. To question a dad's command to stop when stepping into oncoming traffic would prove disastrous should the child hesitate even for a moment. Such hesitation in a spiritual sense has the same results – harm or destruction. For obedience to be real it must be instant…otherwise we suffer the consequences. A

child touching a hot surface in spite of a dad's command to 'stop' results in an excruciating burn and excruciating pain for an excruciatingly long time. When we hesitate at the Lord's command to 'stop' we suffer spiritual harm and pain and, should we continue to disobey, eventual destruction in a certain area of life. When we hear the Lord's command, we should be as little children and respond with 'Yes! Yes! Yes, Lord!'

Are there any areas of your life in which you are hearing the Lord's command and you are hesitating? What must you do to walk in obedience?

Samuel said, "Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, {and} to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from {being} king."
1 Samuel 15:22-23 NASB

January 7

"…I want You to know that I love You…"

It is easy for me to worship my God. It is easy for me to praise Him…

even through the crap life throws my way. Why? He first loved me! In my sin, I was unlovable in an earthly sense. Sin has a way of making even beauty seem ugly (think of the latest Hollywood star caught in a scandalous affair of some sort). Yet the Lord saw through the sin and saw right to the depths of my heart – and wanted me enough to die for me! That is love! It was the recognition of that great love for me that led me to repent of my own sin and follow Him. Now, my greatest desire is to express back to Him the love I feel for Him.

Today, think on all the ways the Lord has expressed His love to you…and then spend time thinking of ways to express your love back to Him.

We love him, because he first loved us.
1 John 4:19

January 8

"…Oh, I believe that He is strong and He is faithful…"

Sometimes it seems that the things we can see with our eyes have all the power. Sometimes it seems that the circumstances of life have all the power. Sometimes it seems that the cares of life are more in control than the God we serve…but we know that is not true. Our victory is found where our intellect gives way to our faith. When, even in the midst of dire circumstances, we fix our spiritual eyes of faith upon the Lord we have a very unique vantage point. From God's power perspective, a mighty spiritual storm becomes nothing more than an inconsequential breeze. From God's perspective of grace, even our weakest moments and greatest failures can somehow be transformed into brilliant displays of His awesome power.

Today, when conflict arises (and it will), make the choice ahead of time as to how you will respond. Choose to respond as one who thinks he can control his circumstances and watch frustration and more calamity follow OR choose to respond as one who believes God is mighty and in control and watch the storms fade away as a mere breath.

God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
1 Corinthians 1:9 NASB

January 9

"…and I believe that He is good, so good…"

How many times have I heard people say things like this: "If God is so loving and so good, why would He send someone to hell? Why do bad things happen to good people? Why does God allow us to go through abuse and emotional wounding?" The short answer is 'sin'. God gave us a free will and we chose to go our own way. Sin ushered in calamity and chaos…not God! But the good news? God is in the business of taking our calamity and chaos and using those things to build a deep, abiding, life-giving relationship with us. Once we reach the age of being aware of who we are, we do have the choice as to how we respond to whatever life throws our way. God allowed me to go through same sex attraction…but taught me how to be a real man in the process. God allowed me to go through spiritual abuse at the hand of other believers…but taught me how to extend mercy and grace to even the most down and out individual – whether they agree with me or not. The bottom line is this: God is good – no matter what.

Spend time throughout the day today contemplating the goodness of God… especially in areas of your life where you may have some resentment toward Him for something He has allowed you to go through.

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to {His} purpose..
Romans 8:28 KJV

January 10

"…and I believe He has redeemed me and I'm grateful…"

I try not to live in the past. That only makes me walk in self-pity and cause me to become too self-focused…but I do take time to remember where God has brought me. Looking back with the idea of putting on a grateful heart is always a good place from which to exalt God. I did not deserve His love. I deserved death and hell because of my sinfulness, yet He saw worth in me as an individual and gave everything He had and everything He was to purchase me for Himself. I was the one kidnapped by sin. He was the only One who could pay the ransom to set me free. When I look at how far He has brought me it is often difficult for even me to believe I ever went through some of the junk of life I have gone through. That makes me very grateful indeed!

Spend time today thinking about where you were before Jesus found you…or where you would be had He NOT found you! Use every memory He brings to mind to launch you into a whole new moment of praise today.

Remember my affliction and my wandering, the wormwood and bitterness.
Surely my soul remembers and is bowed down within me.
This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope.
The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail.
{They} are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.
Lamentations 3:19-23

January 11

"…I love You…"

Walking with anyone in relationship means learning to communicate with one another. Relationship is a two way street. If one party does all the talking the

relationship does not grow. So it is the same with the Lord and us. We need to talk with Him, but we also need to learn to listen for His voice. One of the most simple yet profound ways I have been led to learn how to listen for His voice is to simply ask Him one simple question to begin the day…then spend the rest of that day listening and watching for His answer. That is also how I learned to meditate on God's Word. My brain takes a long time to memorize Scripture, but I can always remember one word!

Today, ask the Lord these simple questions: "Lord, do You love me? Would You show me how You love me today?" Then be watching and listening for what He will say and show!

We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.
1 John 4:16

January 12

"…Oh, I believe Your love is deeper than the ocean…"

A few years ago, Melinda and I had the privilege of taking a trip to Hawaii. Staying on the island of Maui, we made a short trip across the bay to a small extinct volcano cone that protrudes out of the ocean slightly, forming a crescent moon shape. This cone remnant is called Molokini. The crescent shape harbors an abundance of fish and offers protection from the strong ocean currents. While there, we snorkeled in the cold water and were amazed at the abundance of sea life and at the vivid array of colors and odd shapes. Mesmerized by the beauty I could see from the surface, I was startled to see people 40 feet below in SCUBA gear! At that moment I determined I would become certified to dive. A few short months later I gained my certification and found myself once again in the ocean…and was startled to see how much more I could see at 100 feet than I could see from the surface. It's a whole new world (as a Disney character once sang). Knowing God is like that. We can be satisfied with the grandeur of what we can see from the surface OR we can plunge deeper into intimacy with Him and discover a whole new world of relationship!

Today, dare to plunge into deeper intimacy with the Lord. Tell Him EVERYTHING…and trust Him to love you.

For the LORD is a great God And a great King above all gods,
In whose hand are the depths of the earth,
The peaks of the mountains are His also.
Psalm 95:3-4 NASB

January 13

"…and I believe that You are Faithful, True…"

At some time in all of our lives we will experience betrayal…and usually at the hand of someone very near and dear to us. During the course of the past year I have, once again, experienced betrayal at the hand of a close brother. Through a series of events, I was basically thrown under the bus as they say. As a young man I also experienced betrayal. My own mentor made a sexual advance on me when I was in college. Someone I trusted on a very spiritual level. Talk about devastation! My battle (after such times) is not so much a battle to forgive, but a battle as to whether I should ever trust someone again! Thank the Lord that even during such times of betrayal we have one whose very name is Faithful and True who will never betray us.

As you go about your day today, look for signs of God's faithfulness…especially during times in this day and age when it seems the whole world is falling apart.

And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it {is} called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war.
Revelation 19:11 NASB

January 14

"…and Your amazing love has set my heart in motion…"

Have you ever had times in your life in which some traumatic experience literally stopped you in your emotional tracks? Hearing of the death of a close friend or relative has that effect. Being involved in a fender bender can have that effect. The devastating ravages of sin can have that effect. Due to the nature of my own sin, learning to trust someone enough to allow them close enough to my heart to experience intimate relationship was quite difficult. I felt absolutely dirty and utterly unlovable…but the most amazing thing happened. God's love was revealed to me in a manner that left me with no excuses! When I realized He would love me in spite of my sin, that depth of love led me to repent of my sin…and led me to freedom!

Today, meditate on the amazing love God has for you.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
Romands 5:8 NASB

January 15

"…I love You…"

Three little words: I LOVE YOU. So much power in those three little words. And there are so many different ways to say 'I love you'. Our actions, our attitudes, and even our emotions have the ability to convey the power of love. Sometimes a simple gesture can convey the power of redeeming love. Sometimes a simple touch can convey the freedom of release the love offers. Sometimes a simple word spoken at just the right moment can lead a soul to experience the great freedom of acceptance that love offers. 'I love you' can be spoken in so many different ways.

As you go about your day, think about the people you come in contact with and how you might be able to convey the love of Christ to them in some creative and tangible way.

{Like} apples of gold in settings of silver
Is a word spoken in right circumstances.
Proverbs 25:11 NASB

January 16

"…Nothing can separate me from Your love…"

We all fear being alone. I remember one time when I was about 5 years old that left me feeling abandoned. My dad had loaded the tractor's lift with hay and 2 of my little brothers were on back of the lift riding with on the hay. As they pulled away from the barnyard I began to run after them, calling out to my dad, "Wait, daddy! Wait!" But he could not hear me. I remember vividly having to fight feelings of jealousy toward my brothers and resentment toward my dad for leaving me. Reality was that I had taken too much time in gathering my coat and gloves and dad simply thought I wasn't going to come for the ride! How often do we allow the circumstances of life to lead us to thoughts of abandonment and loneliness? Too often! Truth is we cannot be separated from the love of God if we are in Him!

Spend time today thinking about the many times God has come through for you during past episodes of loneliness. Allow Him to reveal to you all the ways He has been there that you had not even realized!

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP

TO BE SLAUGHTERED." But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Romans 8:35-39

January 17

"…Not death! Not life!..."

Is there ANYTHING that can separate us from the love of God? Not according to His Word! What about the circumstances of life? One of my daughters is now living in Australia, as is one of my sons. Another daughter is married and living in St. Louis. Another son is married and living in Arkansas. I feel very separated from them in a physical sense…but because we have more than just a physical basis to our relationships we feel connected even though we do not see one another for long periods of time. Even if we do not 'see' God or 'feel' His presence, HE IS STILL THERE! What about death? Even death cannot separate us from those we love or from the Lord. If we are in Christ, we WILL see one another again. Isn't that the coolest thing?! We win – no matter what!!!

Take time today to think about your circumstances. Even in the worst-case scenarios, believers are assured that we cannot and will not be separated from the love of God – or from one another!

For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.
Romans 14:7-8 NASB

January 18

"…No depth! No Height!..."

Have you ever gotten yourself into a situation in which you simply saw no way out? In my own life, as a result of my bondage to same sex attraction, I absolutely remember feeling there was no way out…no hope for me. I felt unreachable! But God saw otherwise! Just how far is God's reach? Is there any place too deep for Him to reach? Are there any heights He cannot get to? His presence is always with us. We do

not come into God's presence. Reality is that we forget He is there and we need to be reminded of it! Regardless of how much of a mess we can get ourselves into, we cannot get away from His long reach of love. That is good news!

Spend time today thanking God for the amazing ways He has reached into your life during times when you felt unreachable.

Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, You are there;
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there.
If I take the wings of the dawn,
If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea,
Even there Your hand will lead me,
And Your right hand will lay hold of me.
Psalm 139:7-10 NASB

January 19

"…No ocean deep! No mountain high!..."

When I think of how far the Lord has brought me from where I used to be, my heart becomes filled with gratitude. Even though I still experience times in which I cannot feel God's presence per se, my ability to look back at what He has already accomplished – the times He came through for me – gives me great assurance that He will do it again and again and again! We will go through times of spiritual darkness, but the wonder of God's power is that He is not limited by our darkness. He is light – even in our darkest night. Nothing phases Him – even our worst moments of failure and sin. There is no ocean that can separate me from that light. There is no mountain high enough to separate me from that light!

Take time today to allow the Lord to reveal His light to you in areas of darkness you are currently facing.

If I say, "Surely the darkness will overwhelm me,
And the light around me will be night,"
Even the darkness is not dark to You,
And the night is as bright as the day.
Darkness and light are alike {to You.}
Psalm 139:11-12 NASB

Listen to: HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD
Words & Music: Dennis Jernigan
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Verse
Lord, our Lord,
How great! How mighty
Is Your name in all the earth!
Mighty is the name of Jesus!
There is none of greater worth!
Pre-chorus
When I consider
The works of Your hand
I simply stand in awe!
Creator and Maker!
Redeemer of man!
You are the greatest God!
Chorus
How great is our God!
His mercy makes me stand in awe!
Amazing grace that broke my fall!
Amazing! Amazing God!
How great is our God!
His love broke through
Sin's cursed wall!
Redeeming love for one and all!
Amazing! Amazing God!
How great our God!
Bridge
Greater and higher and deeper and wider!
Greater and higher and deeper and wider!
Greater and higher
And deeper and wider Your love!

January 20

"…Lord, our Lord! How great, how Mighty is Your love in all the earth!..."

I can look back at certain points in my life and see that the sin I was walking in was something I fell into as a direct result of trying to fill the void that only God can fill. Every man has the need to be known – the need to be loved and to love. But when we become impatient and self-focused we tend to meet those very real needs in ways God never intended them to be met. Sex did not meet my needs. The approval of others did not meet my needs. The only things that met y deepest need was the greatness of

God's love for me. In comparison to the greatness of God, all other things we try to use to satisfy our longings pales. There is nothing greater than our God…nothing greater than His forgiveness…nothing greater than His redemption…nothing greater than His love for us.

As you go about your day today, be alert to the things that tempt you to meet your needs in ungodly ways…and trust the Lord to show you the correct response to having those needs met.

Your way, O God, is holy;
What god is great like our God?
Psalm 77:13 NASB

January 21

"…Mighty is the name of Jesus!..."

The name Jesus means literally "Jehovah is Salvation". I love the name of Jesus and on more than one occasion have cried out His name when I needed rescue. Right after my daughter Anne was born, I was running errands in our little Ford Pinto…during a snowstorm. As I went across the North Canadian River the little car began to spin around, out of control. Without hesitation I began to call out at the top of my lungs, "Help me, Jesus! Jesus, help me!" Just as I was about to slam into the side of the bridge and plummet over the side I was hit broadside by a truck that instantly stopped my slide! On another occasion, I was confronted by an angry individual who was very upset that I had the nerve to tell others they could be free from homosexuality. What did I do? Called out to Jesus and before I knew it, others were at my side to assure my safety. I call out to Jesus as my salvation in the small things as well. He is concerned that we know His salvation in every area of our lives.

Where do you need to see His salvation today? Do not hesitate to call out to Him throughout the day. He is there.

The name of the LORD is a strong tower; The righteous runs into it and is safe.
Proverbs 18:10 NASB

January 22

"…There is none of greater worth!..."

What is knowing Jesus worth to you? In my life I came to realize that knowing Jesus was worth giving up my past for. My sin left me empty and on the road to destruction. Knowing Jesus is worth giving up wrong relationships for. Knowing Jesus is worth every struggle I have had to face on the road to freedom from same sex attraction. Knowing Jesus is worth my physical life! To know Jesus is to know the Answer to my own existence. I am not here for me. I am here for His glory and for the purpose of extending God's grace and love to others. Knowing Jesus is worth the ridicule of a world that says I am crazy to think freedom is possible. Knowing Jesus is worth everything I have and am. How do I know? He saw worth in me when He gave His entire being to be the ransom for my sin. He wanted me! Knowing someone loves me like that is worth my life.

I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised,
And I am saved from my enemies.
Psalm 18:3 NASB

January 23

"…When I consider the works of Your hand I simply stand in awe!..."

I love Colorado. I love the mountains and the vastness and the grandeur. When in such a place, it becomes very easy to exult in God's creation. Easy to worship. But one thing I have to always be careful of is worshipping the creation rather than the Creator! When you see massive peaks all around you and look down several thousand feet to the valley below it is easy to have your breath taken away by what your eyes can see. But none of that would exist without the Creator. And on an even greater scale we see His grandeur every day – even if we do not live amidst majestic mountains. When I consider the works of His hands, I see redeemed lives all around me. To know that the Creator of all that is loves me intimately and has made a way for me to intimate fellowship with Him, those mountains seem as mere mole hills in comparison.

Meditate on the majesty of God's redeeming love.

When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,
The moon and the stars, which You have ordained;
What is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him?
Psalm 8:3-4 NASB

January 24

"…Creator and Maker, Redeemer of Man…"

God is Creator of all that is. He is our Maker – the Potter who desires to fashion us into the image of Christ. He is Redeemer…and I have needed a lot of redemption! There was a time in my life when I felt I messed things up to the point I no longer wanted to live…and actually took steps to end my own life. Since I failed at that attempt (gladly so!) I went headlong into a year of willful sin. It took the love of God as demonstrated to me by a friend to knock some sense into me. Even though I was allowing myself to receive a measure of God's love I still could see no way for God to redeem all I had done. Yet here I stand 27 years later and God is using the story of my greatest failure to bring glory and honor to His Son and to see countless people receive hope and freedom…and redemption.

Take time to think on all God has redeemed you from. In what other areas of your life would you like to see God's redemption?

Their Redeemer is strong, the LORD of hosts is His name;
He will vigorously plead their case so that He may bring rest to the earth, but turmoil to the inhabitants of Babylon.
Jeremiah 50:34 NASB

January 25

"…You are the greatest God!..."

In our day and age we are inundated with images of celebrities who have an air of superiority…and attitude that says 'Look at me. I have it all together. Be like me and you'll be happy.' Yet we can generally see right through the arrogance to the pain and to the sinking sands of fame and fortune upon which they have chosen to build their lives. Even many of our politicians have a god complex. 'Elect me and I'll make your life easier' seems to be a common mantra. Many things and many people lift themselves up as beacons of hope and all too often we fall for their beautiful words and idealistic concepts. But reality is that all those things are fleeting and could fall at any moment. Where we put our hope makes all the difference in the world when the world falls apart. There is only one God…and He is our greatest Hope.

Meditate on where you place your hope today. Do you hope in things or people or money or how you look? Take time to refocus on your real Hope today.

Why are you in despair, O my soul?
And why have you become disturbed within me?
Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him,
The help of my countenance and my God.
Psalm 42:11 NASB

January 26

"…How great is our God! His mercy makes me stand in awe…"

What is mercy? According to the Encarta® World English Dictionary, mercy is 'kindness or forgiveness shown to an offender'. We all know sin separates us from God…one little sin! And if we were all honest, our sin would disgust most people. Sin is not just the things…we can sin in thought and in attitude as well…and that should make us all cringe. My sin left me wondering not only if God could love me, but if He even LIKED me. When I realized I do not get to decide if God loves me, my heart was set free. My choice is to believe He loves me – to take Him at His Word. His very nature is love and that love is holy – perfect. My choice in any given situation is to either embrace His love and let go of the enemy's lies OR reject His love and cling to the lies. Yes, my sin made me unworthy and I did deserve death and hell…but He loved me and had mercy on me! Hallelujah!

Meditate today on how God has shown you mercy in your own life.

HEAR me when I call, O God of my righteousness!
You have relieved me in my distress;
Have mercy on me, and hear my prayer.
Psalm 4:1 NKJV

January 27

"…Amazing grace that broke my fall! Amazing, amazing God!..."

Grace is different than mercy. From my own experience, grace is actually God's strength and power granted to me. There were times when I did not think I could overcome my past, yet the Lord was there to pour out His grace on me and get me through that battle. There have been times when I have been so wounded I did not see a way out of the pain, yet the Lord was right there with grace to see me through. There have been times when I have been grieved at the loss of a loved one or a break in a relationship, yet the Lord was right there giving me His grace and getting me through.

His strength broke my freefall toward hell! His grace broke through the darkness and empowered me to keep seeking hard after my God. That is truly amazing!

Take time to receive God's grace throughout your day today. You will need it!

…to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.
Ephesians 4:7 NASB

January 28

"…How great is our God? His love broke through sin's cursed wall…"

I know. I know. I talk a lot about my past…but reality is that I absolutely do not live there. It is in sharing my past that I can show others the way through their own journeys. Overcoming our old identities is not always such an easy task is it? Sometimes it seems our journey toward wholeness takes one step forward and two steps back! But the process – the journey – is worth every one of those steps! I remember feeling as if my own sin had held me captive in some impenetrable prison. When the love of God broke through the door of that prison and gave me a new identity the journey did not stop there. He did not stop at the door. He has been in the process of knocking down the WALLS of that prison so that I have freedom that gives me a 360° view! Sin's walls were shattered when the stone rolled away from the tomb. How great is our God?

Meditate on all the walls God has crumbled in your own journey. Thank Him ahead of time for the breaking down the walls that still remain!

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us…
Galatians 3:13 NASB

January 29

"…Redeeming love for one and all! Amazing, amazing God! How great our God!..."

When I was a boy, my mom would collect S&H Green Stamps, which were given as incentives by certain stores whenever a purchase was made at that particular establishment. After she had collected a sufficient amount, she would go to the S&H Store and redeem those stamps – give them in exchange for some product she wanted. Jesus did that for us! God's love is truly amazing. Have you ever really had someone who loved you the way God loves us? People – even those we are most intimate with –

can let us down. It is a good thing we have the example of all examples of how redeeming love works! We were in debt by virtue of our sin. We could not pay that debt. We were bound for the debtor's prison of hell, when Jesus Christ paid our debt – redeemed us!

Think about what God has redeemed you from and then turn that gratitude into an attitude of praise throughout the day.

Blessed {be} the Lord God of Israel,
For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people…
Luke 1:68 NASB

Listen to: YESHUA
Words: Dean Briggs & Dennis Jernigan
Music: Dennis Jernigan
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Verse One
Like raw clay needs a Potter!
Like a desert thirsts for Water!
Like a child needs the love of a Father!
I need Yeshua! Yeshua!
Like a singer needs a new song!
Like the lame needs to be made strong!
Like a lone heart needs to belong!
I need Yeshua! Yeshua!
Chorus One
Yeshua! Yeshua!
The Rock where we stand!
Yeshua! Yeshua!
The Savior of man!
Yeshua! Yeshua!
We need Your saving hand!
Verse Two
Like a poem needs a clever rhyme!
Like a history needs a little time!
Like a lost man needs a sign!
I need Yeshua! Yeshua!
Like a story needs an ending!
Like an outcast needs befriending!
Like a broken heart needs some mending!
I need Yeshua! Yeshua!
Chorus Two
Yeshua! Yeshua!
The Rock where we stand!
Yeshua! Yeshua!
The Savior of man!

Yeshua! Yeshua!
We need Your saving hand!
Yeshua! Yeshua!
The God Who redeems!
Yeshua! Yeshua!
You set captives free!
Yeshua! Yeshua!
The Lord and King of Kings!
Bridge
Like a flower needs the rain!
Like a kiss to heal the pain!
Like the winter's passing brings the sun
To shine again!
Like a candle needs the light!
Like lovers need the night!
Like the ache we feel to prove He's real
That gives our blind eyes sight!

January 30

"…Like raw clay needs a potter…"

I don't know about you, but when I was a young man I knew EVERYTHING!

Funny how time, age, and experience leaves you with a far more humble picture of your own reality! The older I get the less I know! The older I get, the wisdom gained through my experience with knowing God leads me to humbly start each day with the truth: I need Him desperately. Just as time and experience tend to shape us into who we re, the greater reality is that the Lord in His great wisdom uses every bit of that time and experience to shape us into the image of Christ. Reality is that we all have need of His tender, shaping hand. The only way to keep from becoming hardened and embittered by life's circumstances is to place our lives and our circumstances into His hand and allow Him to mold us and shape us. Humility keeps us supple and pliable in the hands of the Master Potter.

Meditate today on how the Lord might desire to use your circumstances to mold you into the image of His Son.

But now, O LORD, You are our Father,
We are the clay, and You our potter;
And all of us are the work of Your hand.
Isaiah 64:8 NASB

January 31

"…Like a desert thirsts for water…"

In all of our lives we will have times where we feel we cannot sense God's presence or feel Him near us. Sometimes I get so busy that I saturate myself with too many things to do at once. If I do not take time to refresh myself I will most likely become burned out. But never fear, sometimes burning out, like being in a desert, is a good thing. When we get to that place where we have to throw our hands up in the air and say 'I give up!' then we have reached the place where we, once again, get to experience God's grace. Think of it like this: if we never experienced the dry times, the rain would not be precious to us. So it is with the Lord. When dry times come we get to experience the refreshing coolness of His rain in our lives…but only when we surrender to Him.

Spend time to day thinking about past times of dryness in your life and remember how good it felt to have that thirst finally quenched.

O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly;
My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. Psalm 63:1 NASB

February 1

"…Like a child needs the love of a father…"

I see firsthand every day of my life the devastation dealt to our society by the lack of a father's presence. Without the presence of a father figure, children are immediately at a disadvantage. When we come to Christ and He gives us a brand new identity we also have access to the heart of Father God. I have seen men who never knew the love of an earthly father who struggled with their worth and identity for years suddenly receive the power to overcome the deficits left by the lack. I have been privileged to watch women who struggled with their identities suddenly transformed from outcast to accepted – all because of the love of our heavenly Father. Having a perfect Father does the heart and soul good. Children suffer without a Father. No matter how old I get I will never stop being His son…and will never stop maturing in Christ as a result.

Meditate on what God as your Father means to your life today.

Just as a father has compassion on {his} children,
So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him.
Psalm 103:13 NASB

February 2

"…I need Yeshua! Yeshua!..."

Yeshua is the Hebrew version of Jesus. The name Yeshua literally means 'Jehovah is Salvation'. The great thing about knowing Jesus and His salvation is that His nature is so massive that it will take eternity for me to touch the tip of the iceberg of Who He is! As I grow older I realize more and more of what it means that I am saved, I am being saved, and I will be saved. I spent such a long time in sin that it will take me quite sometime to remove all the old grave clothes that used to define me. Knowing that God only wants my best, I have learned to simply live my life with the understanding that I NEED JESUS just as much as I did when I was in the depths of my sin! It is when we become comfortable in our own strength and lose sight of our need for Jesus that we tend to get ourselves in all manner of binds. I think the best way to live is to seek Jesus as if my life depends on it.

As you go about your day, look for ways to express to the Lord how much you need Him.

…work out your salvation with fear and trembling…
Philippians 2:12b NASB

February 3

"…Like a singer needs a new song…"

From my earliest memories, having grown up in a very traditional church, I knew the hymns. Not only did I know the hymns we used in worship but I could tell you which hymns we would sing during any given service. Every Sunday night we sang an old hymn called "Oh, Why Not Tonight." Elizabeth Reed wrote the lyrics in 1842.
Oh, why not tonight?
Oh, why not tonight?
Wilt thou be saved?
Then why not tonight?
For the longest time, I thought the only time someone could be saved was on a Sunday night! I love the old hymns dearly…but growing up I thought I would lose my mind over the monotony of singing the same songs week after week and year after year. Our relationship with God can get in a rut if we are not careful. Discipline and repetition are good…but variety adds spice to our lives…and the Lord desires that we live an abundant life.

Take time to worship God from a new perspective today. Ask Him to reveal Himself in a way you have never seen before.

He put a new song in my mouth,
a song of praise to our God;
Many will see and fear
And will trust in the LORD.
Psalm 40:3 NASB

February 4

"…Like the lame needs to be made strong…"

As I look back on my life and the things the Lord has brought me through,

I can see times where I actually felt comfort in my pain. What I mean is this: having felt rejected and unlovable for so long, I came to expect to be rejected and somehow found a weird sense of stability in it! The only problem was that my pain was never dealt with. Pain is the body's way of saying 'there's something wrong here'. Emotional pain is no different. For pain to be dealt with the physician must get to the root cause of said pain. Only then will true healing come. In a sense, I also used the expectation of rejection and my subsequent 'see, I told you I was not worth loving' attitude as a strange sort of self-medication. How hopeless is that? We all have weaknesses that need the touch of healing and the balm of God's medicating presence. We must first get honest and admit they are there. Only then can true healing begin.

Take some time today to allow the Holy Spirit to examine your soul to see if there are any areas where healing may be needed. Do not be afraid to be honest…and be quick to let Him at the root and quick to receive His remedy.

As for me, I said,
"O LORD, be gracious to me;
Heal my soul, for I have sinned against You."
Psalm 41:4 NASB

February 5

"…Like a lone man needs to belong, I need Yeshua! Yeshua!..."

As I travel around the country leading worship and sharing my story, I

come in contact with so many people who have no sense of belonging. For various reasons, people – even in the body of Christ – feel disenfranchised, often due to just not fitting in. That can be due to their perceived social status, financial class, or any variety of things we allow to separate us. I believe the Lord has put it into the heart of every person the need for fellowship. Why do we see so much gang activity in our cities? Because young people want to belong to something that makes them feel they have purpose and identity. When the body of Christ lets one of its members fall through the cracks for whatever reason, what is that person to do? Where can they turn? Fellowship is vital to life…even if that fellowship is with a small group of people. It is simply not good for someone to be alone.

Be alert today to those around you who seem to be alone. Consider what you can do to alleviate that loneliness. If you are that lonely person, whom can you reach out to today?

Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor.
For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion.
But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up.
Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm,
but how can one be warm {alone?}
And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him.
A cord of three {strands} is not quickly torn apart.
Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 NASB

February 6

"…Yeshua! Yeshua! The Rock where we stand!..."

Statesman Alexander Hamilton once said, "Those who stand for nothing fall for anything." That is so true. In this day and age the national thought seems to be that 'anything goes as long as you don't bother me'. That is dangerous ground. A man without a foundation can be swept away like sand on a beach or blown around like autumn leaves on a windy day. Sometimes we fear rejection so we are afraid to make waves lest someone find out and confront us. That's the way I was for far too long. My way of thinking was to simply accept my lot in life as 'this is just the way it is' and everything will be fine. The only problem with kind of thinking was that I never felt secure. Without a sure foundation, fear touches everything we think and do. When Jesus set me free, I suddenly found myself on a Solid Rock that could not be swayed by the world's waves of sinful propaganda any longer. I finally had a place to plant my feet that left me feeling secure.

Are you easily swayed by the opinions of others? Is this because there is an area of your life not planted on the Rock? Meditate today on what you

believe and why you believe it. If the things you stand on do not have Jesus as the foundation what can you do to change them?

And the rain fell, and the floods came,
and the winds blew and slammed against that house;
and {yet} it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock.
Matthew 7:25 NASB

February 7

"…Yeshua! Yeshua! The Savior of man!..."

Every generation faces the same dilemma. We grow up under the belief system of our parents yet there comes a day when each person must decide why they believe what they believe – for themselves. When I was in college I was challenged greatly concerning my beliefs – and I went to a Christian university! My philosophy class ate my lunch. I came away feeling I did not have a clue as to whom I was or why I believed the things I believed. I watched as several of my friends became so confused that they literally walked away from their belief in God! When we walk away from faith in God, we still have to place our faith in something, whether our faith is in our ability to make money, our societal status, nature, fame, our own abilities, etc. We serve what we believe in. In a sense, that which we place our faith in becomes our savior.

Where is your faith today? Meditate today on what it means for Christ to be Savior of each area of your life, from finances to relationships.

But I have trusted in Your mercy;
My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.
Psalm 13:5 NKJV

February 8

"…Yeshua! Yeshua! We need Your saving hand!..."
30

Sometimes we just need someone to help us up when we fall down, don't we? But something I have discovered about myself (and hate to admit) is that I do not want to appear weak so I will often limp through a hard time without asking for help – just so no one will think of me as a weakling. I think we call that pride! What I think of as weakness

God can use as power. It is when I humble myself and seek help that the person I seek help from does not see my request for assistance as weakness at all. This was brought home to me several times while raising my own children. As a dad, I want my children to see me as someone they can depend on. But I discovered that my children learned valuable life-lessons when they saw me express my inadequacy – and saw how I laid that weakness before the Lord. We all need one another. The moment we stop needing a Savior is the moment we allow pride to separate us from THE Savior.

Spend time meditating today on what 'when I am weak, then He is strong' means to you.

And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.
2 Corinthians 12:9-10 NASB

February 9

"…Yeshua! Yeshua! The God Who redeems!..."

God is Redeemer of everything. A few years ago, I decided I was tired of allowing my past to constantly be brought back to my mind to remind me how disgusting I was before I gave up to Jesus. I decided if God was truly Redeemer then I would make a list of all the things that the enemy kept throwing into my mind as well as all the times I felt the Lord had abandoned me. I gave the list to Him. One of those things was how I had felt abandoned by the Lord when my grandmother Jernigan had died. I was 13. After giving that list to the Lord, I had a measure of peace. It was in His hands now…but He had more in store for me! A few days later, a friend of my grandmother's came to me after a time of worship and asked me, "Isn't it wonderful how your grandmother's prayers were answered?" I told her I did not know what she was talking about. She went on to tell me how my grandmother would stand behind me when I would play the piano at her house and ask the Lord to use me in the areas of worship and music for His kingdom and His glory. She told me that my grandmother would ask her women's prayer group to agree with her in prayer every week! As she finished telling me this story the Holy Spirit reminded me of my list! From His perspective I would see my grandmother again…and He had multiplied her prayers even all those years after I was an adult…because the little lady who told me of my grandmother's prayers also told me that two of those original prayer partners still lifted me up regularly! God is a Redeemer!!!

Make your own list of times from your past you would like the Lord to redeem. Then wait for His perspective!

My lips will shout for joy when I sing praises to You;
And my soul, which You have redeemed.
Psalm 71:23 NASB

February 10

"…Yeshua! Yeshua! You set captives free!..."

When I was a boy, I would go out into our pasture at night and cry out to the Lord to please change me…but nothing ever happened…or at least I could not see that anything had happened. Even then, He was preparing the way of escape for me from the things that help me in captivity. Fear. Same sex attraction. Pride. Each of those captors was like a prison with walls a little boy could not see a way out of…and even as a young adult man those walls still seemed too immense to penetrate. The truth is that even when I was a little boy, my Savior was at work using even my failures to bring me to the place where I could see the way out. Of course, it is much easier to see how He did that when looking back – and not so easy to see when you're in the middle of the bondage! Even though I could not see the deliverance during those pasture 'cry sessions' I can look back now and see that He DID hear me. His deliverance came in His time…and since He is a good God who only wants my best, then He set me free just in time!

Are there any requests for freedom you have laid before the Lord but have not seen the deliverance yet? Don't give up just yet. Your deliverance may be just around the corner. Take time today to thank Him for your deliverance even before you see it!

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
Because the LORD has anointed me
To bring good news to the afflicted;
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to captives
And freedom to prisoners
Isaiah 61:1 NASB

February 11

"…Yeshua! Yeshua! The Lord and King of Kings!..."

What is a lord in an academic sense? A 'lord' is someone who wields considerable power or authority over others. Have you ever been in a situation where you had a boss or a teacher whose motto was 'it's my way or the highway'? How did that feel to have your thoughts and your feelings completely trampled on? Not good, huh? Jesus is Lord whether we submit to Him or not – simply because He is God and that is Who He is. But the cool thing about the Lordship of Jesus Christ is that His will is perfect and He only wants what is best for us. He is a Lord Who loves us and whose lordship is born out of perfect love. We can trust Him and we can know He is intimately acquainted with our every feeling and that He values our thoughts toward Him. He is not afraid of our questions or our ideas. He is supreme King over all kings who have ever lived…and He is a GOOD King! The best!

Spend time today allowing the Holy Spirit to show you areas of your life that may not be submitted to the lordship of the King. What would that area look like if it were truly submitted to His loving lordship?

…and that every tongue will confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.
Philippians 2:11 NASB

February 12

"…Like a poem needs a clever rhyme…"

Sometimes I go through periods in my life where everything just feels out of sync…like somehow my mental or emotional or spiritual engine is not firing on all cylinders. It can feel like a bad poetry session where the words ALMOST rhyme or where they rhyme but they are so trite they cause us to groan in agony! Life can get that way. Whenever I get out of sync, one of the things I have learned to do is simply to stop everything and get honest…even if I am in the middle of a busy schedule. You see, God is not limited by our busyness at all! He is more than willing to meet with us anywhere at anytime! When I put the emotional, mental, spiritual, or physical brakes on in my life I do so in order to allow the Lord to re-align my thought processes. The simplest way to do that? Worship. Gratitude. Talking or singing to Him the truth of Who He is. Whenever I am out of alignment it simply means I have stopped thinking God-thoughts and begun to think me-thoughts. When I get back to Him, the 'words' of my life begin to rhyme

again…and not just simple first-grade rhymes, but exquisite, clever rhymes that remind me of how much He loves me.

Spend time to day allowing the Holy Spirit to re-align your thoughts.

He put a new song in my mouth,
a song of praise to our God;
Many will see and fear
And will trust in the LORD.
Psalm 40:3 NASB

February 13

"…Like a history needs a little time…"

I need Jesus…no matter how mature I think I am in Him, I still need Him desperately. This comes home to me in a huge way whenever I go through a period of life where things are going well and there is peace and then suddenly that peace and wellness are shattered with a storm of life. All too often, I regress into old habits of fear and worry about tomorrow. What I have found to be the quickest way back to peace – even in the storm – is to remind myself that God is in control…and that I have been through storms before…and that Someone got me through those storms…and He can do it again and a again and again! Just as history reminds us that in time God always comes through, we must remind ourselves that we need Him – even in the good times.

Take time today to think about all the times God has delivered you in the past…and then thank Him ahead of time for the many times He will do it in the future!

I sought the LORD, and He answered me,
And delivered me from all my fears.
Psalm 34:4 NASB

February 14

"…Like a lost man needs a sign…"

As I was growing up, I heard so many sermons and testimonies from real people about how someone 'found' Jesus. This never really made much sense to me since I also heard the sermon after sermon and testimony after testimony that told about how 'lost' someone was. How can you find something if you are the one who is

lost? It's a logical question. Yes, I know we seek the Lord and we find Him but the true reality is where we must start from if we are to have a healthy view of God. Sin separated me from God and I lost my way. I was the lost one. There was a time in my life where I sought to fill my need for God with other things. I had my needs met in ways that only satisfied me for a moment. It was when I realized just how far I had strayed – just how far I had lost my way – that I realized that Jesus was there waiting for me seeking to save me) all the time. I was lost. He found me. Pure and simple. The sign I needed? That I was loved no matter what – but that His love would not leave me where I was!

Spend time today meditating on what it took for you to realize your 'lostness' and how the Lord found you. You will be pleasantly surprised at the depth of love – all over again!

All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all
To fall on Him.
Isaiah 53:6 NASB

February 15

"…I need Yeshua! Yeshua! Like a story needs an ending…"

For many years, due to my struggle with homosexual thoughts, I felt there was absolutely no hope for me. When one feels no hope, they have nothing to anchor their life to. I knew I wanted to be free but I just could not see how. I knew there must be a way out but I could not see the way. What kept me going and kept me from giving up completely was hearing the stories of others whom God had delivered from various bondages in their lives. Knowing God had taken others from bondage into freedom encouraged me that just maybe there was hope for me. I also remembered that King David had committed adultery and murder – yet is remembered in Scripture as being 'a man after God's own heart'! But what sealed my fate in the journey toward freedom was a simple little passage of Scripture that listed a number of sins and types of bondage and then went on to say that such were some of you! In other words, almost 2,000 years ago, people who struggled just like me were finding freedom! The same God that set those people free could set me free. I simply decided to seek Jesus and it was in that relationship that I found freedom. I can see the end of the story…but now I know how to get there!

What is the ending to your story? Do you know how to get there? Meditate today on what steps your journey toward freedom needs to take.

…do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?
Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor {the} covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.
Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.
1 Corinthians 6:9-11 NASB

February 16

"…Like an outcast needs befriending…"

Have you ever felt like an outcast? Have you ever been to a social gathering where you knew no one and no one made an effort to meet you? How did you feel? Due to the nature of my past, I used to allow my thoughts to keep me in that position of 'the outcast'. After all, I used to be homosexual. Therefore the other men in the room think less of me as a man. Reality was that probably no one was thinking about me at all! We all play those games from time to time. We all have a tendency to think of ourselves as victims in a sense. One of the quickest ways to victory over such thoughts is very simple: if you want a friend, be a friend! Jesus did not wait around for people to pursue Him. He was always investing His life in others. We must learn to do the same. In so doing we put the lies of the enemy down and become Victors rather than Victims!

Ask the Lord to show you those in your life that need a friend. Take time today to bless that person in a tangible way. Offer a warm hug or a fresh cup of coffee. Be creative.

"Then the righteous will answer Him,
'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You {something} to drink? 'And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? 'When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?'
"The King will answer and say to them,
'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, {even} the least {of them,} you did it to Me.'
Matthew 25:37-40 NASB

February 17

"…Like a broken heart needs some mending, I need Yeshua! Yeshua!…"
37

We need Jesus. Even the most healthy and mature in Christ desperately need Jesus. Without Jesus I would surely die. Without Jesus my life would be miserable. The very thought of trying to live apart from His love and grace gives my heart great pause. As a result, I want to live my life broken before Him. This is not a sad, depressing way of living. It is one of abundant life. When I walk in brokenness I walk in honesty. When I walk in honesty I walk in intimacy. When I walk in intimacy I walk in victory. I have nothing hidden to weigh my heart and soul down! Sin leaves every human broken in some way. Every heart needs mending. I just admit it! It is that honesty that leads me to healing and to that abundant life.

In what ways can you walk in more honesty today? With yourself? With the Lord? With others? Take some time to unburden your soul today.

Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.
James 5:16 NASB

February 18

"…Like a flower needs the rain…"

As believers, we are expected to mature in our faith…to deepen our walk with the Lord. That's what relationship is all about. Growth. Depth of life…abundance of life. Yet, the very health such a relationship brings into our existence can often lead us to a sense of self-sufficiency. "Look how far I've come!" is a great attitude…unless we forget the One who got us this far! Without the rain, the flower would not grow. Without the sunshine, the flower does not receive the power it needs to sustain life. Without the nutrients of the soil, the flower cannot possibly survive. That is how the believer is to live his life - thriving in his existence but remembering who gives him his very existence. We need the Lord – no matter how healthy we think we are. Spend time today thanking God for all the things He does to sustain your spiritual and physical existence.

For, "ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF, BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER." And this is the word which was preached to you. 1 Peter 1:24-25 NASB

February 19

"…Like a kiss to heal the pain…"

Remember when you were a child and the many times you fell and scraped a knee or cut your finger? What do you remember more than the pain? Probably you associate a good memory to that pain because (if you were fortunate enough to have a loving mom or dad) your mom was there to kiss the boo-boo and 'make it all better'. What a great picture of what the Lord does for us in a spiritual sense. Through all the pain of my life – the torture and torment of my bondage and the struggle for freedom…the anguish of sorrow and loss in the simple living out of life – He has been there to heal my pain and 'make it all better'. I love looking back on the painful moments of my life now (those that I am far enough removed from) and remembering how the Lord touched me in that moment and brought healing. I still need that. I crave that touch.

What are some of the moments you recall when God touched you in your pain and brought healing? Thank Him. What are some areas of pain right now that you need Him to touch? Let Him.

The troubles of my heart are enlarged;
Bring me out of my distresses.
Look upon my affliction [pain] and my trouble,
And forgive all my sins.
Look upon my enemies, for they are many,
And they hate me with violent hatred.
Guard my soul and deliver me;
Do not let me be ashamed, for I take refuge in You.
Psalm 25:17-20 NASB

February 20

"…Like the winter's passing brings the sun to shine again …"

'This, too, shall pass'. We've heard that statement so many times in our culture. It simply means that even the most trying of times will eventually fade away or that somehow we eventually 'make it' through. Yet, what about the emotional wounds we face in life? Is it right to say to ourselves or to others 'this, too, shall pass'? In God's economy we can always count on Him to get us through the trials of life. Even the most wounding of memories I thought I would always have to carry with me have now become part of the history of my life. The great thing about God's ability to get us

through is that He takes even the impossible situations and makes possibilities. He takes even those things Satan means for evil and redeems them and uses them for His glory. So when we say ‘this, too, shall pass’ from God’s point of view we are saying that God is in control – and look how great He is in His powerful love!

Think about the areas of your life in which you really need one of those ‘this, too, shall pass’ attitudes. In what ways can you see the Lord may be working even in these areas to bring about His glory and His kingdom in your life.

“I am the Lord, the God of all the peoples of the world.
Is anything too hard for me?”
Jeremiah 32:27 NLT

February 21

“…Like a candle needs the light…”

What makes a candle a candle? Is it the wax? Is it the wick? Is it the shape? I would say all of those things are part of what makes a candle a candle…but what makes a candle ‘alive’ in a sense, is it’s flame. But the flame of the candle does not exist without a source of fire. Someone has to strike that match and hold it to the wick for the candle to produce the flame and subsequent light. I am like a candle. I have been shaped into the image of God – made to be like Him. I have a mind and a will and emotions. I have a physical body. But those things do not necessarily make me a man who is like God. Like the flame of that candle, my heart needs to be lit by the Creator of life. To live apart from that source, I would have no flame…no REAL life as ordained by the Creator. And I want all the life I can get and I refuse to settle for second best – what the world calls light. I call that darkness.

How can I stay connected to the Source of my flame – the Source of my life today? Think about what it means to be His child created in His image.

“While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world.”
John 9:5 NASB

February 22

"…Like lovers need the night…"

My wife and I have nine children. People constantly joke with us saying, "Don't you know what causes that?" And our reply is always, "Yes! And we like it!" For us to have made those babies, we had to first become intimate physically. In other words, without intimacy there would have been no life. How can we expect deep and abundant spiritual life if we do not seek intimacy with our Maker? When I come to Jesus in honesty and intimate confession of the depths of my heart, it is as if I stand before Him naked and say, "Here is my heart, Lord. Into-me-see." That's great, but it is still not true intimacy yet. In that same moment that I come before Him in honest confession He says to me, "Son, here is My heart. Into-Me-see." It is when we exchange life with God relationally, intimately through prayer, worship, and meditation that more life is produced…just as when a man and a woman come together in physical intimacy to produce a child. True life is born of knowing and being known.

Meditate today on the things you need to confess to Father…and then take time to hear what He says in response to you.

…that I may know Him…
Philippians 3:10a NASB

February 23

"…Like the ache we feel that proves He's real that gives our blind eyes sight…"

Have you ever had a dream of going to some far away place or seeing some dreamed of event and it was all you could do to keep your heart from bursting at the seams at the sheer anticipation as the realization of your dream drew closer? I believe every human heart is born with a deep, God-planted need to know God and to be known by Him. Our problem is that we try to meet that need in so many harmful ways. Promiscuity. Drugs. Alcohol. Other people. Addictions of all sorts. Emotional dependency on others with deep emotional needs of their own. We are all searching for 'the answer' to that need. I searched in so many hurtful areas and had fleeting moments of satisfaction – but nothing that every truly adequately satisfied. Knowing Christ has met every need I had…and satisfies in ways that nothing on this earth ever could. Just as we ache in anticipation of special events in our lives, we all ache to know our Maker. That ache is satisfied in knowing Jesus Christ intimately.

In what areas of your life are you less than satisfied these days? How can that need be met in and through your relationship with Christ?

For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for {our} adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he {already} sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with rerseverance we wait eagerly for it.
Romans 8:19-25 NASB

Listen to: HOLY IS YOUR NAME
Words & Music: Dennis Jernigan
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Verse
You are the God who is holy
Lord, You are awesome and holy
You are! You are the God who is holy!
You are the God who is holy
Lord, You are awesome and holy
You are! You are the God who is holy!
Chorus
And with the lightning and thunder
I loudly proclaim
All the power and might of Your redeeming name
Holy is Your name!
Like the joy of one heart that Your love has set free
By the pow'r of Your blood and Your great majesty
Holy is Your name!

February 24

"…You are the God who is holy…

One of the names the Lord calls Himself is Jehovah M'kaddesh. The literal translation is 'I Am the Lord Who Sets You Apart'…or I am your Holiness…your sanctification. Something that is holy is something that is set apart for a high purpose. Something to be kept pure. When we think of God we usually think 'holy'…but do we really understand what that means? We know that God is perfect and pure. All that He

is comes from the perfection of His holiness. That means His love is perfect. His forgiveness is perfect and complete. His redemption is perfect and complete. His power and strength – all that He is – is perfect. And because He is perfect, His ways, His thoughts, and His desire for us are all perfect. Do you know what that means? He only desires our best! We can TRUST Him completely.

What are some of the misconceptions of God's perfect holiness that keep me from trusting Him completely? Take time to repent of those wrong thoughts and put on the right thinking that brings victory today.

Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying,
Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep:
for it [is] a sign between me and you throughout your generations;
that [ye] may know that I [am] the LORD [Jehovah M'kaddesh] that doth sanctify you.
Exodus 31:13 KJV

February 25

"…Lord, You are awesome and holy! You are! …"

If God is perfect and holy in all of His ways, what does that mean when bad things happen to us? How can a good and perfect God Who is perfect in His love allow bad things to happen to good people? Sin sees to it that the world is fallen. God's remedy is Jesus. The lies of the enemy see to it that confusion seems to rule the day. God's remedy is the Truth of His Word – Jesus. The word 'awesome' literally means impressive or overwhelming to the point of deep admiration or fear. The awesome thing about God's holiness is that even in spite of bad things happening due to sin, the lies of the enemy, and our own willful disobedience, God is able – in His holiness – to take even our greatest failures and make something beautiful from them. He is able to put down the lies of the enemy and set us on the path of truth. He is able to take what Satan meant for evil and use it for GOOD in our lives! That is AWESOME!

Think of areas of your life where evil seems to be triumphing over good. Ask the Holy Spirit to allow you to see a glimpse of what the perfect holy God is up to in these areas…then take time to rejoice in God's goodness!

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to [his] purpose.
Romans 8:28 KJV

February 26

"…You are the God who is holy!..."

I am who I am because of Who He is. The name Jehovah M'kaddesh literally means 'I Am the Lord Who sets you apart'. When we become new creations in Christ, the Lord sets us apart for a divine purpose. I believe a huge part of that purpose can be summed up in this statement: I am here to know God intimately and to lead others to that same knowledge. Think of it this way. I know God…and He knows me! And He wants others to know Him as well! It brings my heart great joy to watch another person find the same freedom and love I have found in knowing Him and in being known by Him. We are set apart for the Creator of all that exists! All I am and all I will be are best found in deepening that relationship. What freedom there is in being known in every hidden nook and cranny of my heart…and still abiding in His love! He is awesome and holy!

Take time today to allow the Lord to show you more of His purpose for your existence…then spend the day basking in what that realization means to your life.

But know that the LORD has set apart the godly man for Himself;
The LORD hears when I call to Him.
Psalm 4:3 NASB

February 27

"…And with the lightning and thunder I loudly proclaim…"

There have been people I have met in this life who declare their 'greatness' in a loud boisterous manner…and then there are those I have observed who live their lives in such a way that greatness permeates all they say, think, and do. My greatest freedom has come through simple proclamation. Not proclaiming any greatness on my part, but rather, proclamation of Who it is that loves me and sets me free. The power of proclamation is the power of life and death in a sense. God's Word says the power of life and death rests in the tongue. When I am tempted my response is a proclamation that says, 'That thought is not a representation of who I am. That is not me. I will think on what is right and true and good and godly.' That is a great proclamation, but the greater proclamation is this: 'My God is the one Who gives me my identity. I am Who He says I am.' Both are good. The second is better because it declares the reality of Who God is and reminds me that I am nothing apart from Him. May my life be like the lightning and thunder that declare the power and majesty of my God!

Death and life are in the power of the tongue,

And those who love it will eat its fruit.
Proverbs 18:21 NASB

February 28

"…All the power and might of Your redeeming name! Holy is Your name!..."

I have met many people who tell me they have no hope for freedom or redemption. I have no problem telling them that is simply not true…because I used to think the same way. Because of all I had done to separate myself from the Lord, I felt that I had fallen too far for His help…and that because of my unworthiness He would have nothing to do with me…that my sin was too vile for Him. How foolish! Jesus took the sin of every human that would ever exist upon Himself and PAID OUR DEBT IN FULL. He has set a feast of forgiveness and cleansing and hope before us and offered it as a free gift. Our only obligation? To receive that gift. For far too long I sat beneath the table of that feast and tried to be satisfied with the crumbs I felt I deserved. Glorious day it was when I realized the feast was mine for the taking…and man, did I partake! When we take Jesus at His Word – by His name – we have all the power of heaven's love at our disposal. At that table we lose chains and find healing. At that feast we find acceptance and forgiveness. At that table we find fellowship and peace. But we must take and eat for that feast to become reality in our lives.

What crumbs are you settling for in your relationship with God? What must you do to sit down at the table? What do you need from Him today?

Take time to taste and see…
O taste and see that the LORD is good;
How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!
Psalm 34:8 NASB

February 29

"…Like the joy of one heart that Your love has set free…"

When I think about all God has done for me I can easily become overwhelmed. I deserved death and hell for my sin…but I received forgiveness and hope and cleansing and restoration and a family and a ministry and a home - and the list is endless. For far too many years I was a prisoner in an inner prison, locked away in the recesses of my mind due to my own wrong thinking. Then one day, the Lord came bursting through

the door of that prison and knocked it completely off its hinges…and then began to tear down every single wall that defined that prison for so long! What joy! When I remember all He has done for me I am drawn to even greater depths of intimacy with Him. Gratitude is the foundation of that joy and gratitude is the sustainer of that joy and gratitude is the vessel upon which I send that joy back to the Lord and to others. Joy comes when we know the ending of the story is a good one…and I know mine is grand! Who knew a prison break could be such a good thing?!

What are some of the walls that need to be dealt with in the prisons of your life? Spend time today allowing the Lord to tear those walls down and to rebuild an altar of gratitude in their places.

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
Because the LORD has anointed me
To bring good news to the afflicted;
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to captives
And freedom to prisoners…
Isaiah 61:1 NASB

March 1

"…By the pow'r of Your blood and Your great majesty! Holy is Your name!..."

The blood of Jesus paid the debt I owed due to my sin. The blood of Jesus washed me of all unrighteousness. The blood of Jesus empowers me to withstand the lies of the Enemy. The blood of Jesus seals me in my true identity in Christ. The blood of Jesus runs through my spiritual veins and makes me a joint-heir with Christ to the majesty and glory of Almighty God. The blood of Christ grants me instant and deep access to Father God at any moment of the day…for absolutely any reason. The blood grants me intimacy with my God! There is LIFE in the blood! Without physical blood I die. Without the appropriation of the power of the blood of Christ – making it personal to my own life – I walk in weakness and end up in despair and defeat. I must take the power of His blood personally each and every day in order to live the most abundant life possible on this earth.

Take time today to allow the Holy Spirit to show you just how deeply the blood of Jesus affects your life. Allow Him to show you new ways to walk in the power of what that means!

But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off
have been brought near by the blood of Christ.
Ephesians 2:13 NASB

Listen to: COME, KING JESUS

Words & Music: Dennis Jernigan

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Verse
When will You come?
When will I see?
How will I know Your glory?
You are my King!
I will bow down!
Your Kingdom come!
Come in me now!

Chorus
Come, King Jesus!
Bring Your Kingdom!
Scatter darkness with Your majesty!
Come, King Jesus!
Reign in freedom!
Reign in power!
And let Your Kingdom come in me!

Verse Two
You are my King,
So reign over me!
Fill me with pow'r and glory!
Pierce ev'ry darkness
And set captives free!
Lead on, O King,
Beginning in me!

Bridge
The King is coming
On a horse of white!
He will reign in power!
He will reign in might!
Jesus come! Jesus come!
Jesus come!
Let Your Kingdom come!
The King is coming!
Let His church rise up!
Let us declare to the darkness
We have had enough!
Jesus come! Jesus come!
Jesus come!
Let Your Kingdom come!

March 2

"…When will You come? When will I see?..."

God's timing does not depend on my limited view of things! And that is so good! If it were up to me, I would opt for peace and tranquility all the time…and that would do nothing to chip away at the old grave cloths of my life – the things that used to define me. The great news is that He promises in His Word that we can hear and know His voice! A sheep becomes accustomed to the voice of his shepherd…and so it is with us. This is the point where we step out on faith and believe that we CAN hear His voice. He does not always speak the way we would expect. He uses His Word…other people…circumstances…and a still small voice in the core of our being to give us Words of life. Have you been listening?

Take time all day today to listen for His voice…and do not discount the things the world may call foolish. God may very well use that very foolish looking thing to speak great wisdom into your life.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:
And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish,
neither shall any [man] pluck them out of my hand.
My Father, which gave [them] me, is greater than all;
and no [man] is able to pluck [them] out of my Father's hand.
John 10:27-29 KJV

But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, [yea], and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence.
1 Corinthians 1:27-29 KJV

March 3

"…How will I know Your glory?..."

What is His glory? The glory of God is simply the weight of His presence. His glory is everything He is. When I am sick, He brings His healing and I taste the glory of His presence. When I am bombarded by the lies of the enemy, He puts them down by the truth of His Word and I find the peace of His glory. When I feel sorrow, He wraps His arms of comfort and love around me and I feel the weight of His cleansing presence.

And yet, these are but small rays of the fullness of His glory that shine into the cracks of our feeble ability to see Him…like rays of sunlight breaking through the clouds after a thunderstorm. If we saw His complete glory we would utterly explode from the sheer holy weight. How will we know His glory? Walk in intimacy with Him.

Today, allow the Lord to invade your life with His glory…taste and see…feel and be moved…just walk with Him.

For the LORD God [is] a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good [thing] will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. O LORD of hosts, blessed [is] the man that trusteth in thee.
Psalm 84:11-12 KJV

March 4

"…You are my King. I will bow down…"

As a little boy, my brothers and cousins were always playing games.

Fantasy is such an important part of shaping our souls. I believe my imagination was given by God as a tool for creativity - because He is so imaginative and creative as our Maker. One of the things little boys pretend is that he is a knight in shining armor who slays the dragon and defends the honor of the princess, thereby gaining the blessing of her father, the King. Games like that prepared my heart to recognize the deep reality of the King of Kings…and how He slew the dragon (defeated sin and death and the Enemy)…and led me to freedom…and gave me full access to His Kingdom…and calls me His own! How awesome that the imaginations of a little boy were actually a picture of my spiritual reality.

Allow the Holy Spirit to spur your imagination today. Begin by seeing yourself as a man or woman in service of THE King.

And I saw an angel come down from heaven,having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, 'til the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.
Revelation 20:1-3 KJV

March 5

"…Your kingdom come. Come in me now!..."

I am a child of the King. Jesus told his disciples to seek first the Kingdom of God and He taught His disciples to pray for God's Kingdom to come in their lives. We are his disciples – His followers. What does it mean to seek His Kingdom first? What does it look like for His Kingdom to come in my life? To seek the Kingdom I believe we must seek the King, pure and simple, and then we'll have a clue! Beyond that, I pray as He taught us to pray. "Lord, bring Your Kingdom and all the ramifications of Your Kingdom into my marriage…my relationships…my finances…my job…my attitudes…my actions…my relationship with You. This is the key to Kingdom power and Kingdom intimacy with the King!

Allow the Lord to reveal ways His Kingdom can come to pass in various areas of your life as you go about your day today.

But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.
Matthew 6:33 NASB

"Pray, then, in this way:
Our Father who is in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
Matthew 6:9-10 NASB

March 6

"…Come, King Jesus, bring Your kingdom…"

If Jesus is the King of Kings, that means He rules and reigns over EVERYTHING! So why do we cower in fear when things around us fall apart? Is He not in control? Why do we doubt His promises to us? Is He not a good King? Why do we allow the pressure of the world to cause us to waver in our faith? Is He not worth following? Could it be that we don't allow ourselves to live as Kingdom thinkers because we tend to look from our feeble human perspective and allow the dragons of fear and doubt to keep His Kingdom from coming in certain areas of life? I know that is true for me…but no more. My goal is to mature and become so trusting of my King that even sorrow and tragedy are seen as

momentary blips on the big picture of the Kingdom. Let's become 'big picture' people and stop limiting the King by placing Him in the box of our fear and doubt. He is King over EVERYTHING!

In what areas have you limited God by living your life from your own perspective? Allow the Lord to show You HIS perspective in those areas today.

For the LORD [is] a great God, and a great King above all gods.
Psalm 95:3 KJV

March 7

"…Scatter darkness with Your majesty…"

Sometimes the darkness of the world tends to overshadow all that seems good. These days what is good and right has now become demonized. And sadder still, what is evil and wrong is now celebrated as the conventional wisdom of the day. When a Kingdom – like the kingdom of this world – gets out of order, that order can only be restored by the one who has the authority to do so. Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth. He is the King of Kings – Lord of all. The one with the power and authority can, by his mere presence, scatter the darkness with his light. We are called to be his royal ambassadors here on this earth…so guess where He chooses to shine that light and authority from? You and I who are His followers. Let's not waste time complaining about the darkness. Let's unleash the power of the King and bring Kingdom order to the world around us. Exalt Jesus and watch Him scatter the darkness with His majesty!

Take time today to take a fresh look at the darkness around you and allow the Lord to reveal to you new ways to shine forth His light and love to those around you.

I will speak of the glorious honor of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works.
…to make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom.
Psalm 145:5 KJV & Psalm 145:12 KJV

March 8

"…Come, King Jesus! Reign in freedom…"

How can the Lord reign in freedom if we put Him in a box? We allow our fears and our circumstances to dictate what God can and cannot do. He is such an awesome King – One Who does not force His love upon us…or force us to change. He wants us to see our need and respond willingly because He knows what is best for us. What if were able to trust enough to let go of the fear and cling to Him? What if we were to look only briefly at our circumstances and gaze intently at Him? Seems to me that in letting go of those false hopes that fear and circumstances represent and clinging to the Lord of Hope might just mean the difference between victory and defeat.

As you go about your day, practice letting go of the fear by trusting Him with the outcome of whatever circumstances and trials you face. Let Him reign in freedom…and not the fear.

…For God has not given us a spirit of timidity [fear],
but of power and love and discipline.
2 Timothy 1:7 NASB

March 9

"…Reign in power and let Your kingdom come in me!..."

A light bulb has no light without a connection to a power source. A sailboat goes nowhere without the force of the wind. A stack of wood in the fireplace warms no one unless the flame is applied. A child of God who doubts His Maker walks in limited power. We all want God to take us out of our pain and sweep away the difficult circumstances of life, but trusting Him in the midst of the pain and trials is like plugging the light bulb of our heart into the most powerful electrical outlet in the universe. Spreading our wings of faith and allowing the wind of the Spirit to fill us is like spreading the sails of our souls and receiving the necessary power to sail right through the storms and waves of our trials. Recognizing and believing His great passion for us is like a stack of wood being consumed in a fireplace that warms all those who come in contact with it. Trust God today in ways you may not have thought of and see if there is not a power surge in your soul.

Step out in faith today and allow Jesus to reign in every situation. This will allow His Kingdom to come in power in areas where power has been lacking.

Put me like a seal over your heart,
Like a seal on your arm.
For love is as strong as death,
Jealousy is as severe as Sheol;
Its flashes are flashes of fire,
The {very} flame of the LORD.
Many waters cannot quench love,
Nor will rivers overflow it…
Song of Songs 8:6-7a NASB

March 10

"…You are my King, so reign over me…"

Jesus Christ is my King…but He is a good King. His rule is born of His holiness – His perfection. He rules in perfect love, meaning He does not force me to follow Him. This King loves me right where I am…but loves me enough to not leave me there. It was that kind of love – that righteous, kingly, perfect love – that led me to repentance and set me on the road to freedom. I proudly and boldly proclaim His rule and reign in my life. I submit to His royal majesty and invite Him to reign over me. It is in His reign that I have discovered peace and trust and freedom that was simply not to be found when I lived in the era of self-rule.

As you go about your day today, allow the Lord to show you areas of your life that need to be submitted to the rule and reign of His love.

The LORD shall reign for ever, [even] thy God,
O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the LORD.
Psalm 146:10 KJV

March 11

"…Fill me with power and glory…"

There are days when we have become so emptied by the cares of the world that we feel we have no strength to even take our next step…emotionally, mentally, spiritually, or even physically. It is in such times that we need an energy source that does not run dry when we do! God's Word tells us we have not because we ask not. When is the last time you asked the Lord to fill you with His power? Did you ask in faith or were you simply going through the motions because you know that is the right thing

to do? When we realize we (the Lord and us) are in this life together faith takes on a whole new level of meaning. Because I know God does not leave me or forsake me I also know He will not allow me to undergo more than I can bear. Because I walk in such relationship I expect Him to infuse me with His presence – His power and His glory – in the moment I need Him to. By faith I believe He does!

Practice His presence today by asking Him for His power and His glory…and do not limit Him to shows of strength. Sometimes His power comes in a moment of quiet trust.

For thus the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, has said,
"In repentance and rest you will be saved,
In quietness and trust is your strength."
Isaiah 30:15 NASB

March 12

"…Pierce every darkness and set captives free…"

I remember well the darkness I was bound in for so long…and I remember just as well the very moment when my eyes began to open. Reality was that I had believed so many lies of the enemy that all it took was a little glimmer of light in the mass of my darkness to illumine my eyes and set me on the path of righteousness. When that moment happened, I decided that falling headlong into the Light was my one and only response. I did not want just a little light. I wanted the light to reach into the deepest recesses to flush out all the hidden sin and dead places of my heart and life. As long as one area of darkness was allowed to remain then there was still an area of bondage in my life…and the freedom I tasted only made me want more! But I had to allow Him to shine His light in those places – and then respond in naked honesty to that Light.

What areas of your heart and mind would you like to see the Light in today?
Allow the Lord access to those places. Discover a new level of freedom today.

If we say that we have fellowship with Him and {yet} walk in the darkness,
we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
1 John 1:6-9 NASB

March 13

"…Lead on, Oh King, beginning in me!..."

Today we are going to meditate on just one phrase. Meditation is simply focusing our minds on one thought for a period of time. A great illustration of meditation is this: a cow has one stomach with 4 digestive compartments. As the cow eats a mouthful of grass, it swallows that food. After a period of digestion, it then regurgitates that partially digested grass into its mouth where it chews it more. This regurgitated food is called cud. A cow chews its cud in order to extract all the nutrients possible from that food. That is what meditation on God's Word and nature is like. We think on one thought concerning His Word or nature and we allow the Holy Spirit to show us things we've never seen or thought of before concerning that which we meditate on. Today, let's focus on Jesus as King and what His kingdom coming in our thought life should look like.
Here's a hint on helping you along with your meditation: to seek the coming of His kingdom we must seek the King.

…seek first His kingdom and His righteousness…
Matthew 6:33 NASB

March 14

"…The King is coming on a horse of white…"

As children, we often play games in which a knight in shining armor comes riding in on his horse of white. My brothers and cousins and I would play for hours. We had the added advantage of having our own horses, making the fantasy all the more real in our minds! What fun it was to get to play the part of the hero and rush in to vanquish the foe and rescue the fair maiden. In my own hidden world, I secretly always wanted to be the one that got rescued. As a boy I found myself captive to things I did not even understand. So imagine my delight and ecstasy when Jesus rushed in and set me free for real! We are all in need of rescue due to sin. We know from God's Word that Jesus will return on a white horse…but you know what? We do not have to wait until that day to experience His rescue. All it takes is us crying out to Him for help. He hears and rushes in, vanquishing the enemy and setting us free.

In what areas do you need rescue today? Cry out to Him and then be expectant for His answer.

In my distress I called upon the LORD,

And cried to my God for help;
He heard my voice out of His temple,
And my cry for help before Him came into His ears.
He delivers me from my enemies;
Surely You lift me above those who rise up against me;
You rescue me from the violent man.
Therefore I will give thanks to
You among the nations, O LORD,
And I will sing praises to Your name.
Psalm 18:6 and Psalm 18:48-49 NASB

March 15

"…He will reign in power! He will reign in might!..."

For Jesus to rule and reign in our lives we must come to a place of trust.

We do not experience His power and the benefits of His kingdom if we do not trust Him. Our King Jesus is holy and pure and perfect. That means everything that He desires for us and everything He commands us to do is based purely out of what is good and right for us. It is when we do not trust His holiness that we do not experience kingdom life. Almost daily I discover ways I have not released myself to trust Him. I find myself fearful of confrontation at times even though I KNOW it is God's will. In those moments, I trust more in myself than in the One Who created me. There are so many other examples of my lack of trust. You get the idea. When I trust His goodness then I trust that even hard things are for my best. It is in that place of trust that I find strength and I find a place of peace and rest. In what areas for you lack trust today? Ask the Spirit to give you the grace to see God's good plan for you in that area and then receive the grace to step out and trust Him.

Trust in the LORD with all your heart
And do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He will make your paths straight.
Proverbs 3:5-6 NASB

March 16

"…Jesus, come! Jesus, come! Jesus, come! Let Your kingdom come!..."

Have you ever had one of those days where you just felt overwhelmed?

And I'm not talking about overwhelmed with bad things…just the busyness of life. It is in those moments of total mental, emotional, and physical saturation that we need Jesus and His kingdom to come into our lives the most…but we are often too overwhelmed to receive what He offers. It is understandable that we cannot just stop what we are doing all of a sudden – but we can learn to meditate on His presence even as we hurry about our days. As you care for your children, invite the King to care for them with you. As you make that presentation to your boss, invite the King to stand as your Advisor. As you take that test, invite the King to remind you of His wisdom. As you face the storm, invite the King to go through it with you.

You get the idea. Invite the King to go with you through the busyness of your day. This exercise is for us…since He is already there in your every moment of life.

Lift up your heads, O gates,
And lift {them} up, O ancient doors,
That the King of glory may come in!
Who is this King of glory?
The LORD of hosts,
He is the King of glory. Selah.
Psalm 24:9-20 NASB

March 17

"…The King is coming! Let His church rise up!..."

In this day and age it seems the very fabric of our cultural morality is unraveling at the seams. What is right is now viewed as wrong. Things that are sinful and immoral are now viewed as civil rights. What can the church do about it? One thing we cannot do is expect the world to come to us, even in our seeker sensitive focus. Jesus commanded us to go and make disciples…not to wait for them to come to us. No matter how appealing we make our church gatherings the reality is that most people will not darken the door of a church. So what does that tell us? We'd better equip ourselves as the body to do the work of ministry…outside the church walls! Darkness is coming. Let the church rise up with the Light of the Gospel. The world in its sinful, downward spiral needs the purity of the salt of believers. The King IS coming. Let the church rise up and push back the darkness and become the salt and light this world needs.

Take time today to allow the Holy Spirit to heighten your sensitivity to those around you. Ask for grace to build relationships with those He leads you to.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."
Matthew 28:19-20 NASB

March 18

"…Let us declare to the darkness we have had enough…"

Have you ever gotten to a point in one of the rooms of your house…

like with a family room or attic or even a garage where the clutter from years of collection has simply left you so overwhelmed you dread even going into that room? Its easier sometimes to just ignore the mess or simply avoid that room than to deal with the task of cleaning it out! There comes a point where we have had enough and we dive into the mess and start throwing things away…and it feels good! It should be no different in the rooms of our mind. Why do we ignore the messes we have made of our lives and continue to avoid dealing with the issues that could bring us freedom?
We avoid pain and we tend to want that freedom without the work required.

What areas of your life need a good cleaning out? Allow the Lord to bring to your mind rooms in your life that you have been avoiding. Be prepared to receive and practice the wisdom He will bring to help you through the cleansing process.

…for you were formerly darkness,
but now you are Light in the Lord;
walk as children of Light
(for the fruit of the Light {consists} in all
goodness and righteousness and truth),
trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.
Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of
darkness, but instead even expose them…
Ephesians 5:8-11 NASB

March 19

"…Jesus, come! Jesus, come! Jesus, come! Let Your kingdom come!..."

Today, let's take one word and meditate on that Word all day long. As you

meditate, ask the Holy Spirit to take you to places of understanding about this word as it relates to your life that you have never seen before. Let's focus on Jesus in this way. His name means 'Jehovah is Salvation'.
Throughout this day, focus on the word 'Savior'. What does the word 'Savior' mean in relation to your work? Marriage? Relationships? Etc?

He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior…
Titus 3:5-6 NASB

Listen to: YOUR MAJESTY
Words & Music: Dennis Jernigan
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Verse
As the King enters the room
A very reverent hush fills the air
As I look all around I see knees bowing down
All left speechless at the glory everywhere
For the King was standing there
So unworthy not wanting to be seen
I was so amazed to see Him gaze at me
As He held out His hand I was too weak to stand
So He picked me up and held me, washed me clean
In The presence of the King
Chorus
Your majesty! Hail the King!
Your majesty! Who bled and died for me!
I will magnify Your name!
Unashamedly proclaim
Jesus Christ My King Who reigns in majesty!
Your majesty! Hail the King!
Your majesty! Who rose and set me free!
I will glorify and magnify and testify
With all my might that
Jesus Christ is Kling of Kings
Who reigns in majesty!
Verse
In the presence of such royalty
I thought this surely must be a dream
But I still knew somehow it is here it is now
That I'm standing in the presence of my King
And He is standing here with me!
Help my weak and feeble eyes to see
Just a glimpse of who You called me to be
So I stand unashamed and I proudly proclaim
I'm a servant of the King Who ever reigns
Jesus Christ is His name!

March 20

"…As the King enters the room a very reverent hush fills the air…"

We have all seen movies in which a certain character like King Arthur enters the room. The knights and all the royal court grow silent and bow or curtsy in reverence. Can you imagine what that might be like – to finally see the one who ruled your kingdom - the one you had heard wonderful things about but had never really seen up close? Having grown up in a Christian home, I had heard many wonderful things about the King, Jesus, but had never truly experienced His presence and power in my life. The day the King entered the room of my heart I was awestruck. Here was the One I had heard about for so long…and His very real love and concern for my life was truly overwhelming. As He entered, the lies of the Enemy suddenly grew quiet…and I suddenly had the power (granted by the King) to choose to follow Him. It was such an awe-filled moment in my life when I realized the King had granted me the power to choose my own destiny. Out of sheer reverence I follow the One Who would love me right where I was…but did not leave me there.

Today, allow the Lord to show you awe-inspiring moments of His majestic presence in your life…then give Him reverent thanks.

For the LORD is a great God
And a great King above all gods,
In whose hand are the depths of the earth…
Psalm 95:3-4 NASB

March 21

"…As I look all around I see knees bowing down…"

I have been in many worship gatherings where people spontaneously began to lift their hands in surrender to God…or fall to their knees. Those times are precious and holy and proper. When I think of knees bowing before the Lord I cannot help but think of utter desperation – or utter gratitude – an my suspicion is that such moments are a little of both! In my own life I have had moments of despair and desperation that have quite literally brought me to my knees. That place of having nowhere to go but up is a place of realization that we cannot save ourselves…a place of reckoning with the One Who can! It is in that place of utter surrender that we realize that freedom and salvation are at hand because the Victor and Savior meets us in that very place. It is when we understand that position of surrender is a place of intimacy and complete

acceptance by the Father that the soul becomes filled with gratitude to the One Who loves us right where we are…but loves us enough to not leave us there.

In what areas do you need to bow your knee to the Father today? To the Victor? To the Savior? Look for ways to surrender today and watch victory and salvation become very real.

Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your glory. For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; {and} that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.
Ephesians 3:13-19 NASB

March 22

"…All left speechless at the glory everywhere, for the King was standing there…"

There was a time in my life that I could not bring myself to confess my sin for fear of humiliation and rejection. Shame kept me speechless. The sad thing about my speechless state was that the Enemy and his lies constantly bombarded my spiritual ears to the point of deafness. The reality was that I dealt with my shame the moment I became honest and confessed. It was in that moment of sheer honesty with God that freedom came to me. That encounter with the Truth had indeed set me free. When I confessed my sin and confessed my lack of ability to save myself and then declared that I needed Christ to save me I was again reduced to my speechless state. This time the muteness was not as a result of shame…but of utter and deep gratitude for the wave upon wave of love that kept rolling over my heart from the heart of my Maker. The sheer weight of His presence – His glory – had so filled my heart that no words could quite convey the depth of gratitude I felt toward Him.

Take time today to confess your hidden sin and gain a clear conscience…and then bask in the speechless state of cleansing and gratitude.

My soul {waits} in silence for God only;
From Him is my salvation.
Psalm 62:1 NASB

March 23

"…So unworthy - not wanting to be seen…"

God intended shame as a means of turning the human heart to see its need for a Savior. The Enemy, on the other hand, uses shame to keep the human heart in bondage to sin. Having been bound in my sin for such a long time, my greatest fear was that someone would find out…and that I would be humiliated and shamed. For far too many years I allowed the voice of the Enemy to whisper thoughts into my mind that kept me bound to my sin. 'Don't let that person too close. They will see what you're really like and you will be rejected.' Such thoughts so permeated my existence that I let NO ONE know me! There came point of desperation in my life where the weight of that shame so burdened my soul that I HAD to confess to someone – anyone. What I discovered was that most people were very willing to love me and help me find the path of righteousness. Funny how not wanting to be seen due to my shame kept me from finding the joy in absolute honesty and acceptance in the love of God.

Today, allow the Holy Spirit to show you places in you heart you are still hiding. Allow Him to look inside and begin the cleansing process in those areas.

You are my hiding place;
You preserve me from trouble;
You surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah.
Psalm 32:7 NASB

March 24

"…I was so amazed to see Him gaze at me…"

As a boy, I was very modest. Easily embarrassed, I rarely allowed myself to be seen naked by other boys…except when it came to skinnydipping! Such modesty is natural and good. Due to the cloud of shame that I walked under due to my sin, there was absolutely no way I would ever allow anyone close enough to uncover my spiritual nakedness. But that all changed the moment I became desperate enough to expose my sinful heart in all its messy darkness to the One Who could cover my nakedness with His holiness. When I was confronted with a God Whose love seemed to pierce through all my smokescreens and right into the very center of the core of my being, I was compelled to strip naked before Him the heart I thought I had hidden so well. He had seen through me all along…and had faithfully loved me all along. Freedom came to me when I came to Him stripped and bare in heart. He clothed me with His love and forgiveness and said, "This child is mine."

In what areas do you need to strip bare today? Focus on the fact that God sees your hidden things and loves you anyway. Freedom waits for you in that naked place of honest confession.

“Naked I came from my mother’s womb,
And naked I shall return there.
The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away.
Blessed be the name of the LORD.”
Job 1:21 NASB

March 25

“…As He held out His hand I was too weak to stand…”

Have you ever had a time in your life where you felt like you were carrying the weight of the world on your shoulders? Maybe the feeling for you was more of the circus magician who tries to keep all the plates spinning. In my own life, because I did not dare risk exposing myself to humiliation by confessing my sin, I had to keep up the performance that I was ‘OK’ by performing my way to love and acceptance. The only problem with that kind of life is that eventually the world caves in on you and the plates all begin to fall to the ground and shatter. I know I keep harping on this honesty thing, but true freedom comes when we purposely take the weight off of our shoulders and stop trying to keep the crowd wowed by all the plates we spin through our honest confession. My strength is nothing. I fool myself if I think it’s all about me. Jesus Christ took the weight of my sin when I confessed I could no longer carry it. The weight lifted and I stopped performing for man’s acceptance.

What ‘world’ are you carrying around today? What plates are you trying to keep in the air? What can you do to alleviate those self-made burdens?

Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.
Psalm 55:22 NASB

March 26

"…So He picked me up and held me - washed me clean…"

Due to my sin, I wasted so much of my early life walking around in a cloud of fear and rejection. My sin left me covered in shame and the fear of being exposed led me to repeat my sin and walk in more shame…a circle of death I could not seem to get out of on my own. To say I felt dirty and unworthy of anyone's love would be an immense understatement. I heard all the hellfire and brimstone sermons that reminded me of my trajectory right into the deepest recesses of hell and never believed God could possibly find me worth His time. Once I recognized the pride in my heart and fell apart and right into His arms when I allowed Him to love me I began to experience a cleansing like I had never thought possible. My healing/cleansing process began the moment I stopped making decisions that belonged to the Lord. I determined I did not get to decide if God loves me. My only choices were to either reject His love or embrace it. Guess which way ushered in His cleansing power?

Would you be willing to allow the Lord to wash you in the unlovely places you have tucked away in your heart today? Trust Him…and let Him hold you and wash you clean today.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to
forgive us [our] sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
1 John 1:9 KJV

March 27

"…In the presence of the King!..."

Today, let's meditate on what it means to be in the presence of the King.

As you go about your day, invite the King to go with you. See Him in the seat next to you as you drive the kids to school…on your way to work…in that board meeting. You get the idea.

Find your identity and your destiny in the presence of the King today.

You hide them in the secret place of Your presence from the conspiracies of man;
You keep them secretly in a shelter from the strife of tongues.
Psalm 31:20 NASB

March 28

"…In the presence of such majesty I thought this surely must be a dream…"

Sometimes I can look back on my life and feel as if all I used to think I was is but a dream…a foggy cloud of somebody else's life. But I do recall the moment I first realized God's great love for me…how overwhelmed I was as He embraced my broken, battered heart and began to restore me to what He had intended all along in my life. That dream is one that is forever unending…and a dream I get to live out each and every day. In seeking the Dream Maker I become more and more attuned to the way He sees life and this new perspective helps me see past the smoke-screens of the Enemy's perspective on reality (a dream world where I am at the center) and into the Kingdom perspective where God gets glory and people get ministered to through my life. What a dream come true!

As you go about your day, see past the Enemy's point of view and gaze from the King's perspective no matter how rough your storms may be today. From that vantage point storms are mere blips on the screen of eternity.

And it shall come to pass afterward, [that] I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And it shall come to pass, [that] whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call. Joel 2:28; 2:32 KJV

March 29

"…But I still knew somehow it is here it is now that I'm standing in the presence of my King and He is standing here with me!..."

If I am seeking first the Kingdom of God it stands to reason that I must seek the KING!

That means that if I seek the King I will find the Kingdom. When I seek the King I give Him a place in every aspect of my life. After all, He is the King and I am His subject. If I am able to see the reality that everywhere I go His presence is there, then I begin to live my life from a higher perspective than my human eyes would naturally see from. When I am viewing life from His point of view then I find it easier to rise above the temptations and the storms because I see what HE sees…and there I find hope…and peace…and security!

As you begin the day, allow the Lord access to every area of your life and spread your wings of faith to rise above and see how much He loves you right where you are!

Do you not know? Have you not heard?
The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth
Does not become weary or tired.
His understanding is inscrutable.
He gives strength to the weary,
And to {him who} lacks might He increases power.
Though youths grow weary and tired,
And vigorous young men stumble badly,
Yet those who wait for the LORD
Will gain new strength;
They will mount up {with} wings like eagles,
They will run and not get tired,
They will walk and not become weary.
Isaiah 40:28-31 NASB

March 30

"…Help my weak and feeble eyes to see a glimpse of who You called me to be…"

As a boy, there were times when I lost my temper and my mother would tell me 'that's the Bristol coming out in you', the 'Bristol' being the fiery temperament of the red-haired Bristol clan of my family. In other words, she was saying 'that's just the way you are.' While I understand that family traits can be passed down from one generation to the next, I came to the place after the Lord delivered me where I decided that the angry heart I thought was 'me' was not a part of who I was now as a new creation. Rather than walk around thinking of myself as an angry man, I determined that when anger rose up in me that I would remind myself that 'this is not who I am! Who I am is a man of peace who is willing to lay down his rights'. As I sought to put off the old and put on the new, the angry responses began to give way to who God truly called me to be.

As you go about the day, allow the Holy Spirit to show you areas of your identity you may have never seen from His point of view. Quickly begin to put off the old way of thinking of yourself and put on the new!

…if anyone is in Christ, {he is} a new creature;
the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.
2 Corinthians 5:17 NASB

March 31

"…I will stand here unashamed as I proudly proclaim I'm a servant of the King who ever reigns! Jesus Christ is His name!..."

The older I grow physically and the more I mature spiritually, the more foolish my old way of thinking seems to me at this stage of the game! The shame that came as a result of my sin kept me from getting honest for far too long. The eradication of that shame has sent me soaring above all my past failures, present temptations, and stormy circumstances to a place of utter security in my identity in Christ. Coming to the place of faith where I am convinced I am who HE says I am has washed the shame away and left me standing bare naked in conscience. Knowing that even if I blow it 5 minutes from now will not affect my identity one iota sends deep flowing grace to my mind that gives me strength to face the temptations and circumstances and past head-on. I boast in my God and I proclaim His freedom to the captive unashamedly. He is my King. I am His servant. Others needs what I have…

What areas of your life do you still harbor shame over? What will it take for you today to allow the Lord to eradicate the shame? Seek Him to find your identity today!

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
Because the LORD has anointed me
To bring good news to the afflicted;
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to captives
And freedom to prisoners;
To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD
And the day of vengeance of our God;
To comfort all who mourn,
To grant those who mourn {in} Zion,
Giving them a garland instead of ashes,
The oil of gladness instead of mourning,
The mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting.
So they will be called oaks of righteousness,
The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.
Then they will rebuild the ancient ruins,
They will raise up the former devastations;
And they will repair the ruined cities,
The desolations of many generations.
Isaiah 61:1-4 NASB

April 1

"…Your Majesty! Hail the King!..."

When I wrote the song 'Your Majesty' I remember feeling awe at the awareness of His presence in my life. The proper response to that presence comes when I welcome the King to have His place in my life and am really making Him known to those around me. When the King enters the room His subjects bow in honor. By giving Christ the prominent place in my existence I am literally bowing my life before Him – and the result is that others see Him. A life lived for the King…seeking the King…serving the King is a life that draws men to know the same love, freedom, and healing power I have come to know. By living my life in service of the King I am effectively saying to the world around me 'Hail the King!'

As you go about your day today, how can you actively say 'Hail the King' with your life?

"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."
John 12:32 NASB

April 2

"…Your majesty! Who bled and died for me!..."

My sin left me owing a debt I could not pay. No matter how many religious hoops I jumped through I could never be righteous enough to gain access to God. It took a perfect Sacrifice to pay my debt. Jesus gave His life for me and paid my debt with the first drop of blood. He suffered the death my sin made inevitable in order to gain my access to eternal life with the Father - but none of that matters if I never appropriate that truth. To realize the power of the blood I must believe that the blood paid my debt and then actively receive that cleansing redeeming work as done once-and-for-all on my behalf.

Spend time today applying the truth of the cleansing power of the blood of Christ to every area of your existence.

In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.
Hebrews 9:22 NIV

April 3

"…I will magnify Your name!..."

One of the first ways we get to know someone else is by learning their name. As we progress in our relationship with that person their name comes to reflect their character. In other words, when we hear that name certain things come to mind. "John is an honest man. He is a man of integrity, hard-working and devoted to his family." When I hear the name of the Lord I think of His character. In the name of Jesus I hear 'Redeemer, Savior, and Victor.' As I exalt the name of God others come to know His character as well. His name is Peace. His name is Present. His name is Healer. His name is Righteous. As I live my life believing and openly practicing my belief in His nature, others will see and know that he is God. In so doing, I have effectively magnified His name.

How can you actively magnify His name today?

O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.
Psalm 34:3 KJV

April 4

"…Unashamedly proclaim! Jesus Christ my King Who reigns in majesty!..."

By virtue of my testimony – deliverance from and victory over homosexuality – it is quite difficult to keep my story quiet. And, mind you, I do not desire to do so…but there was a day when, out of fear of rejection, I was quite leery of anyone finding out about my past. While there are those who seem to hate me with a vile hatred, I realize that there are even more who find encouragement in hearing my story. What used to bring me a measure of shame has now become my greatest glory…and by glory I mean my greatest gift back to God for all He has done for me. He bore the shame and sin of all mankind upon His shoulders. Why would I not do the same by sharing my love and gratitude for Him? Shame is dealt with when we become nakedly honest with the Lord and then receive His cleansing forgiveness. Nothing hidden leaves room for life.

Allow the Lord to declare His majesty through you today.

"For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of

Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and {the glory} of the Father and of the holy angels…"
Luke 9:24-26 NASB

April 5

"…Your Majesty! Hail the King! Your majesty! Who rose and set me free!..."

Jesus took my sin and paid my debt, dying on the cross. He was buried…

but He did not stay there! By His holy resurrection power He conquered not only sin but death and the grave as well! It is when we realize the power of His resurrection has been granted to every new creation that we are able to overcome the graves our sin had bound us in. For far too long I was buried in the grave of fear…too long in the grave of a wrong perception of my sexual identity…far too long in the grave of self-focus. It is when I receive the power of His resurrection that I, too, rise up from the grave and walk in a brand new life!

What grave or graves do you need to rise up from today? Allow the Holy Spirit to show you those places where death still binds you…then rise and walk by faith!

"DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory.
O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY?
O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?"
The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law;
but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.
Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not {in} vain in the Lord.
1 Corinthians 15:54-58 NASB

April 6

"…I will glorify and magnify and testify with all my might…"

I will never forget the first time I publicly testified of my deliverance. What I thought

would happen – that I would lose my job and ministry – was the furthest thing from reality. My telling took the wind out of the Enemy's ability to humiliate me by threatening to expose me. How could he expose what I had already exposed? My testifying laid bare my soul and gave others the hope that they, too, might be able to find healing. My declaration of what God had done for me set in motion a wonderful depth of life I know I would never have known had I not been open and transparent. A clear conscience

leads to a healthy flow of life where relationship with God has every opportunity to bear fruit in my life. With the telling of my story comes power over the Enemy…and I like that!

In what ways – both spoken and demonstrated – can you testify to God's power in your life today?

And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.
Revelation 12:11 NASB

April 7

"…That Jesus Christ is King of Kings Who reigns in majesty!..."

Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega. He is the Beginning and the End.

Apart from Him there is nothing. Above Him there is no other. To know life in its fullest in this life, it stands to reason that we should get to know the Giver of Life. To get to know the Giver I must seek Him. When we seek Him with our entire being then the Enemy has very few places where he can interject his deceptions. If my mind is engaged in worship and my hands are engaged in service and my emotions are directed to God and my thoughts are engaged in thinking on what is good and right and pure then just where can the Enemy get in? There are so many benefits to seeking the King. He truly is our All in All and the Answer we need…especially when we face things we do not understand. He is King of even those circumstances. He is in utter control whether we see it or not. It is when I close off that relationship that I shut off the essence of my life. To shut out relationship with God is like trying cap the power of a volcano with a baseball cap! Something's going to blow!

How can you keep the flow of relationship going in your life today? Are there any areas where that relationship is cut off and in danger of blowing?

But if I say, "I will not remember Him
Or speak anymore in His name,"
Then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire
Shut up in my bones;
And I am weary of holding {it} in,
And I cannot endure {it.}
Jeremiah 20:9 NASB

Listen to: THERE IS A KING
Words & Music: Dennis Jernigan
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Verse One
There is a King upon the throne.
He rules and reigns, one King alone.
The greatest King this world has known.
Jesus, my King. My heart His throne.
There is a King both good and just.
By holy pow'r our sin was crushed.
He is not tame yet we can trust:
He rules in love both good and just.
Chorus
The King of Kings is Christ alone.
The Mighty Warrior!
Lord of Hosts!
Jesus is King and King alone!
This mighty King.
My heart His throne!
My heart, O King, is Yours alone!
Verse Two
Through every trial, through every pain,
This King is sure to rule and reign! Through storm or peace
Remains the same!
My King is there! I'll praise His name!
There is a name above all names!
The Lamb of God for sinners slain!
Emmanuel, Who came to save.
Redeemer, washing sin away!
Verse Three
There is a King Who bore my sin
Upon a cross, Savior of men.
My broken heart He came to mend!
He died for me and rose again!

April 8

"…There is a King upon the throne…"

There is only room for one on the throne of our heart. When we sit upon the throne of our own heart we do not give the King His rightful place. When He does not inhabit the throne of our heart we have effectively taken away His power to rule and reign in our

lives. When I, for instance, deem myself unworthy of His love I boot Him out as Ruler of my life in that area. When I allow Him to sit upon the throne of my heart it is obvious He loves me…and that I have no right to decide whether He can love me or not. So it goes with other areas of our lives. In my marriage I must allow Him to sit on the throne of my heart in my relationship with my wife. To do otherwise invites self-focus and death of that relationship. So it goes with my children…with my ministry…with my work. There is only one King…and I must give Him the throne of my heart for life to be abundant.

Yet You are holy, O You who are enthroned upon the praises of Israel.
Psalm 22:3 NASB

April 9

"…He rules and reigns, one King alone…"

One of the greatest things about my King, Jesus, is that He does not force me to love Him. In fact, He risked everything by dying for my sin knowing full well that I might turn my back on Him. Knowing that makes me love Him even more! His rule is just because it is born of pure holiness. His reign is benevolent because He only wants what is best for me. To deny His rule and reign in any area of my life is to invite death and destruction. I, for one, do not need any more death and destruction in my soul! He is a good King – the best – the greatest! Why would I deny Him access to all of me?

As you go about your day today, give the Lord access to rule and reign in every area of your life.

O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.
Psalm 95:6 KJV

April 10

"…The greatest King this world has known…"

What other king has ever redeemed the masses of humanity? What other king has conquered sin and death? What other king has ever bestowed his royal lineage on all those who follow him? What other king has calmed a raging storm by the command of his voice? What other king has ever raised a dead man back to life? What other king spoke all that is into existence? What other king ever made a way for his subjects to live forever? What other king has ever been willing to suffer and die to ensure life for his subjects? What other king has ever risen again? I could go on. You get the point…

Be looking for demonstrations of God's power in your life today.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.
John 1:1-5 NASB

April 11

"…Jesus, my King. My heart His throne…"

So many times in my life I have come to the place of crossroads where my perception of what I think I need meets the reality of what my Maker says my needs are. It is when I try to meet those needs in ways He never intended that I get myself in trouble. Sometimes the need is met simply by putting off a lie and putting on the truth. Sometimes the need is met through a series of trials that produce holy pressure brought about by the consequences of my sin. In either case, I have had to realize that I have been sitting on the throne of my own heart in disregard of the perspective of the King of my heart. Deliverance has come as I have stepped down from that throne and allowed Him His proper place there.

As you go about your day, look for the areas you are seated on the throne and actively dethrone yourself. Areas of conflict or failure are great places to look.

The LORD has established His throne in the heavens,
And His sovereignty rules over all.
Psalm 103:19 NASB

April 12

"…There is a King both good and just…"

As a child growing up with three younger brothers, conflicts were many and often. My mother was often the one to settle our disputes. When a toy's ownership was in dispute, she didn't just force us to share. She gave the toy to the one it actually belonged to, encouraging the other boy to play with his own toys. That was the just thing to do. Still on other occasions she did what was fair, dividing the candy evenly between my brothers and me. She was a good mother. God sometimes disciplines us in

ways we feel are unfair. We can either throw a tantrum and demand our rights OR we can put on the truth that He is a good God and that all He does is for our best – and born out of perfect and holy love. He is not so concerned with what is fair, but with what is good and just and in our best interest.

Allow the Holy Spirit to show you what is good and just about where the Lord has you today.

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne;
Lovingkindness and truth go before You.
Psalm 89:14 NASB

April 13

"…By holy power our sin was crushed…"

A few years ago a friend of mine died. When I got the word, I rushed to the ER and was allowed to be with his body along with two other friends. Together we asked the Lord to raise our friend up…and I was preparing myself for the shock of seeing him rise up from that bed. But he did not rise. I believe God had a higher purpose for my friend's death…because I really do believe God can still raise the dead! To raise one from the dead requires a kind of power that exceeds my human abilities. Only One has such power. His name is Jesus. When Jesus rose from the dead sin was left buried there…literally crushed under the sheer magnitude of resurrection power. It is that same power that the Lord infuses my life with that pours out grace to overcome any temptation or get through any difficult circumstance. The power that created the universe is available to me any given moment on any given day. It is mine for the asking.

As you approach this day, be ready to appropriate and utilize the power of resurrection in your own life.

…that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead…
Philippians 3:10-11 NASB

April 14

"…He is not tame yet we can trust…"

Remember the lion, Aslan, in The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe?

One moment he is being cuddled and loved on by the children in the story and the next he is trouncing the enemies of Narnia with wild fury. Our God is like that! One of the things I love about the Lord is that He is bigger than my human mind can even conceive. When I try to box Him in, that is all I get of Him…and I, for one, want more of Him. When I think of Jesus and the kind of King He is, I do not see some effeminate dude in a robe walking around giving peace signs to everyone. I see a conquering hero, riding a white stallion, taking out His vengeance on the enemy on my behalf. A stud of a guy. The Lord is mighty to save and is very jealous of his children. When I feel someone threaten one of my children, I go ballistic in my desire to protect them. I am an earthly father and I feel that way. What about the wild heart of our Father God that no human can tame? I let Him out of the box and have found more than I ever imagined. He certainly is not a tame God…but we can trust Him.

Be on the alert for evidence of the wild heart of our passionate God. Find great victory in His passionate, wild love for you today.

For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.
Deuteronomy 4:24 NASB

April 15

"…He rules in love both good and just…"

As I look back upon my life, I do so only to taste and see how good God has been to me. My goal is to never live in the past, but to look back and see how many times my God has delivered me when my life seemed so absolutely hopeless. In my younger days, I so often allowed MY perception and MY thoughts to rule the day…and MY way always led to destruction! Since I found it difficult to believe God could love me, I could never receive the love He freely offered me. The day I stepped down from the throne of my heart and stopped ruling myself with self-focus, His love was able to do the work required to bring me to hope, and healing, and restoration. His love is good. His love is perfect. He desires only my best. I will follow that kind of love…even when I do not understand the journey.

While going about your day, be watching for signs of God's great love for you.

Hatred stirs up strife,
But love covers all transgressions.
Proverbs 10:12

April 16

"…Through every trial, through every pain this King is sure to rule and reign!..."

As I have sought to walk out my relationship and freedom with and in Christ for over 27 years now, I am finally learning how to trust Him! It is easy for me to trust when I feel that I am being blessed…but quite another thing to trust in the middle of a hurtful time. God never promised us an easy ride…but He DID promise us He would go with us through every step of the journey. I find great comfort in knowing I am not alone in the trials. I find great healing knowing someone is holding me in my pain. When I realized that God is a good God who wants only my best, my ability to trust Him even in the storms rose dramatically. It is when I trust Him even when I don't understand the reason for my suffering that I find the ability to rise above the circumstance and see His face next to mine.

In what areas do you lack trust? What would it take for you to let the Lord hold you in those areas today?

"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
And through the rivers, they will not overflow you.
When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched,
Nor will the flame burn you.
For I am the LORD your God,
The Holy One of Israel, your Savior…"
Isaiah 43:2-3 NASB

April 17

"…Through storm or peace remains the same!..."

Have you ever met people who seem to change their emotional outlook as often as the weather? I used to be one of those people. I allowed every little storm to throw me around from emotional wave to emotional wave, often times dashing my soul against the rocks of despair. Much of the reason for that was because I had built so much of my identity on the shoulders of what I perceived people thought about my

performance or me. When we base our worth on the whims of others, we will always discover those shoulders cannot bear such weight and we crumble into the places of despair. Nothing is constant because the foundation is one of sinking sand. When I discovered what the Lord thought about me, everything began to change. Knowing He sees me as his son and knowing He wants me to succeed – knowing my true identity begins and ends with Him – has delivered me from the rocks of despair and planted my feet on Solid Ground.

In what areas of life are you being thrown about today? What lies are you believing in those areas? What truth must you put on to plant your feet on Solid Ground?

How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor stand in the path of sinners,
Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!
But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and night.
He will be like a tree {firmly} planted by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in its season
And its leaf does not wither;
And in whatever he does, he prospers.
Psalm 1:1-3 NASB

April 18

"…My King is there! I'll praise His name!..."

One of the names God calls Himself is Jehovah Shammah that means 'The Lord is There'. What does that mean for us, His children? Quite simply, it means that in your storm, he is there. In your sorrow, He is there. In your loneliness, He is there. In your pain, He is there. In your good times, He is there. In your suffering, He is there. When God calls Himself Jehovah Shammah He is literally saying 'I Am There' wherever you happen to be, regardless of the circumstances. He has never abandoned us. When we feel forsaken, it is WE who have turned our eyes and thoughts away from Him. That gives me hope! I AM NEVER ALONE!

In what areas of life do you feel alone today? Ask the Lord to reveal Himself to you in those areas.

Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, You are there;
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there.
If I take the wings of the dawn,

If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea,
Even there Your hand will lead me,
And Your right hand will lay hold of me.
Psalm 139:7-10 NASB

April 19

"…There is a name above all names!..."

If you have grown up in any type of Christian upbringing at all you have heard the phrase 'Jesus, the name above all names.' But what does that really mean? With the name of Jesus comes all the authority of heaven. The name of Jesus embodies all that God is. At the name of Jesus, the Enemy flees in utter defeat. Because of the authority of the name and because of Who bears the name there is absolutely no other name higher! When we put our faith and trust in the name of Jesus it is more than taking a pledge or reciting a club motto. Trusting in the name of Jesus requires relationship with the One who wears the name. Relationship with the One Who has all the power means all that power is manifested for us…and that we, too, have authority over the lies of the Enemy…but we must appropriate that power. Jesus is literally called 'The Word of God'…and we know that God's Word, when sent out, does not return to us without accomplishing its purpose. That purpose is always perpetuating His life!

In what areas would you like to see life perpetuated today? What areas of your life seem to be suffering death at the hands of the Enemy's lies? How can you relationally appropriate the name of Jesus in those areas today?

{He is} clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.
Revelation 19:13 NASB

So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth;
It will not return to Me empty,
Without accomplishing what I desire,
And without succeeding {in the matter} for which I sent it.
Isaiah 55:11 NASB

April 20

"…The Lamb of God for sinners slain!..."

I once heard a teacher talk about how we as a people often compare our sins, deeming some as more abhorrent than others. The only problem is that 'all we like sheep have gone astray'. His example included a comparison of sheep in a field of green grass. Some sheep, indeed, did appear dirtier than others…until the snow began to fall. With the clean, pure whiteness surrounding them, every single sheep was very obviously as dirty and soiled as the next. When we begin to compare our sins with others and decide ours are not quite as bad as theirs, we effectively excuse away our own willful choices. How do we remedy that? We, as sheep, must compare ourselves to the pure, spotless purity of the Lamb of God. Just as with a herd of sheep in a field of snow, our sin becomes glaringly apparent.

Are there any areas of your life where you have excused a thought or choice or behavior or an attitude as less sinful than the next person's, thus relegating it to an acceptable status? What would standing next to Jesus look like with you clothed in that sin?

All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all
To fall on Him.
He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet He did not open His mouth;
Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,
And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers,
So He did not open His mouth.
Isaiah 53:6-7 NASB

April 21

"…Emanuel, Who came to save…"

There have been so many times in my life – mainly when I was still hiding my sin – that I felt utterly alone with no hope for acceptance and real love. Feeling unworthy to receive God's love was in actuality simply my willful choice to not receive His love. After all, His Word says that His very nature is love. Once I repented and received His love I began to realize His presence in ways I never dreamed possible in this life. As I learned more about Who God really is, I came to love and appreciate the name 'Emanuel' all the more. 'God With Us'. That's the name given to Jesus! Our God is with us…wherever we are…whatever we are doing…WITH US!

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal God to you in new ways today. Don't put Him in the box of your expectations.

Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.
Matthew 1:23 KJV

April 22

"…Redeemer, washing sin away!..."

Our sin left us all in need of a Savior. Sin left a massive gulf between God and us. Sin left us owing a debt we could never possibly repay. I remember times of feeling so incredibly caked with the muck and mire of my own sin I could not see a way to ever feel clean. When I finally believed God loved me and received that love, a massive wave of cleansing came over my soul, flooding deep into the nooks and crannies of every willful sin, every sorrowful memory, every dreadful wound. What had been a heavy, heavy weight upon my soul was now completely vanquished! My soul felt the way my arm felt when I finally got that heavy cast off as a boy. Just as my arm felt like it would fly upward and lift me through the roof along with it, so my soul felt suddenly so free I could see beyond my sin and sorrow and pain. Believing God loves me led me to repentance. Repentance led me to my Redeemer. My Redeemer washed my sin away.

What sin are you currently hiding that is weighing you down? Take time today to confess it to the Lord and to a trusted friend.

"As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives,
And at the last He will take His stand on the earth."
Job 19:25 NASB

April 23

"…There is a King Who bore my sin upon a cross, Savior of men…"

I remember very vividly the moment when my sin-burden was lifted. Sitting in a massive arena at a Christian rock concert, I was challenged to get honest with God. As I did so, I was led to mentally take my hidden sin and expose it to the Lord…and place it upon the shoulders of Jesus as He bore the punishment I deserved on the cross at Calvary. As I enumerated my sins to Him I watched Him being crushed by the weight of my sin…watched Him die as the remedy for my debt…and then saw myself crucified

with Him! The next thing I knew, I was in the grave, a dead man…and all I could hear was the voice of the Lord saying, “Dennis Jernigan, come forth!” Somehow I knew that the old ‘me’ was dead and gone. Suddenly I realized what it meant to be a new creation in Christ and, along with that understanding, realized I now had the power and grace to make choices based on my new identity! I no longer had to give in to every temptation! I could choose righteousness!

Meditate today on what the crucifixion looked like from the perspective of your own sin. What about the grave? What about the resurrection? Think on these things and give thanks.

But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.
Galatians 6:14 NASB

April 24

“…My broken heart He came to mend!...”

Can you believe I once felt so broken by my own failure – my own sin – that I actually tried to take my own life?! It is so difficult for me to believe I was ever in such a place because of the level of healing God has brought to my wounded places through the years. As I sought an intimate relationship with Christ, trust began to be built (which was difficult for someone who’s trust had been shattered so many times he vowed to never trust anyone!). As trust came, my ability to become even more nakedly honest with the Lord showed my just how much hurt was there. Along with my need to forgive those who had shattered my trust through the years, I also had to constantly receive forgiveness as I went through those times of naked confession. But just as importantly, I learned that I also needed to forgive someone else…myself! To not forgive myself is to once again place ME on the throne of my heart. If God has forgiven me, who am I to not do the same?!

Are there any broken, wounded areas of your life that you have need of mending? Are there any places in your own mind that need forgiveness from yourself?

The LORD is near to the brokenhearted
And saves those who are crushed in spirit.
Psalm 34:18 NASB

April 25

"…He died for me and rose again!..."

I love the work of the cross. I relish the power of the blood. I absolutely, ecstatically rejoice in the power of the resurrection! The cross brought me to die to self. The blood paid my debt and washed me clean. The resurrection made me alive in Christ and offered me a very abundant life. When I see the events of Christ's Passion, I am humbled when I consider that He endured all that sorrow and pain and suffering JUST FOR ME! What worth that infuses into my heart, soul, and mind! What power that infuses me with to overcome temptation in my own life and to take back all the ground the Enemy has stolen from me through the years. Jesus died for me! Jesus rose for me and offered me that resurrection power! Awesome!

As you go about your day, think about areas of your life where you would like to see resurrection power.

For if we have become united with {Him} in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be {in the likeness} of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with {Him,} in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him.
Romans 6:5-9 NASB

April 26

"…The King of Kings is Christ alone…"

Let's make this a day of intense meditation. As you get dressed for the day, see Jesus as King and ask Him what He would like to see you dressed in today. As you drive to work or go about your daily tasks, give the King a throne there in the car or as you go about your business. As you interact with people, see the King standing there with you. As you experience conflict, give the King a place in that conflict with you. As you experience good things, be quick to thank the King for His goodness. As you spend time with family, honor the King in the way you treat them.

As you prepare for sleep, thank the King for your day and ask Him to meet with you in your dreams. Seek the King and discover the Kingdom…

These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him [are] called, and chosen, and faithful.
Revelation 17:14 KJV

April 27

"…The Mighty Warrior!..."

Once of my favorite things about Jesus is His warrior's heart. Think about it. He conquered sin. He defeated Satan. He endured hell. He conquered death. And if you read ahead in the Book, you see that no matter what, we win! He is the Mighty Warrior dressed for battle. He has overcome sin and death for us. He has endured every single temptation known to man and remained unaffected, leading us to discover the way of escape and bringing ultimate victory in our everyday living out of our salvation! He is no mamby-pamby effeminate, ethereal creature. He is the Champion who leads us into battle. He is the ultimate freedom fighter! That is the Jesus I follow. He does not play by the Enemy's rules of deception, but rather, wields a mighty sword of righteousness on our behalf. He is a Mighty Warrior.

In what areas of your life do you need to appropriate the help of the Mighty Warrior, Jesus, today? Be quick to follow Him and put the Enemy under your feet where he belongs!

The LORD will march forth like a mighty man; he will come out like a warrior, full of fury. He will shout his thundering battle cry, and he will crush all his enemies.
Isaiah 42:13 NLT

April 28

"…Lord of Hosts!..."

When I think of Jesus being the Lord of hosts, I think about the myriad angels surrounding Him in worship, being sent forth as messengers on His behalf. But sometimes I think of Him as the Lord of Hosts in another way. He is Lord of the hosts of believers who have gone on before us. I see King David standing with Him cheering me on as a worshiper. I see the disciples standing with Him cheering me on as a proclaimer of the Good News. I see Steven the martyr standing with Him cheering me on to see all harvest that will come from the laying down of my life. I see the countless saints who have paved the way for me standing with Him cheering me on to saying, "We have done

it by His grace! So can you!" I see men like Keith Green cheering me on to listen for the songs of praise and ministry He is singing my way! He is Lord of the hosts of believers inhabiting the earth right now. And I want to proclaim along with the heavenly hosts, and the hosts of those who have gone on to glory the freedom I have found in knowing the Lord of Hosts!

Are there any areas of your life it would be nice to hear someone cheering you on? Ask the Lord to let you 'hear' some of the cheers from heaven being uttered on your behalf.

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.
Hebrews 12:1-2

April 29

"…Jesus is King and King alone!..."

Even in my old life, I had grown so accustomed to my sin that I had given up, saying to myself, 'this is just who I am.' Though I had resigned myself to such bondage, I still foolishly thought I could perform my way to God's approval and acceptance. What I did not know is that I had very effectively given my heart to two masters…and that leads to insanity. What I was doing was nothing less than giving my mind to two opposing powers, the result being my very mind and identity were being ripped to shreds. On one side was homosexual temptation calling my name. On the other was the Lord calling my name. I had become double-minded…and a doubleminded man is unstable in ALL his ways. My remedy? I had to fire one of the masters. Having at least a mustard seed's worth of wisdom left in me, I CHOSE to follow Jesus and began cutting off the Enemy. Choosing to follow one Master led me to peace of mind…led me to healing…led me to freedom…led me to hope…led me to intimacy…led me to worship…led me to right relationships…led me to joy.

Are there any other masters you are serving today besides the Lord? Allow the Holy Spirit the freedom to search your heart and mind and reveal any area of conflict…and then repent!

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."
Matthew 6:24 NASB

A double minded man [is] unstable in all his ways.
James 1:8 KJV

April 30

"…This mighty King. My heart His throne!..."

To give the Lord the throne of our hearts is not to become mindless robots or spiritual zombies. Giving the Lord the throne of my heart is to give Him the place of honor in my life. Giving Him the throne of my heart is the key to the most intimate of relationship with my Creator. Giving Him the throne of my heart gives me access to the wisdom of God. I still blow it from time to time, but when He is on the throne of my heart repentance becomes a joy and temptation loses its powerful bite. Giving Him the throne of my heart grants me His ability to see others as He does. Seeing others as He does fills my heart with compassion and love and kills the roots of selfishness and anger in my mind. Giving Him the throne of my heart fills my life with relational praise and leads me with hope even during the darkest night or most violent storm of the soul.

In what areas of your life do you need to give the King the throne of your heart today?

"Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, {that is,} Christ.
But the greatest among you shall be your servant.
Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted."
Matthew 23:10-12

May 1

'…My heart, O King, is Yours alone!...'

What would my wife think if I said I loved her but my actions said otherwise? "Honey, I love you" in one breath while my heart and attentions were focused on something like golf or football. That is betrayal and a form of adultery if you think about it. My focus tends to go to that which I love. If I truly love my wife and want our marriage to work, I must intentionally place my focus there. With the Lord it is no different. Our God is a jealous God. To say we love Him with our lips but to focus our attentions elsewhere would be idolatry. In my marriage, I actively work at expressing my love for my wife – even when I do not feel like it. Why? Because relationship requires work. As with my relationship with my wife, I must work at my relationship with my Father. To do otherwise is to say that relationship is not as important as my other interests.

Take time today to examine your heart and look for ways to work at your relationship with the Lord.

‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.
They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.’
Matthew 15:8-9 NIV

Listen to: IF IT MEANS MORE GLORY
Words & Music: Dennis Jernigan
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Verse
Who I am I owe to You
Freedom, Life, and love, and truth
All I am and ever hope to be
All that You have given me
I lay it down before Your feet
In glory to my King
Chorus
I give everything to You
My life! The things I hold on to
If it means more glory to my King!
I count everything as lost
For knowing You is worth the cost
If it means more glory
If it means more glory
If it mean more glory to my King!
Verse
Everything I hold so dear
Pales whenever You are near
Every hope and vision! Every dream!
And everything I think I need
I gladly bow before Your feet
In glory to my King!

May 2

‘...Who I am I owe to You…’

Isn’t it funny how mankind gets so caught up in how great mankind is?

The cultural zeitgeist (spirit of the age) always leans toward man as being the greatest, relegating those who believe God is the utmost to the outer fringes of lunacy. That is the scheme of the enemy, to get us so focused on ourselves and our own abilities that we forget God and wind up in hell… both in this life and the next. Healthy, abundant life

stems from an awareness that we have not made ourselves. We were created by and for God, called to exude His greatness through our very existence. Reality is that I am nothing without Him and powerless apart from Him. If man is the utmost then existence is mere futility and if man is the most powerful then what have we to look forward to but dying in utter weakness? Peace, health, joy, and contentment come from knowing who we are and Whose we are…and we owe everything to Him Who made us.

Ask the Lord to show you ways He has blessed your life that you have never thought of before. Spend time thanking Him for all He has done to get you to where you are.

Know that the LORD Himself is God;
It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves;
{We are} His people and the sheep of His pasture.
Psalm 100:3 NASB

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.
Ephesians 2:10 NASB

May 3

Knowing Jesus intimately has certainly brought much freedom and love and truth to my life. Knowing Jesus is the most important thing I have ever done in my life…because without Him, life is futile at best. To know Jesus requires that we understand that for relationship to bring forth life it must be constantly growing. It is a process. Just as in relationship, freedom is also a process and not a one-time event. If we want to win the war for our freedom in any area, we will have to fight a series of many battles…each one bringing us one step closer to ultimate freedom. If I expect complete freedom as a one-time event I will never experience real liberty. Jesus is that Answer. Knowing Him brings freedom to be honest and receive the truth. Knowing Him brings freedom to experience real love. Knowing Him is life.

Take time today to simply relate to God in conversation as you go about your work. Expect to experience freedom, His love, and the power His truth brings.

…that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death…
Philippians 3:10 NASB

May 4

Due to the nature of my story of deliverance from bondage to same sex attraction, I hear the cries of so many on a weekly basis that tell me they just cannot see themselves as who God calls them to be. While breaking off the chains of any bondage is never without pain, we cannot allow that pain to determine our identity. So, too, I can never allow the emotions I experience to dictate my identity. My past does not define me. My feelings do not define me. The wisdom of man does not define me. I am who my Father says I am. The way I see it is this: just as everything the mighty oak will one day be is contained within the DNA of the tiny acorn, everything God says I am is contained in the core of my true identity. Even though I may not be able to see the massive trunk and majestic limbs and canopy of leaves just yet, in my innermost acorn of my true identity I am everything I will one day be. I simply choose to believe it. Now, 27 years further down the road of my journey, I can see growth and maturity and a deeper understanding of who and Whose I am…and I am so glad I never gave up!

In what areas do you struggle to see your true identity in Christ? Take time today to listen for the voice of the Father as you ask Him to speak to you concerning who He says you are.

For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.
2 Timothy 1:12 NASB

May 5

Several years ago, I was faced with a loss. A dear friend felt called of God to move away and plant a new church 800 miles away. This was someone I assumed I would minister with for the rest of my life. I began to grieve and in my grief even asked the Lord if I should go with my friend. His answer? ‘Let Him go. It is for my glory.’ Rather than wallow in self-pity, I asked the Lord to show me His kingdom-perspective. That perspective tells me that I am not here for my own glory and pleasure, but for His. His perspective tells me that in dividing us He is actually multiplying His work in the earth. His perspective tells me that even if we do not see one another again in this life, we will have eternity together in the next. I laid my own desires and wishes at the feet of Jesus and peace flooded my soul. What I discovered in that moment was that my unwillingness to let my friend go was actually damming the flow of God in my life. And I cannot live without the flow of His life in me.

Ask the Lord to show you things that you hold on to that are disrupting the

flow of life in you. Be on the lookout for His kingdom perspective.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”
John 12:24 NASB

May 6

Sometimes we hold on to things without even realizing it. One of the easiest things to hold on to is bitterness toward those who wound us. To not forgive those who wound us is to put ourselves in a position to die a slow, agonizing death. To continue to hold on to the hurt in the hope of making the guilty party pay is an exercise in futility. We only hurt ourselves. We essentially place our own heart and mind in prison while the offender goes about his life. To give up the hope of avenging your own hurt is freedom. To give up the hope of changing what happened is freedom. To release the offender of the debt you perceive he owes you actually frees YOU. To realize the healing power of God for the wounds you have received you must let go of the unforgiveness. You must let go of the bitterness in order to reach for Jesus. Forgiveness is foundational to your freedom.

Take time today to release those who have hurt you. Let them go and forgive their debt. Actively ask the Lord to bless them. You might also want to actively forgive yourself for things you think are unforgivable to you about yourself. Let go! Let go! Let go!

For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?
For what will a man give in exchange for his soul?
Mark 8:36-37 NASB

May 7

Sometimes we face circumstances that cause us to ask ‘why would You allow this, Lord?’ If I truly want to have a Kingdom point of view, I need to ask questions like that. I’ve discovered that the Lord can certainly handle my feeble attempts at understanding something that surpasses my ability to even comprehend in the first place! When I first came into freedom, I still assumed it was ‘all about me’, but the reality that has unfolded in the past 27 years of my life is this: I am not here for my own pleasure nor am I here for my own glory. I am here for His good pleasure and to reflect His glory to others. My purpose in a nutshell is to exalt God and lead others to Him! This has a very profound

effect upon my psyche in this sense: rather than fretting over my circumstances, I have learned (and continue to learn) to ask the Lord to reveal to me His Kingdom point of view in these circumstances. As is always the case, from His point of view I see glory.

As you prepare for the day, ready your mind to be looking for ways to bring God glory and to minister to others even in the midst of dire circumstances.

I will give thanks to You, O Lord my God, with all my heart,
And will glorify Your name forever.
Psalm 86:12 NASB

May 8

The older I get, the less I need. Looking back to my early days of newlywed bliss, I can see just how many 'things' I thought I needed to be happy and successful. Man, was I wrong. My wife and I have a house and lots of land. On that land we have 2 barns and an office house…and I have to take care of it all! The reality is this: I know I could live without all of those things. As with earthly possessions, we tend to be possessed by what we possess. So it is with our sin. So it is with unforgiveness. As long as we leave sin unconfessed we are held captive by that sin. As long as we harbor resentment and refuse to forgive those who hurt us, we are held prisoner by our own thoughts of revenge. The saddest part of all is that we lose everything we desire in freedom and love when we refuse to let go and count it all as lost. We gain the whole world in the process but we lose our own souls. Is holding on worth that? My freedom has come in letting go of my sin and letting go of the debt others owe me because of the way they have wounded me.

What sins do you need to confess today? What people do you need to release and forgive today? Confess and forgive and watch God invade your life with rich blessings of freedom and hope and joy.

More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ…
Philippians 3:8 KJV

May 9

Many times I have come into contact with people who tell me they are ready to give up on their quest for freedom. Some have endured horrendous abuse from their earliest memories. Some have been so confused in their sexual identity they don't have one iota of an idea of who they really are. Some have gone through physical trials and injury and disease that would have left anyone ready to throw their hands up in defeat. Personally, there have been many times in my life – especially when I first came into freedom – when giving up and surrendering to the old life seemed easier. Taking the easy way may take some of the pressure off for a season, but in the long run we never get to experience true freedom, true victory, true grace, or true hope. Because I can clearly see how far I had fallen away from the Lord, His love and forgiveness has left me running after Him for many years. He who has been forgiven much loves much. I can tell you this for certain: knowing Jesus intimately has been worth every fall, every calamity, every disappointment, every heartache, every battle, and every cost to my soul. Knowing Him it worth whatever it takes to get to Him. That is the place of freedom.

Allow the Lord to show you the worth of what your freedom has cost you to this point.

It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.
Galatians 5:1 NASB

May 10

Let's think about what the word glory means. There are times in God's Word where the word glory literally means 'the weight of God's presence'. Still other times it means 'to bring attention and honor' to God. When the Lord allows us to go through even the most trying of times we can still (maybe not in the moment) be looking to bring Him glory – honor and attention – for what He is doing in spite of the circumstances. I am learning to be pre-emptive in my 'glory-giving'…by being prepared to look for God's hand in the midst of the trial and then point out to others the perspective that He sees in it all. What I am discovering is that when I bring Him glory (attention and honor) I always find I become aware of 'the weight of His presence.'

As you prepare for your day, begin to prepare your heart and mind to respond to all circumstances in such a way as to bring Him glory…and be prepared to sense the weight of His presence as you do!

Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump

one vessel for honorable use and another for common use? What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? And {He did so} to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, {even} us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.
Romans 9:21-24 NASB

May 11

Whenever we are face with life and death circumstances it seems easier to delineate between what is important and what is not. A few years ago one of my daughters was involved in a traffic accident. Not knowing her condition, I raced toward the crash site at break-neck speed. My own life seem of little importance to me as I raced to her. Seeing them putting her into the ambulance momentarily sent my heart into shock. I left my keys in my truck in the middle of the road and jumped into the emergency vehicle with her. My own life and that truck were of little value to me. In that moment all I could think of was getting to my child. And then it hit me. That's how Father thinks of me. He did whatever it took to get to me. In the same way that I placed little value on the 'things' surrounding my daughter's safety, I am brought to rock-bottom reality whenever I think about how vital knowing Christ is to my own destiny and identity. If I can live my life to know Christ as if my life depended on it then I have found the key to abundant life…and everything else pales in comparison.

What are the things that overshadow your relationship with Christ that hinder the flow of life in you? Take time to, once again, reorder your priorities.

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, {being} more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;
1 Peter 1:6-7 NASB

May 12

Where we place our attentions – our hopes and our dreams – is what we wind up serving. If that is the case, we truly do waste our time if everything we do on this earth is for our own pleasure and to build our own kingdom. Regardless of our gifts or talents or

mental capacity, we each have a need to know God…and in knowing Him, a need to find fulfillment in the use of those gifts. I have come to realize that all my gifts and talents lead to fulfillment when I use them to serve Him and others. What I accomplish on earth is really about storing up for myself treasures in heaven. How do we use our gifts and our talents for His Kingdom when we are not of this world but must live in it? By staying true to His character/nature and learning to walk in our own. From a Kingdom perspective I can use any gift and any talent – even for making money or starring in a movie or teaching school or climbing a mountain – for His glory. In the process my dreams come true and my vision becomes intense and I am filled with hope.

How can God use your particular gifts and talents to bring Him glory on this earth?

But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
Matthew 6:20-21 NASB

May 13

As a child, there were so many times my mom would take us with her to the grocery store. Each time we walked down those towering aisles of colorful snack cakes and cookies and cereal my senses were overwhelmed with intense desire to begin throwing one of each into the cart! Most of those items I had never actually tried…but I had seen them advertised on TV... and the TV people told me I needed them! I can still remember thinking as I look back that I really did NEED those things to be happy. Each time we left without Hostess cupcakes or Cap'n Crunch cereal I was a basket case. In our spiritual walk, we can quickly become spiritual basket cases whenever we think we can have our needs met in ways other than what is best for us – in ways other than God ordained. My freedom comes when I place all my needs at the feet of Jesus. It is for His glory…but I reap all the benefits.
What are your basic needs today? Spiritual? Physical? Emotional? Mental? Lay them at the feet of Jesus as they come to mind.

"Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and {yet} your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? "And who of you by being worried can add a {single} hour to his life? "And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. "But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is {alive} today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, {will He} not much more {clothe} you? You of little faith! "Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What

will we wear for clothing?' "For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.
Matthew 6:26-32 NASB

Listen to REIGN KING JESUS

Words & Music: Dennis Jernigan
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Verse
He is coming
Make a way
The King is coming
Prepare for Him the way
He is coming
On a horse of white
106
When is He coming?
Morning, noon, or night?
Pre-chorus
Clothed in a robe that is dipped in blood
Poured from the vein of Redeeming Love
Died and rose again and now
He reigns above
And Jesus is His name
Chorus
Reign King Jesus!
Reign in me!
Reign King Jesus!
Lord of Lords and King of Kings!
Reign King Jesus!
Reign in me!
Reign King Jesus!
Reign in glory!
Reign in me!

May 14

John the Baptist came to prepare the way of the Lord…to remind people that the Messiah was indeed on His way. As believers, we are called to do the same thing. If I am to prepare the way of the Lord – remind people He is coming – it stands to reason that I should probably prepare the way beginning with my own life. If I desire the kingdom to come in my life I do that by welcoming the King. To prepare for His entrance

I need to clear away the things that are in the way. Anything that stands between me and the King must go. In my own life I prepared the way of the King by ridding my life of any other voices that cluttered the airways of my mind that kept me from hearing His voice. From 1981 until 1993 I did not listen to any other music but what He was giving me. I also greatly limited the kind of TV I watched – mainly the news and Johnny Carson! In the process – even though I did not know it at the time – I was actually making a way for the King to have greater access to my heart and life…and He began to reveal Himself in ways I had only dreamed of.

Take time to meditate today on the things that stand between you and the King. What needs to be done to make a way for Him in those areas?

The crowds going ahead of Him, and those who followed, were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David; BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; Hosanna in the highest!”
Matthew 21:9 NASB

May 15

Today, let’s continue what we began yesterday and allow the Holy Spirit to reveal any areas of our lives that we have not allowed the King access to. Remember, we are not here for our own glory and pleasure, but for His. As we make way for Him in our own lives He will reveal His Kingdom through us to others.

This is the one about whom it is written, ‘BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.’
Matthew 11:10 NASB

May 16

As a boy I used to love the old western movies. You know…the ones where the good guys wore white and the bad guys wore black. It was always so easy to identify with the good guys because I wanted them to win so badly and for good to triumph…because I really needed to see victory in my own life! As I think about the end of days – when Jesus comes again – I cannot help but think of Him riding in on that great white steed as the Victor and Champion. My reality is this: I do not have to wait until He returns to experience victory and liberty and freedom. In a sense, He is right here, right now, coming to our rescue, bringing triumph over the Enemy. The best part

of all is that even when it seems all will be lost in a certain area of my life, He always swoops in and saves the day. That may not always look the way I wanted, but He always triumphs one way or another! As His servant, I must learn to see every situation from His perspective. From there victory is easily seen. Isn't it wonderful that we can read the end of the Book and find out Who wins?

Are there any areas of your life you would like to see Him riding in to save the day? Ask Him to do just that…and then try to see your circumstance from His point of view.

And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it {is} called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war.
Revelation 19:11 NASB

May 17

There was an incident when I was a child that really rocked my world. I had just come to an awareness that Jesus would come back someday…and that I would not be ready. Still believing I was not going to make it to heaven due to my hidden sin, I lived in fear of death and in fear of Jesus' return. On this particular day I had gotten home from school and was doing my chores. Everything seemed normal at first until I realized that the house had become very quiet. My brothers were nowhere to be found and my parents were simply gone. As I looked around the house a feeling of dread and fear began to invade my every thought. Running around the house and yelling for anyone who might be able to hear me, I began to panic. My thoughts? Jesus had come and taken everyone else and I was left all alone! Since the Lord has brought me my freedom, I no longer fear death and I no longer fear His return. In many ways I actually long for that day…whether by death or whether by rapture…I will be with Him. What joy…and what peace. Fear is gone and peace rules the kingdom of my heart and mind.

For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.
1 Thessalonians 5:2 NASB

May 18

Whenever I think of all Jesus did for me, I am drawn to His personal physical reminders of His passion for me. The nail-scarred hands, the thorn-scarred brow, the

spear-pierced side. Each one a reminder of just how much He loves me. When I ponder the meaning of the passage of Scripture telling me Jesus will return wearing a robe that has been dipped in blood I am once again reminded that He proudly wears the evidence of His passion for me – for all to see. It is in facing the reality of His great passion that I am drawn to wear my personal reminders of my love for Him for all to see. How do I do that? I live my life for Him. I tell the story of His redeeming love in my life. I lay down my life for others. My passion for Him is focused like a laser when I worship…because all I can think of is how much He endured for me. To live out loud for Him is nothing compared to His dying out loud for me.

As you go about your day, think about ways you can express your passion for Christ. Let your life speak what words cannot possibly say.

{He is} clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.
Revelation 19:13 NASB

May 19

Jesus poured out His very life for me. His pouring out was ultimately all-consuming. He poured out his mind, His emotions, His blood, and His very life. It is said that the life is in the blood…and this is so true. After I injured a leg a few years ago, I was left with a gaping wound and was told that no skin graft could be employed…that the wound must heal from the inside out (that's another devotion in itself!). I was instructed to make the edges of the wound bleed as much as possible whenever I was dressing the wound. Why? Life is in the blood. As the wound is opened and blood pours in, life comes to the wounded area. Before I knew it, my wound had begun to close and eventually healed completely. Jesus applied His own life-blood to my sin-wounded life… and the wound is healing and one day will be completely closed when I see Him face to face. When I think of the blood, though, I cannot help but think of not only life pouring out for me, but pure love flowing and pouring out as well.

What areas of your life do you need to see life-blood poured into today? What areas of your life do you need to see love poured into today? How can you pour life and love into the life of those around you today?

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, {and} being made in the likeness of men.
Philippians 2:5-7 NASB

May 20

Jesus died and put death under His feet where it belongs. Even death submits to His rule and reign! When the Lord first began setting me free I still battled the grip my old life had on me. Gradually that grip began to loosen as I realized the reality that if Jesus had conquered death and had risen again then so could I since He lived in me! If He rules over death then so could I. The death of my past has now been conquered and He has caused me to triumph over that old life…those old thoughts…those old attitudes of death and sin. He rules and I reap the benefits…but only if I receive those benefits as the truth and apply them to my life and thoughts. Jesus died and rose again – and He reigns!

As you go about the day, allow the Holy Spirit to remind you of your victory over the death of your past life whenever the enemy would try to get you to respond to circumstances from an old perspective.

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ,
and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every
place.
2 Corinthians 2:14 NASB

May 21

Today, focus on the name of Jesus. Allow the Holy Spirit to guide you outside of the box you have always placed Jesus in. When we put Him inside of a box that is all we get of Him. Limiting the Lord of Lords to only a portion of His potential to work in our lives would be like using only a small percentage of our lung capacity to breathe. Why would we want to struggle for breath by using only 10% of our capacity when real life and abundant living is found as we open up our lungs to their full potential?

As you go about your day today, allow the Lord to take you to vistas of His power and love in your life you had never thought of before.

“THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD,
AND {which} HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL
THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.”
1 Corinthians 2:9 NASB

May 22

Often times when we think of a king's reign we tend to look at worldly examples in which the king is sometimes a tyrant – one who forces people into submission to His will. My King Jesus is not like that. He indeed captured my heart – yet without force. I had been ruled over by the tyrant Satan and his lies and was forced into slavery of my own doing by my own sin. After awhile I felt utterly hopeless in my sinful state. When Jesus extended an invitation to receive His forgiveness and love I was effectively conquered by His love! Being completely accepted by Him and being completely forgiven and washed clean caused me to bowed WILLFULLY and WHOLEHEARTEDLY to His rule and reign. His law is born of holy love. His love led me out of slavery and into freedom. Being ruled by His love keeps me from sin and leads me to an abundant life. Reign, King Jesus! Reign in me!

Allow the rule of God's love to override your responses in every circumstance and situation you face today.

"YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER,
YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET," and if there is any
other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "YOU SHALL LOVE
YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."
Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of {the} law.
Romans 13:10 NASB

May 23

When we use terms such as 'King of Kings' and 'Lord of Lords' we understand that these are names of the Lord Jesus Christ. Sometimes I can forget that these are names that reflect His power and sovereignty. In today's world it seems that dictators and tyrants rule in many areas of the earth. It seems also that the social mores are being transformed before our very eyes and that immorality and sin are considered the norm. It seems that those who love the Lord are ridiculed as being archaic and unnecessary. For all intents and purposes - from a strictly earthly perspective- it seems that everything is out of control. Since we can be easily overwhelmed if we take this chaos at face value it stands to spiritual reason that we MUST see such chaotic times and circumstances from the Kingdom perspective. Even when evil seems to rule the day, we must take our eyes off of that worldly reality and see what the King sees. He is

either in control or He is not. Since He is, we must understand that He is using even the present evil and social climes for His perfect plan. That gives me peace.

Be prepared to see world events from the King's perspective today. Be prepared to respond with a Kingdom attitude to others who see only from an earthly perspective today.

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority…
Colossians 2:8-10 NASB

May 24

Today, let's meditate on one specific area where we need the rule and reign of Jesus – our thought life. The enemy's only power over us is deception. If we can overcome His lies then we can overcome the temptations and stinkin' thinkin' that we tend to allow to rule and reign in our thought lives. And just how do we overcome His lies? By putting on the truth – by putting on His Word.

Today when the enemy attacks you with thoughts that try to tear down your true identity in Christ, remind Him of who you are and of Whose you are. Use the following passages of Scripture to do that today.

Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know {Him} {in this way} no longer. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, {he is} a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.
2 Corinthians 5:16-17 NASB

But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit {with Him.} Flee immorality. Every {other} sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.
1 Corinthians 6:17-20 NASB

May 25

great definition of God's glory is 'the weight of His presence'. Today, let's ask the Lord to give us a Kingdom point of view of our surroundings and everything we face. Rather than be overwhelmed with the weight of the pressures of life, let's transfer that pressure to the One Who can handle it by laying our burdens at His feet and trusting Him with them. In that moment I believe we will see evidence of the weight of His presence. Look for His glory today!

{I would have despaired} unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD In the land of the living. Wait for the LORD; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the LORD.
Psalm 27:13-14 NASB

Listen to JESUS
Words & Music: Dennis Jernigan
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Verse
Standing by the wayside
Listening from the shore
Come the poor and dying
Ever wanting more
See the wretched blind man
Falling at His feet
Wanting just to touch Him
Wanting just to meet Him
Chorus
Jesus!
Just to see this Jesus!
Oh, Jesus!
Oh, Jesus!
Through and through He sees us!
Oh, Jesus!
Oh, Jesus!
Oh, Jesus!
Verse
Sleeping on the sidewalks
Crowding city streets
Dancing to the rhythm
Every person beats
Hearts that beat in anger
Beating in despair
Hearts that need an answer
Needing one to care like
Verse
Surely now He's walking

Right across the waves
Calling to the dying
Look to Him! He saves!
Taking what was broken
Used and cast aside
Raising up to newness
Bury what has died

May 26

When I was a boy of about 10 years of age I already knew I struggled with same sex attraction. No one else knew at that time since I was trying to hide my struggles and appear as normal as possible. One day after Sunday School, I overheard the men of the church discuss what they thought about homosexuals. I knew they were talking about me even if they did not. My point? People are watching and listening. We, as believers and followers of Christ, must understand that in the lives of those around us we may be the only 'Jesus' they see. Will they see and hear hope and healing from the overflow of our lives or will they see and hear rejection and despair?

As you go about your day, allow the Holy Spirit to heighten your sensitivity to the needs of those around you.

'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; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.' "Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You {something} to drink? 'And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? 'When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' "The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, {even} the least {of them,} you did it to Me.' Matthew 25:35-40 NASB

May 27

When I was younger – many, many years ago now – I thought that one day I would be satisfied with my life…that I would come to a day when I felt I could retire and enjoy my last days. Now that I am older and hopefully wiser, I realize that as long as I have breath on this earth there will be people in need all around me. As long as there

are people, there will be sin. As long as there is sin, there will be hurts and failures and wounds that need someone to minister to. Regardless of how old I live in this life my new perspective is that I will always have something to minister to others – always have something to give…and that something is the love of Jesus Christ.

Today, allow the Holy Spirit to show you how to express the love of Christ to those around you in new and innovative ways.

…and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.
Romans 5:5 NASB

May 28

When we think of blindness, we think of someone being physically blind…but the reality is that there is a greater more debilitating blindness of mind and spirit. To be spiritually blind – to see only the wisdom of the world – affects the way we think. The way we think affects the way we act. The way we act leads us to believe this is all we can expect of life. As a believer who has been set free, I strongly believe I must share the specifics of what I was set free from so that those who are blinded in the same delusion of identity that I lived for so long can finally 'see' there is a way out. It is when our eyes are opened to the reality of Jesus Christ and His healing love that we fall at His feet in repentance.

How can you live your life today in such a way as to help others see Jesus?

The LORD opens {the eyes of} the blind; The LORD raises up those who are bowed down; The LORD loves the righteous; The LORD protects the strangers;
He supports the fatherless and the widow, But He thwarts the way of the wicked.
Psalm 146:8-9 NASB

May 29

For many, many years, I held a secret hope and longing to have a best friend. While in college, that longing became obsessive and possessive of anyone who showed me the least bit of kindness – especially if it was a man who expressed worth to me. My obsession was shattered each time the object of my obsession let me down. Reality was that usually my obsession was what drove them away! My longing was real. The

focus of my longing was tragically misplaced and this misplacement always led me to failure and disappointment without fail. We each have an empty place in our hearts only the Lord can fill. When Jesus found me and lavished me with love, the need for masculine affection and affirmation began to be fulfilled through a holy, spiritual relationship with my Father. I finally found that which I had been longing for in Jesus Christ.

People all around you are looking for Jesus today – whether they realize it or not! Allow the Holy Spirit to help you to be sensitive to their needs and give you the grace to love accordingly.

Now all {these} things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.
2 Corinthians 5:18-19 NASB

May 30

Today we are simply going to focus on Jesus. As you go about your day, ask the Holy Spirit to let you see Jesus in ways you had not seen before. Be prepared to be surprised by His creativity! And remember, when you put God in a neat and tidy little box of your comfort and expectations then that is all of God you get!

But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, {namely,} Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.
Hebrews 2:9 NASB

May 31

The Dead Sea in southern Israel is a place where life cannot exist, yet it is constantly receiving fresh water from the north via the Jordan River. The same water that flows from the Jordan River comes from the Sea of Galilee – a sea full of life. Same water in both, yet one is full of life and one is full of death. The reason? The Dead Sea receives…but does not release. The Sea of Galilee both receives life and gives life. One has an outlet while the other does not. When we keep things hidden and un-confessed

in our lives we become like the Dead Sea. When we confess and receive the cleansing of that honest confession, life is free to flow.

Take time today to confess to the Father any hidden thing. Find a trusted spiritual brother or sister and do the same…and watch the life flow!

“He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’ “
John 7:38 NASB

… and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”
John 8:32 NASB

June 1

What’s in a name? God’s Word tells us that a good name is to be more desired than great riches. Why is that? Could it be that a person’s name has certain characteristics attached to it? When someone hears my name my greatest hope is that the one hearing attaches certain meanings to my name – like honesty, integrity, faithfulness, loyalty, freedom, joy, steadfast, humble, hard-working, etc. When I hear the name Jesus I think a myriad of thoughts concerning the character behind the name: Redeemer, Savior, Friend, Faithful, Almighty, Overcomer, Blessing, Peace, Provider, Healer, etc. I want to be like Jesus and I desire to walk in the character He walks in. I want to see redemption in the lives of others. I want to bring His salvation to others. I want to be a friend to the friendless. You get the point.

Today, focus on the character behind the name of Jesus and then ask the Holy Spirit to build that same character into your life.

A {good} name is to be more desired than great wealth,
Favor is better than silver and gold.
Proverbs 22:1 NASB

June 2

We have all probably seen people sleeping on the sidewalks of major cities. Whenever I encounter someone like this my mind goes into overdrive. How did they get here? What events led them to destitution of soul? Do they have any family or friends?

How did they lose hope? What was their childhood like? Does their family know where they are? Does their family care? Often times we feel there is nothing we can do and simply pass on by. Perhaps these people have been passed by so many times they feel as if they do not even exist. Sometimes simply acknowledging someone's existence can mean the difference between life and death. I know we cannot stop and speak to every lonely soul we come across but we can walk in the Spirit and walk in sensitivity. A nod and a smile may be like a cup of cool water to that person…a prayer spoken on behalf of a lonely soul may be all the Lord has for you to do.

Would you be willing to be open to ministering to someone the world ignores today? Buy someone a cup of coffee…or simply acknowledge their existence with a smile.

I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, {even} the least {of them,} you did it to Me.'
Matthew 25:40 NASB

June 3

If you have ever been to Times Square or some other bustling city street you may have felt overwhelmed by the sheer number of people in one small, confining place. Being from a small town, the numbers tend to overwhelm me! Where is everyone going? Why does no one look me in the eye? Does anyone in this crowd even know the others exist? In the same way we become so overwhelmed in a crowd, we can become overwhelmed with the simple living out of life…to the point that we forget there are others around us…to the point that we do not wish to have our routines disrupted. If we are to be kingdom-minded people we need to be able to step away from the busyness and see into the individual lives of those we run across and present them with Jesus. One smile or one kind word could be the key that unlocks the door into that person's life.

Take time today to step out of your routine – even for a few minutes – to take stock of those you will interact with today. Be prepared to offer the love of Christ in a tangible way.

When He went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and felt compassion for them and healed their sick.
Matthew 14:14 NASB

June 4

There is a certain rhythm to life. Our heart beats and brings life to every area of our physical body. If the heart beats out of sync, life is threatened. In a society there is a certain rhythm as well. When, through time and events, the principles of that society lead it down into darkness and away from the light of God's truth, that culture becomes out of sync with God's best. Sin causes the hearts of men to be out of sync with God. My belief is that we, as believers, are here to help shock the hearts of men back into sync with God's rhythm. When we share with another what the Lord has done for us, the one we share with receives a little jolt of life. It is very obvious this is true whenever I share with others how the Lord has brought me out of homosexuality. I can see by the look on their faces and I can hear the disbelief in their voices that the rhythm of their hearts have been shocked into reality even if only for a few moments. People all around us are dancing to the wrong beat – the beat of sin. How can we, as believers, change the music for them?

Would you allow the Holy Spirit to heighten your senses today to the needs of people all around you? Would you be willing to share the music of what God has done in your life with someone else today should the opportunity present itself?

But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate.
Luke 15:22-24 NASB

June 5

I used to have such an anger problem. When I was a boy and I became frustrated my frustration would lead to anger and my mom would say 'That's just the Bristol in him'…meaning I had a fiery disposition due to my great-grandparents (Bristol) who had fiery red hair! In other words, that's just the way I am. Once I found my freedom in Christ I realized I had believed a lot of lies about who I really am…and decided that, just maybe, an angry person was NOT who I was! Most often, anger comes when we think we have a right to something. My freedom came when I surrendered my rights to Jesus. I do not have a right to get my way. I do not have the right to have people notice me. I do not have the right to anything. My peace came when I surrendered my rights. The result of surrender is always a deeper intimacy with Christ and with others.

You will meet angry people in life today. How can you minister peace to them? You will face times of frustration today. When they come, be quick to surrender your rights and quick to see from Father's perspective.

The LORD [is] gracious, and full of compassion;
slow to anger, and of great mercy.
Psalm 145:8 KJV

A hot-tempered man stirs up strife,
But the slow to anger calms a dispute.
Psalm 15:18 NASB

June 6

Mankind has a way of trying to fill the void in their souls where God belongs with things that lead to destruction. God gave us appetites in order to survive. If we did not desire food or drink – if it was not pleasing to us – we would die. If we did not desire physical touch we would die of loneliness. If we did not have sexual desires the human race would cease to exist. All those desires were intended for our good…but the Enemy has tempted us into perversions of those desires. Perversion is simply using something God intended for a holy purpose in a way other than He intended. Just watch the evening news and you will see story after story illustrating this truth. Rape. Drug addiction. STDs. Murder. Unplanned pregnancy. All manner of health issues due to the way we eat. People are searching for answers but finding only calamity…because they are not seeking THE Answer. He is Jesus.

How could you live your life in such a way that people would see the hope of a life lived according to the RIGHT Answer? Be prepared to minister the Answer to searching people today.

Hear, O LORD, [when] I cry with my voice:
have mercy also upon me, and answer me.
Psalm 27:7 KJV

June 7

Growing up on a farm taught me much about ministering to the needs of people. Just as a cattleman or shepherd tends to his herd or flock, so must I tend to those the

Lord puts in my charge. Cattle and sheep go astray and become susceptible to predators and prone to disease when not properly cared for. And the only way for that cattleman or shepherd to know how to tend that herd or flock is to know the CONDITION of that herd or flock. Hence, the very real need for building relationships with those you are ministering to. In a very practical sense, what are the green pastures that world-wearied person needs to be led to? What will satisfy the thirst of that desperate soul? What can you do to help restore that one who has been emotionally broken by life? For the one who is blinded by the ravages of a sinful life, what can you do to lead them down a righteous path? What can you do to bring comfort to those who sorrow? What can you do to bring healing to that wounded heart? What can you do to prepare a feast of God's presence in such a way that the lives of those you are ministering to would be nourished? A good shepherd LEADS his sheep and does not force them into submission. Relational love is the key.

How can you tend to the needs of those around you today? Sometimes just acknowledging another's existence with a smile or kind greeting is a deep expression of God's care.

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.
Psalm 23:1 NASB

June 8

People are always looking for Jesus – even if they do not know it. There is a need for relationship with God that is in each of us. Because the Enemy does such a great job of deceiving people, most wind up looking in the wrong places. Because sin does such a great job of making us feel worthless, most don't see any hope for salvation because their belief system is based on a foundation of works. In our own lives as believers, we are still susceptible to the lies and still susceptible to keep wearing the grave clothes from our former lives. With seekers we must present Jesus to them in a real way – by living our lives in a real and transparent way. In our own lives we must always try to see from the Lord's perspective so we will not walk in the delusion that we can earn His love and acceptance.

What can you do to live your life in such a way that people see the love of Jesus today? Are there any areas that you are trying to earn God's love and acceptance?

You will seek Me and find {Me} when you search for Me with all your heart.
Jeremiah 29:13 NASB

June 9

There was a time in my life when it felt like I carried the weight of the world on my shoulders. This weight was not born of any righteous burdens I was bearing but rather from the weight of un-confessed sin I kept hidden in my heart. From the time I was a boy until I was in my early twenties I kept everything hidden out of fear of rejection – if anyone finds out what I'm really like they WILL reject me. The lies of the Enemy kept me from freedom. It was when I realized that Jesus saw right through me and loved me anyway that I began to unburden myself and receive His forgiveness. He saw right through me and loved me anyway! He loved me right where I was – but He loved me enough to not leave me there! Oh, Jesus!

What burdens do you need to get honest about today – whether sin or something other? What brother or sister can you share those burdens with today?

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.
1 Peter 5:6-7

June 10

Today, let's focus on one of the benefits of knowing Jesus intimately. His Word tells us that if we believe in Him rivers of living water will flow from the deepest place in our being. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you pictures of what a river of life flowing into the deepest places of your heart would look like…then allow those rivers of living water to flow and refresh and sustain and cleanse and carry you today.

"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said,
'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.' "
John 7:38 NASB

June 11

There have been so many times in my life where I felt absolutely hopeless… hopeless to be worth saving…hopeless to be worth someone's time and friendship…hopeless to be set free from my sin. As a boy, I saw no way for Jesus to invade my life and rescue me from homosexuality. As I grew up, I saw no good in me and felt unworthy of anyone else's attention. As a young adult, I gave up to sin and felt God had abandoned me. But one day in the midst of that storm of hopelessness, Jesus came walking across the waves of my ungodly perspective and rescued me by His love. He became Peace to me right in the middle of that storm. He calmed the waves and taught me to see myself as He sees me. He set me so free that I now want as many people as possible to know that same freedom. I now have hope…and my hope has a name – and it is Jesus.

What storms of your life would you like to see Jesus walking across the waves in? Are there any around you that need to see Jesus walking across the waves of their storms? What can you do to help them see Jesus?

But the boat was already a long distance from the land, battered by the waves; for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea. When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid."
Matthew 14:25-27 NASB

June 12

When I was trapped in my sin, I was dying a spiritual death. Due to the many times I had felt used by others I had made a conscious decision to never let anyone get close enough to me to find out what I was really like. I was unwilling to take the risk. Love requires risk but I was too afraid of rejection to allow anyone near me. To close one's self off from the risk love requires is to effectively place one's self in a coffin. Life is found outside that coffin. Jesus risked everything to express His love for us…knowing full well we would reject Him! He rose from the grave and conquered death for us. For us to take part in that life we must be willing to rid ourselves of the coffin by risking relationship with Him. The Good News is that He will not reject us. To remain in sin and to walk in fear of rejection effectively keeps us in that coffin. Nothing gets in. Nothing gets out. That is death.

Jesus is calling us all to greater levels of life today. In what areas of life are you experiencing death? What will it take for you to step out of the coffins you have built around those areas?

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have {it} abundantly.
John 10:10 NASB

June 13

Many times in my life I have come to the place where I realize that I cannot put my hope in anything but Jesus Christ! Recently I had a health crisis. No doctor could give me peace. My hope cannot even be in my own physical health because each day brings me closer to the day I will physically die! Even though my wife and I are each other's biggest champions I cannot put my hope in her to save me! There is no 12 step program or set of rules that can save me either. There is only One Who can save – only one Savior – and He is Jesus. When I reduce my life down to the lowest common denominator – when I look around me and see the eternality of what will be left standing in the end – only Jesus remains. This day I choose to not misplace my hope. I choose to keep my eyes on Jesus. He alone can and will save.

In what things do you place your hope and happiness? Is there any misplaced hope in your life? What can you do to place your hope in Jesus in those areas? Put your hope in God and watch fear and worry wither away.

Why are you in despair, O my soul? And {why} have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him {For} the help of His presence.
Psalm 42:5 NASB

June 14

It is now so easy for me to look back on my life and see just how broken I used to be. Broken mentally. Broken emotionally. Broken spiritually. In fact, due to the relative health I walk in now it is quite difficult to even believe I was so formerly broken. God's healing love is truly amazing…and what's even more amazing is His very wonderful way of taking our greatest failures and using them for His own glory and for the good of others. Who would have thought He could take a life ravaged by homosexuality and

shame and then heal to such a degree that He now declares His healing power to others through that formerly broken life?! Amazing! What others discarded, He took and made something beautiful of. What others used and cast aside as worthless He picked up and made new again. Broken and beautiful. What a life…

In what ways do you need the Lord to heal today? Are there any areas of life you feel used and cast aside? What would it take for you to lay them at the feet of Jesus? What would you like to see Him do with your brokenness?

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, Because the LORD has anointed me
To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to captives And freedom to prisoners; To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD and the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn,
To grant those who mourn {in} Zion, Giving them a garland instead of ashes,
The oil of gladness instead of mourning, The mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.
Isaiah 61:1-3 NASB

June 15

My life had become so messed up by the time I was 21 that I honestly felt there was no hope for change. By that age I already felt used up and burned out and not worth anyone's time or energy. If anyone needed to have their life renewed and remade it was I! How could Jesus possibly take something so tainted and soiled and clean it up? How could Jesus take something so broken beyond repair and put it back together? How could Jesus love something that held no worth? He is Redeemer, that's how! His precious blood washed me clean when I gave up to Him. His amazing grace slowly and surely rebuilt me in the way He intended all along, leaving the scars as testimonies to His healing power. His incredible love saw that who I was was indeed worth loving. He gave me new life. Who I was was someone brand new!

Are there any areas of your life in which you would like to see renewal or rebirth? What would it take for you to see those areas from His point of view?

Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know {Him} {in this way} no longer. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, {he is} a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.
2 Corinthians 5:16-17 NASB

June 16

When I was set free and given a brand new identity, I not only believed God loved me but I believed He LIKED me very, very much. My days of performing for His acceptance and approval and love were over! I simply believed and received. Whenever the enemy would lie and try to get me to believe the old lies I was granted great grace to put on the truth of my core identity and remind him that the things he was tempting me with were part of my old lie…that I had buried the old man and was someone brand new now. My freedom came when I decided to stop looking to my past failures and began believing my present Savior. Many in my old life told me I had been brainwashed and that I would return to my 'true' old life. Reality is that I WAS brainwashed by the cleansing blood and power of Jesus Christ! I am who my Father says I am. I choose to leave the old man dead and buried where he belongs!

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?

Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death,
so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.
Romans 6:1-4 NASB

June 17

God's Word tells us that when we seek Him with our whole heart we will find Him.

Let's spend some time today simply seeking Jesus in our thoughts…in our attitudes…in our actions…in our relationships…in our marriages…in our ministry to others. Be expecting Him to surprise you with His presence today!

You will seek Me and find {Me} when you search for Me with all your heart.
Jeremiah 29:13 NASB

June 18

When we spend all our energy trying to hide our deepest darkest secrets – our failures and the things that cause us shame…sin – it's a lot like trying to wrestle the wind. We get nowhere and expend a lot of energy for nothing. The wind is still there – our sin is still there. Just as we have no power over the wind, we have no power to keep God from seeing the things we hide. When we hide, we only hasten our own demise and destruction and death! My ability to enjoy the fullness of life as God intended was only enhanced the day I decided to stop hiding. There is something about getting completely emotionally, mentally and spiritually naked before God that lends itself to true freedom. I remember my wedding night, fearing the risk of being completely naked with my wife…and how all the fear and trepidation melted into ecstasy and bliss the moment we experienced complete and utter intimacy where nothing was hidden. That same feeling and fullness of life was the result of my honesty with the Lord. He sees right through me and loves me anyway. Why would I not want to keep the flow of intimacy going by making honest confession a part of my daily walk with Him?!

Take time to consciously let the Lord see through the recesses of your being today.

The spirit of man is the lamp of the LORD,
Searching all the innermost parts of his being.
Proverbs 20:27 NASB

June 19

The name of the Lord is a strong mighty tower where the righteous can run and be saved. There have been several times in my life in which I loudly called upon the name of the Lord Jesus. On one occasion I was driving over a bridge in the middle of a blizzard when the car went out of control, sending me on a trajectory over the side of the bridge. As I called out the name of Jesus a miracle occurred. Just before I slammed into the bridge railing I was broadsided by another vehicle that slowed the impact with the railing. The car was totaled but I was unhurt – and merely bounced off the side of the bridge rather than plunge over! On other occasions concerning my children or my wife or on behalf of others I have called out – boldly and demonstratively – the name of Jesus. When I am afraid or when I am discouraged I call upon the name of Jesus. In that name I remember His character. When I repeat His name I repeat His faithfulness to my own soul and to the enemy…and victory comes…and peace prevails…and hope

is sustained…and I am saved time after time. Still other times, I call upon His name just out of sheer gratitude and joy…and always with the same results. He is faithful and true. I will call upon the name of the Lord and I will be saved!

Be prepared to call upon the name of the Lord today…and watch life become a little fuller.

As for me, I shall call upon God,
And the LORD will save me.
Psalm 55:16 NASB

Listen to HALLELUJAH! HE REIGNS IN MAJESTY!

Words & Music: Dennis Jernigan
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Verse
Hallelujah! He reigns in majesty!
Hallelujah! He reigns in glory!
Hallelujah! He reigns in righteousness!
Oh! Hallelujah!
Chorus
Hallelujah!
Hallelujah!
Hallelujah!
Hallelujah!
Hallelujah!
He reigns in righteousness!
Oh! Hallelujah!
Verse
Hallelujah! You reign in majesty!
Hallelujah! You reign in glory!
Hallelujah! You reign in righteousness!
Oh! Hallelujah!
Chorus
Hallelujah!
Hallelujah!
Hallelujah!
Hallelujah!
Hallelujah!
You reign in righteousness!
Oh! Hallelujah!

June 20

The word ‘hallelujah’ literally means ‘praise the Lord’. It is a word of boasting. It is a word of adoration. It is a word that packs a lot of meaning into 4 simple syllables! When I say ‘Hallelujah! He reigns in majesty’ I am saying that, in my life, He rules and reigns! I boast in His power in my life! I boast in the fact that He is in control even when the world around me devolves into confusion and chaos.

Practice using that simple phrase today at work…or as you pray for your family…for your spouse…for your friends. Boast in your Redeemer’s ability to rule and reign in every situation!

The LORD reigns, He is clothed with majesty;
The LORD has clothed and girded Himself with strength;
Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved.
Psalm 92:1 NASB

June 21

We have already discussed the literal meaning of the word ‘hallelujah’, but we also need to think about the root words that form the Hebrew word. One of those roots is the name of God – Yahweh. Another root word means to be foolish – and loudly, boastfully foolish is implied! It is a word we use to put the enemy in his place and at the same time to remind our own souls of Who is truly in control! God’s glory is literally described as the weight of His presence. We are never away from His presence. We may FORGET He is there in our every moment, but that does not negate the truth and reality of His presence – His glory. That thought makes me want to shout ‘Hallelujah!’

Be looking for His glory and presence in your life today. Look in unexpected places and circumstances.

Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence?
Psalm 139:7 NASB

June 22

As the days grow dark with sin, it is sometimes easy to become discouraged. From time to time I share my testimony of deliverance from homosexuality on college campuses. After one recent episode, I was approached by a young person – a believer – who asked me if I thought homosexuality was really a sin! I was shocked and disheartened. After spending so many years telling my story and watching people find freedom, our culture seems to be falling ever deeper into the delusion that 'anything goes'. To have another believer question God's Word on the subject (He does call it sin by the way!) took my breath away. When everything around us seems to call what is righteous wrong and what is unrighteous right it is easy to want to give up. It is during such times that we need to step away from what we see with our earthly eyes and try to get a Kingdom perspective. What does God see? What do I see when I look from His point of view? I see that He still sits upon the throne and He is still in control…and He rules in perfect righteousness.

As you go about your day today, be prepared to boast in His righteousness whenever unrighteous thinking is shoved in your face. Be prepared to step back and gain a Kingdom point of view.

The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Romans 5:20-21 NASB

June 23

"…Oh! Hallelujah!..."

Praise the Lord! Hallelujah is one word but so full of meaning. Today let's take the time to praise the Lord in ways we may not have thought of before…for things we may not have thought of before. Have you ever thought of serving others in the name of Jesus as a way to praise the Lord? Have you ever thought of giving to someone anonymously as a way to say thank you for what He has done? Have you ever thanked Him for the trials of your life? Have you ever taken the time to boast in Him for using the shame-soaked failures of your life to bring glory to His name and freedom to others?

Put on the garment of praise today and let the 'hallelujahs' ring out in voice, thought, attitude, and action.

To grant those who mourn {in} Zion, Giving them a garland instead of ashes, The oil of gladness instead of mourning,
The mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting.
So they will be called oaks of righteousness,
The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.
Isaiah 61:3 NASB

Listen to: WE RUN THIS RACE
Words & Music: Dennis Jernigan
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Verse
Let us run the race.
Let us gain the prize.
Let us run with grace
To where we fix our eyes!
Let us all endure storm and fiery wind.
Let your gaze be sure.
Run your race to Him!
Chorus
We run this race!
We run to win!
We run this race!
We run to Him!
Our race is done
When we have run so far
That we have run
Into His arms!
Verse Two
Let us look to those
Who ran before with praise,
Running like we know
The outcome of this race!
Run, though weak, be strong.
You belong to Him.
Sing your victory song
And run this race to win!
Bridge
The legacy of every runner
Is to run this race
In such a way that others come
To know His love and grace!
So run through sorrow!
Run through trials!
Run with joy through pain!
Run with all your heart to Him
Whose life He freely gave!

June 24

"…Let us run the race…"

The year I decided to truly follow Jesus, a little movie called 'Chariots of Fire' came out. After seeing that film my life was encouraged greatly. In the movie, the main character is a runner (based on the true life story of missionary, Eric Liddell). In a trial to qualify for the Olympics, he falls! Rather than give up in defeat, he gets up and heads toward the finish line – and wins! In my own life, I decided to take that lesson to heart. Even when I fall, I get right up from where I fell and head straight toward the finish line – Jesus! I am not called to surrender to sin or to wallow in defeat. I am destined to win…and to run toward Jesus as if my life depends upon it…because it does!

Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy.
Though I fall I will rise;
Though I dwell in darkness, the LORD is a light for me.
Micah 7:8 NASB

June 25

"…Let us gain the prize…"

When running a race, the runner does best when keeping his eyes focused on the prize ahead. It is when the runner looks to the side at distractions or turns his head around to see who is gaining on him that he falters and loses that prize – the winner's trophy. We cannot afford to allow distractions to keep us from the prize – knowing Christ in a victorious way. We cannot afford to allow the little scare tactics of the enemy to cause us to turn around to see who is coming to catch us. The enemy is the enemy! He will ALWAYS try to cause us to look back. If we know he is always lurking to try and cause us to stumble, let's just not turn to the right or left and give him that possibility. Let's keep our eyes on the prize…the high calling of knowing Jesus Christ. It is in that 'knowing' that we find victory and freedom!
In what ways is the enemy trying to distract you from the prize today?

What can you do to re-focus on Jesus?
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.
Philippians 3:14 NASB

June 26

"…Let us run with grace…"

A very simple yet powerful way to think of God's grace is this: the power and desire to do His will. In my own human strength (which is true frailty at best) I do not have the power to resist temptation or to do what is right. But as a new creation I have been granted God's grace – HIS power and HIS desire. GRACE. I have been given not only His grace but also the mind of Christ! To know His will has been under-girded by His power and His love gives me the strength I need in any given moment to DO His will! He has promised that his grace is sufficient which literally means 'as much as needed'! We have been given what is needed in any given circumstance…no matter how hurtful or difficult it may be. To know that kind of grace and to practice that kind of grace is true freedom.

In what areas do you need His grace today?

And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.
2 Corinthians 12:9 NASB

June 27

"…To where we fix our eyes!..."

When driving down the road in my truck I do not get to where I am going by using the rear view mirror! That would be ridiculous! But that is exactly how we try to navigate our lives when we do not receive the forgiveness and cleansing of God's love in our lives. When we live in regret and see our lives according to our past we get nowhere! Even as we think of ourselves we live best when focusing on the identity HE sees when He sees us. I am whom He says I am…and the only way to know who I am is to keep my eyes on HIM! My identity flows from HIM! My life flows from HIM! When I take my eyes off of Him and focus on my past or on my circumstances then bondage and defeat are lurking right around the next bend of the race to try and trip me up. To avoid that bondage and to avoid that defeat I simply keep my eyes on Jesus. Period.

Are there any things vying for your focus these days that are not of the Lord? What can you do to re-focus?

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay

aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.
Hebrews 12:1-2 NASB

June 28

"…Let us all endure…"

What if I had allowed the past failures of my life to keep me from going on to my freedom? What if I had given up every time I fell to temptation? What if I simply threw my hands up in despair and frustration every time something did not go my way? I was never promised that life would be easy…but I was promised that He would walk with me every step of the way and I was promised that His grace would be there when I need it and I was promised that His love would endure forever! Knowing that all those promises of God's Word are true, I can face anything in this life with hope. When I have hope I can endure any situation. With endurance comes sure victory. Even now I can look back on where He has brought me from to see how great and sufficient His love and grace truly are. What I have gained in knowing Christ has been worth every hardship. Giving up is no longer an option. The only thing I give up on is the hope of changing my past! God has redeemed and that redemption has filled me with hope. I will survive…and more importantly, I will endure with HIM!

What are you currently facing that requires endurance? What is the end goal that gives you a place to fix your eyes? You CAN endure because your hope is in Jesus!

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have {its} perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.
James 1:2-4 NASB

June 29

"…Storm and fiery wind…"

Life is full of storms…full of fiery trials. When I was in the midst of the storms of walking away from homosexuality I often felt as if the shore was nowhere in sight. Because I had bought into so many lies concerning my identity life felt very much like a storm in the middle of the sea, my mind tossed around on the waves of all the enemy's

lies. Walking in obedience to Christ was made easier knowing I was not alone as a struggler and that I was not alone in spirit. Others walked through the same fires I was facing…and the Lord walked through every one of those fires with me. It became apparent soon after I began my journey of freedom that the storms and fires of life would come and go…but there was One Who was constant through it all. Jesus. As long as I could see Jesus I could go through any storm and face any trial. And that will not change!

What storms do you currently face? What fires are you in the middle of right now? Ask the Lord to show you where Jesus is in the midst.

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
And through the rivers, they will not overflow you.
When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched,
Nor will the flame burn you.
Isaiah 43:2 NASB

June 30

"…Let your gaze be sure…"

Today, spend time simply doing an inventory of your life in this sense: in your thoughts, where are your thoughts focused? In your emotions, what are you feeling that may be a symptom of a deeper root issue of a wrong focus? In your physical body are there any symptoms that could be related to a spiritual, mental, or emotional worry or fear?

In every area of your life today allow the Lord to help you re-focus and see each area from His perspective. Let your gaze be sure…surely focused on Him.

But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
Matthew 6:20-21 NASB

July 1

"…Run your race to Him!..."

It is important when running a race that we know where we are headed! It would be foolish to head out on a marathon without knowing the end destination. When we get sidetracked with the circumstances of life it is easy to become disoriented. The best remedy I have found for getting back on track is quite simple. I know I am supposed to be seeking His Kingdom and His righteousness…but my destination is even simpler than that. My destination is Jesus. When I cannot remember anything else about my destination, I head to Jesus. When storms blow against me, I head to Jesus. When I am wounded, I head to Jesus. When I am discouraged, I head to Jesus. When dreams and visions do not come to pass, I head to Jesus. He is my first love. Your first love is always the place to get back to! So, run your race to Him!

What are some things you need to do to get back to your first love today?

But I have {this} against you, that you have left your first love. Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first…
Revelation 2:4-5a NASB

July 2

"…We run this race!..."

When running a race, I cannot run someone else's race for them. We each must run our own race…but what makes running the race toward Christ so joyful is that I CAN cheer others on in their race! How do I do that? I can do that by encouraging them with words of affirmation…words of admonition…and by telling others what God has done for me to
get me through my race. We are all running somewhere. As a believer I want as many others to see that Jesus is the ultimate place to run. Even though I run my own race, I must help others run theirs as well.

How can you help someone else run their race today?

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us…
Hebrews 12:1 NASB

July 3

"…We run to win!..."

We are all programmed by the Lord to desire life. To survive and sustain our own being is an innate feature of God's perfect design. We really are programmed and designed to win. It is sin that leads us to death and despair and destruction. It is when we walk in sin that we set ourselves up to fail. Why not set ourselves up to win? We do that by walking in intimacy with God. We do that by seeking His will and His righteousness. We do that by seeking HIM. If sin represents pitfalls and unnecessary hurdles, why would I head toward sin? I choose to head toward Jesus and the victory that is assured me through life in Him!

Are there any pitfalls or unnecessary hurdles you are facing today? What does repentance look like in each of those areas?

The LORD will make you the head and not the tail, and you only will be above, and you will not be underneath, if you listen to the commandments of the LORD your God, which I charge you today, to observe {them} carefully, and do not turn aside from any of the words which I command you today, to the right or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.
Deuteronomy 28:13-14 NASB

July 4

"…We run this race!..."

What is the race you are running today? Have you charted your course yet? Have you counted the cost yet? Running toward Jesus is costly. Do not let anyone tell you differently. This race will cost you your life…your reputation…your everything. But the wonderfully good news is that the cost is WORTH EVERYTHING!

Take time today to rid your life of unnecessary baggage that only bogs you down in your race. What can you live without?

Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'
Luke 14:27-30 NASB

July 5

"…We run to Him!..."

In the days before GPS, a ship moving across the ocean during the night was guided by the position of the stars…but what was that ship to do if the clouds covered the view of those stars? How could a ship avoid running aground as it approached land? The beam of light shining from the lighthouse on shore was there as a beacon through to any ship treading those treacherous waters, safely guiding the vessel into safe passage. In our own lives we require the same kind of guidance – a Light to guide us safely through the treacherous waters of life. When I do not know which way is up, I look for the Light. When I am wounded or at risk of running aground in sin, I look for the Light. Jesus is the Light of the World, a beacon of hope for every soul lost at sea, a beacon of refuge for every believer needing a safe harbor.

In what areas do you need to look for the Light today? Seek the Light of Christ and allow Him to guide you into safe harbor.

Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."
John 8:12 NASB

July 6

"…Our race is done when we have run so far that we have run into His arms!..."

My life is not a sprint of a race. My life is a marathon. A marathon requires stamina and a steady, sure pace. It is when we think we have arrived at our destination – thinking we are perhaps now mature enough in our faith to walk well on our own – that we risk being blind-sided by the enemy. Also, if we become so weary in our running that we want to give up, again the enemy will have us right where he wants us. There are times in running the race where we do need to take time to rest and refresh ourselves – and that is good. The Lord will sustain us and refresh us to be sure, but make no mistakes, our race is not done until we take our final breath in this life. My race is run toward Jesus, for Jesus, with Jesus, to Jesus…and it is only done when HE says it's done!

Are there any areas in which you simply need to rest and get refreshed today? What can you do to get that rest and refreshment?

Delight yourself in the LORD;
And He will give you the desires of your heart.
Psalm 37:4 NASB

July 7

"…Let us look to those who ran before with praise…"

Regarding my own story of deliverance from homosexuality, I cannot think of one instance in my early years and well into adulthood when I heard of someone being free from homosexuality. My desire was to walk in freedom, yet at the same time it would have been such a boost to my soul and to my faith had I heard of others who had walked that same road. Imagine my delight and encouragement when I heard of an organization (Exodus International) that helped men and women walk in freedom from same sex attraction! Imagine my sheer joy at hearing others tell of what God had done for them! My healing was enhanced and heightened and hastened each time I heard the story of another who had been set free! I want to be one of those men whom people look to as a part of that great cloud of witnesses telling those who are bound in sin that there IS hope…and that they can do it through faith and intimacy with Christ just like I did!

Have you ever seen yourself as an encourager to others due to the redemption God has brought into your own life? Today, be aware that there are those around you that need hope and encouragement – the same hope and encouragement you found in knowing Jesus. Would you be willing to step out and cheer another on in their journey today?

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.
Hebrews 12:1-2 NASB

Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
Let the redeemed of the LORD say {so,}
Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the adversary…
Psalm 107:1-2 NASB

July 8

"…Running like we know the outcome of this race!..."

I grew up believing there was nothing I could not do. Honestly, I think that attitude came from having to prove myself to other boys because I was constantly teased concerning my sexuality. Fighting was simply a real part of my life…and I was not programmed to lose! When facing my sin (homosexuality and wrong thinking concerning my identity in general) I learned quickly that I would walk in defeat if I looked at my past failures or upon my present temptations with the attitude 'I might as well give up because I can't resist'. The truth was I could not resist in my own strength…but I could resist by God's grace! When I think of His amazing grace (the power and desire to do His will), I am called to look ahead – to read the end of the Book – where His Word tells me I win! When facing temptation and hurt and anything else in life I cannot afford to do anything but glance at the problem and fix my gaze on Jesus. It is there that I can see the outcome of the race. He wins. I win. Issue settled.

Are there any areas of your life where you are gazing at the problem and glancing at the Savior? What steps do you need to take to reverse your gaze?

He has brought me to {his} banquet hall,
And his banner over me is love.
Song of Songs 2:4 NASB

July 9

"…Run, though weak, be strong…"

When we are weak, then He is strong. We often hear that truth but do not know how to appropriate it. For a man or woman who thinks, in their pride, that they need no one else or that any sign of weakness gives someone else the upper hand, it becomes difficult to become weak that Christ might be strong in their life. It is the humble heart that receives the mercy of God. It is the humble and broken heart that receives the power of God. It is the broken and spilled out life that becomes the stronger vessel, shaped and molded into a vessel of life by the Master Potter's hands. The vessel that grows hardened by life and by its own pride is the vessel that ultimately becomes brittle and breaks beyond repair. It seems like such a paradox…to become strong I must become weak…but it is true. My greatest strength has come from my willingness to humble myself and become weak. When I do that, His strength has a place from which to flow in my life. Others may see humility as an act of weakness…but I find it to be the greatest of strength.

In what ways do you need to become weak today that He might be your strength?

And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.
2 Corinthians 12:9-10 NASB

July 10

“…You belong to Him…”

Jesus purchased me – paying the debt of my sin and redeeming me by the shedding of His own blood. That means I am signed, sealed, delivered! I am utterly and irrevocably saved! Do you know what that does for my soul? That means I am free! Free from my old life! Free to think new thoughts! Free to experience this life on a level that the world tries to keep me from seeing as even possible! Of course, the naysayers will say that such freedom will give me license to sin…but my reality has been this: why would I want to sin when such love compels me to follow after Him? The pleasures of sin do not lead to life. Following Christ leads to abundant life and more guiltfree and shame-free pleasure than I thought possible in this life. I will walk with Jesus because I belong to Him.

What does the fact that you belong to Jesus do for your soul today? Think about what that means as you go about your day.

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.
Romans 6:1-4 NASB

July 11

“…Sing your victory song…”

When I was in high school I had the privilege of playing on a very, very good basketball team. I was the starting point guard for a team that made it to the state tournament three times. That being said, my favorite part of the game was when we were nearing that final buzzer and the fans began to sing the most awesome victory song… 'Thunder! Thunder! Thunderation! We're the best in all the nation! Fight with power, determination! We are a great sensation!" Hearing that song fill that gymnasium did something to my soul. So many times the fans would begin that song when we were behind knowing that it had the power to stir our souls with passion! Most often, that victory song would lift our spirits to the point of helping us overcome our foes! This song meant we had triumphed. It meant we were the victors! Why should my thoughts for a game that has very little eternal significance be more soul-stirring than my thoughts concerning my victory over sin in Jesus? They shouldn't be! Because of all Christ has done to seal my victory for all of eternity, I WILL sing a song of victory and boasting very single day!

In what areas of your life do you need to sing a song of victory today?

Boast in your God and in the victory HE has made available to you!
O sing to the LORD a new song,
For He has done wonderful things,
His right hand and His holy arm have gained the victory for Him.
Psalm 98:1 NASB

July 12

"…And run this race to win!..."

It seems that our culture attacks our attitude in subtle ways. We hear on every front and even in our schools that everyone should be winners – but no one is allowed the actual victory anymore. I heard of one school that allowed every student to have the lead role in their school play because they were afraid some child would have hurt feelings. I hear stories weekly of schools giving each child a passing grade or awarding every child the winner's trophy in the name of promoting 'good self-esteem'. What happened to personal responsibility? What happened to working hard? How will we learn to be overcomers if we are never allowed to lose? Jesus secured my victory, but He calls me to run the race of life…and guess what? Life is full of losses and failures. It is the one who learns to run the race who wins. The one who sits on the sidelines and expects triumph at the finish line to be handed to him on a silver government-provided silver platter loses in the end.

Are there any areas of personal responsibility that you need to take back from the enemy today? Run your race well.

For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread.
2 Thessalonians 3:10-12 NASB

July 13

"…We run this race! We run to win!..."

As you go about your day today apply the principles of running to your thoughts, attitudes, and actions. Prepare your soul for the task. Focus on the goal. Stretch your spiritual muscles by meditating on God's Word. Run with endurance and perseverance. Take time to drink plenty of His Living Water and to be refreshed with the Wind of His Spirit today.

See the victory that is already yours in every area of your life – whether that reality has come to pass yet or not. Look to Jesus!

The eyes of all look to You,
And You give them their food in due time.
You open Your hand And satisfy the desire of every living thing.
The LORD is righteous in all His ways
And kind in all His deeds.
The LORD is near to all who call upon Him,
To all who call upon Him in truth.
He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him;
He will also hear their cry and will save them.
The LORD keeps all who love Him,
But all the wicked He will destroy.
My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD,
And all flesh will bless His holy name forever and ever.
Psalm 145:15-21 NASB

July 14

"…We run this race! We run to Him!..."

As you begin your day today, focus your mind on running toward Jesus. The way you think of others and the way your respond to criticism – even these things do as unto the Lord. Ask Him for the needed grace ahead of time. When running a race it is all too easy to get our eyes focused on the little things that try to side-track us. Run with patience and allow the Lord to use even the side-tracks as short-cuts into His presence rather than roadblocks that we tend to see with our human eyes.

I will lift up my eyes to the mountains;
From where shall my help come?
My help {comes} from the LORD,
Who made heaven and earth.
He will not allow your foot to slip;
He who keeps you will not slumber.
Behold, He who keeps Israel
Will neither slumber nor sleep.
The LORD is your keeper;
The LORD is your shade on your right hand.
The sun will not smite you by day,
Nor the moon by night.
The LORD will protect you from all evil;
He will keep your soul.
The LORD will guard your going out and your coming in
From this time forth and forever.
Psalm 121:1-8 NASB

July 15

"…Our race is done when we have run so far that we have run into His arms!..."

Over the years I have imagined what it will be like when I finally run into the waiting, healing arms of Jesus. I can see the wounds being finally and deeply dealt with. I can feel the warmth of the cold, hardened places of my heart being touched by His deep and amazing love. I can stand in utter nakedness and feel no shame at being seen for who and Whose I am…and then it hits me. Every one of those things I can experience RIGHT NOW! I do not have to wait until death and heaven to run into His arms! That's where my faith and God's presence intersect in this life! That is where I must live!

During this day, take time to run into His arms…even if for a few fleeting seconds in the midst of a crowd and your busyness.

The LORD has bared His holy arm
In the sight of all the nations,
That all the ends of the earth may see
The salvation of our God.
Isaiah 52:10 NASB

July 16

"…The legacy of every runner is to run this race in such a way that others come to know His love and grace!..."

There are times when I look at my life and wonder if I have done enough for the cause of Christ. Because I have nine children, that wonder is brought home in a very tangible way as I think about whether I have done enough to prepare them for life and for the Kingdom work they are called to do. An athlete is awarded for accomplishment…given a trophy…an award. I have rarely received a trophy or and award for my earthly achievements…and that's okay. If I am Kingdom minded I must see what God sees. Will others see my faithfulness? Will others be encouraged by my steadfast stand for the truth? Will others be drawn to Jesus by my kindness and love? My greatest hope is that countless others will enter the glory of relationship with Christ and enjoy eternity with Him because of my life…whether directly or indirectly.

The reward of humility {and} the fear of the LORD
Are riches, honor and life.
Proverbs 22:4 NASB

July 17

"…So run through sorrow!..."

In this life, we will know sorrow. Sorrow over sin. Sorrow over the sin of others. Sorrow over emotional wounds. Sorrow over dreams crushed and visions vanished. Sorrow over the death of a loved one. When running this race of life in Christ, sorrow can knock us to our knees and take our breath away for long periods of time. Sorrow can make one feel like getting out of the race altogether. Reality is that sorrow itself is a journey – a race within a race, if you will. What I have learned is to be aware of the race

I am in and to run accordingly. When running in good weather, the race is clear. When running in wind, I must brace myself and run at a slower pace or at a different angle. When running on ice or in snow, I must run with extra caution. Just as in a physical race, I must make adjustments in my spiritual race as the need arises. In sorrow, I may be knocked down for a few seconds in the scheme of eternity, but getting up and running – even if only for a few paces at a time – is like a breath of life….because I have to lean so heavily on the Savior to do so.

Today, do not hesitate to adjust your race as needed…or to sit and rest for awhile in Him. The wonderful thing about running the race with Jesus is that, even when resting, we are still running!

Those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting.
Psalm 126:5 NASB

July 18

"…Run through trials!..."

Faith and hope and vision are all wrapped up in the running of a race. I have faith to believe that I am not alone. My hope is not in the things of earth but in the One I am running to. My vision – my ability to see what He sees – keeps me running strong. In his life, trials will come. Failure will occur. Storms will blow. People will betray. Hurt will happen. Life is full of trials but if we see the trials as a testing of our faith – a test that makes us stronger in our faith and in His grace – then we discover a sense of constant joy in the journey. A trial is not something to dwell in. I trial is simply another obstacle in the journey to help us discover yet another wonderful facet of God's grace. I may see a mountain…but the Lord sees a way over, under, around, or through! That's what I want to see!

As you face various trials today, remember to see them as God does.

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, {being} more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.
1 Peter 1:6-9 NASB

July 19

"…Run with joy through pain!..."

Joy is in the journey. I've said that for many years, but it is true. When I think of the many trips we took as a family while my children were growing up it is not the destination I remember most. It is the many moments of joy and laughter and working through problems – even pain - that I recall with sheer joy and gratitude. Yes, we relished the completion of each trip as a great family accomplishment, but the memories along the way are what made reaching the destination all the more sweet. As we run this race of life we need to have that same attitude. Do not discount the memory making moments along the way or there will be a lack of joy in that journey. I want to see Jesus with all my heart…but I want to savor every moment of this life just as I did on those family journeys. That is the key to an abundant life, I believe. Let's enjoy our journey WITH Jesus as we race TO Him.

Even through pain you may feel today, remember to go through that pain WITH Jesus. Let Him in…and watch joy bring healing to that hurt.

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have {its} perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.
James 1:2-4 NASB

July 20

"…Run with all your heart to Him Whose life He freely gave!...

When I think about the work of the cross and the suffering Jesus endured for me, I think about what that must have felt like for Him. You do not just nonchalantly take the sin of the world upon your shoulders and casually allow someone to beat you to a pulp. One does not flippantly decide one day to be humiliated and stripped naked in front of an entire city to be mocked incessantly. You just wouldn't do those things without an extraordinary reason. Yet Jesus endured all those things for me. He wanted me for His own. He paid the debt I could not pay. He endured all of that suffering simply because He loved me and wanted me for His own. He gave everything He had and was – His whole heart – just for me. I can do no less.

Are there any ways you know you will need to run to Jesus today with your whole heart? Remember all He did for you as you contemplate your response to life today.

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.
Hebrews 12:1-3 NASB

Listen to: IT'S GONNA BE ALRIGHT
Words & Music: Dennis Jernigan
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Verse
It's gonna be alright, child
Even through the darkest night, child
I'll even use the darkness
To teach you how to hear Me
It's gonna be alright now
Even if you don't see how
I'll even use your failure
To help you to draw near Me
Chorus
Hear Me. I am calling,
"Child, come falling deeper in love with Me."
Trust Me, you must let go
Or you will never know any deeper love in Me
Verse
It's gonna be alright here
If you will let Me hold your heart near
I'll even use your sorrows
To teach You how to love Me
It's gonna be alright, child
I'll hold you really close and tight child
I'll even use Your woundings
To help you know more of Me
Bridge
Why do you hold on to the things of your past
Let go and cling to Me and love that will last
How can you know Me if you do not trust My love
Let go! You'll find My love is more than enough

July 21

"…It's gonna be alright, child…"

Where does fear come from? I believe fear comes from believing the lies of the enemy. Fear comes from placing our faith in the wrong things and focusing our attention on in the wrong places. When we feel overwhelmed by life it is quite easy to lose that focus, yet if God is truly God then what's the worst thing that can happen? I could die…but the Kingdom reality is that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. How is that a bad thing? Whether I live or whether I die, I am the Lord's! The more we can see our lives from that perspective the less fear and worry can control our responses. The more we see from God's perspective the less we place our faith in the lies of the enemy. It really is gonna be alright as the song says. It's all a matter of perspective.

Begin your day by purposing to see every conflict and hurt from God's point of view. Trust Him. He only desires what is best for you.

For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge. Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord-for we walk by faith, not by sight-we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.
2 Corinthians 5:4-8 NASB

July 22

"…Even through the darkest night, child…"

As a young boy, we lived on a farm. I remember playing games at night with my brothers and cousins and marveling at how much could be concealed by the darkness. Knowing that things could be hidden right before our eyes as we played those games of Spotlight and Hide-and-Seek made the darkness all the more intriguing when the games were not being played…and I had to walk out to the barn alone to do a chore…in utter blackness…alone. That aloneness translated into terror for me as the enemy had me locked away in the darkness of my own mind, fearing that I would never walk in my true identity as a man. But the Lord does not see the darkness. He sees perfectly in any medium. He does not sleep. He does not fear. He is ever-present even in the darkest moments of life. It is in the darkness that we learn to draw close to Him.

How can you draw close to Him in the dark areas of your life today? Take His hand when He offers it. Listen for His voice singing through your night.

He is here.
Behold, He who keeps Israel
Will neither slumber nor sleep.
The LORD is your keeper;
The LORD is your shade on your right hand.
The sun will not smite you by day,
Nor the moon by night.
The LORD will protect you from all evil;
He will keep your soul.
The LORD will guard your going out and your coming in
From this time forth and forever.
Psalm 121:4-8 NASB

July 23

"…I'll even use the darkness to teach you how to hear Me…"

God's Word tells us that He is our Shepherd and that we, as His sheep, can know His voice. How do we get to know His voice? We talk with Him! Sounds simple enough. Reality is that I believe God is always speaking to us from the moment we are conceived. Just as infants learn to recognize the voice of a parent, we need to learn to recognize the voice of God. When we open our ears in expectation of hearing Him we have a better chance of hearing Him! In other words, we must believe we CAN hear Him! In a storm we must call out for Him – and then listen for His direction. When tempted we must call out to Him – then listen for His direction. In the dark times of the soul we must call out for Him – then listen for His voice singing through the night.

Open your spiritual ears today and be listening for His voice. For more instruction on hearing God, go to www.dennisjernigan.com and click on the 'Need Help?' button and find the article entitled 'How to Hear the Voice of God'.

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand."
John 10:27-28 NASB

You are my hiding place;
You preserve me from trouble;
You surround me with songs of deliverance.
Psalm 32:7 NASB

The LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime;

And His song will be with me in the night,
A prayer to the God of my life.
Psalm 42:8 NASB

July 24

"…It's gonna be alright now…"

Today, rather than focus on the areas of our own lives where we need to know everything is going to be alright, let's focus on the needs of others we know who have concerns in their own lives. Pray for them. Call them. Send a note of encouragement. Also, be prepared to cross paths with people who need to know God is in control.

As each one has received a {special} gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.
1 Peter 4:10 NASB

July 25

"…Even if you don't see how…"

The funny thing about storms and clouds is that they change the entire perspective of everything we can see. When our perspective gets skewed then we lose our ability to discern the right direction. Losing one's sense of direction is a sure way to become lost. In a spiritual storm we need to know that just because a storm clouds our lives we need to stand firm on the Rock of Christ. Recently, I was in the beautiful and majestic Colorado Rocky Mountains. One moment the majestic peaks were there, the next they were gone – shrouded in clouds. Even though I could not see them any longer, I knew they were there. My knowledge of their presence also caused me to realize that I would see them again. Knowing they were there even though I could not see them as easily as during a clear day brought my heart joy. So it is with the Lord. Storm clouds cover and dull my ability to see clearly…but I KNOW He is still there…so I operate in joy, standing firm on the Rock.

Even though you may not see the Lord as clearly as you would like today, reaffirm - before you head out the door – that you will walk in the faith and assurance of His presence with you. Pre-emptive faith!

Now faith is the assurance of {things} hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.
Hebrews 11:1 NASB

July 26

"…I'll even use your failure…"

Our God is so amazing in His ability to take our broken lives and makes something beautiful of them! From my perspective I would never have seen that He would take my greatest shame and bring my greatest glory. From my perspective I would never have seen that He could take my greatest failure and bring great triumph from that failure. From my perspective I would never have seen how He could take what the enemy meant for evil and use that very thing for good! Yet that is exactly what He does! He is able to redeem. He is able to save. As long as we have breath, He is able to find beauty in the ashes of our lives. That brings me great hope. That brings me great peace. That makes me want to follow Him even more intimately. He is so good to us.

Take time today to reflect on the ash heaps of your life and see what God has done to bring beauty from those ashes. Take time to revel in His goodness over those things. Take time to thank Him.

As for you, you meant evil against me, {but} God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.
Genesis 50:20 NASB

To grant those who mourn {in} Zion,
Giving them a garland instead of ashes,
The oil of gladness instead of mourning,
The mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting.
So they will be called oaks of righteousness,
The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.
Isaiah 61:3 NASB

July 27

"…To help you to draw near Me…"

In my own life, the Lord used the pressures of life to bring me to my knees. In my shame and humiliation – my fear of being rejected – I resisted Him. My perspective (really me sitting on the throne of my own heart) was that I was beyond hope. His perspective was that I was ripe to receive hope! What turns out to be true was the exact opposite of what my feeble perspective told me. He loved me NO MATTER WHAT…even while I was still smack-dab in the middle of my sin! When I realized His

healing power and learned to lean into Him, I was able to allow Him to use even my failures and even the direst of circumstances to help me to draw even closer to Him. It is in that intimate place of rest that I receive healing for my wounds…peace for my turmoil…gladness for my sorrow…strength for my weakness. It's like a woman in labor who learns to work WITH the labor rather than against it. I will allow the Lord to use whatever He wants to help me know Him better. After all, He is God…and I am not.

What are some of the things in your life this day that you think God might be able to use to help you draw near Him? Allow Him to draw you into His side with those very things.

And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.
2 Corinthians 12:9-10 NASB

July 28

"…Hear Me. I am calling…"

Have you ever been walking in a crowded shopping area or at some event where throngs of people hurried about only to be surprised when you heard someone calling your name? When those moments occur, what do we do? We stop. We look with intensity for the source. We perk up our ears. Our entire array of senses seems to be heightened. We want to find the source! In a spiritual sense, I believe the Lord is always there calling out our names in the crowded times of life…in the busyness of life…in the chaos of life…in the temptations of life. He is calling. Just as in a physical crowd, we must take time to stop…to listen…to intensify our gaze. He is calling your name. What a blessing and what a joy and what a hope! Yet another reminder that He is right here with us.

As you prepare for the day, purpose to heighten your sensitivity to the voice of the Lord. Be prepared to think outside the box you have placed Him in (remember, when we put the Lord in a box, that is all of Him we get). He can speak in and through a variety of ways. Be prepared to be surprised by His voice and presence today.

And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; [but] the LORD [was] not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; [but] the LORD [was] not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; [but] the LORD [was] not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.
1 Kings 19:11-12 NASB

July 29

"…Child, come falling deeper in love with Me…"

An intimate knowing – of being known by another – goes a long way in helping us attain freedom. I thought I knew my wife before we were married, but that knowledge went to places I had never dreamed of once we consummated our vows. To be known physically is one thing, but to be known intellectually and emotionally – to be utterly stripped naked before one another yet without shame – is true freedom. That kind of freedom is only possible in a holy context…only possible through faith in Christ. During the stresses of my life I find it easy to fall into routines that direct my attentions away from my First Love (Jesus). It is when my affections become focused elsewhere that I begin to lose that sense of intimacy – of being truly KNOWN. It is when I lose that feeling of being known that I tend to get into trouble and fall easily to temptation. When I realize I have drifted away but do not know how to get back, I have a simple plan of escape: I return to my First Love!

Take time today to renew your First Love by opening your heart in complete honesty to and with the Lord. Fall in love all over again as you realize the depth and height and breadth and magnitude of His great love for you right where you are.

'But I have {this} against you, that you have left your first love. Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place--unless you repent.' Revelation 2:4-5 NASB

July 30

"…Trust Me, you must let go…"

When it comes to our freedom there are things that continue to tie us to our old lives we may not even be aware of. For me to be free from my homosexual past I had to give up not only the old way of thinking about myself, I had to give up all connections to that old life. To cut off my past completely – to loosen the enemy's grip on my mind – I cut off old friends who constantly tempted me to give up and return. To cut off the enemy's ability to remind me of the old me I cut up old photos with any connection to wrong relationships. I threw away gifts. I moved away from the area where I was tempted most. I avoided wrong places and people. I drove school bus rather than place myself in a position that could lend itself to temptation. I even burned a journal page by page as a way to physically remember what the Lord thought of my old life. That life was placed into the trash bin of oblivion with each step I took to cut off the power of and

the hold on me that the old life held. I LET GO OF EVERYTHING so I could cling to Him.

Are there any reminders of your old life that you had not thought of that are serving to keep an open connection between you and that stinkin' thinkin'? What is freedom worth? Your freedom was worth the life of Jesus. Why would you allow things that will one day burn to keep you from complete freedom from your old life and complete freedom IN Christ?

It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.
Galatians 5:1 NASB

July 31

"…Or you will never know any deeper love in Me…"

Why do we continue to hold on to the things from our past when we know full well that on the other side of that release Jesus offers hope and freedom? As long as we cling to our old ways and our old thoughts and our old life we do not fully realize the newness and the guilt-free thought life and the abundance of life in Christ. Knowing Christ to me is like plunging into the depths of the ocean of His love. I swim about freely, enjoying His presence as long as I do not cling to the old ways. To cling to a certain thought that is contrary to the way the Lord thinks of me is like trying to swim with an anchor tied around my neck. Why would I ever think that was a good thing? Yet that is exactly what we do when we continue to resist God's thoughts and plans for our lives. Until we let go of the old we will never fully realize the power of the new.

Would you allow the Holy Spirit to reveal any old thoughts you are clinging to? Would you be willing to repent of that wrong thinking and put it off? Would you be willing to apply that truth – put it on – and walk in freedom today?

…More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ…
Philippians 3:8 NASB

August 1

"…It's gonna be alright here…"

When we constantly look back on our lives in regret – or when we constantly look ahead and try to figure things out in fear – we tend to lose sight of the one thing that is real: God is with us in THIS moment. We cannot change our past. We must give up hope of ever doing that. We repent when needed and forgive when needed… and we move on. We cannot see what tomorrow holds. Only One knows that answer…and He holds our hands...so why waste time trying to figure out what will come to pass. That is called vain imagination. Vain imaginations keep us from seeing what is right here in the here and now. Jesus is constant and He is our hope. Anything else we place our hope in is vain imagination.

Begin the day by, once again, placing your hope in Jesus. He will work through people. He will bring hope through revelation. He will work wonders through His Word. Do not limit Him today…let Him be your hope.

{We are} destroying speculations [vain imaginations] and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and {we are} taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ…
2 Corinthians 10:5 NASB

August 2

"…If you will let Me hold your heart near…"

We all long to be known. We long to know our existence is for a reason…that we have a purpose. The sad truth is that we allow shame and guilt and fear to keep us from realizing that kind of intimacy with the One Who can best satisfy that very need. Do we think our shame and our guilt and our fear somehow negate the power of God's love? Do we really, truly, honestly believe that we can somehow be a better judge than the Lord concerning the depth of our sin and His ability to forgive and cleanse? To think like that is to play right into the enemy's hand. If the enemy can keep us focused on our shame, our guilt, and our fear then he effectively keeps us from true intimacy with God.

Take time today to stand naked before God in soul and let Him see all the places you have been hiding…and let Him hold you close in those places.

Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Try me and know my anxious thoughts;
And see if there be any hurtful way in me,
And lead me in the everlasting way.
Psalm 139:23-24 NASB

August 3

"…I'll even use your sorrows to teach you how to love Me…"

When we are in the midst of a sorrowful situation – whether the physical death of a loved one or the sorrows of broken hearts – it is difficult to see how anything good could possibly come of that sorrow. Sin introduced sorrow to the world…yet the Lord turns that sorrow around for us when we allow Him to shoulder our grief with us. When we lose something, we realize how much we love that which was lost. If we grow bitter at God when we experience loss we will miss the grace and joy that comes from such times. It is through my sorrows that I have learned how much He loves me. He does not leave me alone in that sorrow. He comes alongside and reveals just how near He can be in this life. It is that constant presence and faithfulness that bathes me in love and gives me the strength to keep loving again and again. His sorrow has taught me how to love Him even when I have no emotional strength left.

Allow Him to use even your sorrows today to reveal a new level of trust and love towards Him in your life.

Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried…
Isaiah 53:4a NASB

August 4

"…It's gonna be alright, child…"

Rather than focus on our own need to know if everything is 'gonna be alright' today, let's focus on the needs of others. When I am tempted to fear or despair or wallow in self-pity that usually means I have my eyes on 'me' rather than on the Lord or the needs of others. One of the quickest ways to defeat the enemy in this area of my life is to go about blessing God by meeting the needs of others.

Be prepared and be sensitive today as you lead others (whether subtly or not-so-subtly) to see the sovereignty of God.

The LORD will reign forever,
Your God, O Zion, to all generations.
Praise the LORD!
Psalm 146:10 NASB

August 5

"…I'll hold you really close and tight child…"

When the Lord finally set me free to share my story of freedom I was still very afraid of what other men would say and do when they realized my sin. A very close friend convinced me that it did not matter what I had been set free from…words I had heard others say but had seldom seen others actually believe with their actions. As soon as I told my friend about my past he did a wonderful thing. He embraced me with a bear hug and would not let go! I melted into his arms feeling clean and safe and utterly accepted like seldom before in human terms. There was healing in his touch. The thing I had craved in my formative years had become something I had given up on ever realizing in a pure and holy manner…yet here I was experiencing a dream come true! To be told you are accepted is one thing. To be held says it's true. What if you never receive the touch you need in physical terms? Would Jesus be enough? During all those years before that moment of healing Jesus had become my All in All…which made the human manifestation all the more precious when it came about.

Today, do not underestimate the need for others around you to experience a true healing touch from your life…a touch that desires nothing sexual or physical in return…a touch that simply says 'I know you exist and you are valuable to me.'

And they were bringing even their babies to Him so that He would touch them, but when the disciples saw it, they {began} rebuking them. But Jesus called for them, saying, "Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. "Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it {at all.}"
Luke 18:15-17 NASB

August 6

"…I'll even use Your woundings to help you know more of Me…"

The wounds of my life have been many, but rather than allow them to keep me in 'victim' mode I decided a long time ago that I would rather walk in 'victor' mode! One attitude leads to self-pity and despair and depression…and ultimately leaves the enemy in control of my existence. The other attitude – victor – leads to outward focus, hope, and peace of mind…and ultimately leaves God in control of my existence. This has come about by simply seeking Him for intimacy. He is very careful to do the cleansing necessary to heal my wounds. He is very compassionate in dealing with the deepest of

wounds and takes great care when spiritual surgery is required. Through the process of healing I come to know Him more intimately.

If you have any wounded places in your soul, be quick to show them to the Great Physician in order to know…and receive healing.

Heal me, O LORD, and I will be healed;
Save me and I will be saved,
For You are my praise.
Jeremiah 17:14 NASB

August 7

"…Hear Me…."

How is it possible to hear the voice of the Lord when life is so full of chaos – so crowded with other voices vying for our attention? To follow the Shepherd the sheep must know His voice. We are His sheep. When I was first set free in 1981 I soon discovered that I was being pulled in too many directions by too many voices other than the voice of God…so I took a very drastic step. I cut out the other voices. From 1981 until 1993 I did not listen to any other music than what I sang to the Lord and He sang to me. I stopped watching TV and stopped listening to radio. I went to an occasional movie but even cut them out – and I LOVE going to movies. In a very real sense I missed the '80s…but in the process I learned to hear the voice of the Lord.

What is hearing Him worth to you? I know that in the digital age it is almost impossible to cut out all of the voices that clamor for our attention. Would you be willing to take time to silence one or two of those voices even for a few minutes today? In that silence, ask the Lord to speak to You. Then listen…and HEAR Him.

So faith {comes} from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.
Romans 10:17 NASB

August 8

"…I am calling…"

I believe the Lord is always calling my name…and I believe He is always calling me deeper and deeper into intimacy with Himself. If that is true – and His Word bears that up – then I should always be honing my listening skills. When I was a music major in

college, we had a class called ‘Sight Singing and Ear Training’. We had to learn to hear differences in pitches and recognize the intervals between those pitches. We also were tested on our ability to be able to follow and sing the written notes of a certain song without ever having seen that song before. Learning to hear the voice of God is very similar. Just as I skilled myself to hear and interpret what I heard musically, I must skill myself to hear and interpret what I hear with my spiritual ears. One way I do that is to ask the Lord simple questions and then wait for His answer…either through a still small voice or ‘knowing’ in my soul…by His written Word…or by His supernatural ability to speak through people and things when I least expect it.

Practice listening today. Ask the Lord questions and then expect to ‘hear’ His answer.
“He who has ears, let him hear.”
Matthew 13:9 NASB

August 9

“…Child, come falling deeper in love with Me...”

When I was a small boy, we would go spend time at the river, camping and swimming. My mom made me stay in the shallow water until I could swim…but I could see all the big kids swimming across…and I could hear their gleeful shouts of joy along with their soulful laughter. What a wonderful day when I got to swim out into the deep – where all the fun and adventure awaited me! For many years I have had a wonderful vision of what God’s heart looks like. I see His heart as a vast ocean, deep and inviting, full of life…just waiting for me to plunge in…but I cannot plunge into the depths if I stay content in the shallows. To get to the deep places of God, I step out onto the springboard of gratitude and take a huge jump that lifts me out over the deep places of His heart, allowing me to plunge in deeply…and sure enough, joy, and laughter, and comfort, and strength, and healing are mine for the taking!

Remember to take time to be grateful today and use that gratitude as a springboard into the deeper places of God’s presence. Fall a little more in love with Him in the process.

Deep calls to deep at the sound of Your waterfalls;
All Your breakers and Your waves have rolled over me.
Psalm 42:7 NASB

August 10

“…Trust Me, you must let go…”

When we hang on to the old lies about our identity we set ourselves up for failure – every time. Why do we do that? I believe we grow so accustomed to the crumbs beneath the table the enemy tells us we deserve that we forget we have free access to the feast the Lord has set for us at the abundance of His table. Why settle for crumbs when we can embrace the feast?! We can only embrace one love at a time. Why not let go of the old loves – the lies we have believed about ourselves – and cling to and embrace the true love of Christ. In that embrace we find our true identity. We find freedom! We never get to the place of abundant life or freedom without letting go of the past – of the old – of the lies.

What lies do you need to let go of today? What truths must you put on to receive His love and take part in the feast of your true identity in Christ?

"No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money [or anything else!]."
Matthew 6:24 NLT

August 11

"…Or you will never know any deeper love in Me…"

When we do not put off the old from our minds – change the way we think – we never go any deeper. We can never go any deeper in a relationship than we are willing to risk. In other words, if we are more concerned about what people will think than we are of what the Lord thinks of us we will only get that much freedom. We can put God in a box – and once we do, that is all of Him we get. But we can also put ourselves in a box…this is all I am willing to confess so this is as deep as I will allow the cleansing and healing to go. That's such a foolish way to think – yet we all do it. Until we let go and get completely naked in soul and mind with the Lord we will not be free from the things we THINK we hide. I want all of God I can get in this life…so I walk in utter and complete honesty with Him.

What are the areas of your life where you need to strip bare and let God see? Take time to repent today and walk in a greater level of love and intimacy with Him as a result.

Who can discern {his} errors?
Acquit me of hidden {faults.}
Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous {sins;}
Let them not rule over me;

Then I will be blameless,
And I shall be acquitted of great transgression.
Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
Be acceptable in Your sight,
O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer.
Psalm 19:12-14 NASB

August 12

"…Why do you hold on to the things of your past?..."

There is only one area it is wise to give up hope. That area? We must give up the hope of EVER changing our past! For far too long I allowed the enemy to keep me from moving ahead because I could not let go of my past…like I know better than God! We tend to hold on to the familiar – even things that are abusive – because they give us a sense of belonging to something…even if that something is in no way good for us. At least it is familiar and we can count on it being there for us! Isn't that a warped way of viewing the world? Yet that is exactly what sin does to our minds – causes us to see the world in a skewed manner. To get out of that death spiral we must see even our sin from God's point of view. He calls it sin, so must we. He says He has cleansed our sin, we must believe it and receive it…and let go…and move on. We give up hope of changing our past and receive the eternal hope of our present and future hope in Him!

What areas do you need to give up hope of changing today? What does that look like from God's perspective?

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
1 John 1:9 NASB

August 13

"…Let go and cling to Me and love that will last…"

Allow the Lord to search your heart today and reveal to you things that you cling to for security that are not healthy for you spiritually. Are there any people you place too much hope in? Are there any activities that have replaced your need for intimacy with God? Are there any habits you have allowed to take the place of healthy relationship? Do you have expectations for joy based on people you know rather than finding your joy

in the Lord? Are there any wrong thoughts that lead you to cling to things that are not healthy for you? Ask Him to reveal to you the truth of His Word where you can place your trust in that area of your life.

And now, Lord, for what do I wait?
My hope is in You.
Psalm 39:7 NASB

August 14

"…How can you know Me if you do not trust My love?..."

Trust became a huge issue for me the first time I realized I had been used by someone else. The other person excused their behavior by calling it love. How can you trust someone and know it is real love? In Jesus the answer is easy: Love lays down its life for the object of its affection. In my own marriage we never would have had even one child had I not trusted my wife. Love requires risk. Love requires honesty and transparency. Love that is not expressed is not love! My freedom in Christ comes from knowing He loves me NO MATTER WHAT and that I can trust that love. Freedom in Christ grows exponentially to the degree we surrender to His love. Do you want more freedom in your life from sin and heartache and sorrow? Surrender to His love. This is knowing and being known in its purest form…completely surrendered – naked and unashamed – before the Lord. It is there that my needs are truly met and my soul completely satisfied.

What areas of your life do you need to surrender to Him today? Can you imagine what it would feel like to stand before Him with nothing to hide? Guess what? He sees your hidden places – and loves you anyway. Go ahead. Surrender.

Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Try me and know my anxious thoughts;
And see if there be any hurtful way in me,
And lead me in the everlasting way.
Psalm 139:23-24 NASB

August 15

"…Let go! You'll find My love is more than enough…"

When I was a boy, one of my favorite places was the local shale pit. This quarry had long ago filled with water and had become a swimming hole for several generations of my family. At Shale Pit (as we called it…we were great at naming places!) there was a huge tree below the 40-foot cliffs. From this tree hung a long rope with knots near the end for gripping. We would take turns swinging from the rope and plunging into the deep, cool water. I remember the fear that gripped my heart the first time I decided to take the plunge. As I jumped onto the rope and swung out above the water I had not been prepared for the height I would gain – or for the momentum that took me to such height! In fear, I would not let go of the rope and swung back into the shore…but not quite far enough back to gain a foothold! I had no choice…it was either let go or sit there on that knot suffering the ridicule of the other kids! On that second swing out I let go…and was so overcome with exhilaration at this great accomplishment that I immediately swam back to shore for another turn! I soon found myself mastering swan dives and flips from that same swing…and after awhile complained that it needed to take me higher and further out! Knowing God is like that. We may swing out a little at a time into the depths of His presence…but until we let go and take the plunge into fully trusting Him we will never know the fullness of joy that waits for us in that 'letting go' place!

Allow your soul to 'swing out' into the deep places of His presence today. Let go and find joy in trusting Him completely.

I have set the LORD continually before me;
Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.
Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices;
My flesh also will dwell securely.
For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol;
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.
You will make known to me the path of life;
In Your presence is fullness of joy;
In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.
Psalm 16:8-11 NASB

Listen to: OVERWHELM ME
.
Chorus
Overwhelm me with Your power!
Overwhelm me with Your grace!
Overwhelm me with Your glory,
As I rest in Your embrace!
Verse
Let me see a light
At the end of the tunnel!
Let me hear Your voice
When alone in the dark!
Let me feel Your presence
Both below and above me!
Let me hold Your hand
So I can know where You are!
I will not give up the battle;
Run the whole entire race!
I will keep my eyes on You, Lord!
I will rest in Your embrace!
Verse
Let me see with eyes
That can see where You're going!
Let me run with strength
To the battle and fight!
Let me feel Your passion
Like a fire that's growing
Strong enough to pierce
The very darkness of night!
I will not give up the battle;
Run the whole entire race!
I will keep my eyes on You, Lord!
I will rest in Your embrace!

August 16

"…Overwhelm me with Your power!..."

To be overwhelmed is to be filled to overflowing, to be submerged and covered completely…to be consumed. For so long I felt overwhelmed by my sin – consumed to the point of having no self-control. This state of existence left me constantly weak and unable to have any semblance of victory in my life. When Jesus gave me a new identity, I suddenly found the grace and the faith to believe He would give me the power to say no when temptation came along. When I began to believe I really was who HE said I

was then I began to walk in the power of His resurrection! As we walk in faith, believing we are who God says we are we effectively give the Lord permission to flood us with the power to overcome temptation. To the degree I used to be overwhelmed with my sin, I hope to be that overwhelmed with His power. What I am discovering is that once I have tasted that overwhelming victorious power of God I want even more!

What truths do you need to put on today concerning your identity that would allow you to walk in the overwhelming power of God?

Answer me when I call,
O God of my righteousness!
You have relieved me in my distress;
Be gracious to me and hear my prayer.
O sons of men, how long will my honor become a reproach?
{How long} will you love what is worthless and aim at deception?
Selah.
But know that the LORD has set apart the godly man for Himself;
The LORD hears when I call to Him.
Tremble, and do not sin;
Meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still.
Psalm 4:1-4 NASB

August 17

"…Overwhelm me with Your grace!..."

We have often heard that grace is the unmerited mercy and favor of God…and I would agree. But I would take grace a step further. Grace, as I see it in God's Word, is the power to do His will. I certainly need His mercy and His favor – and I believe I have both because He is so good and perfect in His love for me. But in my own experience it has been the grace that is sufficient in my weakness to get me through a difficult situation that has me convinced of this facet of God's grace. To receive and be overwhelmed with the power to overcome my failure, my sorrow, and my wounds causes me to be overwhelmed by the magnitude of His mercy and favor! Grace is a double-whammy of God's power and love!

In what areas do you need His grace today? In what areas do you need His mercy? His Favor? His power to do what is right?

For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.
What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! Romans 6:14-15 NASB

And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 2 Corinthians 12:9 NASB

August 18

“…Overwhelm me with Your glory…”

The glory of God can be described as the weight of His presence. It is in His presence that I feel secure and safe. Our God is omnipresent, meaning He is everywhere…meaning that when we do not ‘feel’ His presence the problem is on our end and not His! It is one thing to believe by faith that He is with me. It is quite another to experience the weight of His presence. I feel that weight when He convicts me of sin. I feel that weight when I am overwhelmed with His love. I feel that weight when I worship Him. I feel that weight when I fellowship with other believers. I feel that weight when I step out of the boat of my comfort zone and follow where He leads me.
Like a blanket on a cold winter’s night, the weight of His presence – His glory – warms my soul and makes me feel secure and victorious. Under that weight is where I want to live.

In what areas of your life do you need to feel the weight of His presence today? What will it take for you to experience that glory by faith?

On God my salvation and my glory {rest;}
The rock of my strength, my refuge is in God.
Psalm 62:7 NASB

August 19

“…As I rest in Your embrace…”

I remember many times when I was a young boy when I would get hurt and run to my mom in tears. Some of my memories go back to age three. Even though those wounds were not life threatening to me, my lack of experience caused me to react with tears and sorrow. Running into the arms of someone who could ‘make it all better’ always seemed to do the trick. Being held in my mom’s embrace had a double-edged effect. Her embrace represented safety and it also represented a place of being known. When we suffer the wounds and sorrows of life, we must run to the arms of Jesus. In His embrace we find a safe place to fall apart and to be put back together. In His embrace we find

healing intimacy that comes from knowing and being known. In His embrace we find rest for our souls.

Take time today to rest in His embrace – even in the midst of your busy schedule…even in a crowd.

“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.”
Matthew 11:28-29 NASB

August 20

“…Let me see a light at the end of the tunnel!...”

Have you ever gone through a period in your life in which you did not see a way out? We all face such times. When I graduated from college and I was confused and feeling hopeless concerning my identity there came a point where I could not see that light at the end of the tunnel. I was told with God all things were possible. I just could not see it with my own eyes. The reason I could not see was two-fold: I was looking in the wrong place for the light and I was blind to the truth! When we look to the darkness for answers, darkness is all we get. When we are blind to the truth we see only the lies. When the Lord gave me a new identity and I placed my faith in Him, my spiritual eyes made a 180-degree turn. Instead of looking back at the darkness of the tunnel of sin I had just been in, I was now looking up toward the light…the Hope of salvation found only in knowing Jesus. My eyes could now see THE Truth – Jesus, the Hope I had needed for the journey. When I face darkness, I must look to the Light and not upon my circumstances…and I cannot rely on the wisdom of this world. It is when I look to the Light I see the Light.

What directional changes do you need to make today to see the Light? What truths must you put on today to scatter the darkness of the enemy’s lies?

How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God!
And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings.
They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house;
And You give them to drink of the river of Your delights.
For with You is the fountain of life;
In Your light we see light.
Psalm 36:7-9 NASB

August 21

"…Let me hear Your voice when alone in the dark!..."

I used to fear being alone. For far too long the snare of sin I was trapped in caused me to push people away lest they find our what I was really like – and reject me. As I have matured in my ability to trust God and to walk in transparency I have begun to see the blessing of the opposite of being alone. I call it solitude. When I feel alone now, I try to see that aloneness from a Kingdom perspective. I know the enemy wants me to feel abandoned…but the Lord wants some alone time with me! What I have discovered in times of solitude - as opposed to loneliness – is that I learn to hear His voice more clearly. It is in the darkness that our sense of sight is heightened. It is in the quiet that we hear more clearly. If the Kingdom point of view is that God is ALWAYS with us, then why should we even give the enemy one tiny foothold in our minds? When sorrow comes, He will comfort. When I fall in sin, He picks me up and washes me clean. When people wound me with their words or actions, He allows me to see from His perspective and forgive. When I am in a storm, He is right there with me, a Solid Rock. When I am alone in the dark, He is a calming voice and sustaining presence.

Quiet your soul today and listen for His voice. Silence other voices as necessary and revel in the solitude of being together with Your Maker.

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days…
Luke 4:1-2 NASB

August 22

"…Let me feel Your presence both below and above me!..."

I love to SCUBA dive! On one diving trip I was fortunate enough to go on, our boat was surrounded by a group of 10 reef sharks. The Dive Master assured us they were simply curious and would not harm us. That was all I needed to hear! I was the first in the water and due to my excitement at swimming with these magnificent creatures, I blew right past the 45-foot level where I was supposed to wait and found myself at the 90-foot level before I thought to check my depth gauge! I also realized that I had completely forgotten one of the cardinal rules of diving: I had left my dive buddy! Now I was alone and surrounded by sharks – and I suddenly could not get my bearings. I was lost! All I could see was the deep blue darkness of the 5,000-foot drop into the abyss below. I was utterly alone in every direction! As my heart began to race, I panicked and headed for the surface, frantically looking for the security of my dive buddy. At the 45-foot level, imagine my relief at finding the rest of the divers…and the comfort of seeing

my dive buddy giving me the OK sign! Come to find out, my dive buddy had been with me every step of the way, trailing right behind me! I had never taken the time to look behind me. Just as my dive buddy was with me every step of the way, the Lord is with me every step of the way. I simply need to open my spiritual eyes and see! Like the ocean that consumes a diver, God's presence is both below and above me, surrounding me and immersing me in His glory…if I will open my eyes and see!

Take time to remember He consumes you with His presence. Look for signs of His presence in unexpected places and ways today.

You will make known to me the path of life;
In Your presence is fullness of joy;
In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.
Psalm 16:11 NASB

August 23

"…Let me hold Your hand so I can know where You are!..."

When I was going through the training required to gain my certification to SCUBA dive, my only option was to train in the cold month-of-May waters of Lake Tenkiller in northeastern Oklahoma. Due to the time of year, the visibility was 10 to 15 feet. Wearing a 7-mil suit, I felt claustrophobic before ever getting into the water due to the sheer thickness of the material (not to mention the gloves and head covering I had to wear to avoid hypothermia!). Our first dive went well because I could see enough to feel safe. On the second day of training, the water had become murky. Because I had done so well the day before, I assumed this day would be no different. I was wrong. As we headed down toward the 35-foot level, I suddenly lost all perspective due to the lack of visibility. In a panic, I turned to head toward the surface. Fear had consumed me! Before I could make the surface, I felt a hand grasp my hand. My Dive Instructor had recognized what was happening and quickly reached for my hand. His action had an immediate calming effect upon me. Fear vanished and trust took hold. Leading me back down through the darkness, we eventually broke through the murkiness and into clarity at around the 35-foot level. After going through our maneuvers, we headed for the surface. When life takes us through a murky time of losing our bearings, we must remember that the Lord is there, always holding our hand through the darkness and leading us into clarity. We just need to believe and receive…and watch fear vanish.

Begin your day today by asking the Lord to let you sense His hand of security – His presence. Trust Him through the murkiness of life today.

Now I know that the LORD saves His anointed;
He will answer him from His holy heaven

With the saving strength of His right hand.
Psalm 20:6 NASB

August 24

"…I will not give up the battle…"

When overcoming my sin, the Lord completed the work with the shedding of His blood on the cross and by the power of His resurrection. When I placed my faith in Him I became alive in Christ…but I still had a long journey toward complete freedom (which I am still on!) that required the removal of the old grave clothes…anything that used to define me in my old life. The enemy hates my freedom and will do anything he can to trip me up. That means war…and the enemy fights a continual war using guerrilla tactics. This means that I cannot afford to stop fighting and I cannot allow myself to become complacent during relatively peaceful times. To stop fighting in the middle of a battle I have been equipped to win would be foolish. A war is a series of battles and may require many years to complete…but my life and my freedom are both worth any battle I must go through. And after all, I've looked ahead to the end of the Book. We win!

As you prepare for the day, put on the full armor of God and prepare for battle. Be diligent and aware of the enemy's schemes to deceive…but remember you are surrounded by and bathed in God's power and love.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual {forces} of wickedness in the heavenly {places.} Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.
Ephesians 6:12-13 NASB

August 25

"…Run the whole entire race!..."

Just as we do not win a war if we stop fighting, we do not win a race if we stop running. My relationship with Christ is like fuel for my spiritual stamina as I run through the course of life's race. Not only is life with Him the fuel, it is also the destination! I run WITH Him as I run ultimately and completely TO Him. When the race takes me through a storm, I run hidden in His sheltering presence. When the race takes me through sorrow, I heal in His arms as He carries me. When I run through temptation, I follow

His lead as He shows me the way through. Every day is a journey. I must continue the race even when I feel like giving up…and must remember that I may just need to rest for a while and recharge my batteries. Relationship with Christ is vital to running the race. We cannot afford to stop pursuing Him. To stop pursuing Christ is to stop running the race. To stop running the race is to stop living.

Begin the day by deciding ahead of time how you will run your race today.

Be prepared for detours and roadblocks…but keep running toward Christ!
But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.
Matthew 24:13 NASB

August 26

"…I will keep my eyes on You, Lord!..."

How do we keep our eyes on the Lord when the world throws so many distractions our way? How do we discern what is important and what is merely a distraction even when those distractions appear to be good things? My eyes can be drawn to things that are good but still keep me from placing my full awareness on Jesus. A friend may call and ask me to a movie. Spending time with friends is good for me…but my children need me to spend time with them. My children may even tell me to go be with my friend because they are so gracious to me. But what are my priorities? When I am tempted by good things that might keep me from what is best, I must always go back to my first love. Jesus is the starting place. From the vantage point of my First Love I can see my wife, my children, my ministry, my friends, my leisure time, my interests, etc. From the vantage point of the King even good things begin to pale in comparison to what is best…and they fall into their proper place in the order of my life…and my eyes stay focused where they belong.

Take time to look at today's activities from the vantage point of the King. From there, order your day accordingly.

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.
Philippians 4:8 NASB

August 27

"…I will rest in Your embrace!..."

When should I fall into the arms of my God's embrace? When I am weary from battle. When I have come up against a wall of doubt. When I am in the midst of battle. When I feel lonely. When I am confronted with fear. When wounded by the actions, words, or attitudes of others. When I have blown it. When I need to rest. When the sky is blue. When in a crowd. When needing direction. Whenever I get the chance!

Take time to rest in His embrace today. Let Him reveal some new facet to His love for you.

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; {and} that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.
Ephesians 3:14-19 NASB

August 28

"…Overwhelm me with Your power!..."

There are times in our lives where it seems there is just no way out of the circumstances we find ourselves in. When death comes to a loved one, how do we get through the grief? When society goes against the Word and nature of God leaving us with the choice between compromise and persecution, how do we endure? When circumstances are set in motion and we have absolutely no control over those circumstances, how do we survive? There is only one way to get through. We must rely on the power of God. The power of His comforting arms…the power of His grace to withstand even persecution and death…the power of His presence when we need a Solid Rock on which to stand. Rather than allow my circumstances to overwhelm me, I choose to allow the power of God to overwhelm me…in any way He sees fit or deems best for me.

Take a quick mental survey of the circumstances of your life right now. In what areas do you need to see and be overwhelmed by the power of God?

For the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power.
1 Corinthians 4:20 NASB

August 29

"…Overwhelm me with Your grace!..."

Sometimes God's grace comes in very unexpected ways. We've all heard stories of people in times of crisis responding with amazing feats of physical strength – like a woman lifting a car in order to save her husband who became pinned beneath it. Often times, we do not realize God's grace until the very moment we need it. His grace is power to do His will. If His will is for you to be an overcomer, you will receive grace to overcome. And guess what? In those moments where the circumstance you face seems insurmountable, God will meet you there with His grace. I believe that even if that circumstance requires my physical death He will be there to meet me with the grace needed to die well! Now that's overwhelming!

What are circumstances you currently face that cause fear or doubt or worry? Do you believe the Lord has grace for you in those circumstances? What must you do to put off the fear, doubt, or worry? What must you put on in its place?

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.
1 Corinthians 15:10 NASB

August 30

"…Overwhelm me with Your glory…"

All too often, we assume things that are meant to bring God glory are by our own doing. When someone is ministered to by something I said or did I too easily take credit for the result. Reality is that were it not for Christ's intervention in my life I would have nothing to say or do that amounted to anything worthwhile! Every good thing is from Him. Even the hard things I have endured have produced glory…but not by my hand! I am here for His glory and His pleasure. When I think it's all about me, I cloud His glory and deflect His praise. My life is best lived when I live in the reality that I was created for His good pleasure and for His glory. And the greatest reality of all? His glory IS my glory because I am His child!

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.
Ephesians 2:10 NASB

…for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for {His} good pleasure.
Philippians 2:13 NASB

August 31

"…As I rest in Your embrace!..."

No one loves a child more than the parent. Why do we ever doubt God's love for us, then? His very nature is love. His love is perfect because He is holy. Holy love is a love that meets us right where we are and loves us anyway…and loves us enough to not leave us there! Good news. We do not get to decide if God loves us! Our two choices in any given moment is to either embrace His love or to reject His love. Guess which way healing and deliverance and salvation and hope come? That's right…by letting go of the things we cling to and embracing Him. To run into the embrace of God is to run away from bondage and deceit of the enemy. To run into the embrace of God is to be able to rest in our true identity and learn who we are from the source of the One Who loves us best – our Maker. Our Father, God.

What lies are you believing that keep you from receiving God's love for you? Practice the embrace of God today.

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son {to be} the propitiation for our sins.
1 John 4:10 NASB

September 1

"…Let me see with eyes that can see where You're going!..."

Why does the Lord allow us to go through times of wilderness…times in which we simply need to be reminded where we are, what we're supposed to be doing, who we are, and what our purpose is ALL OVER AGAIN. I believe life is ever changing and that we must learn to see even the wilderness times from God's perspective…or we will not survive them. We may not die physically, but we will die in other ways. When we go through seasons where we lose our bearings we must trust that the God who has seen us through before will see us through again. Where am I in the chaos? I am heading

towards God and understand that even the wilderness is part of His plan. What am I to be doing in the wilderness? I am to continue to seek God and minister to others. Who am I in the wilderness? I am a child of Almighty God…a mighty warrior in His Kingdom. What is my purpose in the wilderness? I am to glorify God and lead others to Him. The best way to get to that reality is to get to the place of faith where I can at least see a glimpse of God's perspective in the wilderness. It is in the wilderness we can reflect on the beauty of Who God is and find God IN THE MOMENT. It is there that we will see what He sees.

Survey the magnificent view from the wilderness points of your life today. Do not take them for granted or see them as useless. See them from the King's point of view.

Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.
1 Thessalonians 4:24 NASB

September 2

"…Let me run with strength to the battle and fight!..."

The enemy is a liar and he deceives with full force, incorporating guerilla tactics. At times it seems as if the whole world has fallen for His schemes. In many ways it is simply easier to just give up rather than fight and resist. After all, being salt and being light in a world where bland and blind apathy rules can be quite painful. What is your freedom worth? Is it worth the sting of what others think and say and do? Is it worth the satisfaction of having fought for what you know is right? Is your freedom worth the constant battle with darkness? Is it worth the satisfaction of seeing others finally come into the Light? Our freedom is worth any struggles we must go through to attain. I would rather face the sting of man than the sting of regret had I never sought Jesus. I would rather face the wrath of darkness than never having experienced the Light of Christ. I no longer fear the battle. I run TO the battle because that is the proving ground of freedom…and worth every drop of blood, sweat, and tears.

What battles do you need to stop running from today? In what ways do you need the Lord to go before you in those battles?

Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.
1 Timothy 6:12 NASB

September 3

"…Let me feel Your passion like a fire that's growing…"

When I think of how much I love my own children I easily become overwhelmed. I do not think there is anything that I would not do to rescue them…even if it required my physical life. That kind of passion – that kind that considers its own safety secondary to the object of its desire – is what sent Jesus to the cross for me. Yet my earthly father passion is as darkness compared to the fire of God's passion for me! As I let such thoughts consume me temptation loses its power…worry fades into trust…fear is dispelled by His presence…and loneliness is shattered with true intimacy. That is where I want to love…consumed by His passion for me and overflowing with my passion for Him.

Spend time today reveling in God's passionate love for you.

For a remnant of my people will spread out from Jerusalem, a group of survivors from Mount Zion. The passion of the Lord Almighty will make this happen!
Isaiah 37:32 NLT

September 4

"…Strong enough to pierce the very darkness of night!..."

Sometimes it seems as if evil is winning the day. The darkness of the depths mankind is able to plunge is disheartening. Mankind is not evolving at all. Sin simply blinds us to our real need so we strive for things to satisfy the deep need of our soul with things that cannot possibly meet that need. Our only satisfaction comes from knowing God and being known by him. That is why we are able to have hope when the world seems hopeless. That is why we are able to feel loved and accepted when the world demonstrates hatred and rejection. That is why we are able to find our way through the darkness…because we are children of the Light. We simply need to believe and receive who and Whose we are.

In dark times you experience today, be quick to remind yourself that you are a child of the Light…and be quick to walk in that Light.

…for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness…
1 Thessalonians 5:5 NASB

…for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light…
Ephesians 5:8 NASB

September 5

"…I will not give up the battle…"

In what areas of your life do you grow weary of the battle? Are there any areas in which you feel like giving up? Are there any areas where you wonder whether the battle is worth going through? Make today a day of reflection on the battles of your life. Take time to look back and see all the battles God has brought you through so far. Take time to then look ahead to where the Lord is taking you. In both cases, give thanks and express your gratitude to Him for battles already won and for battles you have yet to win. Then, take stock of the battles you presently fight – and thank God for the grace He has given to sustain you. Remember that our God is a God of Hope and a God of Victory. Just because you feel like giving up does not mean you should – or will. That feeling simply reveals your need for the Father and for a touch of His presence and grace. Put on that grace and revel in that presence and see if those feelings do not fade into assurance and hope.

Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.
Galatians 6:9 NASB

September 6

"…Run the whole entire race…"

When I look at my life before freedom and I look at it now, I can see a long line of battles I have endured a long the way. What is so amazing is that when facing each one I did not see hope for success in too many of the early battles. As I kept running and fighting, each victory in a particular leg of the race (I know, I am mixing metaphors here!) helped build my faith for the next leg. I see far too many people simply give up the fight and stop running the race simply because they don't see an end in sight. The enemy is crafty that way, huh? If he can get us focused on the little things, those little things eventually overwhelm us. When I cannot see the end of the race or I am feeling consumed with the battle, I do two things. I look to where Jesus is standing in the current battle and run there…and then I look back briefly to where I have come from to remind myself that He has done it many times before – and He will do it again!

Where are you running in this particular race? What must you do to keep fighting the battle? Where should you rest you mind today to find strength for the race. Focus on this leg of the race and find rest in God.

{For I am} confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.
Philippians 1:6 NASB

September 7

"…I will keep my eyes on You, Lord…"

Sometimes the Enemy throws things in our face from our pasts that tend to sidetrack us. If we truly believe the truth of who the Lord says we are, those things tend to glance off of our souls like a bug on a windshield - little messy reminder of a lie we used to believe but of no consequence to our present reality in Christ. I have experienced too much wonder, too much healing, too much joy to ever turn back. Real life is best spent seeking God...and trusting that He loves you regardless of my sin. He gave His Son, Jesus, to bear the punishment and pay the debt we owed because of our sin. He rose that we might rise from the death of sin in our own lives. He gave us a free will and man sinned. It is we who separated ourselves from God. He did not separate Himself from us. We are the lost ones. He is the One Who finds us! We need to stop hiding and allow Him to love us into our true identity. I did not want to be a homosexual any longer. He showed me the way to learn how to be a new creation. Sometimes I still feel like a baby, learning to crawl all over again. Sometimes I feel like a young boy, reaching for his Daddy's arms. Sometimes I feel like a rebellious teenager needing his Dad's correction and guidance. But mostly, I feel like a son in whom my Father is just pleased to know! I will keep my eyes focused THERE!

And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.
Mark 8:34 NASB

September 8

"…I will rest in Your embrace…"

When all is said and done, there is Jesus. When something or someone I love is gone, there is Jesus. When a dream comes true, there is Jesus. When storms cloud my vision, there is Jesus. When a vision is realized, there is Jesus. When life throws me a

curveball, there is Jesus. When I am successful in an endeavor, there is Jesus. When despair leads to hopelessness, there is Jesus. When I have a reason to rejoice, there is Jesus. When pain and suffering seem to rule the day, there is Jesus. When an unexpected blessing finds me, there is Jesus. When the pressures grow too much to bear, there is Jesus. When I look at my life in honesty, the one common denominator – rain or shine – is Jesus. And I wonder why the Enemy tries to get me focused elsewhere? Knowing Jesus is there no matter what; is like being embraced by loving arms that will not let me go. It is in that knowing place – that love embrace – that I find true rest.

Are there any areas of your life that you find it difficult to see Jesus? Would you be willing to let go of your intellect and give your thought life to the One Who created your intellect in the first place? Sometimes holy love defies human logic. Let Him love you to that place of mental rest today.

"I am with you always, even to the end of the age."
Matthew 28:20b NASB

Listen to: REST
Words & Music: Dennis Jernigan
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Verse
When everything you are
Just seems to fall apart
And you're alone in the dark;
Sorrow, like endless rain,
No longer hides the pain
And now you've drifted too far;
Come down from the ledge
Of your own broken heart.
Run here to My open arms
Where you can fall apart!
Chorus
I'll be your Light in dark!
I'll be right where you are!
I'll hold you close through the pain!
I'll calm the raging tide!
I'll be right by your side!

I'll shelter you from the rain!
Put your head on My shoulder!
Put your head on My shoulder
…and rest.
Verse
No more tears left to cry.

Wishing that you could die
And make this hurt go away!
This endless raging storm
Has left your heart so torn
You simply can't see a way!

September 9

"…When everything you are just seems to fall apart…"

How many times has calamity or loss sent you running to God? It sounds so cliché but reality is that God uses such things to help us see our need for Him. The other side of the coin is this: if I never experienced the desert how would I appreciate the sweetness and sustenance of the rain? Sin sees to it that life falls apart around us. Despair is simply not seeing a way out. Truth is that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Isn't it amazing how the Enemy can use our natural inclination to run to God to keep us from running to God? He will plant seeds of doubt that say, 'There you go again. The only time you seek God is when you need Him' or 'God is not going to listen this time. He's heard it all before. Why should He believe you now?' Let's put that lie down. What better time to run to Him than when we need Him? The only further reality we need to remember is this: We need him all the time!

Are there any lies concerning your need for God that you have been believing lately? What truth do you need to put on to put that lie down?

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.
John 14:6 NASB

September 10

"…And you're alone in the dark…"

Sometimes we feel that we cannot see one step further due to the darkness of circumstances that surround us. Sometimes we have such myopic vision (shortsightedness) that we do not see the answer sitting right next to us. Recently, I was in an airport with time to kill so I began looking for an outlet where I could power my laptop so I could get some writing done (this very devotion I now write you!). I looked at my gate. Nothing. I looked at the next gate but the only chairs with outlets faced the wrong direction – and I wanted to be able to see my gate of departure. Frustrated, I

walked away while my friend went and sat down. As I walked back to where he was I realized the seats literally across the aisle (a mere 3 feet) had outlets and faced the desired direction. Because I could only see what was right in front of me I did not look ahead to see the remedy that was only 3 feet away! How often do I allow my fear and doubt to cause spiritual shortsightedness when the Answer is as near as my own heart and soul? Truth and reality say that we are never alone – even and especially in the dark. The Lord is an ever-present help. What must you do to dispel the darkness today?

God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
Psalm 46:1 NASB

September 11

"…Sorrow, like endless rain, no longer hides the pain…"

There have been times in my life when sorrow seemed to rule the day and direct the path my life took. Usually that sorrow came as the result of my own sin and not so much from the loss we all suffer throughout the normalcy of our lives. There have been seasons when God was working so much that I felt there was no more feeling left in my soul – like my heart had been reduced to utter nakedness, eroded and rubbed bare by the weight of the constant rain of guilt and the sands of shame that blew against it. It is on those moments of being stripped bear by my sorrow that I realized I had absolutely no where else to turn except to the Lord. But that place is a good place to be picked up and held by His loving arms…to find the warmth of His grace as I melt into His embrace, utterly consumed with the heaviness of His forgiveness flooding through my soul. Pain is the last place I would want to hide. Pain's load is lightened in the sharing…and there is no better place to share that pain than with the only One who can ultimately bring its end.

What sorrows do you face today? What areas are you hiding from His view? What must you do to lighten your sorrowful load?

Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried;
Isaiah 53:4a NASB

September 12

"…And now you've drifted too far…"

By the time I graduated college, I was already in a death spiral. My sin had plunged me deeply into a false reality of who I was and had set me adrift on the ocean of trying to meet my needs in every human way possible. I was effectively adrift on the whims of the Enemy's lies…and that is a hopeless state of being. Due to the nature of my sin and the extent to which I had given myself to it, I felt that I had drifted so far away from God that I could see no way of ever coming back. But wouldn't you know it? Somewhere in that vast sea of lost-ness, the Lord constantly placed little beacons of light and hope along the way…and eventually I drifted right into the Solid Rock of His love to such a degree I could not help but hang on for dear life. Reality was that it was He Who was holding on to me…and the more I let go of the sin, the more I was able to receive the grip of His love. It was there that I found there is no distance too far for Him to reach. As long as we have breath, there is hope.

Where are the hopeless places in your life? Are there any areas where you allowed yourself to drift away from His grip of love? What must you do to get back to the Solid Rock?

The name of the LORD is a strong tower;
The righteous runs into it and is safe.
Proverb 18:10 NSAB

September 13

"…Come down from the ledge of your own broken heart…"

When our hearts are broken we usually find it difficult to trust our heart in those areas of brokenness. We often avoid contact with others because we do not want to risk being hurt again. When I was a boy, my dog Tillie (Border Collie) was hit by a car but was not killed. As I reached out to comfort her, she bit me! This is the dog who always jumped readily into my arms with joy! How could this be? She had been wounded and would not allow me to help her…and I was devastated. How must our Father feel when He reaches out to us in love but we refuse to allow Him access to our hurts because we fear being hurt again? During times of great emotional wounding I have often felt like I was on the ledge of despair and one more nudge would push me over the edge into utter ruin. Yet God's love has always been there to talk me down from those ledges…to love me down…but not until I stepped out in trust and allowed Him to hold my wounded heart. His love can be trusted – but that love cannot be experienced until we trust.

Are there any areas in which you are finding it difficult to trust the Lord or others? What can you do to practice trust and to risk emotional and spiritual healing?

Trust in the LORD with all your heart
And do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He will make your paths straight.
Proverbs 3:5-6 NASB

September 14

"…Run here to My open arms where you can fall apart…"

Have you ever noticed that when a toddler falls and scrapes a knee how quickly that child runs into the open arms of a parent? No prodding is necessary. No manipulation required. Sheer, unadulterated honest emotion directed at the one they perceive as the comfort for their pain. In those outstretched arms the toddler unashamedly falls apart. And the parent patiently wipes away the tears and brings comfort to the child. Pure and honest relationship at its best. Yet, we, in our pride and fear and doubt, balk at the arms of our God when we need to be like a toddler running full throttle into those arms. We are afraid of what others will think if we appear weak. We are afraid of what others might say if they see us go to a spiritual place for comfort. We doubt He can truly understand or even meet our needs. Yet, the very place where real hope and deep healing can be found is in the arms of our Lord and Savior. If I am going to fall apart, it is there that I want to begin and end. It is in that falling apart that I find Someone who can put me back together – to kiss the wounded place with His presence and make it all better.

Are there any areas of your life in which you need to fall into His arms? How can you be the arms of God to others around you today?

The eternal God is a dwelling place,
And underneath are the everlasting arms;
And He drove out the enemy from before you,
And said, 'Destroy!'
Deuteronomy 33:27 NASB

September 15

"…I'll be your Light in dark…"

If God says He will never leave us and never forsake us, what do we do when we cannot hear where He is or see evidence of His presence or find our way in the darkness or feel the security of His love? That is where faith comes into play. When eyes are clouded by darkness, faith that He is Light brings us to the place of sight. When we cannot feel or sense His presence, faith that He is true to His Word is what gets us through. Without faith it is impossible to please God…to know God…to experience God. Faith is the difference between life and death. Put on faith today!

Take time to refresh your faith today. Reaffirm what you believe and why you believe it…then walk in that faith today and see and experience the presence of God anew.

And without faith it is impossible to please {Him,} for he who comes to God must believe that He is and {that} He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.
Hebrews 11:6 NASB

September 16

"…I'll be right where you are…"

I can remember a few times during my younger days when I was separated from my mom in a huge department store. At least it seemed huge in my 4-year-old eyes! Turning a corner as I explored the store only to turn around and not be able to see my mom was, indeed, traumatic. In a panic, all I could think of in the midst of my fear was that everything would be OK if I could just get back to her. She was always there nearby. I just could not see her. From her vantage point she had never let me out of her site. It was me who had not been able to see her. When I became a dad and experienced such times with my own children from the vantage point of a parent, I felt such passion to find my lost child and to bring them into the safety of my arms. God's passion to find me is on a level surpassing the heat of the sun. His desire to bring me into the safety of His arms is beyond my ability to adequately comprehend. The way to freedom from fear is to understand that passion of the Father and to see what He sees…and He never takes His eyes off of me. It is I who take my eyes off of Him.

Search your heart today and see if there are any areas where you have taken your eyes off of the Lord.

My help {comes} from the LORD,

Who made heaven and earth.
He will not allow your foot to slip;
He who keeps you will not slumber.
Behold, He who keeps Israel
Will neither slumber nor sleep.
Psalm 121:2-4 NASB

September 17

"…I'll hold you close through the pain…"

Pain is a pretty clear indication that something is wrong in our physical body. When we are physically wounded we can often see the wound or we can undergo tests that will help reveal the source of the pain. What about emotional or mental pain? Just as with our physical pain, emotional pain reveals that something is wrong in our soul and in our thought processes. When we have a wound of this nature, it is important that we get to the root of that pain. To not deal with the root is like placing a Band-Aid on a wound that requires surgery. Ludicrous! When dealing with a deep wound, deep cleansing is often required – especially if a foreign substance has contaminated that wound. Sometimes that cleansing requires a lengthy process, often repeating the cleansing again and again. During times when I have had to undergo deep physical cleansing that has resulted from an injury, the only way I was able to endure that pain was in having someone there holding my hand – especially when I was a child. With my emotional and mental (spiritual) pain I cannot endure the pain of the cleansing without the presence of God holding me through. As the cleansing comes, the Great Physician is able to use the pain to guide Him to the root of my pain. Once the root has been eradicated, the pain ceases. We must trust Him through the cleansing process…and let Him hold us through the pain. In God's economy, pain and sorrow are never wasted. He uses even our hurts to bring about a greater depth of relationship with Him.

Where do you need cleansing today? How do you allow Him to hold you through that pain?

You have taken account of my wanderings;
Put my tears in Your bottle.
Are {they} not in Your book?
Then my enemies will turn back in the day when I call;
This I know, that God is for me.
Psalm 56:8 NASB

September 18

"…I'll calm the raging tide…"

There have been times in my life when I have felt so overwhelmed by the cares of this world that I have wanted to give up. Financial pressure, emotional stress, betrayal of trust, crushing of dreams, relational rifts, fear, and doubt all seem surmountable by themselves…but when several pressures converge on the soul at the same time, we tend to feel as if we are being sucked into the vortex of a whirlpool dragging us down into ruin or that we are headed for a waterfall and there is no place to hang on to for rescue. At times it seems as if the tide of circumstantial pressures threaten to drag us so far into the sea of despair that we see no way back to shore. But our hope is not always rescue from the circumstances. Our hope is in the one that can meet us right there in the middle of that raging tide and help hold our heads above water. Our hope is in knowing that with God all things are possible and that He will not leave us alone in the storm. He goes with us, buoying our spirits with His presence, teaching us how to receive His grace – the power and desire to obey and do His will. He calms the raging tide of my emotions and thoughts right in the middles of a raging storm.

Make sure you have a plan today for when the stresses build up. Plan to lean into His calming arms and rest – even in the middle of the storm.

In peace I will both lie down and sleep,
For You alone,
O LORD, make me to dwell in safety.
Psalm 4:8 NASB

September 19

"…I'll be right by your side…"

Isn't joy always made sweeter and more intense when we share that joy with someone else? When something good happens to me, my joy is always heightened when someone else shares that joy with me. I love to go to movies but I love the experience more when I am able to share that experience with another. So it is, too, when we share our burdens with another. When I am carrying something heavy, the load is always lighter when someone helps me carry that load. When I am going through a difficult time emotionally my sorrow and pain are somewhat lessened when I have someone to share those burdens with. Even if the sorrow or pain seems unbearable, having someone help carry the emotional load makes even those crushing times somehow bearable. There have been times in my life in which I have had to

walk certain roads alone…but the only way I have survived those journeys is that I have never been alone. Having the presence of the Lord to walk through those alone times with me has given me the strength to make it. We are never alone. He is always right by our side. We just need to believe and receive.

O LORD, in Your strength the king will be glad,
And in Your salvation how greatly he will rejoice!
Psalm 21:1 NASB

September 20

"…I'll shelter you from the rain…"

As a kid, it was not uncommon for me a summer rainstorm to blow through and fill the drainage ditch in front of our house in a few brief minutes of deluge. As the rain began to fall I would run outside with my brothers dancing around the yard for joy, flopping into the miniature river that was the drainage ditch. As I got older, the rain became a nuisance. I no longer enjoyed the wetness. What used to bring joy now brought shivers as the water cooled my skin. I learned to avoid the rain. When the rains began to fall on my adult life I felt much the same way. I saw each shower of adversity and torrent of sorrow as something to be avoided. God's Word tells us how to have a heavenly/Kingdom mindset. We are to approach Him as a little child would – running with abandon into His arms. Instead of dreading the adversity and sorrow I am learning to run to Him in those showers and allow His presence to shelter me from the destructive forces and lead me to the joy that always accompanies His presence. Learn to find the joy in the rain again…

As you prepare for this day's activities, decide ahead of time what you will do when the rain of circumstances begin to dampen your day.

And He [Jesus] called a child to Himself and set him before them, and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."
Matthew 18:2-4 NASB

September 21

"…Put your head on My shoulder…"

When my children were small, it didn't take much for them to find peace on my shoulder. When they fell and scraped an elbow, my shoulder became a place to soothe pain. When their actions required discipline, my shoulder became a place where relationship was restored. When they had worn themselves out from sheer joy of play, my shoulder became the resting place that helped them find peace for the night. If we desire the easing of pain or the restoration of relationship or simply a place to rest our spiritual heads, we should become as little children and run to the arms of our Savior…and let Him hold us…and trust our heads to His shoulder.

What do you need from the Father's shoulder today? Be quick to put your head there and allow Him to meet your need.

"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."
Matthew 11:28-30 NASB

September 22

"…and rest…"

The arms of God are gentle enough to cradle a broken heart…big enough to lift a burden we cannot carry…strong enough to defeat the lies of the enemy…open enough to meet us right where we are…wise enough to not leave us where we are…soft enough to catch us when we fall…quiet enough to allow our souls a place to breathe…thoughtful enough to discipline us with love…peaceful enough to block the winds of the storms of life. In His arms we find fullness of joy. In His arms we find a place to fall apart where we can also get pieced back together. In His arms we find shelter and safety and support. In His arms we find healing and comfort. In His arms we find that every need is met…and in that moment of complete trust in His arms, we come to the place of rest. True, pure, holy rest is the only Source of life. Fall into His arms daily…

Are there any areas of your life where you need to find rest today?

"Cease {striving} and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth." Psalm 46:10 NASB

September 23

"…No more tears left to cry…"

When the Lord first set me free, He bathed me with wave after wave of His love. My response? I could not stop crying! It seemed that I cried for years every time I sensed the Lord's deep love for me. Before I knew the Lord, I had also experienced a long period where tears ruled the day. Those tears faded into hopelessness the night my own mentor made a sexual advance. All trust was shattered and I was convinced that there was no way out for me…and the tears stopped. Even though I felt there was no hope, the reality was that my sin continued to build up. Soon those built up feelings of guilt and shame could no longer be suppressed and I literally felt as if I was losing my mind. Knowing Christ intimately – and being known and loved – opened the floodgates of my heart. Cleansing is always a result of honest confession…and we serve a God who loves us right where we are…but loves us enough to not leave us there. Let's go with Him today.

Take time to make honest confession today and allow the Lord to lead you to cleansing and hope.

…for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.
Romans 10:10 NASB

September 24

"…Wishing that you could die and make this hurt go away…"

Sometimes the pressures of life coupled with the pain and sorrow of hurt coupled with the load of unconfessed sin brings us to the place of hoping for death. Honestly, I have been there many times. In my opinion, physical pain is often easier to bear than emotional pain. The only problem with this is that had I given up and died I would never have come into the victory and freedom waiting for me on the other side of that pain. Pain is there for a reason. As believers, we should work with the pain and follow it to its source and then take that root of pain to the Lord for His remedy. Even sadder is that in my life I became so used to pain that there came a day when I just assumed this was normal for me and that this was simply part of who I was. In many ways I knew the Lord but did not fully engage in all that meant for my identity. I can either sit at the table with Him or eat the crumbs at the foot of the table. My life is meant to be lived AT the table. I realize there are some pains that we must carry…but I do not carry them alone anymore. The stigma of my past will always pain me…but I allow that pain to keep me

dependent on the Lord. The pain does not control me. I control it. One day my pain will end…but in the meantime I plan on enjoying my abundant life in Christ!

Are there any painful places in your life that are controlling you? What must you do to control it? To end it?

Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me--to keep me from exalting myself!

Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.
2 Corinthians 12:7-10 NASB

September 25

“…This endless raging storm has left your heart so torn…”

Have you ever been betrayed by someone you trusted? We all have. If we are not careful life can seem like one endless storm of betrayals and letdowns. As with the pain I have gone through in my life, there came a day when I just assumed I was not worth being faithful to. I came to expect to be thrown under the bus by people I trusted. On one hand, I deeply desired to be loved so would give myself to anyone who showed me the slightest attention…yet, on the other hand, completely distrusted anyone! This became the norm for me! That is simply being double-minded…and a double-minded person is unstable. How did I learn to stop being doubleminded and, subsequently, put and end to the back and forth drama of betrayal? I placed my hope on and in Jesus alone. Sin and the lies of the enemy see to it that people hurt one another. To weather those inevitable storms of life we must have a Sure Foundation or we will surely be beaten to death on the rocks of doubt and mistrust.

Search your heart today and see if there is any misplaced hope and trust in your life. Take the necessary steps to put your trust and hope in God in those areas.

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, {being} a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.
James 1:5-8 NASB

September 26

"…You simply can't see a way…"

Let's make today a day of allowing the Lord to open our eyes to the reality of His presence. Right now, ask Him to reveal Himself to you in ways you have never seen before…or in ways you have not experienced in quite some time. Allow Him the freedom to show Himself in ways that are outside the box of what you consider your comfort zone. Let God out of the box in your spiritual eyes. Remember, when we put Him in a box, that is all we get of Him. Desire more today.

As the deer pants for the water brooks,
So my soul pants for You, O God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God;
When shall I come and appear before God?
Psalm 42:1-2 NASB

September 27

"…Come down from the ledge of your own broken heart…"

Sometimes we paint ourselves into a corner when we try to cover our sin. We play the right games. We use the right words. We express the right emotions. We go to all the right spiritual functions and attend the right Bible studies…in order to appear OK rather than to know God. When we have played the games and performed long enough we begin to think this is the way it is. When we perform for the acceptance and approval of others we tend to crash and burn either to poor performance or due to the sheer weight of having to spin so many plates in the air or trying to carry a load we were never intended to carry. When we have experienced hurt, we tend to protect our heart, yet sharing our hurts and pains with others is one of the primary ways God created to keep us healthy. We allow the fear of what others think to keep us from being well in our souls. That is not the way to abundant life. We must learn to share our hearts in honesty and at the same time, not rehash the same junk over and over again. That is like living on the edge of insanity if you think about it. Why relive the same pain over and over again when the Lord offers a way down from that ledge?

Take time today to pour your heart out to someone else. Allow them the opportunity to help you carry that burden to God. If you have no one, ask the Lord to send you someone. If you have no one, be like God…and pursue someone as He pursues us!

A man [that hath] friends must show himself friendly: and there is a friend [that] sticketh closer than a brother.
Proverbs 18:24 KJV

Oil and perfume make the heart glad,
So a man's counsel is sweet to his friend.
Proverbs 27:9 NASB

September 28

"…Run here to My open arms where You can fall apart…"

Have you ever just had 'one of those days' where everything just seemed to fall apart and you felt like throwing your hands in the air in surrender? We all have! Recently my world fell apart like that. It seemed as if I couldn't win for losing! The heat/air unit upstairs went out, my daughter's car engine needed replacement, my recording studio died, I was inundated with hundreds of people needing help via e-mail, and the normal everyday junk of life! I literally fell apart mentally, overcome with the pressure to provide and to be everything everyone needed me to be. So I finally did the only reasonable and sane thing to do: I surrendered! That's right, I gave up! If we are going to fall apart and give up, there is only one place where that is acceptable. I fell apart and surrendered to the arms of God! When I am overwhelmed, I must fall apart in the place where I can be put back together. In His arms I find provision. In His arms I find the proper perspective from which to live my life. I can either live beneath the burdens of life or I can live above them in the grace of God. Life is found in that place of surrender to His arms and to His will. To try and carry the load alone is trying to play God with our own lives. That simply will never work out in the long run!

Are there any burdens you need to surrender to the Lord today? What is His perspective on those burdens? Is He your Provider? Then trust Him to meet your needs today as HE sees fit.

He gives strength to the weary,
And to {him who} lacks might He increases power.
Though youths grow weary and tired,
And vigorous young men stumble badly,
Yet those who wait for the LORD
Will gain new strength;
They will mount up {with} wings like eagles,
They will run and not get tired,
They will walk and not become weary.
Isaiah 40:29-31 NASB

September 29

"…I'll be your Light in dark…"

As I write this devotion we have just gone through 20 straight days with at least some rainfall. Many of those days were completely cloud-covered. On other days during this period we would see morning or afternoon showers and then a slight clearing in which the sun would make brief appearances. Each time the sun broke through my soul felt a lifting. Dwelling in the darkness – even in a physical sense – brings a dampening to our spirits. In places where there are long periods of darkness (as in northern Alaska) the suicide rates go up during the dark times. When we go through dark times of the soul, hope fades…or at least it seems to. Just as with those days of complete cloud cover and rain, the sun was still shining. I knew that so I did not sweat the fact that soon the sun would break through and lift my spirit. In our spiritual walk with Christ it is the same. Even though we go through dark times of the soul, He will break through…He is always there…and He will give grace to get us through to that breakthrough. Even in the darkness the Lord is my Light.

Take time to look for the Son to be there in your dark times today. Have an expectancy knowing He will break through.

Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy.
Though I fall I will rise;
Though I dwell in darkness, the LORD is a light for me.
Micah 7:8 NASB

September 30

"…I'll be right where you are…"

Isn't it good to not be alone? Having someone with you to experience life with heightens our ability to enjoy life. When I watch a movie that moves me I enjoy re-telling the story to those I know will love it. If I have no one to tell, the moment passes and I become somewhat frustrated because I did not get to share the joy! At the same time, when I experience trials and rough times the burdens are lessened when shared with others. Life – living – is meant to be shared. In our faith we know that Christ is right here with us every step of the way…whether we feel Him or not (my faith is not dependent upon some feeling…but at the same time allows me to feel deeply!). In my joy, He is there. In my sorrow, He is there. In my temptations, He is there. In my deliverance from those temptations, He is there. There is no place He cannot be. There

is no distance He cannot reach. In Christ we have a constant companion – a living, breathing, walking Hope Who goes with us every step of the way.

Where do you find yourself right now? Where is Jesus in this picture? Trust Him to be right where you are today.

Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, You are there;
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold,
You are there.
If I take the wings of the dawn,
If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea,
Even there Your hand will lead me,
And Your right hand will lay hold of me.
Psalm 139:7-10 NASB

Listen to: YOU ARE MY ALL IN ALL
Words & Music: Dennis Jernigan...September 12, 1989
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Verse
You are my strength
When I am weak
You are the Treasure that I seek
You are my All in All!
Seeking You as a precious jewel
Lord, to give up, I'd be a fool!
You are my All in All!
Chorus
Jesus, Lamb of God!
Worthy is Your name!
Jesus, Lamb of God!
Worthy is Your name!
Verse
Taking my sin, my cross, my shame
Rising again, I bless Your name!
You are my All in All!
When I fall down You pick me up!
When I am dry, You fill my cup!
You are my All in All!

October 1

As people of faith, we say those words – You are my strength when I am weak - all the time but do we truly practice what we preach? It is one thing to be confronted with a circumstance like betrayal or grief and be forced to our knees…to that place of surrender to Him. It is quite another to live that weakness in the small things. We think we are strong when we go through our day without having to rely on God's strength. Without problems would we need our God? I believe it is the stronger person who lives his or her life in that constant state of weakness. "Lord, even in the little things I need your strength to make it through." It is that level of dependence where life in Christ becomes exciting. What if you knew you had only one day to live? How would that change things? We need to live our lives as if we were dying. Our level of joy and gratitude would be surpassed only by our dependence upon the Lord. That's not fear. That is freedom.

How can you practice weakness in your life today? Let His strength flow through you as you experience Him today.

It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.
Galatians 5:1 NASB

October 2

Our world is full of greed. For the love of money many have found their way to disappointment and many to destruction. All that love truly is can be traced back to our innate need to know and to be known. Greed comes from a very real need we all have to find something to believe in… something to satisfy our need for approval or acceptance or for affirmation. If we can just get more then we will be loved. Greed can also be born of fear…fear that we will not have enough or that we will not have our most basic needs me . In my own life, I have asked the Lord to help me lust after Him the way I used to lust for money. What I found in the process is that IN HIM all my needs are met…and the love for money is exposed for what it truly is…a trap or a snare used by the enemy. Money is not bad. Worshiping money as the god of your life is. Jesus is the most prized Treasure…and the only one that can truly satisfy.

What must you do to seek Jesus as if He were the most costly treasure on earth? Finding Him in that sense is like finding silver or gold or diamonds… only eternal in nature!

Make your ear attentive to wisdom,
Incline your heart to understanding;
For if you cry for discernment,
Lift your voice for understanding;
If you seek her as silver
And search for her as for hidden treasures;
Then you will discern the fear of the LORD
And discover the knowledge of God.
Proverb 2:2-5 NASB

October 3

We all have basic needs. The needs to eat and drink and procreate are among the most basic of requirements for the survival of the human species. We also each have an innate need to know and be known by others. Sin left us all with a void in our hearts that only God can fill. As sin invades our lives, we tend to become like Adam and Eve who took matters into their own hands, usurping God's design with the impatience of their own. As sin would have it, there comes a day in each life in which our attempts at meeting our very real need in ways other than God designed catch up with us. When everything we trust in apart from God falls apart we come to that crossroad where our selfishness and our need for God intersect. True life begins when we take the road toward meeting our needs in God. That road-sign says, 'This way to All in All'. If we lost everything yet gained eternal relationship with God in the process we would realize that all of our true needs are met in that place.

Take stock today of each facet of your life and see whether it truly meets a need or is something that needs to be pruned. Worship Jesus Christ as your All in All.

When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected
to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.
1 Corinthians 15:28 NASB

October 4

Have you ever been searching for that perfect gift for someone special but found it to be elusive? When I am on a mission to bless my wife with just the right gift for Mother's Day (It's got to be amazing… because she gave me nine children!), I will often

search for weeks in advance, perusing catalogs and going to numerous stores. My quest is to bless her – but in the process, I find such joy because I know the presentation of the gift will express great value and worth to her…that she was worth the sacrifice and effort. Seeking God is much the same…only as I seek God, I do so as if my life depended on it…because I know that my life DOES depend on Him! If I were dying of some new disease, I would search the world over for a possible remedy. My deliverance from sin and my journey toward freedom and wholeness have been just that. My 'remedy' – that precious jewel worth everything I have and am – is Jesus. As I seek Him I find healing for my soul…and the richest treasure the world has ever known.

Spend time seeking Jesus specifically today. If you need provision, seek Him as Provider. If you need healing, seek Him as Healer. If you need a Friend, seek Him as the Best Friend.

More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ…
Philippians 3:8 NASB

October 5

God made me tenacious…made me curious about what lies around that next corner. I love to explore, even when making a simple trip to the grocery store, frustrating my wife who says I never go home the same way! There is something in me that just will not give up. It's as if I didn't take that next step I might miss something amazing…like a flock of wild turkeys, or a doe and twin fawns, or a bobcat, or a woodchuck, or a fox, or coyote (all of which I have seen at various times while making that extra mile)! In my quest to know freedom and wholeness, my journey has led me straight toward Jesus. Imagine if I had given up when I felt like the weight of my sin, shame, and guilt were too much to bear. Imagine if I had not gone through the pain of deliverance and transparent confession and honest repentance. Imagine if I had let the naysayers have the last word. I would not have found forgiveness…or healing…or life…or a whole new way of understanding my true identity. I would never have married…or had children…or written a song of worship or deliverance. I would have lost everything of eternal value! I would have been a fool! To give up our quest to know God and to be known by Him through faith in Jesus is one of the most utterly foolish decisions one could make. Where are you in that process?

Take time to evaluate areas of your life in which you feel like giving up or giving in to compromise, sin, or apathy. What would the wise decision be in each of those areas?

The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God,"

They are corrupt, and have committed abominable injustice;
There is no one who does good.
God has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men
To see if there is anyone who understands,
Who seeks after God.
Psalm 53:1-2 NASB

October 6

God calls Himself many different names. Jehovah means 'I Am'. That name, when coupled with other descriptive names, reveals His true nature to us in extravagantly amazing ways. Jehovah Tsidkenu – I Am your Righteousness. Jehovah M'Kaddesh – I Am your Holiness. Jehovah Shalom – I Am your Peace. Jehovah Rophe – I Am your Healer. Jehovah Nissi – I Am your Victory. Jehovah Shammah – I Am the God Who is There. Jehovah Rohi – I Am your Shepherd. Jehovah Jireh – I Am your Provider. Every one of our deepest needs are met in our amazing God. What do you need from Him today? Call upon the name of the Lord and allow Him to be Who He says He is in your life.

Evaluate your needs today. Take inventory of your soul and simply give the Lord the opportunity to be Who He truly says He is. You will also discover more of who YOU are in the process.

"WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED."
Romans 10:13 NASB

October 7

For far too many years I dragged my sin around with me, never believing I could ever be rid of it. After awhile, it simply seemed as if my sin was THE identifying factor of my life. When Jesus found me, I was swept off my feet by His love. In the ensuing flood of Living Water, my sin was washed away and my soul was cleansed. Unlike earthly floods that eventually subside, God's flood of love is not like that. When swept away by His love we are deposited onto Solid Ground – the Rock Who is Jesus – and then we continue to be constantly bathed in His love. To remain aware of that flow is one of the keys to abundant life. He took my sin and washed it completely away. My former sin no longer defines me. I stand clean before my Lord.

Allow the Lord to search your heart today and be quick to confess and be cleansed when He reveals sin or wrong thinking.

As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.
Psalm 103:12 NASB

October 8

There was a time in my life, after the Lord began the delivery process in me, in which I asked the Lord, “Why did you allow homosexuality in my life?” The stigma of that former life was like a heavy burden…a cross that, at times, seemed impossible to bear. But just as I discovered the cleansing work of God’s forgiveness I also discovered that even though I had been called to carry this cross, it was not a burden I carried alone. The better question then became, “Why NOT me?” I am not here for my glory or pleasure. I am here for HIS. His purpose is accomplished in my life as I experience His grace to overcome. Because of all I have gone through concerning my deliverance, I now have the honor and privilege of leading others through that same process! I cherish the rain of His presence because I have gone through the desert of my sin. I thank God for this cross…and reality is that He bears the brunt of the weight, allowing me to experience levels of grace and joy I never realized were possible in this life.

What cross do you bear today? Give thanks to God for the grace you have experienced as a result.

Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.
Matthew 16:24 NASB

October 9

We all experience shame in our lives. When we walk in sin we realize our nakedness at some point. Allowing that sin to go unresolved always results in guilt and shame. Shame is the fear of being found out… the fear of humiliation. The funny thing about shame is that it effectively blocks the way to healing by virtue of that fear. Like a giant whispering in our ear, shame says, “If anyone finds out what you’ve done, you will be rejected.” When we listen to that lie we are kept from our cleansing. God’s Word

says that we will know the truth and the truth will set us free. Truth begins with our own honesty. When I finally confessed my sin to Jesus, He took my shame and made it His own, absolving me of my debt. I was left with nothing more to hide. Just as with Adam and Eve, my shame left me feeling naked and exposed so I tried to cover my nakedness, yet once I had confessed and come clean, I found myself naked before Him and - finally unashamed!

What are you afraid of confessing? Do you realize the Lord sees what you are hiding and He loves you anyway? Your lack of confession hurts only you – and those you desire honest relationship with. Confess and come clean.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
1 John 1:9 NASB

October 10

Once I had confessed to the Lord and began to experience freedom from my past, healing – complete healing – seemed so far away. I knew the path of freedom would be a long journey, but through the years I have found it to be most rewarding…and worth every step. When I was given a new identity and found initial freedom from the old ways of thinking, it was as if I had gotten to rise again! Resurrection is a brand new beginning… but what is so amazing about that new beginning is that I have gotten to experience it many times during my journey. Gaining my new identity was a resurrection moment…but each new discovery of God's grace and freedom along the way is like rising again – all over again! What a wonderful life we live if we live in Christ!

What resurrections have you experienced in your life? Thank God for them today.

Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy.
Though I fall I will rise;
Though I dwell in darkness, the LORD is a light for me.
Micah 7:8 NASB

October 11

Worship is vital to abundant life in Christ. To refuse to worship the One Who set us free would be like refusing to breath in the air that gives us physical life. That would

be utter foolishness! In its most simple form, worship is relationship with God. Love that is not expressed is not love. Without the exchange of life between the two involved in that relationship, there is no life. Worship involves expressing our gratitude and practicing our faith that He is present with us. One of the best ways I have found to worship Him is to bless His name. To bless someone is to express how much he or she is worth to us. I bless the name of my Redeemer. My Savior. Emmanuel (God With Us). Deliverer. Rescuer. Faithful Friend. Shelter. Source. Healer. You get the idea. He truly is All in All and the One Who meets every need…but most of all, He is WITH ME EVERY STEP OF THE WAY.

Take time to bless the name of the Lord today. You will find yourself refreshed and seeing life from a proper (Kingdom) perspective by the time you are through!

Blessed be the name of the LORD
From this time forth and forever.
Psalm 113:2 NASB

October 12

Jesus is the Beginning and the End of my existence – the Giver and Sustainer of my life. If I can trace everything I am – all that is good about my existence – back to the Source, I can live life from a healthy point of view. In my sorrow, He is my Comforter. In my financial difficulties, He is my Provider. In my confusion, He is my Sanity. In my storms, He is Solid Ground and the Anchor for my soul. In my fear, He is Perfect Love. In my darkness, He is Light. In my chaos, He is Peace. In my indecision, He is Wisdom. In my despair, He is Hope. In my loneliness, He is Faithful Friend. In my pain, He is the Balm of Gilead. In my bondage, He is the Singer of songs of deliverance. Knowing Jesus is life. Knowing Him is like having a personal relationship with the very air I breathe. He truly is our All in All. We must simply believe…

Who is Jesus to you? What are your needs today? Seek the reality of Who He is in those areas of your life.

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”
Revelation 1:8 NASB

October 13

Our sin left us in debt to our Creator. He made us and gave us a free will…and we rejected Him and His ways! We thought we knew better than God concerning what was best for us! The wages – what they earned us – was death. The only way to satisfy our debt was to die…but Our Creator – God Almighty – provided the payment and fulfillment of that death through the perfect sacrificial Lamb, Jesus Christ. To atone for our sin, Jesus died…but we do not experience that atonement unless we appropriate that sacrifice and claim it as our own. By faith I believed Jesus paid my debt in full and I was completely absolved of my sin! What joy and what freedom that step of faith constitutes in my life! I cannot afford to allow myself to feel guilty over what Christ has done for me. To do so would be playing right into the deceiver's hands…and it would be placing myself on the throne of my heart once again. God says I am absolved…so my place is to simply and freely receive that absolution…and live my life free from sin and shame and guilt!

Spend time worshiping the Lamb of God today and celebrating His sacrifice.

The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!
John 1:29 NASB

October 14

Worship simply means to bestow worth on someone or something. Due to all God has done for us, He is, indeed, worth our highest praise. The name of Jesus is a name full of personal meaning to every believer. That name means salvation, deliverance, freedom, healing, hope, restoration, peace, and any other attribute we associate with Jesus. To praise the name of Jesus and to worship Him is to tell Him by our words, attitudes, and actions how much He is worth to our lives.

Take time to worship Him throughout the day. To the degree you have experienced the wonder of His name, bestow that much worship and worth upon Him.

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." Revelation 5:11-12 NASB

Listen to GREAT IS THE LORD ALMIGHTY

Words & Music: Dennis Jernigan

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Verse
The Lord reigns! He is a mighty God!
The Lord God reigns!
The Lord reigns! He is a mighty God!
The Lord God reigns!
When the children of Israel came to the brink
He led them through letting Pharaoh sink
Then the children were dancing
As old Pharaoh sank down
Lifting up a mighty, joyful sound,
Singing…
Chorus
Great is the Lord Almighty!
He is Lord He is God indeed!
Great is the Lord Almighty!
He is God Supreme!
Great is the Lord Almighty!
He is Lord He is God indeed!
Great is the Lord! Great is the Lord!
Verse
The Lord reigns! He is a mighty God!
The Lord God reigns!
The Lord reigns! He is a mighty God!
The Lord God reigns!
When the children of God
Came up to Jericho town
The Lord said, "Children,
Let's walk around!"
So for seven whole days
They walked around that great wall
'Til the Lord said, "Shout!
Children, watch it fall!"
Singing…
Verse
The Lord reigns! He is a mighty God!
The Lord God reigns!
The Lord reigns! He is a mighty God!
The Lord God reigns!
When His children were dying
And lost in their sin
My Lord died and He rose again!
Now I've been rejoicing
Since He took my blame!
And I praise You Jesus! Praise Your name!

October 15

When I think of the expanse of the universe I begin to become overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of God's presence and reality. He is absolute Creator of all that exists. The only thing He did not create was sin. He gave us a free will and WE chose to go against His will…and WE gave sin its existence. Still, He rules and reigns over it all! If He rules and reigns over everything, what do we have to fear? If we suffer persecution, He rules and reigns over those things…and will walk through them with us. If we stumble and fall, He is still in control and will pick us back up as we reach for Him. Should we find ourselves facing death, even death has no power over Him! Whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's! He is in control and to be absent from this body is to be present with Christ. He is so in control that nothing fazes Him. He wins…and because we are His, WE win!

Spend time today contemplating the reality of the extent of God's rule and reign over all areas of your life…and find peace and joy in that truth.
Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"
John 11:25-26 NASB

Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord - for we walk by faith, not by sight - we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.
2 Corinthians 5:6-8 NASB

October 16

When we think of might we think of strength and power and major, tangible demonstration of that power. Sometimes the might of God is shown in restrained ways…or in ways that are not apparent in the moment yet massively mighty at the same time. When I was set free there were no outward explosions and no ticker tape parades. There was no evidence of my changed heart except what I was experiencing on the inside. Yet, the power and might of that moment forever altered my world in ways that would affect my family and me for generations to come. In the innermost core of my being the might of God's love and power to change radically transformed my very identity from what I once was to that of a brand new creation. No scientific discovery

could do that. No invention or scheme of man could have done that. No herbal formula or atomic bomb could do that. There is only one that mighty and He is a mighty God.

Meditate on the subtleties of God's power in your life today…and thank Him for such awesome displays of might.

Behold, God is mighty but does not despise {any;}
{He is} mighty in strength of understanding.
Job 36:5 NASB

October 17

Whatever or whomever I bow my life to is the thing or person that rules and reigns over me and my life. If I bow to money or work or pleasure or the fear of what people think of me then those things rule and reign over my very existence and strongly influence any decisions. Those things were never meant to rule our lives. They are things that have usurped the rightful place of One God in our lives. The only way we gain our independence from the tyranny they represent is to dethrone them decisively. It is our choice concerning the things we allow to rule our lives. If I truly desire that God be the One King Who rules over my life then I must see work and money and pleasure (and anything else that seeks to usurp His rightful place of authority) from His perspective. When we work, we should work as unto Him…for Him in whatever we do. When we make money, we should use it for His glory, providing for our own family's needs and to meet the needs of others when possible. When we seek pleasure, we should even see that pleasure was meant to serve His Kingdom. When we learn to see from His point of view He truly rules and reigns in our lives.

Are there any things or people who rule over you right now that are actually usurping God's authority in your life? What must you do to see those things from His perspective?

The LORD will reign forever,
Your God, O Zion, to all generations.
Praise the LORD!
Psalm 146:10 NASB

October 18

We all come to times in our lives where we are literally on the brink of disaster in some way. Sometimes that brink is in a physical sense as with health issues. Sometimes that brink is in the financial realm. Still other times that brink is in a mental or spiritual sense as when we have fallen in sin or when we have been wounded or betrayed in some way. Each of the brinks we come to are overwhelming in their own right when seen from an earthly point of view. The difference between irrationality or panic and wisdom and peace comes when we see those edges of disaster from the Lord's perspective. When faced with health concerns, we must see that He is THE Healer and that we are with Him whether we live or whether we die. When faced with financial woes, we need to remember that He is THE Provider and that He will not leave us begging for bread. When faced with our own failure or spiritual and emotional wounds, we must remember that He is THE Redeemer and that He forgives and He uses even our hurts and failures to bring about good.

Are there any areas of your life where you feel you are on the brink of disaster? Ask the Holy Spirit to allow you to see what the Father sees in those areas.

The LORD is my strength and song,
And He has become my salvation;
This is my God, and I will praise Him;
My father's God, and I will extol Him.
The LORD is a warrior;
The LORD is His name.
Pharaoh's chariots and his army
He has cast into the sea;
And the choicest of his officers are drowned in the Red Sea.
The deeps cover them;
They went down into the depths like a stone.
Your right hand, O LORD, is majestic in power,
Your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy.
And in the greatness of Your excellence
You overthrow those who rise up against You;
You send forth Your burning anger, {and} it consumes them as chaff.
Exodus 15:2-7 NASB

October 19

When the Lord set me free and set my feet on the path toward wholeness, I still had a very difficult time forgiving myself for my failures…for my willful sin. Even though I had been set free from my old identity I was still making decisions for myself that were rightly God's decisions to make. My standards were higher than God's in a sense! How prideful and how arrogant! If He has forgiven me I must forgive me! It was as if God had led me out of the wilderness of my sin (just as He led Israel out of Egypt) and I was still allowing my captor (Pharaoh) to come along for the ride! To let Pharaoh go I had to let go of the throne of my own heart in every area…and let Pharaoh sink…let my captor go! Sometimes we grow so accustomed to deciding what is right and wrong or what is best for our own lives that we do not give the One Who set us free the freedom to lead us as far out of bondage in this life as possible! Let Pharaoh go and let God lead today!

What are the Pharaohs in your life right now? What must you do to let them go?

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me.
Exodus 8:1 NASB

October 20

When the Lord leads us to victory over the enemy, we should rejoice! I am always amazed at the way people behave at sporting events (and I am one of them!) when their favorite team scores a goal. People become clamorously foolish…and it is completely acceptable behavior! When the Lord set me free from my sin, I responded in much the same way. The sheer realization that THE big score of my life brought about by the work of Christ at the cross on my behalf led me to moments of absolute spiritual pandemonium! I could not stop thanking Him for setting me free! I could not stop thanking Him for loving me so completely! I could not stop telling everyone about what He had done for me…and that initial victory was over 27 years ago…yet I still feel all of those same feelings every day because I know had it not been for His victory in my life I would still be in bondage to the Pharaoh of sin…and would be stuck wandering around in the wilderness, confused about my identity and purpose in life. Just as the children of Israel celebrated when God defeated their enemy, so I celebrate my victory every single day…regardless of what my circumstances look like. Victory is mine!

Take time today to celebrate the victories the Lord has brought to your life!

…but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.
1 Corinthians 15:57 NASB

October 21

Sometimes during a corporate time of worship I will just let out a loud shout. When I think of all God has done to take back what the enemy had stolen from me concerning my identity…and all I would have never known had He not saved me…all I can do is shout from the depths of my innermost being. When I worship the Lord, the enemy has no place to latch on to me. My mind is engaged and focused on Jesus when I worship. My emotions are poured out to God and I feel what He feels when I worship. When I sing or dance or lift my hands in worship, even my physical body is engaged and kept from temptation and evil! Worship is for God…but look at all the benefits for us! When we worship Him, He blesses us with a wonderful feeling of safety and contentment and at the same time fills us with a desire for even more of His presence. Engaging Jesus Christ in worship renews my mind and floods my physical body with endorphins that lead to a sense of physical well-being. Worship is good for the soul!

Spend time worshiping the Lord today and think about the many benefits God blesses you with when you focus on Him.

Come, let us worship and bow down,
Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.
Psalm 95:6 NASB

October 22

When I look back on my life it is much easier to see the work of God's hand than when I am in the middle of my latest crisis! At the same time, when I am in the middle of a crisis I can allow the Holy Spirit to use those very memories of the many times God has intervened in my life with deliverance, rescue, provision, hope, endurance, peace, or healing, etc! When I begin to have doubts or fear tries to creep in, I simply speak to my own soul and to the lies of the enemy and say, "My God has always been there for me. He is with me now. Nothing has changed." It is the greatness of God's power to deliver that causes me to praise Him loudly, passionately, and boldly! When I praise Him I call to mind all He has done for me…and it's a little like reliving victory after victory in my life! Great is the Lord Almighty! He IS Lord! He IS God indeed!

Spend time to day just exalting and praising God for all He has done to deliver you in the past…and then thank Him for all He will do to get you through today!

Remember my affliction and my wandering, the wormwood and bitterness.
Surely my soul remembers
And is bowed down within me.
This I recall to my mind,
Therefore I have hope.
The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease,
For His compassions never fail.
{They} are new every morning;
Great is Your faithfulness.
Lamentations 3:19-23 NASB

October 23

In all of our lives, the enemy raises up false gods and false hopes, trying to cause us to doubt our God is able. Sometimes we put our hope in financial security. Sometimes we place our hope in popularity. Sometimes we put our hope in what we think people think of us. Sometimes we even put our hope in our own physical health. What happens, though, when money runs out? What do we do when people no longer remember us? Where do we turn when our performance for the acceptance of others leaves us feeling empty and utterly alone? What do we hold on to when our physical health is weakened by injury or disease? It is in those moments of reality that false idols fall…and it becomes apparent that there is only one God who is Supreme. One God Who is Provider…One God Who knows us and loves us right where we are…One God Who never forgets us…One God Who is able to heal and even use our weaknesses for His glory and for the good of others! Talk about Supreme! Our God IS!

Where does your hope lie today? Put down any false gods you have raised up…and place God back on the throne of your heart in those areas.

'I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 'You shall have no other gods before Me. 'You shall not make for yourself an idol, {or} any likeness {of} what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. 'You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, and on the third and the fourth {generations} of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.
Deuteronomy 5:6-10 NASB

October 24

Who is like the Lord? Really? Who on earth can do and be all He IS? He is exceptional and beyond compare! Who can calm the sea? Science cannot. Who can still a raging storm? We cannot even accurately predict the weather! Who can take a life so broken and shattered that hope seems impossible and make it something beautiful? No psychiatrist can. Even when there are success stories in the world apart from God, even that success came because they applied Godly principles (whether the counselors knew it or not!). Only our God can do something so extraordinary as transform a life. Only our God can bring the rain or bring down a mountain with one stroke of His mighty hand. What is man that He is even mindful of us? That is a magnificent God Who contains all the power of the universe within His being yet humbles Himself to our level and our plane of existence to have relationship with us! How great our God is!

Take time to meditate on the greatness of God's power in your life today.

O LORD, our Lord,
How majestic is Your name in all the earth,
Who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens!
From the mouth of infants and nursing babes
You have established strength
Because of Your adversaries,
To make the enemy and the revengeful cease.
When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,
The moon and the stars, which You have ordained;
What is man that You take thought of him,
And the son of man that You care for him?
Yet You have made him a little lower than God,
And You crown him with glory and majesty!
Psalm 8:1-5 NASB

October 25

Have you ever come up against a wall between you and the freedom you desire on the other side? When I first truly confronted my bondage to same sex attraction my perspective was one of hopelessness. After all, I had lived this mindset for so many years. I am sure that to the children of Israel the fortified city of Jericho with its heavily guarded walls seemed impenetrable. God had a plan to destroy the walls of Jericho in spite of what the children of Israel could see with their natural eyes. His plan? Do

something the world thought impossible - walk around the city in fellowship with their God until they saw the walls fall down. Just as they walked in obedience to their God, so we must walk in obedience, too. They walked for seven days without one single change in that wall. On the final day they walked around 7 times. Still nothing. They were commanded to shout…and then the walls began to crumble. Obedience is as simple as walking closely with the Lord and doing what you know is right…what HE calls right. The freedom comes in the journey…and then one day you realize you were free all along because of Who you walk WITH. The walls between you and greater intimacy and freedom from sin were felled by the very intimacy born of the walk with God.

Take time today to walk with God in intimacy.

You shall march around the city, all the men of war circling the city once. You shall do so for six days. Also seven priests shall carry seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark; then on the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets.
Joshua 6:3-4 NASB

October 26

When the children of Israel came to the city of Jericho and saw the wall I am sure they all hoped the Lord would simply crush the walls with the sound of His voice. After all, they had already witnessed His might with a little thing called 'the parting of the Red Sea'! But the Lord said something I think is very significant. He told them to walk around the city in silence…with the priests praising Him with trumpet blasts. I am sure this was confusing and intimidating to the enemy after a while. The walk had several purposes (intimidate the enemy, build faith in the children of Israel, etc.) but the main one was for the building of intimacy between the Lord and His people. Praise and worship are vital to building that intimacy. When we worship Him, we empty ourselves of our burdens. When we worship Him, we focus on someone beside ourselves and something beside our pain or failure. When we walk with Him in an attitude of worship (He is God and I am not!) we get to know Him…and when we get to know Him we learn to walk in freedom from wrong thinking…and freedom from the perspective of bondage.

Spend time worshiping Him today and ask Him to let you see from His perspective.

The armed men went before the priests who blew the trumpets, and the rear guard came after the ark, while they continued to blow the trumpets.
Joshua 6:9 NASB

October 27

For many years, I wanted my temptations to suddenly be gone. Reality came the day I realized even temptation was not a defining factor in my identity. We do not get to choose what we are tempted by. But once we are born again – made new creations – we have the power – the grace – to choose what we will do with that temptation. It has been over 27 years now since I came to that realization…and I can honestly say that the temptation has lost its power. So much healing has come that I find it difficult to believe I was ever 'that way'. When I was made aware of my identity in Christ I set my eyes firmly on Jesus and decided I would not look away – no matter what. Just as the children of Israel determined they would walk around Jericho for those seven days, I determined I would walk around my own Jericho until the Lord brought the victory. Knowing Jesus intimately – the walk – has been worth every step…because now I enjoy knowing with EVERY temptation there IS a way of escape…and grace to run through that opening to freedom…mine for the taking!

Commit to walk with Jesus no matter what – just for this day.

Yet those who wait for the LORD
Will gain new strength;
They will mount up {with} wings like eagles,
They will run and not get tired,
They will walk and not become weary.
Isaiah 40:31 NASB

October 28

There are times to be silent…like at a wedding…or in a piano recital audience…or to keep from waking the baby. Yet there are times to be loud and boisterous…like when your team scores…or the hero comes through…or when God is to be greatly praised! When the Lord set me free there were times during worship when I simply could not contain the sheer joy and exultation at what He had done JUST FOR ME! Sometimes a shout pushes back the enemy with intimidation. Sometimes a shout bolsters my faith and invigorates my entire being. Sometimes a shout is all that stands between me and that final triumphant fist-pumping moment when my mind comes into alignment with what my spirit knows is true…that in Jesus, the walls have fallen and I AM FREE.

Find time today to shout to the Lord. I'm serious. Shouting does the soul good!

At the seventh time, when the priests blew the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, “Shout! For the LORD has given you the city.
Joshua 6:16 NASB

So the people shouted, and {priests} blew the trumpets; and when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted with a great shout and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight ahead, and they took the city.
Joshua 6:20 NASB

October 29

If you are a parent you know what length you would go to rescue one of your children. The Father saw our need for a Savior and willingly gave His only Son for us…that Son willingly gave His life to purchase us and make us His own. There is something within the heart of a mother or father that compels them to do whatever is necessary to preserve the life of that child. We were dying in our sin…slaves to that sin…and there was nothing we could do about it. But Father had a plan…a plan specific to your need and to mine. Our sins may have been as different as night is from day, but the Answer is the same for all. We were all lost and we were given a Savior. Without Him we would be doomed to eternity in hell – separated from the Father and His great love for us. We have a reason to shout to Him and to worship Him with deep gratitude. We have been rescued.

Spend time in gratitude today, thanking God for all He has done to rescue you. Remember what He has rescued you from.

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, {be} glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.
Jude 1:25 NASB

October 30

Jesus died with my sin upon Him. He paid my debt…but it did not end there. He rose again victorious over sin, death, and the grave. That means that we died with Christ. We were buried with Him. We were raised to a new life, leaving the old identity in

the grave. When we are born again we become someone brand new. That means that I do not have to think the way I once did about myself. I can think about myself what HE thinks about me. He calls me royalty. He calls me a priest. He calls me His own. That means that everything that He contains within His nature is now mine… but I must accept what He calls reality as my own. I must view not only my circumstances from His point of view but I must view my SELF from His point of view. If I can do that then I can overcome my past, my circumstances, and my temptations. I am my Beloved's and He is mine!

Think about what God sees when He sees you…and discard every thought contrary to His way of thinking about you.

…fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.
Hebrews 12:2 NASB

October 31

What is happiness? Happiness is a good feeling in my soul that is based on and dependent upon my circumstances. What is joy? Joy is a feeling of great pleasure in knowing God is pleased with me because of who I am in Him – regardless of my circumstances. True happiness comes when it is born out of joy. Joy comes even in hard times when we are confident that we are not alone. Joy comes even in the midst of sorrow when we know that whether we live or die we are the Lord's. Joy comes even in pain when we have One enduring the pain with us. Joy comes in knowing I am known and loved and cared for no matter what. Joy comes when I walk in my true identity as a new creation. My joy is not dependent on what I see, feel, or experience – but it does depend on what I think. If you want to walk in joy, then you must put on the mind of Christ. My blame was dealt with on the cross. My shame was dealt with. My sin was dealt with. My need for forgiveness was dealt with. I stand clean before my Lord. I am NOT the man I used to be. I am a NEW creation. What joy…

What stands between you and sheer joy today? Take the necessary steps to put on right thinking.

Yet I will exult in the LORD,
I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.
Habakkuk 3:18 NASB
You will make known to me the path of life;
In Your presence is fullness of joy;
In Your right hand there are pleasures forever. Psalm 16:11 NASB

November 1

Thanksgiving springs from our realization that it was the Lord and others who have brought any success in our lives. I would not have a wonderful marriage without my wife. I would not have even one child without my wife. If no one ever bought my handiwork I would not have a business. Had the Lord not bought my redemption I would never have experienced the freedom I now enjoy. True thanksgiving is born of our Understanding that God is responsible for every good thing! When we step out of the way and begin to see life from God's perspective, gratitude has a way of flooding in and carrying us through even the most difficult of circumstances. After all, if we got what we truly deserved we would get death and hell. And that is why I find it so easy to praise the name of Jesus. He set me free and delivered me from death and hell. Thank You! Thank You! Thank You, Jesus!

As you begin the day, think about all God has done to get you where you are right now. Thank Him for delivering you from death and hell…and let gratitude be your attitude for the day.

Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
Let the redeemed of the LORD say {so,}
Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the adversary
And gathered from the lands,
From the east and from the west,
From the north and from the south.
Psalm 107:1-3 NASB

Listen to: IF I COULD JUST SIT WITH YOU AWHILE
Words & Music: Dennis Jernigan
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Verse
When I cannot feel,
When my wounds won't heal,
Lord, I humbly kneel
Hidden in You!
Lord, You are my life
So I don't mind to die
Just as long as I'm
Hidden in You!
Verse
When I know I've sinned
When I should have been
Crying out "My God"

And hidden in You
Lord, I need You now
More than I know how!
So I humbly bow
Hidden in You!
Chorus
If I could just sit with You awhile
If You could just hold me
Nothing could touch me though I'm wounded,
Though I die!
If I could just sit with You awhile
I need You to hold me
Moment by moment 'til forever passes by!

November 2

When walking out my faith, I have gone through times of hurt and betrayal. When walking out my salvation, I have gone through the agony of facing my own sin and accepting responsibility for said sin. Still, there are many times when I have gotten so overwhelmed with trying to minister to the needs of others that I have not had time to seek God to have my own soul needs met adequately. When we get to the place of numbness it is time to stop in our tracks and evaluate our heart. When one gets hit enough in the same place, pain becomes relative. What once caused me to wince now hardly causes me to glance up. When one becomes so engrossed in self-examination that they lose all sense of true north (Jesus/Direction), it is time to stop looking inward and begin to look elsewhere to have our needs met. When we become so wrapped up in meeting the needs of others that we forget how to empathize with real emotional passion, it is time to stop and assess why we are doing what we are doing. When I get to the place of feeling nothing, I see that as a big red warning flag that's says, 'Cease striving and know God.' Pain needs to be dealt with. Sin needs to be dealt with. People need ministry. But reality is that we must live our life in balance. Even Jesus took time away from the maddening crowds to recharge his emotional batteries. Emotions can run dry. We must take that dryness as a sign that we need to seek the only One Who can truly fill us to overflowing.

Assess your soul today. Are you so used to pain that you feel nothing anymore? Are you so self-focused that you feel nothing anymore? Are you so consumed with meeting the needs of others that you have run dry? Take time to recharge your batteries today by simply BEING God's son or daughter. Let Him love you…

"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and

YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."
Matthew 11:28-30 NASB

November 3

When a wound goes for any length of time and does not appear to heal we often blame God for not caring or not being the Healer He says He is. But if He is good and He desires our best, shouldn't we be willing to believe that even in sickness or a state of wounded-ness that He is still in control and still desirous of what is best for us? What is the Kingdom point of view? Why would He allow us to suffer? In my own life, why didn't Jesus simply take homosexual temptation away from me when I first asked? I believe that from His point of view He had a great plan to teach me what true intimacy really is…and what dependence upon Him truly means. Would I cry out to Him in naked honesty if I were never tempted? Would I rely on Him so completely had I never seen a need for Him? Sometimes what appears to be wounding is actually a part of our inner healing when seen from God's perspective.

Are there any areas of wounding or sickness that you do not understand? Would you be willing to ask the Holy Spirit to allow you to see that wounding/sickness from God's point of view? Would you be willing to bless the Lord for His healing in the midst of your wounding?

Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me--to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.
2 Corinthians 12:7-9 NASB

November 4

When I was struggling against the seeming stranglehold my sin had upon me, all I could see was MY pain, MY needs, MY feelings, MY agenda, and MY way of doing things. I thought I knew best concerning my needs. The true reality was that I had become so consumed with MY self that I could not see the very hands of help the Father was extending to me. Because no one could understand MY wounds unless they

had walked in my shoes (at least that was MY perspective!), my pride kept me from receiving love and support and proper perspective because I was sitting in God's place on the throne of my mind and the throne of my heart. My own pride kept me from help and hope! When I got to that place of desperation in which I finally discovered that I could not save, rescue, redeem, or heal myself, I humbled myself and knelt before my Maker. In that very moment, salvation, rescue, redemption, and healing began to flood every nook and cranny of my being. In my nakedness He met me with His holiness and covered my formerly shame-clothed being with His intended identity and destiny.

Are there any areas in which you are seated upon the throne of your own heart? Would you be willing to humble yourself and step down, giving the Lord His rightful place? Be prepared for His glory to flood in and impact your thoughts, your emotions, and even your physical well-being.

A man's pride will bring him low,
But a humble spirit will obtain honor.
Proverbs 29:23 NASB

But He gives a greater grace. Therefore {it} says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE." Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.
James 4:6-7 NASB

November 5

When my children were young, some of my favorite memories are of times when storms would blow through in the night. At the first crack of lightning and before the thunder had stopped rolling I knew the children who were startled awake would find their way to our bed! Even though I knew we were safe, my children did not. They would hide under the blankets between their mother and me and huddle as close to us as possible. For all intents and purposes, they were hidden in the safety of our parental embrace. With the Lord it is no different. He sees the storms of life coming and longs for us to come running to His hiding place of safety. We may not see the outcome but He does…and He welcomes us freely and joyfully without reservation. It is when we refuse to hide away in His embrace and to see from His point of view that we get tossed around by fear and doubt - crushed by the waves caused by the storms of life. We will face storms. Where we choose to hide our souls will be the difference between safety and destruction of our souls.

Are there any storms you presently face where you need to be hidden in Him? Take time today to hide away in His embrace…even for a few precious minutes.

Keep me as the apple of the eye;
Hide me in the shadow of Your wings…
Psalm 17:8 NASB

November 6

When I think of all God has brought me through it is not very difficult for me to say that He is my life. Had He never brought my father and mother together, I would not exist. Had He not had a plan for my life, I would surely wander about aimlessly, attempting to meet my own needs in the power of my human flesh. Had He not intervened with His redeeming love, I would surely be dead in my sin. Had He not Intervened on the night I attempted to take my own life, I would surely be physically dead and separated from that love forever. When we boil our existence down to its lowest common denominator, we come up with only one Answer. The Lord. It is He who has made us and not we ourselves. He gives life and He gives breath. He is faithful and true to walk with us through the many twists and turns of life. Without Him NOTHING would exist! He Is every thing and all in all. It is when we think we have had anything at all to do with our life, our redemption, our successes, our victories that we begin to walk in the wisdom of the world and that leads only to our destruction. Give credit where credit is due. Every good thing in your life comes from God who was merciful and loved us even while we were dead in our sin!

Meditate on the Life-giving power of God today. Allow the Holy Spirit to take you to places yet undiscovered of His great mercy toward you.

Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.
James 1:16-18 NASB

November 7

I will never forget the moment I realized God truly loved me. Having felt the pressure of and carried the burden of my sin for so long, His great and powerful love became like a safety net for me. If He revealed something that needed to be cut away from my soul, then I was willing to do so – no matter how painful – because I knew His

love would catch me as I fell through the air. Confessing my sin and becoming nakedly transparent before Him became like those times in childhood when a child find himself on a high place and the daddy tells the child, “Jump! I’ll catch you!” The child may have hesitation due to fear the first time…but jumps readily the next time because he remembers the joy of flying and being caught in midair! That is what repentance and confession is truly like. The more we take the plunge the more accustomed – and thankful – we grow to those moments of pure, unabashed freedom! Dying to self is like that – jumping away from the high places of our own self-reliance and jumping into the arms of the One Who always catches us…and then hiding deep in the joyful embrace of His presence at the end of that leap of faith. If that is dying, what are we so afraid of?

Can you think of any areas of your life where you need to leap into the arms of God? Take the plunge today each time He reveals something to you.

For in the day of trouble
He will conceal me in His tabernacle;
In the secret place of His tent He will hide me;
He will lift me up on a rock.
Psalm 27:5 NASB

November 8

It seems in many ways as if the church of today is afraid to mention the possibility that people might actually sin. That might be offensive to someone. I guess I find it difficult to find a place in God’s Word where we find Jesus watering down the message of sin and the need of a Savior. When we are more concerned about whether or not the latte’ is warm enough rather than the condition of one’s soul then how can we truly minister the love of God? Until someone sees their need for a Savior there IS no need for a Savior in their mind. I know that we can be sensitive to the needs of others around us – like serving them that perfect latte’ – but reality is that when we are awakened to the reality of our own sin we come to the understanding that we need to deal with it. And how do we deal with sin? We seek the Savior. As we live this in our own lives we will come to see the need to live that reality before others. When one is made aware of their sin we need to be ready to make them aware of the remedy for that sin. We need to be Jesus to them…but we cannot do that until we have made it a reality in our own lives.

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any area of sin in your life…and be ready to surrender to the Savior, repent, and go on.

Hide Your face from my sins
And blot out all my iniquities.
Create in me a clean heart, O God,

And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from Your presence
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of Your salvation
And sustain me with a willing spirit.
{Then} I will teach transgressors Your ways,
And sinners will be converted to You.
Deliver me from bloodguiltiness,
O God, the God of my salvation;
{Then} my tongue will joyfully sing of Your righteousness.
O Lord, open my lips,
That my mouth may declare Your praise.
For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it;
You are not pleased with burnt offering.
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.
Psalm 51:9-17 NASB

November 9

There are times in life when we feel we are all alone against the world. It is during such times that we need to remember that we are never alone…that the Lord is always with us. There have been such times in my own life when I have simply grown so tired of crying out to others because of the repetitive nature of my deep spiritual or emotional need, saying to myself, “They must be tired of hearing the same old thing as I am of battling the same old thing.” Still there have been other times when I have said to myself, “I can defeat this by myself. There’s no need to drag anyone else into my problem.” In either case, we have no one to share the burden with. It is in those moments when we should be crying out to God and to others for help and wisdom and support that we allow the subtle schemes of the enemy to keep us from the help we need. After all, a burden shared is a lighter load. It is in those crying out moments that we find ourselves hidden in Christ rather than exposed to the fiery darts of the enemy’s lies.

Even if there are no specific areas of your life in which you need to cry out to God today, determine ahead of time that you will be quick to cry out to God during times of trouble.

Hear my cry, O God;
Give heed to my prayer.
From the end of the earth
I call to You when my heart is faint;
Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

For You have been a refuge for me,
A tower of strength against the enemy.
Let me dwell in Your tent forever;
Let me take refuge in the shelter of Your wings.
Psalm 61:1-4 NASB

November 10

When I am awake, I need the air to breathe. When I am asleep, I need the air I breathe. When I am running or swimming, I really need the air I breathe. When I am fighting for life against sickness or injury, I need the air I breathe. When I am at complete rest or watching my favorite basketball team play in the championship, I still need the air I breathe…to survive. With the Lord it is no different. During every season, every day of my life, and through all circumstances I must live as if my life depends upon Him…because it does. Knowing Christ intimately is like the spiritual air I need to survive. As my soul thrives – lives in health – so does my entire being. The spiritual air I breathe permeates my mental life, my emotional life, and my physical life. We focus so much on the physical when the true nature of our existence is spiritual. When we are breathing well spiritually every facet of our life is effected. If we die physically, nothing changes in our true nature. Our spirit lives on…so breathe deep.

Do you feel starved of spiritual air in any areas of life today? What can you do to get the 'treatment' you need? May I suggest a time of intimate worship?

For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.
1 Corinthians 2:2 NASB

November 11

We will all face times in our lives where we simply do not have the answer to a specific problem. When I do not know what to do, I try to turn to someone who does know what to do. Recently, one of my children was faced with a huge dilemma – a crossroads of life in which they needed to make some very crucial decisions that would effect the rest of their life. As a dad, my first reaction was to swoop in to the rescue and get her out of the situation…but wisdom took over and I felt the Lord nudging me to let her come to her own conclusions. My only recourse became one of guiding my daughter with words of wisdom but completely turning her over and trusting her to the

Lord. In the process she came to begin to trust the Lord on a whole new level…and made a very wise decision in the process. At the same time, I also learned a new lesson of trust…that sometimes we must see that even the things we hold most dear in life – like our children – are actually not our own. My heart was lightened when I turned her over to the Lord…and loved my daughter regardless of what decision she made.

Think about the places in your life where you simply do not know what to do. What does trusting God completely in that area look like?

Trust in the LORD with all your heart
And do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He will make your paths straight.
Proverbs 3:5-6 NASB

November 12

Humility is the understanding that it is the Lord and others who deserve the credit for any success we have in life. It is always amazing to me how even in my times of distress I try to take credit for my own strength before I remember who built that strength in me to begin with! Do we not remember that godly wisdom is born out of the way God poured out His grace on us in times of bondage, deliverance, healing, provision, protection in times past? I go through circumstances where I know the godly wisdom required to get through and apply that truth without giving Him the glory. It is in such moments where I all too often take credit for something that truly God has done…only to fall flat on my face in defeat! Even in our spiritual maturity we MUST always be about giving God the glory for any good thing that comes our way. He is the Author. He is the Finisher. He is responsible for my blessings and victories!

Take time to humble yourself before the Lord today and practice honoring Him with praise for all He has done.

Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.
James 1:17 NASB

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.
Hebrews 12:1-2 NASB

November 13

I remember when I was a boy and my parents would take us to our grandmother's house and my grandmother would always invite us to sit with her and visit. Even though I was so young I could tell how it pained my grandmother for us to leave – even if we had been there for several hours. She was lonely and our presence meant everything to her… even if those hours together were spent in silence. Relationship IS life. Knowing and being known are keys to our sanity and health. Oftentimes we allow the hurts and failures of life to build up to the point of shutting off relationship. And still often we simply neglect certain relationships for a variety of reasons. Regardless of the 'whys' we must learn that our relationship with the Lord is vital – of uttermost importance – to our spiritual well-being and that this relationship is the key to every facet of our existence. We may not see the need to simply sit and visit with Him every day because things are going so well. It is not the Lord Who needs us to sit with Him. It is we who need Him to sit with us. Learning to simply find our being in and with Him is part of experiencing the abundant life we are promised in knowing Him.

Intimacy is allowing the Lord to see the hidden places of the heart and mind…and trusting Him to allow us to see and experience His. Invite the Lord to sit with you awhile today.

"I came that they may have life, and have {it} abundantly."
John 10:10b NASB

November 14

When my children were small, I found great joy in comforting their hurts. When a knee was scraped or a disappointment came, I found great fulfillment in being there to pick them up and just hold them until the hurt subsided or the hope returned. It did not take very long for my children to learn that comfort and hope could be found in daddy's arms. It was not uncommon at all for even the slightest scratch to illicit a run for dad's strong, comforting embrace. Just being in my arms was enough for them. As they have grown up there are still times when my children need to be held…and I can honestly say that I cannot see a day when they would be too old or too mature for me to simply enjoy holding them close. In my walk with God I have that same understanding. No matter how old I may grow to be or how mature in my walk I may become, I will never be too old or mature to not need my Father's embrace. IN that embrace I find comfort and hope, healing and restoration, peace and a future. There is absolutely nothing immature about that kind of embrace.

Take some time today to just allow the Lord to hold you close. If you are in pain or under stress, release it in His embrace and receive His comfort. If you are doing well, simply enjoy your Father's deep love and affection for you.

You are my hiding place and my shield;
I wait for Your word.
Psalm 119:114 NASB

November 15

When we learn to see life from the Kingdom – the King's – point of view, then we learn how much grace is available simply by seeing from a new perspective. Although it is not pleasant to go through conflict or betrayal or loss or wounding, knowing we are not alone and stepping out on faith to see what the King sees helps carry us through such times. And if we are honest in our faith we must get to the place in any circumstances where we see and understand the truth – we are untouchable! Who I am is hidden in Christ…so nothing can touch me. If I suffer, I get to experience God's deep grace. If I die, I get to be with Him in eternity. Living in that attitude is what puts wind beneath my wings. Living in such faith gives me sight beyond earthly vision. Living in such grace gives me strength beyond my humanness. Knowing Christ in such faith is the key to the overcoming life.

Take a deep plunge in your faith today and see even your hurts and losses from God's point of view. Receive the grace you find in that place of hope.

Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. It was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. So the sisters sent {word}
to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick." But when Jesus heard {this,} He said, "This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it."
John 11:1-4 NASB

November 16

To sit with someone – to just be with someone – is and act of intimacy and life. With my wife, we can sit together in the same room and not say a word and still walk

away feeling satisfied and content with one another's presence. We love to converse with one another but there are times when simply BEING with one another is the deeper thing. She is there and loves me. I am there and I love her. Resting in one another's presence is very freeing. I do not have to perform – say or do anything to convince her of my love. She does not have to say or do anything to convince me of her love for me. We just know. The freedom to just 'be' ourselves and relax in that realization brings satisfaction to our souls. Such times make the moments of verbal and physical contact all the more sweet. So it is with the Lord, as well. We need to learn to crawl up into His lap and just 'be' with Him. It is there that we find soul satisfaction and true spiritual fulfillment. Such deep fulfillment permeates every other area of our lives…and makes the times we verbally, mentally, and physically worship the Lord all the more sweet!

Practice 'being' in God's presence all day…no matter what activities you are involved. The Lord is ever-present.

Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, You are there;
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold,
You are there.
If I take the wings of the dawn,
If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea,
Even there Your hand will lead me,
And Your right hand will lay hold of me.
Psalm 139:7-10 NASB

November 17

We often associate being held with finding comfort from the wounds of life in the embrace of a trusted parent or friend or spouse. Some wounds come as the result of our sin. The same comfort from being held by another is available but often we do not pursue it due to the shame we feel at our failure. Shame has a way of keeping us from living our lives in fullness. As long as we have those hidden places of unconfessed sin we have a portion of our heart that is blocked from God's grace…and blocked from relationship with others. Our God has never turned us away when we have repented in the past, has He? Why would He reject us now? Even in our worst failures, we must learn to be quick in our repentance, run towards His outstretched arms, and find healing and restoration in that loving embrace.

Do you have any places of unconfessed sin today? Turn from them by confessing them in honesty to the Father. Receive His forgiveness and revel in His embrace.

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
Romans 8:1 NASB

November 18

The beauty of an ongoing relationship is that regardless of the season, each party in the relationship is still there for the other. I have a friend who loves me even when I fail him. Recently, he was wounded because of something I had done. Rather than cut me off and consider the relationship lost, he valued our relationship enough to point out my inconsistency as he expressed his hurt and disappointment to me. Not many people these days are willing to be honest with one another. Rather than feeling exposed and shamed by his accusations, I saw and heard and experienced his love for me to such a degree that I could not help but cross the bridge of repentance he so eloquently laid before me. It was in that restoration process that I see not only eternity in our relationship but I see the moment-by-moment work that relationship requires. Just as with my friend, the Lord makes repentance and that moment-by-moment relationship very accessible and inviting…even though repentance sometimes brings pain.

What kind of relationship with others do you have? Do you walk around in fear that you will lose them if you do or say or think the wrong thing or do you walk in absolute assurance that whether you blow it or not, they are with you? What does this mean to how you will relate to others today?

Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same {yourself,} that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?
Romans 2:1-4 NASB

Listen to the song: THANK YOU
Words & Music: Dennis Jernigan
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Verse
For all that You've done,
I will thank You
For all the You're going to do
For all that You've promised
And all that You are
Is all that has carried me through
Jesus I thank You
Chorus
And I thank You
Thank You Lord
And I thank You
Thank You Lord
Thank You for loving and setting me free
Thank You for giving Your life just for me
How I thank You
Jesus, I thank You
Gracefully thank You
Thank You

November 19

Sometimes we become so focused on the here and now that we lose sight of the hope we have in Christ. When in the middle of a storm, all we can see is the storm. Kingdom reality is that just on the other side of that storm, clear skies and calm seas await us. Kingdom perspective says that even in the middle of the storm we are not alone…that our God misses nothing. If we look to the left or right, He is there. If we glance to the front or to the back, He is there. If we look beneath us or above us, He is there. When we choose to see Kingdom reality rather than to allow the circumstances of the storm to become our focus, we will find peace in that place. Wherever our focus lies, there we will find what is of greatest value. Weeping may last for the night, but joy always comes in the morning. It is at this Kingdom realization that we must readily give thanks…right there in the middle of the storm. The most awesome of gifts has been given to us as a part of our Kingdom perspective. We have the advantage of being able to look back at other storms in our lives and remember how God got us through those storms. This builds our faith and restores our hope…that if He is our Hope and Rescuer then, nothing has changed. That is still Who He is today!

What are the current storms you face? Look back at all the storms He has brought you through thus far…and then give thanks.

I will extol You, O LORD, for You have lifted me up,
And have not let my enemies rejoice over me.
O LORD my God, I cried to You for help, and You healed me.
O LORD, You have brought up my soul from Sheol;
You have kept me alive, that I would not go down to the pit.
Sing praise to the LORD, you His godly ones,
And give thanks to His holy name.
For His anger is but for a moment,
His favor is for a lifetime;
Weeping may last for the night,
But a shout of joy {comes} in the morning.
Psalm 30:1-5 NASB

November 20

What an act of faith it is to actually thank God for what he is GOING to do! To thank God ahead of time may seem like a big deal to us – especially when going through a fiery trial. But reality is that one of the names God calls Himself is Jehovah Shammah which means 'God is There'. Since our God is omnipresent – everywhere at the same time, whether past, present, or future – He has already seen our need and already made a way. In fact, another name of God is Jehovah Jireh, which literally means 'The Lord Will Provide' or 'The Lord Has Seen'. In other words, the Lord will provide AHEAD OF TIME because He has already seen the need you will have! That is amazing! That is more than enough reason to thank Him ahead of time!

Take time today to thank God ahead of time for the provision of your needs before you even see that provision. Allow this to bring peace to your soul!

"Hear, O LORD, and be gracious to me;
O LORD, be my helper."
You have turned for me my mourning into dancing;
You have loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness,
That {my} soul may sing praise to You and not be silent.
O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You forever.
Psalm 30:10-12 NASB

November 21

Too many times we neglect to take God at His Word. Too many times we do not incorporate the promises into our daily live because we may not even KNOW His promises. A promise is an assurance that something will be done. God's Word is so full of promises that by merely reading His Word our faith and hope and peace will increase in leaps and bounds. His Word is life to our spiritual 'body'. If we do not properly nourish that 'body' we will suffer malnutrition – a spiritual famine. Jesus Himself said that we cannot live on bread alone but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Why do you suppose that is? By one Word all of creation was spoken into existence. By the Word of God comes deliverance and salvation. Jesus is the actual living embodiment of the Word – and is actually called by the name 'The Word of God' in Revelations. His Word is life and sustenance to our souls…and His Word is true…and He keeps His Word…He is THE Promise Keeper.

What are your needs today? I would challenge you to find what His Word promises concerning your specific need today. Look beyond today's cultural spin on your specific need and see the foundational principles of God's Word. There is nothing we face today that He has not addressed in His Word.

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword,
and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow,
and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature
hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him
with whom we have to do.
Hebrews 4:12-13

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all
defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.
2 Corinthians 7:1 NASB

For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that
by them you may become partakers of {the} divine nature, having escaped the
corruption that is in the world by lust.
2 Peter 1:4 NASB

November 22

I look back on my life and all the many trials I have come through. In each instance the Lord has shown Himself strong…but not always in the same ways. When I was in turmoil, His strength came in peace. When I was lost in the darkness, He became light for my blind eyes. When I was hurting, He applied the balm of His healing love to my wounds. When I was needy, He was Provider. When I was defeated, He led me to victory. When I was confused and in chaos of soul, He settled in my heart bringing peace. When I felt unworthy, He showed me how I was worth His life. God is too vast in His nature to be put in the boxes we create for Him. He is so much more than we ever imagined in the expanse of Who He is. As a new creation, I want to experience all of Him in my own identity…allowing Him to shape me even more into the image of Christ. As a child of the King, I want to see from the place He sees. He sees the extent and limitless bounds of His love and power…and that is seen from outside the boxes I have placed Him in.

What do you need to do to get outside the boxes you have placed God in?
How will this change your life today?

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him {be} the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.
Ephesians 3:20-21 NASB

November 23

Sometimes in our journey from darkness to light we get to places of such healing and hope that we can forget the One Who got us here. Whenever I begin to take credit for the victories or successes or healings in my own life something will crop up to remind me that I am not God – HE is! Even though I am almost 28 years down the road in my healing (as of this writing). I cannot allow myself to sit on the throne of my own heart for even a minute. As surely as I do the reality of my feebleness comes shining through! Sure, I have made choices along the way…but Who exactly offered the way of escape when choices came my way? And how exactly does one forget the many deserts he was carried through? How does one forget the treks through the wounds and trials of life? Yes, I made that journey toward wholeness – but not in my own strength! Even on my best day, it was Christ Who carried me…held me…calmed me…bound my wounds…made me feel worth fighting for. I do not live in the past…but I do love looking

back and remembering from where I have been brought…and thanking God for all He has done to get me through.

Allow the Holy Spirit to take you on a ‘sentimental journey’ through your past and this time see it from His perspective…and thank Him for each and every time He was there for you in some way.

Remember my affliction and my wandering,
The wormwood and bitterness.
Surely my soul remembers
And is bowed down within me.
This I recall to my mind,
Therefore I have hope.
The LORD’S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease,
For His compassions never fail.
{They} are new every morning;
Great is Your faithfulness.
Lamentations 3:19-23 NASB

November 24

When we hear stories of how God has transformed the lives of others we receive encouragement for our own lives. I enjoy sharing what God has done for me for so many reasons. As I share I am reminded that I felt so much discouragement in the darkest days of my bondage because I never heard of anyone overcoming same sex attraction. I felt utterly alone and helpless – hopeless. I do not want others to go through that, so I share freely. My main concern when sharing is that people remember that I had nothing to do with my own freedom. The bottom line is this: JESUS was the answer for every one of my questions. As I share my freedom with others I want them to know that Jesus is their answer as well. When I was alone, He was the answer. When I was discouraged, He was the answer. When I was in bondage, He was the answer. When I was in pain, He was the answer. When I was in despair, He was the answer. What is so awesome about Jesus being the Answer is that no matter how different your circumstances might be from someone else’s, Jesus is able to uniquely invade your hellish life and make a way…just as He did for me. What a great reason to give thanks.

How can you express thanks for Jesus being the Answer in your life today?

Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.
John 14:5-6 NASB

November 25

G.K. Chesterton, one of the most influential English writers of the 20th century said, “I would maintain that thanks are the highest form of thought, and that gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder.” Chesterton was considered a genius – and he was an unapologetic believer in Jesus Christ. Man far too often places himself on the throne when he believes he somehow is responsible for his own intellectual prowess. Could it be that true genius understands that everything good comes from God and that even our intellects need to be offered in service to the King? A heart of gratitude places its focus on the Creator, taking our focus from our circumstances and placing our thoughts where they belong – on the Lord and upon those who have blessed us with success. We have a God Who is Redeemer – taking us from horrible sin and placing us in right standing in relationship with Him. We have a God Who created all that is – yet desires deep fellowship of relationship with us. What does it matter what I have been through in My past? To be ungrateful is to remain a victim of my past. To be ungrateful gives sin power over me – even though that sin was dealt with! Thank God for all I have been through! What wonder and awe floods my soul when I think of how He has orchestrated even the bad episodes in such a away that salvation, deliverance, joy, and peace have made a permanent home in my heart. Think thoughts of gratitude. Stand in awe and wonder at such an amazing God. Give thanks.

Take time today to revel in all God has done. Do not focus on the hurts.
Focus on the healings. Do not focus on the failures. Focus on the triumphs.
Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from
the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.
James 1:17 NASB

November 26

We have probably all had times in our lives when we took the risk of opening our heart to someone else and then had it ripped apart by rejection. Teenagers experience this many times as they fall in and out of love. All it took for me was one rejection to become wise to the fact that putting my heart out there was an invitation to have it torn to shreds. Reality is that love does require risk. We cannot experience true love unless we are willing to risk our hearts. Often we close our hearts to anyone or avoid having our hearts broken. But we are meant to be creatures of relationship. That is where life begins and ends. To close ourselves out of a relationship is like sealing our hearts in a box and nailing it shut. We normally call such a box a coffin – and a coffin has a dead body inside. To not take the risk love requires is to effectively seal our souls in coffins

where no one can get in and we cannot get out. Jesus risked our rejection…and we all rejected Him! Yet, true love is willing to lay down its life for the object of its affection. When I think about what Christ did to get to me, everything tends to fade into peace and sanity. True love has no place for fear of rejection. True love is not about me, but about the one I love. It is in the action of actively loving that I find complete satisfaction of my own need for love. I love Jesus. Why? Because He first loved me.

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. We love, because He first loved us.
1 John 4:18-19 NASB

November 27

Have you ever been in a situation that you saw no way out of? When we are teenagers it is not uncommon to fall in and out of love…so we often find ourselves in relationships we need to get out of but remain in because we do not want to hurt the other party. That is miserable! Remember? But what is even more miserable is when we go for years and years in the bondage of sin and see no way out. Of course the enemy wants us to believe that 'this is just the way I am' or 'this is the best I can hope for' when in reality that is the furthest thing from the truth. For years I longed to get out of the prison of homosexuality and tried to escape on my own. The Kingdom perspective that I finally came to was this: I needed a Rescuer – Someone to break me out! Jesus did just that. He kicked in the door of my prison and set me free…but He did not stop there. He began to tear down the walls that had surrounded me and defined me for far too many years… and suddenly the vast vistas of freedom began to invade my vision and I never looked back. I stopped allowing the prison to define me and began to define myself as a new creation…liberated…free. Such thoughts fill my heart with gratitude. How about you?

Take time to thank God for all the times He has set you free.

It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.
Galatians 5:1 NASB

November 28

In a crowded place it is easy to get lost in the hustle and bustle…even in a church gathering…especially in a church gathering! Sin has a way of keeping us subdued and alone – even in a crowd – by threatening to expose us and humiliate us. At the same time, we all have a deep longing to be known – to be valued by someone else simply by virtue of who we are. We need look no further than Jesus. He saw you and me and saw a pearl of great price. Sin made us unworthy but He saw something of worth in us. He wanted us as His own. What was the price He paid for you, His beautiful, priceless pearl? He gave up the riches and glory of heaven to come after you. He went through physical life to show you how much He does understand your grief and your pain. He was tempted just as you were (yet without sin). He was punished for your sin. He was mocked, beaten, and scorned on your behalf. His death paid the debt your sin required… once and for all. As He paid your debt He kept you as the focus of His attention. You were the passion that sent Him to the cross. You were the pearl of great price that He gave everything He was to purchase. He gave His life…just for you.

Jesus wanted you as His own. Take time today to think about what it means to be His pearl of great price – His priceless treasure.

“The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid {again;} and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.”
Matthew 13:44-46 NASB

November 29

There is only One Who bore your sin. There is only One Who cares about every detail of your life. There is only One Who knows you better than you know yourself. There is only One Who will never leave you and never forsake you. There is only One Who conquered sin and death on your behalf. There is only One Who is able to wash us and cleanse us of our sin. There is only One able to give us a brand new identity. There is only One that is able to take even our deepest regrets, failures, and shame and make something beautiful from such a mess. His name is Jesus. Have you thanked Him today?

Spend the day reflecting on the power and majesty of the One Who did all this and more. Let gratitude be the attitude that permeates every thought and decision.

I will give thanks to the LORD with all my heart;
I will tell of all Your wonders.
Psalm 9:1 NASB

November 30

When the world closes in around you…whether stressful circumstances or the simple, hectic everyday busyness of life…we need a safe place to retreat to and refresh our souls…even if only for a few moments. For some that place may be the den. For others that place might be the golf course. For others that place may be the back porch or a walk in the woods. For some that moment may only be a few seconds of stolen time during your lunch break at work or school. For still others there may be absolutely no free time due to their circumstances. The quickest way to the place of solitude – even in a crowd – and an awareness of God's wonderful presence is to simply offer Him thanks. Thanks for His presence in a crowd. Thanks for His care and concern even when on one else notices you exist. Thanks for the way He preserves the human soul even in the harshness of life. Gratitude has a way of lifting us from our momentary stresses and transporting us right into the throne room of God. Gratitude has a way of taking even a stolen few precious moments and blessing our soul with an eternity's worth of rest and refreshment…from a Well that never dries up!

Thank Him in your stress. Thank Him in your busyness. Thank Him in the crowded streets. Thank Him for His grace and mercy. Thank Him for His ever-abiding presence in your life.

Walk in gratitude today.
In God we have boasted all day long,
And we will give thanks to Your name forever. Selah.
Psalm 44:8 NASB

Listen to: LIKE CHRISTMAS ALL YEAR ‘ROUND
Words & Music: Dennis Jernigan
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Verse
There is a feeling of joy everywhere
Like the anticipation of snow in the air
Falling down on me
Like the laughter when children see gifts ’neath the tree
Is the joy of my heart since the Lord rescued me
And joy fell down on me
Chorus
Like Christmas all year ‘round
I can’t help but sing
Hallelujah! Joy to the world! Christ is King
Jesus washed my heart much whiter than snow
And now my heart is full of joy and made whole
Gloria!
(2nd and 3rd times: Joy to the world! The Savior made me whole!)
O, come let us adore Him
Who washes white as snow
Verse
Like the joy of a mother to give to her child
Her heart’s greatest treasure
Each memory. Each smile
Christ is joy to me
Like a father who can’t wait for work to done
‘Cause when he walks thru the door he knows children will run
And I’m God’s child, you see

December 1

Don’t you love the anticipation of Christmas?! It is absolutely one of my favorite times of the year. I love the decorations. I love the hustle and bustle. I love the pursuit of just the right gift for family members and friends. I love the music. I love it all! I even love the silly old movies – especially ‘Rudolph, the Red-nosed Reindeer’! But you know what I love the most? The thought of what the birth of Jesus truly means to me, and my life. Just think about all God did to get to you. He gave up the riches and glory of heaven. The King of Kings humbled Himself and came to us in the lowliest of places – a manger. He was born in a stable and He slept in the trough where animals were fed! He was tempted just like us. He suffered our punishment and gave His life willingly…because He wanted us as His very own! When December rolls around each year I am transported to those very thoughts again and again. What joy floods my soul as I think

about the King of all wanting me – desiring intimate relationship…with me! I can't wait for Christmas!

Think about all that the Lord has done to gift your life and get you to where you are today. Do not focus on the trials but on the triumphs. Respond to Him with joy – even if your circumstances try to get you to respond otherwise.

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.
Hebrews 12:1-2 NASB

December 2

Remember what is was like as a child and reports of coming snow began to find their way to your ears? Even if we did not get much snow (we lived in northeastern Oklahoma) we knew the possibility was at least there. Even before the first flakes began to fall I would imagine standing in a field and closing my eyes and turning my face skyward and opening my tongue and finally tasting the cold, icy treat in sheer ecstasy! What joy that anticipation was…and the snow had not even begin to fall yet! As the years went by and wrong thinking and unwise choices led me into sin, sin led me into bondage. After so many years of thinking 'this is just the way I am and this is just the way it's going to be', God intervened and began to set me free. With each step out of the bondage I began to realize that God's grace was greater than my sin…and that with each drop of grace I received another measure of freedom came into my life and experience. When I opened my heart in honesty to Him those drops of grace began to come like a snowfall. As I became saturated in the purity of His grace and love all I could see was Him and all I could feel was consumed by His love. My old life had effectively been covered by the pure whiteness of His holy grace…and I became someone brand new! I guess you could say God made a snowman of me that day! Just as with the anticipation of childhood and coming snow, I look with anticipation for God's grace each and every day of my life!

In what areas do you need God's grace (the power to do His will and be His child) today? Look to Him with anticipation and receive all He brings your way.

And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.
2 Corinthians 12:9 NASB

“Come now, and let us reason together,”
Says the LORD,
“Though your sins are as scarlet,
They will be as white as snow;
Though they are red like crimson,
They will be like wool.”
Isaiah 1:18 NASB

December 3

I recall with great joy specific times from childhood Christmas experiences. For weeks we saw the gifts mounting beneath the tree. Christmas could not come soon enough for us. Each day saw the rise of expectation and the mystery of what could possibly be wrapped up in those wondrous boxes. My three younger brothers and I all slept in an upstairs room my dad had built in the attic for us. Not only did we fall asleep wondering aloud amongst ourselves as to what might be waiting for us underneath the tree…but we woke with that same wonder. Once one brother had awakened it was not long before his excitement had roused us all. Do you think we simply waited around for our parents to call us downstairs? No way! We shot down the stairs and through the house to the front room where the tree and its bounty awaited our arrival! The wonder of that moment when we finally got to see what we had dreamed of for so long still fills my heart with joy – 40 years later! Knowing Jesus has been like that. I will never forget the moment when He gave me the gifts of salvation and freedom. I had dreamed of them for years…but when they finally were opened to me they blew my expectations out of the water! He and His love were more amazing than I could have even imagined. Just as with those memories of a boy on Christmas morning, my heart is filled With joy and laughter as I DAILY experience the wonder of all God has done for me…because of His free gift of life to me.

Do you begin each day in anticipation of the Lord’s presence? Look for Him and commune with Him throughout the day today. And rejoice – laugh – because of all He has done for you!

When the LORD brought back the captive ones of Zion,
We were like those who dream.
Then our mouth was filled with laughter
And our tongue with joyful shouting;
Then they said among the nations,
“The LORD has done great things for them.”
The LORD has done great things for us; We are glad.
Psalm 126:1-3 NASB

December 4

When the Lord first set me free (there have been numerous moments of rescue since!), my heart was so full of joy. It was like being released from a prison. It was like having shackles removed from my feet. But the greatest asset of my freedom was instant intimacy with my God – the same God that I thought had hated me for most of my life! Suddenly I felt completely free to approach Him with ANYTHING. I felt like a kid whose dream was to play in the snow who suddenly finds himself in the snowfall of the century! I felt like joy was falling down on me…but I have an even better picture of that joy. When my children were small, we spent a LOT of time wrestling! Even the girls got in on it! I loved being tackled with their screaming, laughing bodies and getting so tangled up I did not know where they began and I ended! One time I saved up all my old T-shirts and put them all on at once (about 25 of them!) and dared the kids to rip them off of me! Talk about anticipation and sidesplitting laughter and unending joy…that's how I feel when I think about all the Lord did to rescue me!

Spend time pondering the way the Lord rescued you…and then 'tackle' Him with your gratitude!

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, {be} glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.
Jude 1:24-25 NASB

December 5

What would you do if the thing you had hoped for the most in life came to pass – but you only had a few days or hours to enjoy it? When I was first learning to walk in a Kingdom mindset I was ministered to deeply by a band called 2nd Chapter of Acts. Whenever they were near my area I was there! Each concert was, indeed, one of those gifts I only got to enjoy for a few hours. It was wonderful to be in such a worshipful atmosphere with people whose lives had been truly transformed…but I was always let down because the show had to end! What if the greatest gift in the world was available to enjoy day in and day out, moment by moment? What if Christmas came every day of the year? What I have come to realize in my life is that knowing Christ is exactly that – and more! The greatest gift was given and I received life and freedom as a result of the advent of Christ. But He did not leave me alone the day after Christmas. He, by virtue of His Holy Spirit, is with me each and every day…and I get to enjoy His presence any

time I choose to acknowledge Him! What a gift! What a blessing! When I think of it I cannot help but sing…because it really is like Christmas all year ‘round!

What can you do to realize God’s presence in your life today?

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, {being} more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.
1 Peter 1:6-9 NASB

December 6

Hallelujah means ‘praise the Lord’. Joy is seeing our life and circumstances from the King’s point of view. Christ is King no matter what the world around us says. Knowing that Christ is King and in control even when the national Zeitgeist (spirit of the age) is one of sexual depravity and sensual overload, a culture where fame and a sense of entitlement go hand in hand with a lack of personal responsibility is a foundational resting place for joy. Knowing that Jesus overcomes the world and that there is none greater than He (and knowing that I WIN no matter what) is a place of health and life for my soul. I am in this world but of another one. I am here for His glory and fame, not my own. I am here for His good pleasure and not to primarily seek my own. When everything around us seems to be going to hell in a hand basket we have the ability to step into the spirit realm and see reality for what it truly is. God is in control. Period. We may suffer and we may sorrow…but He will use that suffering and sorrow for His Kingdom as we have the opportunity to receive more and more of His grace to get through this life. Knowing the King and knowing that we are called for His kingdom purpose gives a whole new perspective to what life is all about. With that foundation of hope how can we not find joy? Christ IS King. Period.

Take a good long look at all the difficult places of your life…and ask the Holy Spirit to allow you to see His point of view in each of those. Live through those circumstances from that vantage point.

You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.
1 John 4:4 NASB

December 7

I placed my faith in Jesus Christ. My sins were as dark as scarlet. He washed my sin-stained heart clean, making it as white as snow in the sense of purity. What was old was suddenly made new when I became a new creation. That faith was not based on my performance. I had already established that my performance for the approval, acceptance, and love of others never satisfied or found its mark. I have kept my eyes focused on Jesus and, when focused on Jesus, I am constantly reminded of who and of Whose I am. That being said, we humans are quick to justify our sin and place degrees of severity on our sin. “My sin was nothing compared to what he did” or “I know I sometimes gossip a bit but can you believe what she said?” We tend to see certain sins like homosexuality as more vile than lying or cheating…but they are the same. They all separate us from God. If we were all sheep in a pasture, we could see degrees of whiteness or dirtiness when standing next to one another. But let the pure white snow begin to fall and cover that pasture and we would see rather quickly just how dirty and filthy each sheep had become. When dealing with our sin we must recognize that we cannot afford to compare ourselves to one another. That gives room for compromise. No, we must compare ourselves to the pure white snow of God’s holiness. When the snow of His holiness surrounds us, sin is easy to see for what it is.

Spend time taking responsibility for your sin today. Compare yourself to no one but Christ. Confess. Receive forgiveness…and then move on toward Christ.

…for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus…
Romans 2:23-24 NASB

December 8

When we place our faith in Christ and by faith receive our new identity the enemy takes great exception to our spiritually awakened state of being. He begins to double his efforts (it seems) to cause use to stumble. People sometimes ask me why I never categorize myself as a recovering homosexual. To me, that moniker places a false identity in my mind. I am either a new creation or I am not. One cannot be two identities. To try and live as two (or more, in some cases) different people (old me versus new me) is only going to bring personal conflict and lead me to being double-minded. And, according to God’s Word, to be double-minded is to be unstable. Who wants to be unstable? When I placed my faith in Christ I determined I would no longer allow my past failures, present circumstances, temptations, emotions, or anything else to determine

my identity. There is only One Who can tell me – Who even has the RIGHT to tell me – who I am. That Person is my Creator. He made me whole when I was born again. I began to change my way of thinking to align with my faith. In an instant I was made whole by faith. The journey of walking out and realizing that faith is where I find the greatest joy. I was made whole. I am being made whole. I will be made whole. That is simply the living out of my faith relationship with Jesus Christ. That truth brings me joy…and helps me put down the lies of the enemy…no matter what.

Are there any lies you are believing about yourself today? What truth do you need to put on as you put off those lies?

Jesus got up and {began} to follow him, and {so did} His disciples. And a woman who had been suffering from a hemorrhage for twelve years, came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak; for she was saying to herself, “If I only touch His garment, I will get well.” But Jesus turning and seeing her said, “Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well.” At once the woman was made well [whole].
Matthew 9:19-22 NASB

December 9

When Christ was born, the angels were commissioned to exalt and thank God for the advent – the coming – of Jesus, saying, “Glory to God in the highest!” I believe this was also a foretelling of Who Jesus was…a statement of His identity. The word for glory in this instant literally means ‘magnificence, excellence, preeminence, dignity, grace, and kingly majesty’. While each of these denotes the magnificence of the Father, these terms also denote and magnify the identity of Jesus. Jesus is the embodiment of God in human form. His splendor and magnificence are displayed in the resurrection. His excellence is displayed in His sinless life – especially since He was tempted in EVERY manner that we are tempted. His preeminence is conveyed in the fact that above His name there is no other by which mankind can be saved and set free. His dignity is made manifest in the worth He placed upon every soul in His willingness to die for every sinner. His grace is evident in the statement He made from the cross…“Father, forgive them…” And His majesty is displayed whether we recognize Him as King of Kings or not. Who He is makes the difference between eternal life and eternal death for each and every soul. Sin led me to destruction. His coming made a way out of death and destruction for me. Glory to God in the highest!

In what ways can you see the display of God’s glory in your life? Ask the Holy Spirit to help you see God’s glory in unexpected ways today and (paradoxically!) EXPECT to see Him!

And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.”
Luke 2:13-14 NASB

December 10

In my sin-damaged state before knowing Christ intimately I spent way too much time feeling the depths of my many inadequacies. With each of us the enemy seeks to destroy our God-intended identity and replace that identity with a false one, keeping us wrapped up in so many lies that we simply spiral away into destruction because the things we use to try and meet our emotional needs never satisfy. For me that was my masculine identity. As a boy I felt like a part of me was missing and that I did not even deserve to be called a boy. I felt so inadequate that I would not even put my hands in my pockets as boys do without even thinking. It was not until I was a grown, married man that I would even allow myself the freedom to do that one simple act of masculinity. When Jesus came into my life I was so transformed in my way of thinking that I soon began to think right thoughts. My right thinking led me to right attitudes. My right attitudes led me to right behavior…and suddenly what I had experienced on the inside was now very evident and naturally expressed on the outside in both attitude AND behavior. I was made whole…I was being made whole…I will be made whole! Joy to the world!

How do you view yourself? What areas of your life and identity are you most often attacked by the enemy? What must you do to put off the lies and put on the truth? Spend time today focusing on the truth.

And answering him, Jesus said, “What do you want Me to do for you?” And the blind man said to Him, “Rabboni, {I want} to regain my sight!” And Jesus said to him, “Go; your faith has made you well.” Immediately he regained his sight and {began} following Him on the road.
Mark 10:51-52 NASB

December 11

When we worship the King we focus our entire being on the magnificence of His entire being. He is worthy of all our praise simply by virtue of Who He is! We cannot worship our God without also recognizing what He has done for us. When someone has

rescued us – when our life as been saved from certain calamity or doom – we become very grateful and we tend to focus our attention on the One Who did the saving. That is good and that is right…especially as it pertains to our worship of Almighty God. Have you ever stopped to wonder just how God uses even our worship of Him for our own benefit? Here is one of my favorite Kingdom Truths: worship requires the focus of our entire being. When I worship, I must engage my mind…my emotions…my senses…my physical body in order to relate to my God in worship. The Kingdom Truth? When I am entirely consumed relationally in worship – my entire being engaged – there is no room for the enemy or his lies! While worshiping the Lord the enemy is defeated and my identity is bathed in the truth of Who He is which, in turn, reminds me of who and of Whose I am! O, come let us adore and worship Him!

Use worship as one of the weapons of your warfare against the enemy and his lies in your life today. Exalt God and watch His glory invade your existence.

{Let} the high praises of God {be} in their mouth,
And a two-edged sword in their hand,
To execute vengeance on the nations
And punishment on the peoples,
To bind their kings with chains
And their nobles with fetters of iron,
To execute on them the judgment written;
This is an honor for all His godly ones.
Praise the LORD!
Psalm 149:6-9 NASB

December 12

I don’t know about you but my old life of sin always left me feeling so dirty and unworthy. In my own mind I saw myself much as the Peanuts character Pig Pen – you know, the guy who walked around with a cloud of dirt surrounding him. My remedy in those days? Be as likable and perform as well as possible on the outside so no one will be able to see the reality of just how soiled my soul has become. Even though this outward performance often led me to feel much better about myself, I could only sustain that feeling for so long. My performance always left me lacking…because there was no substance…no money in the bank of my heart, so to speak. I kept making withdrawals but there was nothing to stand on in reality. My life was basically a shell serving to hide all the dirt and darkness I was truly defined by in my own mind. Love was longed for but never realized…until Jesus came into my life in a very tangible way. He swept me off my feet in His flood of forgiveness and love. He bought me with His own life and washed me clean by that shed blood, effectively and eternally giving me a brand new identity. The dirt and filth had been dealt with. The blinders had been lifted from my

eyes and I saw myself for the first time in the way He saw me…clean and redeemed…washed white as snow.

Focus on your cleansing today. Focus on the power of the blood of Jesus to wash your heart and soul and white as snow.

Be gracious to me,
O God, according to Your lovingkindness;
According to the greatness of
Your compassion blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity
And cleanse me from my sin.
Psalm 51:1-2 NASB
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Psalm 51:7b NASB

December 13

When I was a boy, my mother always made Christmas very special. Even though we did not have much by worldly standards, my brothers and I did not have a clue. My parents took care of us and made the holidays a time of family, making memories that would last a lifetime. We began Christmas morning unwrapping our gifts and playing with our toys. We had lunch with my grandmother Jernigan and then drove 50 miles to visit my mother's side of the family, ending up in the home of my great-grandparents. My brothers and cousins and I would have walnut wars, using the nuts remaining on the winter ground as grenades (no one lost an eye…). We would roll down the hill on our sides like human logs, laughing hysterically at our attempts to stand and walk once we made it to the bottom of the hill. We would listen to my greatgrandmother tell stories about hoop snakes and her own childhood memories… always in vivid Technicolor in my mind…which was amazing since she had been blind since childhood. We would end the evening singing carols as I played the miniature organ. On the drive home, my brothers and I would always fight over who got to stretch out in the space above the back seat of the car because we knew it would have the most grand view of the Christmas lights we passed by as we drove through the countryside back home. Whenever I got to do this, I would think back on the course of the day and savor all the fun and revel in the good feelings I can only describe as joy. Complete satisfaction that all is well. My mom helped facilitate that. And just as with those early Christmas memories, I now have One Who facilitates joy. An intimate relationship with Jesus Christ has taught me that His Kingdom point of view is the one that allows me to see what He sees…and from that vantage point I can see that, in spite of life circumstances, all is well…eternally well. What joy this brings to my soul…

At the end of this day, look back and glean from this day's memories those moments that bring joy to your soul. Bring each event of the day – good or bad – through the filter of the Kingdom point of view and see if joy doesn't have a way of finding you.

I have been young and now I am old,
Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken
Or his descendants begging bread.
Psalm 37:25 NASB

December 14

Looking back on my life and the many Christmases from my childhood I can only remember a few of the toys I received. I remember that first stick horse and the gun and holster when I was about 5 years old. I remember the 'Getaway Chase' cars and track a couple of years later. Mostly I remember the laughter and the times spent over meals with my family. My mom's pumpkin pie seemed like heaven melting in my mouth. The times spent playing with my brothers and cousins from morning until night flow back easily to my mind. The anticipation of hearing my mother and her sisters describe with glee the many escapades from their own childhoods still floods my soul each Christmas as I hope they will share the same old stories with my children. The greatest gifts were the times spent relating to one another. That was my mother's greatest gift to me. Each memory still evokes a smile in my soul and on my face. Just as with those precious gifts from my mother, I am also blessed with that same precious gift of relationship with Christ that transcends any earthly treasure or success. I could lose everything and still be a rich man for that very reason. Now that's joy…

What would you do if you lost everything? How would that really affect who you really are and how you relate to your God and to others?

"For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?"
Mark 8:36 NASB

December 15

I was lost. Jesus came to earth just for me. I know. I know. He came for every single person who would ever exist…but I take His advent so very personally. How can I not? Because He is God, He is able to carry on a deep and intense relationship with every person on the planet simultaneously! That is amazing…and because He is able to

do that, I do not have to wait in line hoping that one day I will get my turn at intimacy! It truly is as if Christ came to earth just for me! In the early days of my freedom this truth went a long way toward helping me discover my true identity in Christ. I was unique and special to Him and I was not simply another cookie cutter version of a man that God randomly caused to come into existence. I was thought out and planned and formed especially for God…for HIS pleasure and for HIS glory. Even though it has been over 28 years (as of this writing) since I was given that new identity, I am still just as ecstatic as when freedom first came. Why? Because life did not end the moment I was made new. Problems and life circumstances didn't suddenly become scenes from a Disney movie where I was instantaneously surrounded by singing birds and dancing forest animals. I needed Him more than ever! My joy is found in my dependence upon Him. It's called relationship – relationship equals life.

Meditate on all God did to engineer your existence. Think about this: how does a Kingdom point of view make you see your upbringing? The social status your were born into? Your parents? Your childhood and teen year circumstances? Find the joy in seeing how magnificently God used even what
Satan meant for evil to bring about good for the Kingdom…through YOU.

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, {it is} the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.
Ephesians 2:8-10 NASB

December 16

Some of my favorite joy-inducing memories are produced when I think back to the time when my children were small. Since I was one of those 'get-down-on-the-floor-and-wrestle-at-every-opportunity' kind of dads, I knew my children had expectations of when our next 'bout' would be. Working all day and focusing on my job was made bearable as I took time to think about how my children would respond when I walked through the door at the end of that day. Without fail they were there at the door to greet me with outstretched arms, and every time I walked in one child draped around each leg like human boots as I tried to get into the house! They were glad to see me and interact with me and I was the same with them. It was as if we could not get close enough so wrestling was where we always ended up! I loved those times. Knowing Jesus has that same expectancy of meeting with me and drawing close to me even after all these years of knowing Him infuses my heart with deep gratitude and joy. Just like a child who can't wait for their dad to get home from work, I anticipate meeting with the Lord… and relish in the fact that He anticipates it even more than I am able to!

Do you live your life expecting to have fellowship with the Lord? What kinds of things dampen or kill your expectancy? What can you do to open the door of your heart to expectancy of meeting with the Lord?

I waited patiently for the LORD;
And He inclined to me and heard my cry.
Psalm 40:1 NASB

December 17

When I think of Christmas I am always drawn back to that Baby in a manger. Jesus, the Son of God, in flesh – growing up just as I one day would grow up. The only difference is that I did not live my life without sin. My earthly viewpoint was all I had…and my earthly viewpoint kept me from seeing the truth of who God had called me to be. When I child grows up confused about their identity the enemy is able to steer that child toward destruction and despair…and that is exactly where my sin and my listening to the lies of the enemy led me to. When I think of Christmas now, all I can see is that, just as Jesus was THE Son of God, I am now – in Christ – a son of God. His child is who I am! The birth of Jesus means so much more to me now than a child's story we almost place in the fantasy realm. This story is REAL and VITAL to my existence and experience now. I am who I am because of the severe reality of the birth of Christ. All I am and ever hope to be was introduced into the human realm at the birth of Christ. I now have the privilege of living my life from the vantage point Jesus had when He entered the world. I believe He had no doubt as to Who and Whose He was. Now I walk in that same assurance. Christmas is that special time of year when we traditionally celebrate the birth of Christ. But now, it has become the time of year when I get to celebrate MY new birth as well! And the beauty is that I get to celebrate this one each and every day of the year! Hallelujah!

As Christmas day approaches, use the anticipation to remind you of Who and Whose you are. Live these next few days from the vantage point of being God's child!

See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and {such} we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.
1 John 3:1 NASB

Listen to: A CHRISTMAS BLESSING
Words & Music:Dennis Jernigan
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Verse
Merry Christmas I wish you
May joy, like snow, fall daily new
May each day find hope and truth
And memories sweet
Merry Christmas! Peace on earth!
May Christ reveal your depth of worth!
You are why He came to earth!
Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas!
From my heart – from my heart to you!
Verse
Merry Christmas! Bless you friend!
May every wound find grace to mend
Daily strength renewed again
By God's own hand!
Merry Christmas! May you see
The way God sees you and receive
His love and life abundantly!
Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas!
From my heart – from my heart to you!

December 18

The word 'merry' is usually associated with Christmas due to the use of the phrase 'merry Christmas'. The word merry literally means 'full of joy'. When breaking down the word 'Christmas we are reminded that the word 'Christ' is literally the Son of God Who came as the Savior of mankind. The rest of the word 'mas' is a shortening of the word 'mass' which means 'ceremony' and can mean celebration. When we 'wish' something on someone, such as 'we wish you a merry Christmas' we are actually speaking a blessing upon them. To wish someone a merry Christmas is to say this: "I bless you with a joy-filled celebration of the Savior'! When I say merry Christmas I am blessing someone else with the hope that I have found. When you hear those words over the next few days, take them to heart and receive the blessing – whether those speaking it 'get it' or not! And in like manner, speak it as more than a perfunctory phrase. Mean it as a blessing to those you speak it to. You will find your receive a blessing when you give a blessing. It's part of God's economy – we reap what we sow!

Take time to consciously bless others as Christmas approaches. What better time to bless people with the hope of salvation than during the time when even the

secular world is confronted with those simple little words ‘Merry Christmas’!

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.
Romans 12:14 NASB
Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.
Galatians 6:7 NASB

December 19

In the area where I live we get a few snows each year. Usually those snows have small accumulations and last for brief periods. We get very excited when it snows here. Occasionally we get periods when snow falls for several hours over a period of several days. Those times are quite magical. Falling snow means the possibility of a ‘snow day’ for school children. Falling snow paints the countryside in white brilliance that transforms the countryside into a winter wonderland. Falling snow dulls the bustle of sound emanating from the city and brings a deafening stillness to a forest glade. Falling snow builds anticipation of building a snowman…or snowball fights to come… of a batch of fresh snow ice cream. Falling snow brings a sense of peace and joy in a world of confusion and chaos. Knowing Jesus is like a falling snow that never ends…that brings forth a point of view that makes living and abundant life even possible. Knowing Jesus is like falling snow…bringing joy and emanating peace. And unlike the snows I am accustomed to, the snowfall of knowing Jesus is a snow that falls daily. I just need to step outside the earthly point of view to see and bask in…daily.

What do you need to do today to step outside the earthly point of view and enjoy the snowfall of His presence?

He makes peace in your borders;
He satisfies you with the finest of the wheat.
He sends forth His command to the earth;
His word runs very swiftly.
He gives snow like wool;
He scatters the frost like ashes.
Psalm 147:14-16 NASB

December 20

What if we woke up every day and, instead of dreading what the day would bring, we began the day with anticipation and hope? What a world that would be! The lies of the enemy and our own very real experiences with pain and suffering have a way of causing us to see only with earthly eyes. We serve a God Who has transformed us from the old life of sin into an abundant life of victory over sin…yet we still have to live in that sin-stained world, don't we? So how do we live without losing hope? Where do we look to find hope and truth? During this time of the year when we focus so much on the coming of Christ perhaps the better question might be 'from what vantage point do we look to find our hope and truth?' Learning to see from God's perspective and then living our lives according to what we see is an absolute shortcut into the realm of hope and truth. It is from that vantage point that we can see life where the world only sees death. From there we can see peace in the midst of chaos. From that magnificent vista we can see order and healing where there is only confusion and pain. Because we serve a God Who is with us each moment of life we have the ability to live in truth. It is living in THE Truth of Jesus Christ that we create a place for hope and love and life to spring forth from. In the process God grants us times of sweet memories we can hold on to like precious treasure…even when we lose everything. The best memories are those born of relationship. Relationship with family and friends. Relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Take time to savor the memories of Christmases past today. See if you can find God's perspective even if some of those memories evoke pain or regret. Ask the Lord to allow you to see even those memories from His point of view.

This is the day which the LORD has made;
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
Psalm 118:24 NASB

December 21

How in the world does one find peace on earth when there is no peace on earth? We have to look no further than the day's news reports to hear of all manner of conflicts. Suicide bombers. Terrorist attacks on innocent people. War after war. Children beaten to death by parents. Women battered by abusive husbands. Political maneuvering that more resembles manipulation than compassion. Earthquakes that kill thousands. Tornados and hurricanes. Tidal waves and floods. Famine and pestilence. Need I go

on? If we are honest we can say there are pockets of peace on earth – but much chaos and confusion that demonstrates anything but peace as a whole. Mankind is not born good and innocent, as many would have us believe. Mankind is born in sin. Sin is the catalyst of confusion and chaos. Until the sin problem is addressed we will always have a lack of peace. We cannot make someone be at peace…just look as near as your local prison to verify that fact. The one person we can affect is our self. But even we cannot bring peace to our own soul. The best thing we can do is to seek Jesus and find our needs met in Him Who dealt with sin once and for all. We, in turn, live our lives in such a way that peace permeates our existence. The sweet fragrance of that peace will then become like the scent of a cinnamon candle we smell at Christmas time, evoking an atmosphere that says, “Peace dwells here. And you are welcome to rest your soul with me.” Is there any better way to say ‘Merry Christmas’ than to let a hurting, sin-tossed soul find refuge in your Christ-focused life?

Be aware of those around you today who are allowing the busyness and chaos of life to dictate their existence. Consciously be ready to be a place of refuge for them. Light a candle with your life…

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things?
2 Corinthians 2:14-16 NASB

December 22

Why did Jesus come to earth? I’m sure the rich glory of heaven was a tad bit more appealing than a life of being tempted on earth. And what about the endless peace and joy in that heavenly realm as opposed to the reality of the suffering and pain and death He would endure here in our world? What drove Him to come? What led to His advent? Here is what I believe. He WANTED you. He wanted you as His own. He wanted relationship with you so much that He was willing to leave the fathomless magnificent realm of heaven and be a part of this finite sin-soaked world. The coming of Christ reveals just how much you are worth to Him! He did whatever it took to get to you. He was tempted like you. He felt pain like you. He knew disappointment like you. He knew betrayal like you. He felt the weight of life like you. You were worth His life to Him. Talk about making for a merry Christmas! You are the reason He even came! What does that tell you about your worth and value that no one on earth can even come close to expressing?! Celebrate His coming and receive the blessing of how valuable you are to Him.

Let this day be a day of fresh awareness of your worth. Express that worth in worship toward Him. Express that worth by living your life in such a way that others feel valued and worthwhile in YOUR presence.

For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
Romans 5:6-8 NASB

December 23

Why did Jesus come? He came to seek those who were lost? Who were the lost? Those who had been separated from God by sin. Who are those separated from God by sin? Every last one of us! Jesus wanted to restore what sin had severed way back in Eden. God created us for fellowship with Him. That fellowship was broken by sin and we LOST OUR WAY. I did not find Jesus. I was the lost one. He found me! Let us never forget that truth. We could not save ourselves from sin. We could not redeem ourselves. We could never have met the requirements on our own. Jesus Christ came to bridge the gap between us and the One Who created us. You and I are why He came.

Celebrate His coming by thanking Him for finding you today. Remember how lost you were? Rejoice in how found you are now!

“For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”
Luke 19:10 NASB

December 24

My greatest blessings come not from the gifts I receive. Mind you, I LOVE to receive gifts! But, in all truth and honesty, after the gifts fade away what remains is relationship and the memories created as lives intermingle on common ground of knowing Jesus Christ. My greatest blessings come from pouring out my life to and for others…regardless of whether we share the common Foundation of Jesus Christ. A gracious smile speaks volumes to a passing stranger. A kind word speaks encouragement to a weary acquaintance. A helping hand to that one who has dropped their shopping bags and scrambles in vain to retrieve the contents among the throng of

hurried holiday shopper's feet. A look of understanding or a simple touch on the shoulder brings comfort to a hurting soul. It is when we pour out of our own life of abundance in Christ that we begin to discover the true Reason for the season. Jesus came as a gift to the world, seeking to save that which was lost. We are grafted into His purpose when we are born again. Wish many a Merry Christmas with your life…every day of every year.

Be conscious of opportunities that arise to bless others around you. Give yourself as a gift today.

For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with {me} in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel…
2 Timothy 1:6-10 NASB

December 25

Think on this today as you cherish your family and friends and bask in all God has done by sending Jesus into this world on your behalf. You are His workmanship, created for His pleasure. You are His child. You are righteous in nature because you have been granted a new nature in Christ. You are a man/woman of peace. You are a man/woman set apart for God's service. You are the head and not the tail. You are a mighty man/woman of valor. You are victorious over sin and death because He is victorious over sin and death. You are a conduit for the light of the world because He lives in and through you. You are precious to Him and He takes great delight in your presence. He rejoices over you with singing. You are loved…no matter what. My gift to you today? My personal translation of Zephaniah 3:17.

Meditate on this today and allow this same attitude to permeate how you relate to those you spend time with. Listen well and hear His song… The eternal self-existent God, the God Who is three in one; He Who dwells in the center of your being is a powerful and valiant warrior. He has come to set you free, to keep you safe, and to bring you victory. He is cheered and He beams with exceeding joy and takes pleasure in your presence. He has engraved a place for Himself in you and there He quietly rests in His love and affection for you. He cannot contain Himself at the thought of you and with the greatest of joy spins around wildly

in anticipation over you...and has placed you above all other creations and in the highest place in His priorities. In fact, He shouts and sings in triumph, joyfully proclaiming the gladness of His heart in a song of rejoicing! All because of you!
Zephaniah 3:17
(Translation by Dennis Jernigan)

December 26

I am one of those people who seem to be easily wounded. Perhaps the better perspective would be I am one of those people whom God allows to feel emotions on a very deep level! Either way, I have had my share of woundings… physical… mental… emotional. What I have come to know is that with every episode of wounding I find that God's grace is there from the initial moment of damage when it seems this is the blow that finally keeps me down. He faithfully loves me through the initial pain and begins the healing process, deftly guiding me through the necessary abrading of the wounds and subsequent cleansings required all along the way. Often times, holidays tend to dredge up old familial wounds that cause us to relive past hurts. Instead of dwelling on the past, I have learned to let the past stay in the past…forgive when necessary…seek forgiveness when possible…thank God for lessons learned…and continue to pour out my life relationally regardless of any past wounds. To stop loving because one is afraid of being hurt is literally signing one's own death sentence. It is also amazing to me that healing for wounds comes from that same willingness to risk being hurt…because true healing is born of relationship. Physical healing does not take place if the cells of my body do not communicate and share life with one another. Emotional and/or mental healing does not come if I do not communicate and share life with others who love me and care about my healing. Regardless of whether I feel loved by someone else, I have purposed to love and to continue to risk being hurt and rejected. It is in that relational reaching out that I am met with God's grace…every time.

As you recuperate from the holidays, look back on the time spent with family and friends and see even (if any) hurtful encounters from God's perspective… and then go do the Kingdom thing…forgive…seek forgiveness…build the right relationship.

He who conceals a transgression seeks love,
But he who repeats a matter separates intimate friends.
Proverbs 17:9 NASB

December 27

There come times in each of our lives when we just grow tired – tired of working so hard to make ends meet – tired of the continual onslaught by the enemy against the holy lives we try to lead – tired of doing what's right in the sense that we do not always see results from the amount of labor we put into doing the right thing. Sometimes our priorities can get out of alignment with the reality of our humanness. Sometimes we allow things to take on an urgency that they really do not warrant. Will the house fall apart if I don't get the vacuuming done today? Will the children really be well adjusted if I don't work overtime today to buy that gaming system they've been begging for? Will that person really fall into oblivion if I don't forsake time with my family to rescue them? One of the things that will help us prioritize is to always remember this: we are no one's Savior. There is only One! Of course we are to work hard…but do we rest just as hard and allow refreshment to come to our body and soul? Of course we are to care for our children and provide for our families, but do the wants of our children supercede their needs at the risk of us parents burning out? Of course we are called to be minister to others, but at the expense of our first priority to our own children? We must learn to rest and rest well. Our rest comes from the Lord…and He calls us to rest from our labors (physical, mental, etc.) and to rejuvenate our body and soul.

Have you taken time to rest this week? Purpose to rest from your labors – all labors – at least sometime each week. Let the Savior be the Savior and you rest in being the servant…the servant He calls to rest…and do not allow guilt to keep you from that rest. The house will be fine. The children will be fine. Those you minister to will be fine. And YOU will be fine and rejuvenated in the process to be that minister God has called you to be.

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; {in it} you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.
Exodus 20:8-11 NASB

December 28

Can you think of anything better than being able to see yourself the way your Creator sees you? In a sense, every single person on earth is on a quest to find out that

very thing. Sin sees to it that we seek to satisfy that need in unholy – and unintended – ways. Sex outside of marriage. Drugs to numb the pain of life. Pride to keep us seeking the spotlight. Possessions to keep our hands grasping for what is not eternal. Jesus paved the way for us to become new creations, saved and set free from our old sin-identities. As we learn to seek the King in this relationship, we learn to see our lives – and our own identities – as He does. We are tempted to define ourselves by past failures. He sees us victorious over them. We are tempted to define ourselves by what we are tempted by. He sees us as passionate seekers of Truth. We are tempted to define ourselves by our circumstances. He sees us as Kingdom Seekers. What a blessed and precious gift He gave the world when He gave us the ability to see what He sees. That makes for a good life. That makes for an abundant life. That makes for a victorious life. That makes for a very Merry Christmas!

Spend time today asking the Lord to let you see yourself as He sees you… then act like you believe it!

But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God {sees} not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”
1 Samuel 16:7 NASB

December 29

Something the Lord has convicted me about many times is that I must learn to be a good receiver. Due to my past, I often allow the enemy to convince me I am unworthy of any good things…that I am worthy of rejection, but that is such a lie. Jesus wanted me for His very own…and gave everything to purchase my redemption. My desire truly is to be a giver, but I am learning that the best givers are actually those who have learned to receive unapologetically. I was never born again until I let go of my pride and reached out and received the free gift of salvation He offered me. I was never able to overcome my fear of rejection until I received the unabashed love He offered me right where I was. I was never able to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit until I received that power and those gifts. Reality boils down to this: I cannot be an abundant conduit of His blessing, love, and abundance unless I have received it myself! The most beautiful thing about receiving His love and His life in abundant measure is that I have the joy of giving it away to those around me! I want all God has for me in this life…but if I do not think I can have it or if I do not think I deserve it, I will never step up and receive it. God gave freely to me when I did not deserve it. His love is unmerited and free for the receiving. It is in the act of receiving Him and His gifts on a deeply personal relational level that love and life become powerfully real and fulfilling.

What do you need from the Lord today? Have you asked Him to meet those needs? Get love and life today…then give it away…and watch the world come to the doorstep of your heart to have their needs met.

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.
James 1:5 NASB

December 30

Yes, Christmas Day has come and gone, but that does not mean you have to stop giving away the gift of knowing God that you received because of the coming of Christ. Jesus Christ truly is the greatest gift the world has ever known. Knowing Him is the key to an abundant earthly life and the assurance of an eternal life with Him. We who have received the gift of salvation in knowing Christ are commanded to go and make disciples – to spread the love we have experienced to those who do not know Him yet. I think one of the greatest gifts I can give anyone is to introduce them to the love of Christ. One of the greatest ways to express worship and thanksgiving to Him for all He has done for me is to turn around and tell someone else of all He has done. It's like I get to say Merry Christmas all year 'round because I get to keep on giving away the gift of Jesus all year 'round! A new year is about to dawn. Would you be willing to love God and love others as if it were Christmas all year 'round?

Make today a day of vision. Ask the Holy Spirit to begin showing you new and adventurous ways to express the love of Jesus Christ to those you will come into relationship with this year.

Delight yourself in the LORD;
And He will give you the desires of your heart.
Psalm 37:4 NASB

December 31

Receive this blessing from the Lord's Word – from His heart – for you during the coming year…and be quick to bless others with these same gifts. Speak these truths often and loudly to your soul, to the enemy, and to the Lord…
I am…
…Dead to sin

…Born again
…Cleansed by the blood
…Alive to God
…A victorious runner of the race
…A child of destiny and purpose
…Eternally His
…Found
…Free
…Holy and righteous because He is holy and righteous
…An overcomer
…Redeemed
…Crowned with victory
…Restored
…Resurrected to new life
…A new creation
…A servant of the Most High God
…A mighty warrior
…Royalty
…A receiver of visions and dreams
…Chosen
…A trophy of grace
…A delight to my God
…Accepted
…A part of the Bride of Christ
…A Kingdom Seeker!!!!!!!

Seek the Kingdom first in the coming year…by seeking first the King. And walk in the identity He has formed you to be. Walk in your identity as a child of the King – a Kingdom Seeker.

But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION,
A PEOPLE FOR {God's} OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim
the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light…
1 Peter 2:9 NASB