

What I'm Most Thankful For

By Joyce A. Stevens

When asked, “What are you most thankful for?” Most people say their family, and that’s a good response. One is blessed to have a loving and caring family. What I am most thankful for, however, is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who died on the cross for us that we may have life and have it more abundantly. Though his suffering was excruciating, He endured it for us. I am thankful that He did not decide to come down off the cross.

During my walk with the Lord, I have had many trials and tribulations as we all do. One of which is my struggle with an illness called Pulmonary Artery Hypertension (PAH), an illness that causes high blood pressure in the arteries that supply blood to the lungs. Symptoms include fatigue, dizziness and shortness of breath. There is no cure—only medication to ease the symptoms. I have been fighting this illness for over twenty (20) years. Presently, only one lung is functioning. Although things might get rough at times, I know that God will not put any more on me than I can bear. I have faith that the Lord will work things out for me in His own time.

To help me in this battle, I am thankful that God has placed in my life a loving, caring, patient, and understanding husband, who has taken every step with me. He has also blessed us with a son whom we both love and adore. He is a blessing to us. I will continue my fight to conquer and defeat this illness. Through your prayers, my sisters and brothers, I know I shall be victorious. Let us pray for each other and “watch God change things.”

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“Growing in Faith”

“We live by faith, not by sight.” II Corinthians 5:7 (NIV)

What is faith? Faith is the unquestioning belief, complete trust or confidence in God. Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. (Hebrews 11:1)

One may ask, how do we obtain Faith? Romans 10:17 tells us “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”. One must first hear the Word of God and then believe.

Let’s look at a two Old Testament Faith Heroes:

ABRAHAM: Abraham was a model of faithfulness for Christianity. The age of 75, God told Abraham to leave his home Haran and go to a strange and unknown land that He would show him. The Lord promised Abraham that He would make him and his descendants a great nation. Abraham’s faith allowed him to obey God without doubt. It took twenty five years for God to make good on his promise. The crucial test of Abraham’s faith came when God commanded him to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac. Abraham was obedient and willing to sacrifice Isaac, but God intervened, saved Isaac and reaffirmed His promise to Abraham, as a result of his unquestioning faith and obedience.

Job: Job’s faith was tested beyond belief by Satan, but Job had unwavering faith in God. Job was a prosperous, prestigious man who had seven sons and three daughters and many possessions. Job was a blameless and upright man who feared God and shunned evil. All Job owned as well as his children were destroyed or taken away. His body was afflicted with painful boils from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head, and though his wife suggested he should curse God and die, Job kept his faith in God. What great faith. Do you have half the faith of Job? If you lost everything you had, would you still trust God?

The more I study; I find the bible is based on faith. Hebrews 11:6 tells us that and without Faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him (God) must believe that He exists, and that He rewards those who earnestly seek him. The entire eleventh chapter of Hebrews tells of those who placed their faith and trust in God. In Matthew 21, Jesus tells his disciples they can pray for anything and all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

There have been times that I’ve prayed for something for years and I thought Jesus did not hear me. When discouragement was setting in and I was about to give up, is when Jesus stepped in and blessed me with better than I had I prayed for. I realized that Jesus had heard me all along, but He does things in His time, and though I had to wait, He had something much better in store for me. It’s easy to trust God when things are well but the testing of our faith comes when our prayers seem to go unanswered and God makes us wait. We need to remember

(Phil. 4:13 & 19) which states, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me, and God will supply all my needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus". It's sometimes easier to tell others to have faith and hold on to Jesus and believe in his promises when they are going through times of testing, but when the shoe is on the other foot, we can lack the faith we speak of. We must learn to pray in FAITH and BELIEVE in his PROMISES as well as BELIEVING that His will, will be done (James 5:13-16).

Where are you in your faith? Do you have Great faith (Mat 8:10); Mustard seed faith (Matt: 17:20); Strong faith (Romans 4:20); Weak faith (Romans 14:1); Rich faith (James 2:5) or No faith (Mark 4:40)?

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“Standing in Wisdom”

As we approach this Thanksgiving Holiday season I thank God for Wisdom! It is the very thing that is missing in a lot of our young men and women’s lives. I remind myself how God has blessed me to be in the company of Women of Wisdom (I call them my WOWs)...They range in age from 60 thru 100 years of age. Although life for me has not been without challenges; my blessings far exceed any difficulties I may have faced. In the midst of death and suicide...hurt and pain...war and confusion...Pollution & Poverty...I am thankful that I can get up, pick up, pull up and put on, and still paint the world and those in as Beautiful!...

As I reflect over my life, I realize I did not go it alone. I am thankful for a loving mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother, three doting sisters (that are the best therapist in the world), and a host of family members and extended family members that helped me along this journey. So in reflecting on Thanksgiving, I thank God for the Women of Wisdom in my life.

I give thanks by dedicating the following poem to the women in my life:

Standing in Wisdom

(Inspired by the book of Proverbs)

Sitting at her feet I basked in her Wisdom like basking in the Sun
Hanging and holding on to her every word as if I may not get another
opportunity

Tucked away her thoughts in my heart, beneath my pillow...
Another Day, Another Conversation...Another lesson learned...

Wisdom really asked for nothing in return...just taking a little of my time...
Knowing if I allowed her to take a few hours, minutes, days...
She just may prolong my life...

I wore Wisdom like high quality velvet...folding her away in the trunk and
Cedar robes of my memory bank...
Rocked in the bosom and upon the laps of Wisdom...Held closely in the arms
of wisdom
Resting and laying in the basinetts and cribs of Wisdom...

Took long strolls...pushed in the stroller of Wisdom, found reasons and made
Excuses just to hang out with Her...Played on the Playground Of Wisdom
Skipped along the sidewalks of life holding the hands of Wisdom

Solomon dedicated his life to finding her...God's Word speaks Poetry about
Wisdom...

"Happy is the man who finds Wisdom....Her proceeds are better than fine
Gold...

She is more precious than Rubies...and all the things you may desire can not
compare with Her...

Length of days is in Her right hand, in her left hand are riches and honor"...

Lurking around the corners and standing on the corners looking out for
Wisdom...

Feeling like a junkie looking for my next fix of Wisdom
Hiding out in unknown places to get just a glimpse of Wisdom...

Now Today ...
"I Am Standing In Wisdom"

Cassandra Walton is a Poet, Producer, Song Writer and Spoken Word Artist. She refers to Poetry as "Spoken Music" and attributes her Mother's beautiful, melodic Opera & Gospel singing to her success as a Poet. She is a native of New Orleans, given her foundation in the south, and an opportunity to spread her wings in the West for the last 18 years. The author of the inspirational poem "You Can't Walk in Her Shoes".

www.cdbaby.com/cd/cookingwithpoetry
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Compassion without Strings Attached

“The story of the Good Samaritan”(Luke 10:25-37)

In this text, a lawyer is trying to justify himself by asking Jesus the question, “Who is my neighbor?” I believe he is asking as if he already knows the answer. Jesus replies to this question by telling him a story filled with revelation as to how we should evaluate how we show compassion to others. In this story a man is wounded by thieves and there are several responses to his situation.

To a lawyer, this wounded man becomes only a topic of discussion.

To some thieves, this wounded man becomes someone to use and exploit.

To some religious men (a priest and a Levite), this wounded man becomes someone to avoid.

To an innkeeper, this wounded man becomes a customer to serve for a fee, however to this “Good” Samaritan (in spite of the deep hatred between the Jews and the Samaritans), this wounded Jewish man is a human being worthy of being cared for and loved. After all, to Jesus all of them and all of us were worth dying for.

How do you view the wounded around you? Are you a compassionate neighbor or do you give of yourself looking for something in return? True Compassion requires one to evaluate one's motivation for showing kindness. You never see this Samaritan man bragging about showing kindness to the wounded man nor do you see him seeking compensation for services rendered. You see his compassion yielding corresponding action. You see him covering the wounds of the wounded, pouring oil and wine on them (both were significant for healing), providing a safe place or shelter for him, and taking care of him i.e.; making sure he receives physical food to sustain him(James2:8,15&16). In v,35 of the text, the Samaritan even commits to seeing his act of kindness through to completion. He states that he's coming back to finish what he started. Sometimes your commitment to serve extends beyond one random act. In some cases one random act of kindness may never be enough! This man shows compassion without strings or looking for anything in return.

Our giving of compassion should reflect the love of God, glorifying Him and not ourselves (Matt 5:16 & Ps.100:3). God showed His love for us by giving of Himself; His Son. Jesus gave His life as a ransom for all who would believe. His Spirit dwells within us and enables us to give to others

selflessly and without strings attached. Let us follow the demand of The Lord Jesus as he speaks to this lawyer about being a “good” neighbor to “Go” and “Do” as this Samaritan.

“Seven Detestable Things”

“There are six things the Lord hates, *seven* that are detestable to Him.”
Proverbs 6:16 (NIV)

We’ve been taught that our God is a God of love, and He is. He is also a God of justice, who hates sin. There are seven named sins in Proverbs 6:16-19 that we are told God finds detestable. We are going to focus on the first one in this article.

The first sin that is mentioned is a haughty or proud look. It’s almost impossible to live in this world that places a premium on being proud and not develop pride or a haughty spirit. We are taught early in our lives to strive to be number one. We are instructed to be proud of our accomplishments and those of our loved ones. The kind of pride God is speaking of in this scripture is one that looks down on others because of a sense of intellectual, physical, social, economic or racial superiority. Through the scriptures, God is saying that He hates this kind of pride/arrogance. It’s one that exalts itself while debasing others.

I’ve been in the company of those, even the saints of God, who find nothing wrong with exalting themselves above measure. They have a very high opinion of themselves and a low opinion of everyone else. If they were involved in anything, they would use words, such as awesome, great, excellent and fantastic to describe what happened. If it concerned someone else, the description is limited to “all right.” My mother use to advise us not to brag on ourselves. She asserted that if you are good, someone else will notice it and say something about it. My mother was appalled by those who were constantly tooting their own horns. The Bible tells us in Proverbs 27:2, “Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; someone else, and not your own lips” (NIV).

I’m reminded of a parable (story with a heavenly meaning) located in Luke 18:9-14. It’s a story of a Pharisee and a Tax Collector who went to the temple to pray. The Pharisees in Jesus’ day were regarded as holy and righteous men, while Tax Collectors were seen as sinners, because of their dishonest practices in collecting taxes. In this story we are told that both men stood while praying, which was the standard posture for praying among some Jews. The Pharisee began his prayer by thanking God that he was not like other men – robbers, evildoers, adulterers – or even like this Tax Collector. Can you imagine listening to someone praying in such a manner today? He went on to tell God about how often he fasted and how much he tithed. His prayer was not one of God-exaltation but one of self-exaltation. The Pharisee was spiritually arrogant. He bragged about his charitable deeds, exalted himself and put others down while praying to God. (Read Matthew 6:2-4, 16-18).

There is nothing wrong with fasting or tithing. We should fast and tithe, but it is wrong to boast about it. Conversely, the Tax Collector who was considered a sinner by the Jews, would not even look up while he prayed. He stood afar off, beat his chest and cried, “Lord have mercy upon me, a sinner.” What a difference in attitude! The religious leader was over-confident of his righteousness, but the Tax Collector was aware of his need for repentance. Jesus said that because of

his humility, the Tax Collector, rather than the Pharisee, went home being justified by God. Jesus finished the story by saying that everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the person who humbles himself will be exalted.

In Philippians 2:6-8 the word of God tells us, “Who (Jesus) being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God, something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He *humbled* Himself and became obedient to death- even death on a cross.” Jesus is the example of how we should live and what our attitudes should be toward others. We are not to exalt ourselves above measure and look down on others. God does not want us to have low self-esteem, nor does He desire that we have an unrealistic self-image. The image of who we are should be tied to our relationship with Jesus. The Bible tells us that every good and perfect gift comes from above (James 1:17a).

The Apostle Paul said it well, “By the grace of God, I am what I am (1 Corinthians 15:10a). We are who we are, only by the Grace of God. Throughout the Bible we read that God hates the proud. He hates the attitude of the proud. It’s best if we have a realistic view of ourselves. A low self-image is not good. It makes one feel too unworthy and hopeless. On the other hand, if we have an exalted self-image, it creates independence from God and dependence on ourselves and our abilities. The Bible tells us to examine ourselves. Who are you most like in this story, the Pharisee or the Tax Collector? Ask the Lord to help you develop a realistic self-image that will bring glory to His name.

To be continued.....

In His Service,

Shirley Freeman

"Father Knows Best"

God has a destination for all of us. He knows exactly how He wants our lives to turn out from the moment He creates us. It is up to us, though, to seek Him in order to get His road map for our lives. Like any journey, we will inevitably be confronted with some deep valleys & high mountains to climb. We must prepare ourselves to go through both highs and lows, if we plan to make it to our ultimate destination. It helps if we take the time to remember that no matter what road blocks we face, God's desires for our lives are right on the other side of them.

Like most women I know, I grew up without a father. Don't get me wrong, he lived in the same house with me. He just wasn't there for me very often. This article, though, is not about what my father didn't do for me. It's about what he did do and how it has impacted my life. When I was 17 years old, 2 pivotal things happened: My parents divorced after 18 years of marriage & my mom and I moved from Houston to San Francisco.

I remember the day we left like it was yesterday. My father came to pay me a visit. He sat me down at the dining room table & proceeded to explain in great detail the difference between creation and evolution. This came as no surprise. My dad had been teaching me the Word since I was about 7 years old. Twice a week, he would sit me down and fully equipped with several bibles, bible dictionaries and atlases, he would teach me scriptures and biblical stories. On this particular day, however, after about 2 hours of explaining, he stood up; shook my hand and told me to have a good life. Let me paint this picture: I was moving to another state for good. He didn't know if or when he would ever see me again. ...and he shook my hand? That hurt me, because I thought that was an inadequate, inappropriate expression of his love, given the circumstances.

I WAS WRONG!! What I now know is that my father was expressing his love in the best way possible. He may not have known how to be a very gentle or affectionate father, but he did know how to lead me to the Father that I could have an intimate relationship with. He knew that I was going outside the realm of his care and protection. So, he guided me to the One who could provide for my every need. It has taken me almost 20 years to see that my father gave me the most precious gift he could give me. He instilled in me a love for Christ at a very young age. He laid a foundation that has been my strength during some of the toughest struggles of my life. I have never been more grateful than I am right now for my father's insight & wisdom.

So, why am I sharing this story with you? It is because I am hoping that my experience will encourage someone to view their past & present circumstances differently. I thought that my father left me lacking something, when in actuality, he had given me all that I needed a long time ago. When someone hurts us or something takes place in our lives that we don't understand, we carry it with us.. It weighs on us and often hinders us from truly experiencing joy and serving to our full capacity. ...But if you will take those issues and situations to the Lord in prayer and trust Him with them, He, alone, can bring to the light both truth & understanding. We are reminded in I Corinthians 14:33 that God is not the author of confusion. He is able to make sense out of even the most perplexing occurrences in our lives, and more importantly, He desires to do so. He only requires that we be willing to lay them down before Him. All my life, I've heard people say, "Just let go and let God." I will be honest in saying that until very recently I didn't know how.

Now, that I've discovered how, I want to share it with you. If we are not careful, we can spend a lifetime being angry, confused or depressed over things over which we have no control, or we can make a conscious decision, to acknowledge God in His sovereignty, and ask how we might improve our outlook. That's what happened with my father. The

situation did not change. It could not change; it was in the past. However, when I gave it to God, He changed me and my perception of the situation, and it has made all the difference in my life. So, start with prayer and forgiveness. Then, let the Lord bring the peace that passeth all understanding (Philippians 4:7). He has a way of turning hardships and challenges into opportunities and blessings. Just leave it in God's hands. After all, He knows what's best for us.

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“Godly Leadership during Uncertain Times”

Part I

Scripture References: Exodus 2-40, Numbers 12, Hebrews 11: 23-29

During these times of economic crisis, threats of war, terrorist invasion, job loss and other uncertainties, many will look to their leaders, both spiritual and political, for help and direction. It was during a time like this, in which God raised up a leader, to deliver His (God’s) people out of bondage.

Moses was born during the time the Jews were enslaved in Egypt. A decree was sent out from Pharaoh to kill all Hebrew male infants. In order to save his life, Moses’ mother (Jochebed) placed him in a basket into the Nile River. Through the providence of God, Pharaoh’s daughter found the child and raised him as her own. God had a purpose and a plan for Moses’ life and no decree from Pharaoh, nor any other circumstance, would be able to frustrate or cancel that plan. Everything that was going to happen to Moses would prepare him to become one of the greatest leaders in Israel’s history. According to Romans 8:28, God will cause all things to work out for the good, for those who love Him, and are called, according to His purpose.

Although Moses was brought up and educated in the ways of the Egyptians, he did not forget, nor was he ashamed of whom he was. The Bible tells us that he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, but preferred to suffer along with his people. In order to be a good leader, you must be secure in who you are. You must not allow how others feel about you, or what they say about you, to define you. Moses had a great sense of right and wrong and was always fighting injustice. He killed an Egyptian Overseer who was beating a Hebrew slave. On another occasion he witnessed two Hebrews fighting each other and attempted to make peace between the two. He shortly after flees Egypt for fear of his life. Pharaoh became aware that Moses was responsible for the Overseer’s death and threatened to kill him. He ends up in Midian where he again comes to the defense of Jethro’s daughters against Midianite Shepherds, while hauling water for their father’s sheep.

Moses married Zipporah, one of Jethro’s daughters and spends forty years being shaped and molded by God for a specific purpose. He no longer has the confidence in himself that he once had when he was younger. He’s now eighty years old and has no idea that God will use him in a mighty way to deliver the Israelites out of Egypt. Moses meets God through a burning bush, and after he’s given instructions, heads back to Egypt to carry out God’s orders. After a series of ten plagues, Pharaoh allows the Hebrews to leave Egypt.

He spent forty years leading stubborn, rebellious, unbelieving and ungrateful people. On a number of occasions they plotted to kill Moses and were constantly murmuring against him. In spite of their rebellion, Moses displayed great love and compassion toward them. He always interceded on their behalf and came to their defense. When God threatened to kill them all, it was Moses who prayed that their lives be spared. He prayed for his brother

Aaron and his sister Miriam, when they incurred God's anger by speaking against him, and he never placed his own needs above the needs of the people.

During these uncertain times, we need leaders who will emulate the qualities that made Moses a man God could use. One of the most amazing characteristics of Moses to me was his meekness. Scripture tells us that he was the meekest man on the face of the earth, during his life. It's almost unheard of these days that someone who is given such authority and power would be humble. Because of his humility and obedience to God, he was able to ask of God something that no one has ever asked again, "Show Me Your Glory." He wanted to know God more intimately, so he would know how to please God. He knew that being in the presence of God would give him strength to endure all of the challenges he faced leading God's people. He would go often to the Tent of Meeting away from the crowd, to spend time communicating with the Lord. Godly leaders must not allow the busyness of everyday activities to prevent them from hearing from God. Moses refused to take a step without the presence of God. When God said He would not go with them, Moses said to the Lord, "If you don't go with me, I'm not going." He knew that the only way he could succeed was if God was with him. Too often leaders try to do things in their own strength and underestimate the importance of God's guidance and presence.

Moses was a Godly Leader because:

- He met with God regularly in prayer
- Interceded for those he led
- Showed humility, love and compassion
- Was a man of great integrity
- Understood the need for God's continued presence for success
- Placed the needs of others above his own
- Knew the importance of mentoring

Moses was called the friend of God and though he was not perfect, always wanted to please God. He was a Prophet, Lawgiver, Administrator and Intercessor. Let's pray that God will raise up men and women during these uncertain times, who will lead with the meekness, humility and compassion of Moses.

“Godly Leadership during Uncertain Times”

Part 3 – The Lord Jesus Christ

This is the last of our three part series on Godly Leadership during Uncertain Times. In our previous articles we focused on the leadership styles and abilities of Moses and the Apostle Paul. Though these men were great leaders who accomplished much, they are no match for the leadership abilities of our Savior. Our final article on this subject will focus on Jesus, the greatest leader who ever lived.

His Life and Ministry

Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea and grew up in the town of Nazareth. He was a Carpenter by trade and began His public ministry at the age of thirty. He had friends that He visited and spent time with such as Mary, Martha and Lazarus. He attended weddings, spent time with His family, went to the synagogue on the Sabbath Day and was a practicing Jew. He encountered temptations while in the wilderness, experienced betrayal and disloyalty from those closest to Him, and as Hebrews 4:15 tells us, “He was in all points tempted as we are, but without sin.”

After His baptism by John the Baptist, Jesus began to select those who would help Him in fulfilling His mission. He didn’t visit the University of the Pharisees or Sadducees to recruit the best minds or the greatest achievers. Instead, He went to the streets and solicited a Tax Collector and went fishing and asked some to follow Him and become fishers of men. The twelve men He chose were from various backgrounds. They left their families, their businesses, and their jobs to follow Jesus. These men would spend three years being taught and trained by the Master to assist him in proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom of God, establishing His organization, the church and continuing the work after His departure.

Our Savior was not associated with any of the political or religious organizations of His day, such as the Sanhedrin Council, Pharisees and Sadducees. We are not informed of any formal education as was the case of Moses and Paul. Our Lord was taught by God the Father and empowered by the Holy Spirit to fulfill His mission. Jesus knew His purpose and read of Himself from the book of the Prophet Isaiah, as recorded in Luke 4:18-19, *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”* He later announced that the scripture He read had been fulfilled. It’s important that a leader knows his or her purpose and work with all their hearts to fulfill that purpose.

Jesus was a revolutionary leader who had a different approach to dealing with the customs of His day, and often challenged the status quo. On one occasion a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery was brought to Him, and the question was asked of Him, “What should be done to this woman?” Jesus knowing their hearts did not give them an answer as to whether the woman

deserved death, but suggested to her accusers that they should throw the first stone, if they were without sin. Needless to say, all of the stones were dropped and the woman was forgiven by Jesus and admonished to sin no more (John 8:3-11). He also had a hands on approach to ministry. He went around touching people that no one else would touch. Leprosy was a horrible and contagious disease of that day. Yet Jesus healed a leper by touching him (Matthew 8:2-3). The great love that was inside Jesus moved Him to compassion and concern for those who were sick, hurting, broken, and imprisoned (both physically and spiritually). Jesus was the friend of the outcast, the poor and those rejected by others. How wonderful it is to know that no matter what shape you are in, you can always be touched by Jesus.

His Teachings and Message

Jesus was a great teacher. His teaching was so profound that He baffled the minds of other teachers and leaders and yet so simple that it was easy to comprehend. He often drew large crowds wherever He preached (Matthew 4:25-5:1). The people were eager to hear His message because He spoke both with power and authority, and His words gave them hope (Mark 1:21-23). His message was often “the Good News of the Kingdom of God.” The word “Kingdom” is listed over fifty-five times just in the book of Matthew. His discourse referred to as the Sermon on the Mount is one of His greatest teachings (Matthew 5-7). In chapter five is one of His teachings known as the Beatitudes. This teaching begins with the word “Blessed.” These were meant to offer comfort to those who were suffering. In this Sermon on The Mount the old law is contrast with the new, Jesus teaches His disciples to pray, stressed proper motive for fasting and giving, taught proper attitudes concerning the use of money, judging others and warnings regarding false teachers and hypocrisy. Jesus always seized an opportunity to teach His disciples. He often used parables (a story with a spiritual meaning) and simple illustrations to explain kingdom principles. In Matthew 5:17 Jesus says, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them.” In this passage of scripture which is part of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said He didn’t come to abolish the law, such as the Ten Commandments and other religious regulations. Yet He often did re-interpret these laws, and sometimes added to them. As a result, some of His teachings were considered controversial. For example in Matthew 5:38-39 Jesus says, “You have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on the right cheek, turn the other to him also.” This teaching along with others is referred to as the “Hard Teachings” of Jesus because it is not easy to obey.

The primary sources for Jesus’ life and teachings are found in the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The first three books, Matthew, Mark and Luke are referred to as the Synoptic Gospels, because they share much of the same information. John’s Gospel account differs from the rest. Matthew’s gospel was directed to Jews to prove that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the *King of the Jews*.” Mark’s gospel account is fast paced and thought to be written to a Roman audience. Mark portrays Jesus as the “*Suffering Servant*.” Luke is the gospel historian who emphasizes Jesus’ humanity and refers to Him as the “*Son of Man*.” John’s gospel is written to prove that Jesus is the “*Son of God*.” There are approximately thirty eight (38) parables of Jesus recorded in Matthew, Mark and

Luke. John records No parables and is the only gospel book that records the seven “*I Am*” statements of Jesus which helps us understand His divinity.

- “I AM the Bread of Life” (6:35)
- “I AM the Light of the world” (8:12)
- “I AM the Door of the sheep” (10:7, 9)
- “I AM the Good Shepherd” (10:11)
- “I AM the Resurrection and the Life” (11:25)
- I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (14:6)
- “I AM the True Vine” (15:1)

His Miracles

The Word of God tells us in Acts 10:38 that ‘God anointed Jesus Christ of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, Who went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.’ In Matthew chapter 4 beginning at verse 23 is recorded that Jesus went throughout Galilee teaching and preaching in the Synagogues and healing those who were afflicted with all kinds of sickness and diseases. There are approximately thirty eight miracles performed by Jesus recorded in the gospels. These miracles proved that Jesus had power over nature, diseases and death.

- Power over Nature – Jesus calms the storm Mark 4:35-41, Turns water into Wine (John 2:1-11), Jesus walks on water (John 6:16-20)
- Power over Disease – Possessed Man (Mark 1:21-27), Paralytic (Matthew 9:1-8), Ten Lepers (Luke 17:11-19), Official’s Son (John 4:46-54)
- Power over Death – Jairus’ daughter (Luke 8:41-42), Widow’s Son (Luke 7:11-17), Lazarus (John 11:1-45)

Conclusion

Our Lord was the greatest leader who ever lived, yet He says in regards to Himself in Matthew 11: 29b, “For I am gentle and humble in heart, (NIV). Meekness does not equate Weakness. One day while in the temple, being appalled by what He saw practiced in the House of God, Jesus took a whip and overturned the money changers tables and rebuked them for their evil practices. Jesus’ life and character are the best examples we have of what a great leader should be. Great leadership is not synonymous with arrogance and pride, but that of a servant. Jesus came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom, for all who would believe on Him. His life, death and resurrection were mandatory for our salvation. He completed His mission and made our reconciliation possible.

Jesus, though He was God in the flesh, showed us by example that prayer is essential in the life of every believer, and especially those who will lead His people. Jesus prayed often and at times in seclusion. One of the greatest prayers recorded in scripture is located in John 17. There Jesus prayed for Himself, His disciples, believers, and unity of all believers. Jesus did more in three years than most of us will do in a life time. The organization (the church) He founded over two thousand years ago still exists. It’s not just ALIVE, it THRIVES. He taught, trained, encouraged and when necessary corrected those He led. He gave His

disciples the authority and power to continue the work He began (Mark 6: 7-13). Everything He did and taught was for their benefit as well as ours, and to glorify God. As He said in John 8:29b, "For I only do those things that please the Father." Can you as a Leader or Believer say the same?

Happy Resurrection!

Love is the Greatest !

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. 1 Corinthians 13: 4-7. (New Living Translation)

What is the greatest foundation for building a lasting relationship? The question springs from a natural desire to connect with someone or something. Humans by nature are social beings. Herding and mating instincts in other animals also exist in man. We run in packs like wolves or we wander in fields like sheep. Just ask anyone who has witnessed a gang fight or attended a political rally. Our natural tendency to bond challenges us to find ways to build relationships.

For many, our introduction to relationship building begins within a family setting. We observe relationships between our parents, we struggle to develop relationships with our siblings, and we experiment on building relationships with acquaintances. Society steers us toward developing an intimate relationship with a special mate. Through all of these experiences we challenge ourselves to figure out how to build lasting relationships.

Aretha sings about "Respect" leading us to consider whether this might be the best foundation upon which to build lasting relationships. A successful business woman once shared with me that respect is more desirable than love. She reasoned that a man who respects you will not mistreat you. On the other hand, she cautioned that if a man loves you, then he may show disrespect toward you and even hurt you. Her views match those of society in general, which promotes respect as a means for people to live together in harmony.

Some people form relationships on power. People with power certainly seem to have everything under control and nothing to fear. But, power by its nature invites challenges. Few people can feel comfortable in a relationship where one party must continuously demonstrate or defend his/her superiority. History teaches us that relationships built on respect and power seldom last longer than the latest fashion trend. Almost any show of human weakness can lead to a loss of respect and will certainly cause power to slip away. So,

questions about developing lasting relationships with our fellowmen are best answered by looking to one of God's greatest gift to us – love.

God sent Jesus both as an expression and an example of His love for us. The four gospels show us how Jesus used God's love. He used love to build enduring personal relationships. (John 15:13-15.) He used love to unite man to man. (John 13:35.) Finally, He used love to unite man with God. (Romans 5:8-10.) Using God's love, Jesus laid a foundation for all our relationships that has remained solid for more than 2,000 years.

It is no surprise that God's love provides the only lasting support for our relationships. Reading 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, shows that God's love has comforting, inspiring, healing and restoring characteristics that everyone should find appealing. And, this love is available to everyone who believes that Jesus is God's son and that he died for our sins. This love will build strong alliances for anyone who allows the Holy Spirit to perform God's work in their life. Whether we want to build intimate or communal relationships, God's love is the only lasting foundation.

Happy Valentine's Day!



Janie White loves studying God's Word. She mentors young women and is active in her church. Janie thanks God for her 14 year marriage to John White. She has one biological son and several spiritual sons, daughters and grandchildren who keep her energized. Her personal joy comes from seeing others grow in faith and in knowledge of God's Word. She is a native of Perris California and currently resides in San Francisco.

LET GO AND LET GOD

Psalm 37:5. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass." Psalm 55:22 "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee. He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."

How many times have we heard the saying, "LET GO AND LET GOD"? It is a lot easier said than done.

Let me back up a little to about two years ago, when I was diagnosed with high blood pressure, high cholesterol, pre-diabetes, collapsed arches of both feet with coupled with Tendonitis to both feet, Chronic Pulmonary Disorder (CPD), Chronic Asthma and to top it off, I was 120 pounds over weight. I walked in my doctor's office one day about two years ago and after instructing me on how to give myself insulin injections, he then told me that if I lived another six months, he would be surprised. He said if I didn't lose some of the weight, he could not treat the other diseases that I was enduring because the weight I was carrying would fight against all the medicines and treatments he would advise.

My doctor said to me, "Hubie, you said you believe in Jesus, "so let go and let God". Just hearing him say I could possibly be dead in another six months, wasn't as bad as hearing a doctor, whom I had witnessed to many times over the last 14 years about the Power of Jesus Christ, tell me to tap into "My Power Source" for the healing I needed. It was if the doctor was saying to me "don't you believe what you preach?"

I asked my doctor if he could get me into a weight loss program and that I would do the rest. I had to show him that I could let go and let God and that I did believe in the God I preached about, and that I know He is a Healer. A couple of months later, I did get into the weight loss program and begin to fast and pray, and pray and fast; and, as I did this, God blessed.

Psalm 37:5 – "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass" and Psalm 55:22 – "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved" are the Scriptures that I hung on to. I let God minister to me each day through these two Scriptures.

The work and task that God set before wasn't going to be fixed by medication and it wasn't a "band-aid" or temporary fix. Yes, my doctor prescribed many, many medicines, two leg braces, a portable breathing machine, two canes and a walker, but the crux of it all was I needed God

to intervene. My asthma attacks were getting so bad that I had began going into the emergency hospital room. My breathing was such that I could barely go up and down a couple of stairs. Oh, but I tell you that God is a “Miracle Worker”.

The weight loss program that the doctors put me on was a controlled fast. A controlled fast is fasting that is monitored by doctors during the entire program. The fast included mostly liquids and lots of vitamins and supplements to compensate for the daily nutrients that are required in a daily diet. I will not tell you that this was an easy program because it wasn't. However, God honors our fasting when coupled with prayer. It doesn't matter if the fasting is for weight loss or for personal gain with God because our physical body reaps the blessings of our spiritual beings. When we simply commit our ways to God, He does the rest.

God showed me favor by allowing me to lose 120 pounds. Now, this is not to say that the battle is over because everyday it is an uphill battle, BUT, with God's help and guidance I will not let the mountain get as high as it once was.

As I am writing this testimony, I'm reminded of Hebrews 12:1-2 – “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.....Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

It is not easy to do God's work carrying around excess spiritual weight or physical weight. Now that I am a little lighter physically and little brighter spiritually, I can more readily be about the Father's Business. I truly can “LET GO AND LET GOD”.

Hubie Jasper was born and raised in San Francisco. She recently united with New Providence Baptist Church and sings with the Voices of New Providence. She's been married for 29 years to Ronald Jasper. She is a mother of one son (Todd Jasper) and two beautiful grandchildren (Toddiana and Demareay) who are also members of NPBC. While she loves to vacation every opportunity she can, she is also devoted to Kairos Prison Ministries and other Bay Area Prison Ministries. Many have come to know the Lord Jesus through her witnessing.

“Growing in Faith”

“We live by faith, not by sight.” II Corinthians 5:7 (NIV)

What is faith? Faith is the unquestioning belief, complete trust or confidence in God. Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. (Hebrews 11:1)

One may ask, how do we obtain Faith? Romans 10:17 tells us “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”. One must first hear the Word of God and then believe.

Let’s look at a two Old Testament Faith Heroes:

ABRAHAM: Abraham was a model of faithfulness for Christianity. The age of 75, God told Abraham to leave his home Haran and go to a strange and unknown land that He would show him. The Lord promised Abraham that He would make him and his descendants a great nation. Abraham’s faith allowed him to obey God without doubt. It took twenty five years for God to make good on his promise. The crucial test of Abraham’s faith came when God commanded him to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac. Abraham was obedient and willing to sacrifice Isaac, but God intervened, saved Isaac and reaffirmed His promise to Abraham, as a result of his unquestioning faith and obedience.

Job: Job’s faith was tested beyond belief by Satan, but Job had unwavering faith in God. Job was a prosperous, prestigious man who had seven sons and three daughters and many possessions. Job was a blameless and upright man who feared God and shunned evil. All Job owned as well as his children were destroyed or taken away. His body was afflicted with painful boils from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head, and though his wife suggested he should curse God and die, Job kept his faith in God. What great faith. Do you have half the faith of Job? If you lost everything you had, would you still trust God?

The more I study; I find the bible is based on faith. Hebrews 11:6 tells us that and without Faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him (God) must believe that He exists, and that He rewards those who earnestly seek him. The entire eleventh chapter of Hebrews tells of those who placed their faith and trust in God. In Matthew 21, Jesus tells his disciples they can pray for anything and all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

There have been times that I’ve prayed for something for years and I thought Jesus did not hear me. When discouragement was setting in and I was about to give up, is when Jesus stepped in and blessed me with better than I had I prayed for. I realized that Jesus had heard me all along, but He does things in His time, and though I had to wait, He had something much better in store for me. It’s easy to trust God when things are well but the testing of our faith comes when our prayers seem to go unanswered and God makes us wait. We need to remember

(Phil. 4:13 & 19) which states, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me, and God will supply all my needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus". It's sometimes easier to tell others to have faith and hold on to Jesus and believe in his promises when they are going through times of testing, but when the shoe is on the other foot, we can lack the faith we speak of. We must learn to pray in FAITH and BELIEVE in his PROMISES as well as BELIEVING that His will, will be done (James 5:13-16).

Where are you in your faith? Do you have Great faith (Mat 8:10); Mustard seed faith (Matt: 17:20); Strong faith (Romans 4:20); Weak faith (Romans 14:1); Rich faith (James 2:5) or No faith (Mark 4:40)?

Frankie Nickson is a Transit Operator for Muni and a member of New Providence Baptist Church in San Francisco. She is active in the Daughters of Zion, Sunday school and Mission. She loves family, friends, traveling and doing what she can to help others. Frankie's always says, she is "A Work In Progress for the Lord".

“Releasing, Believing and letting Go”

By: Maya Scott

“For the word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, Piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit and of the joints and marrow and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Hebrews 4:12

We must allow the work of God to do its job. Often times we hold onto our children, situations, circumstances and loved ones, trying to help, teach, guide or fix things for them in our own strength or power. We want the best for them, but we go about it the wrong way. When we speak the Word of God and stand, believe and receive it, our situations, circumstances and loved ones will be changed.

The Bible says that the Word is quick (alive, living, speedy, turning or bending sharply.) When we speak or send the Word to situations or circumstances, it arrives with life expeditiously. Our concerns or worries arrive with doubt and unbelief, with no life in them. But, the Word of God is sharp (having a thin cutting edge or fine point, exactly and precisely). Nothing you can say or do is sharper than, or can cut like God’s Word. His Word is sharper than a two-edged sword, which pierces and cuts on both sides. It is a weapon with a long blade for cutting and thrusting. It uses force to make a way into or through. After God’s Word has penetrated, it then separates or divides into pieces, and puts things into position. When the two-edged sword (God’s Word) goes in, it comes out clean. When chicken or other raw meats are cut, the knife comes back with lots of dirt, fat, and debris on it. God’s Word (the two-edged sword) comes out clean, because no unholy thing can attach itself to something pure and holy.

His word cleans and purifies as it cuts (a refiners fire). God’s Word discerns, it detects with eyes, it distinguishes, it comes to know and recognize anything that’s not like Jesus. It even discerns the process of thinking and the intents of the mind. We are a spirit that lives inside a body and we possess a soul. The Word of God will separate, heal, cleanse, divide and cleanse any part of us or our loved ones, if we allow it to do its job and stop getting in the way. We must release our situations, circumstances, concerns, worries and loved ones to the Word of God. **RELEASE, TRUST AND LET HIS WORD WORK!**

When our children leave home we should not try to control their lives. If we have done our job of putting the Word in them, the Word will work, release and let them go and watch God work. *Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it. Proverbs 22:6*

Maya Scott is an Intercessor, Teacher and Worshipper. She has been married to Minister Anthony Scott for nineteen years. They are the proud parents of five wonderful sons, who are a blessing to them. Maya desires to please God with her whole heart and help others grow in their relationship with Him.

She is a native of San Francisco Bay Area and currently resides in Fort Worth Texas.

RESTORATION - (A Look at Rescue and Recovery)

Then David asked the Lord, “Should I chase after this band of raiders? Will I catch them?” And the Lord told him, “Yes, go after them. You will surely recover everything that was taken from you!” 1 Samuel 30:8 (NLT)

What would you do if thieves steal something you cherish? You could take matters into your own hands and try to recover what was lost. You might turn the matter over to someone else to pursue recovery. Or, you could just accept the loss. How do you decide on the right option? In some cases, your significant interest in rightful repossession will justify taking action. In other instances, pursuing the thief may not be a reasonable or lawful option. Then again, the lost item, while cherished, may not have any extrinsic value that would justify recovery efforts. To respond appropriately to theft you must get answers to important questions.

Two important questions are: (1) should you pursue the thieves? and (2) can you get your stuff back? These are similar to the questions David asked the Lord before his thrilling pursuit of the Amalekite raiders recounted in 1 Samuel Chapter 30. David was discouraged upon discovering that the Amalekites had taken the women, children and possessions from his camp. So, David asked the Lord what to do about this pilfering mob. Empowered by God’s command to pursue, David goes on a *take-no-prisoners* rescue and recovery mission freeing captives and recovering stolen property.

Just like David, we must rely on God when deciding whether to pursue the thieves and recover our losses. The Word teaches that events occurring in the physical realm are the fall-out from events occurring in the spiritual realm. (See, Job 1:8, 2:3, *Satan challenges God to test Job*; Daniel 10:12-14, *answer to prayer delayed when spiritual being held hostage*; 1 Peter 5:7-9, *Satan prowls around looking for those off-guard*.) So, when the enemy steals your stuff, his intent is to destroy you spiritually. (See, John 10:10 *The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly*.) Guarding against spiritual attacks requires divine intervention. (2 Corinthians 10:4.) Looking at thieves and losses exclusively from an earthly perspective could cost you valuable spiritual gains, such as peace, love and joy.

On the other hand, having the enemy raid your camp can benefit you if you remain open to seeking God’s plan. Sometimes the enemy walks away with your spouse. The enemy may take your job, your money or even your dreams. But, the greatest losses should force us to seek God the same way that David sought direction before pursuing the Amalekites. Thieves cannot destroy those who trust God. (Romans 8:28.) But, thieves can remind us to rely on God. (Proverbs 3:5.) In seeking His guidance on whether to pursue recovery we acknowledge that He knows what is best. (Jeremiah 29:11.) And, because God knows what is best, He should decide (1) whether you pursue the thieves, and (2) whether you get your stuff back.

PRAYER

2 Chronicles 6:20

The Origin and Discovery of Prayer

Genesis 4:26

Our Faith walk is developed by prayer (supplication & intercession).

We pray to our father for every situation or circumstances that arises in our life that we have no control of. We should endeavor to make prayer a daily part of our lives because the enemy will try to weary and weaken us to prevent us from praying so that he will control, oppress and depress us. However, we must be determined to pursue an impassioned pursuit of prayer particularly in these end times.

Prayer has many forms, all of which are important – forms such as adoration, thanksgiving and supplication.

Our first thought in prayer should be the prayer of Faith (Matthew 17:20), because if we don't believe, we cannot receive.

Some Principles of prayer are:

To whom Prayer is addressed – Our Father... Matthew 6:6, 9 Luke 11:2 We should refer to God as our Father as He is in the "Lord's Prayer. "Father" has an important significance that we cannot overlook; in prayer as in all other activity, we relate as children with an ever loving Father.

The Realization of our Father's Holiness ... Matthew 6:9, 11:2
Reverence Him! Be in awe of Him!

The Reign of God ... Matthew 6:10

"Thy Kingdom come" implies that while God is reigning. His Fatherly Government cannot be fully effective in our lives unless we welcome it. **The King reigns only where He is invited.** He will reign in our lives as we make our request to Him.

As It is in Heaven, So on Earth: Matthew 6:10

This declares that the will of God is accomplished in the physical realm as in the spiritual or in the visible realm as in the invisible.

God is the Giver... Matthew 6:11, Luke 11:3

This promise of the providence of God must, like all of His gifts, be received by Faith's action and partaking in prayer. His gifts are to be desired and asked for to be obtained. It is God's nature to give, it is His will to give, and when He gives, He gives abundantly, Our part is to receive what He is offering.

The condition of Forgiveness ... Matthew 6:12, 14, 15, Mark 11:25, Luke 11:4 For our prayers to be effective, there are certain conditions to be fulfilled. The primary one is to pray in a spirit of forgiveness to ensure that that our prayers are answered.

No evil from God ... Matthew 6:13: Like 11:4, James 1:13

God does not lead us into trial, but delivers from evil. James 1:13 states that God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. Sometimes we bring trouble upon ourselves by our own inclination or desires. God is the creator and Giver of all good and of good only.

Praise ... Matthew 6:13 Luke 11:41, 42, Philippians 4:6

Our prayers should always end with adoration, praise and thanksgiving, not only for what we are expecting from God but for God himself.

Believe that you have received ... Mark 11.24

Believe, Believe, Believe.

Make sure you want what you ask for, pray when you are happy or sad, or discouraged and instead of complaining – pray.

So I urge you my brothers and sister to begin to pray without ceasing, for brothers, sisters, children, all our loved ones and all those that need our prayers. We should not let guilt feelings keep us from praying, forgive yourself and you will be able to forgive others.

Remember to ask God for anything, but expect anything.



Malvia Lewis (Formerly Bailey) has been a member of the Word of Faith Church in San Pablo for over 11 years. She serves as an Altar Worker, Usher and as an Intercessory Prayer team member. She is the mother of three children, Christopher and Shari. She lost her second son in 2007, but was blessed in that same year by marriage with a new son, Lester III. Malvia has been a Daughter of Zion for over 8 years and is also a member of Women of Valor ministry in Milpitas.

"Who Do You Trust?"

"Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God."
Psalms 20:7 (NIV)

During the 1960's, there was a game show on television entitled, "Who Do You Trust," hosted by Johnny Carson. The contestants on the show were usually married couples. A topic or category was given and the question was asked to the male, "Who do you trust, yourself or your wife?" In order to make a good decision, the person who was making the choice needed to know who was more qualified to give the answer based on the subject matter. For example, if my husband and I were contestants on the show and the topic was finance, there would be no doubt as to who would be the better person to answer questions from that category. If the category were the Bible, again we would have no problem deciding who would be more qualified to answer questions in that particular category.

Trust does not just happen. It has to be earned. We do not open up our hearts and expose our innermost thoughts to those we do not trust. Sometimes a person is trustworthy in one area but untrustworthy in another. Years ago, a story was on the news of a man who, while visiting Las Vegas, found a lot of money. It never occurred to him to keep the money, because it didn't belong to him. He went straight to the authorities and turned it in. They were amazed at his honesty and asked his name so they could publicize it and give him a little media coverage. He refused to give his name, because he was married and was visiting Las Vegas with another woman, not his wife. This man, who was honest enough to turn in money that was not his, was untrustworthy in his relationship and commitment to his marriage.

We never have to worry about placing our trust in the Lord, because He is altogether trustworthy. He is faithful -- even when we are not. Like an unfaithful spouse, some of us have committed spiritual adultery and have gone whoring after other gods. Some place their trust in wealth, education, careers, marital and social status. The Psalmist in Psalms 20:7 let's us know in Whom our trust should be: "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.

God is the only one we can trust at all times who will never abandon His Word. If He said He's going to do it, just trust, believe and wait on Him to bring it to pass. In Numbers 23:19 the Word of God says, "God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should change his mind. Does He speak and then not act? Does He promise and not fulfill?"

Late in 1988, I began to go through a very trying and difficult time in my life that lasted over nine years. My fifteen year marriage ended in divorce in the early nineties. I lost my job of twenty-two years due to a merger and went from earning a very good salary to earning just barely enough to pay my mortgage. My son was young and in school, and I was only able to provide the bare necessities for him. Through His word, God had strengthened me years prior to these occurrences to help me persevere. I learned more about God and began to trust Him as a daughter would a good and loving Father. So when this happened, I couldn't understand why. God assured me that He was going to provide for me and my son and that I wouldn't have to worry about the battle. It was His, not mine. In subsequent years when I thought things couldn't get any worse, they did. Through it all, I remained faithful and committed to our Lord and the work of the ministry. My love for the Lord grew stronger and deeper than ever before.

Then one Saturday morning in 1998, I was on my way to a prayer breakfast with two of my acquaintances. They were seated in the front, and I sat alone in the back of the car. For whatever reason, I began to pray within myself. My prayer was, "Lord, please fix me so I can be content in whatever circumstances I'm in, because I'm tired of looking for something that may never happen."

You see, during those years of testing, the Lord promised me in His Word found in Joel 2:25a: "And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm." But it had been years and nothing had changed. When we arrived at the hotel, we took seats in the rear of the room. I didn't know anyone except the two women I came with and the hostess. When the speaker took the platform, she immediately pointed in my direction and asked me to stand. Being puzzled as to why she wanted me to stand, I remained seated. She then described the color of jacket I was wearing and asked again for me to stand. This time I pointed to myself and asked, "Are you speaking to me?"

After I stood she immediately said to me, "The Lord wants you to know He has heard your prayer. He knows it's been a long time, and He wanted you to know He has not forgotten you, and by this time next year, things will begin to change." I began to weep uncontrollably. I knew no one was aware of the prayer I prayed on the way there, because I prayed within my heart. God sent that word to comfort and strengthen me as I waited on Him. My prayer that morning was a 9-1-1 call to Heaven. The Lord knew that I was on the edge of a cliff and that my feet were slipping; so He sent His Word to rescue me, heal my hurts, and give me hope.

Regardless of what you may be facing now or in the years to come, just remember that we serve a faithful, trustworthy and compassionate God. Our Lord is concerned about everything that happens in the lives of His children. The tests and trials will come. God allows them, not to destroy us, but to make us strong and to let the enemy know that we will trust Him, even when we can't trace Him. Warren W. Wiersbe said in his book entitled, "Be Hopeful" that a faith that can't be tested, can't be trusted. Can God trust you to hold on when things seem unbearable? More importantly, do you still trust Him when all hell is breaking loose in your life and there seems to be no way out?

It took approximately fifteen years for some of what God promised me to be fulfilled. My marriage which ended in the divorce for over fifteen years was restored. God gave me a much better job and all that is associated with it. I'm still looking forward to all of His promises. I'm a living witness that God is faithful and altogether trustworthy. Remember the Word of God located in Numbers 23:19 and be encouraged: "God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should change His mind. Does He speak and then not act? Does He promise and not fulfill?"

The answer is absolutely not! If God said it, He will bring it to pass.

In His Service,

Shirley Freeman
President/Founder

“Glory to the King of Kings”

“Silver and gold I do not have what I do have I give you ...” says Peter in the book of Acts 3:16. And I embrace his words because neither do I have silver nor gold, but what I do have I received freely and I give you, which is the Word of God with His priceless message of salvation.

I wish I just could say this: Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. And then sign and seal the card. But there would not be a message to give. Zephaniah 3:18 states:

“The Lord your God is in your midst, (assurance of His presence). The Lord Jesus is the Omnipresent God, and He is right in the middle of your midst, near you, **with His right hand extended waiting for you to hold it tightly, to cling, so that no one could ever** take you away from Him. His arms are open waiting for you, to hug you, and never let you go. He listens to your heart where there are no witnesses, where you pour out your heart, where you are only with yourself. He knows your thoughts and your ways: where you’re coming and where you’re going (that’s assurance). Come with confidence before His presence. He is in the midst of your needs, cares, and concerns... Just talk to Him. He wants you to trust Him, and be your friend and confident.

The Mighty One will save; (assurance of His deliverance). He is the Omnipotent God, the Mighty One who saves. There’s nothing impossible for Him. In the wilderness, He turned the rock into a fountain of water. In John chapter 4:13-15, Jesus told a Samaritan woman, who would come to a well to seek for water, that if they drank of that water they would soon become thirsty again. “But the water I give them,” told Jesus to the woman, “becomes a perpetual spring within them, watering them forever with an eternal life.” The woman response was, “Please, Sir, give me some of that water! Then I’ll never be thirsty again ...” Do you want to drink of that water and say to Jesus, “Please, Sir, give some of the water!?” He is waiting for your response, as a result:

- 1. He will rejoice over you with gladness,** (assurance of His joy) “...His favor lasts for life! Weeping may go on all night, but in the morning there is joy.” Psalms 30:5
- 2. He will quiet you with His love,** (assurance of His peace). God is love (I John 4:8). “Truly my soul silently waits for God; from Him comes my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved.” Psalms 62:1-2e
- 3. He will rejoice over you with singing.”**(assurance of His comfort). “Remember the Word to your servant, upon which you have caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction, for Your Word has given me life.” Psalms 149:49-51

MERRY CHRISTMAS!!! JESUS IS BORN

Luz M. Sandoval

“Seeking the Face of God”

*“When You said, “seek My face,” My heart said to You, “Your face Lord, I will seek.”
Psalm 27:8 (NKJV)*

To seek means to pursue, go in search of, and try to discover. As Christians, we seek the face of God when we spend time in His Word, when we pray, and when we praise and worship Him. God desires an intimate relationship with His children above all else. Spending time with the Lord should be a priority for all of us who are part of His family.

David, the author of Psalm 27, was considered a man after God’s own heart because he was a worshipper. David made knowing God intimately his priority (Psalm 63:1-6). In this wonderful passage of scripture (Psalm 27), David shares with us his confidence in God’s strength and ability, his desire or longing to get to know God more intimately, his desire for safety from his enemies, and a longing to spend time in the House of God.

When we seek God’s hand rather than His face saying, “Give me, bless me, heal me,” it is equivalent to a child who only communicates with his or her parents when they are in need. How would you feel as a parent if your child or children only communicated with you when they were in need?

Spending time with a person we love is the only way to cultivate an intimate relationship with him or her. There is no substitute for gaining intimate knowledge of anyone, without spending time with that person. Seeking (knowing) God has to become our number one priority.

Luke records a story in chapter 10: 38-42 which helps us understand the importance of being in the presence of God. It reads, *“As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, He came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to Him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to Him and asked, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!” “Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better and it will not be taken away from her.”*

Most of us are like Martha. We are busy working for Jesus, doing a lot of stuff, but missing the greatest blessing of all, which is sitting at His feet listening and communicating with Him. Never neglect spending time with the Lord to do what we refer to as the Lord’s work.

We may need to develop creative ways to ensure we spend time with the Lord on a daily basis. Just about everyone I know lives busy lives. Some have children, full time jobs, are active in the church/community or are involved in some form of ministry. Still, all of those things, which may be good and noble, should not prevent us from carving out a portion of our time to meet with our Lord. Spending

time with the Father was important to Jesus. Communicating with the Father regularly gave Him strength. He would get up early in the morning to be alone with Him (Mark 1:35).

Some sacrifice may be required if spending time with God is going to occur. Some of us may need to sacrifice a little sleep, by getting up earlier to meet with the Lord. Others may need to sacrifice part of their lunch, television or social activity. The choice is ours. Regardless to how busy we may be, we always seem to find time to do those things that are important to us. Does spending time with the Lord important to you?

The person who makes sacrifices in order to seek the face of God will gain much more than they've lost. Being in the presence of God ensures blessings, peace, joy (in spite of circumstances), confidence, and security. It transforms us into Christ-likeness. His desires will become our desires and His will our will. Our love for the Lord will grow deeper, we will grow into spiritual maturity, and our lives will be changed, as we get to know Him in a more intimate way.

Do you seek God's face or only His hand? Seek God's face and you will automatically have His hand (provision). Let's begin today to make spending time with the Lord our number one priority. He is worthy!

Let us pray. Father, we acknowledge that we have not always made you our priority and have sometimes behaved as ungrateful, selfish children. We desire a deeper, more intimate relationship with you and will make every effort to spend time with you each day by studying your Word, in prayer and in praise and worship. Thank you for this awesome privilege to know you better. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

In His Service,

Shirley Freeman
Founder/President

“Seven Things...conclusion”

“There are six things the Lord hates, *seven* that are detestable to Him.”
Proverbs 6:16

In last month’s article we saw how an innocent man lost his life due to a *lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devised a wicked plan, feet that were swift in running to do evil, and a false witness who spoke lies*. This month’s conclusion of “Seven Things” will focus on the last sin mentioned in Proverbs 6:19b, “*sowing discord among brethren*.” God has given us many examples in the Bible of both good and evil. We can emulate the good that is written and avoid those things that dishonor Him.

The church at Corinth is one of those examples. It was a church much like many churches today. They quarreled, compared and boasted about their spiritual gifts. They were divisive, failed to speak against some in their congregation’s obvious ungodly behavior, and brought lawsuits against each other (1 Corinthians 1:7, 4:18-20, 5, and 6). In 1 Corinthians 1:10-12 the Apostle Paul addressed a problem of factions within the congregation. The Word of God tells us not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought (Romans 12:3). The Corinthian believers thought that they were spiritually mature, but the Apostle checks their spiritual barometer and sheds light on their spiritual condition.

Since they quarreled and exhibited jealousy toward each other, the Apostle Paul in chapter 3 told them that he could not feed them with solid food. He considered them still infants in Christ who could digest only milk. Additionally, they even played favorites by declaring whom they followed. “I follow Paul,” said some. “I follow Apollos”, asserted others. They also named Cephas (Peter) and Jesus as persons they followed (Chapter 1:12). Because Paul had spiritual discernment, he addressed what was at the core of the matter. He asked them who was Apollos and who was he. He explained to them that one of them planted the seed, (of the Gospel) one watered it, but only God causes it to grow. He cautioned them to stop boasting about men (or women) who are only servants, being used by God (1 Corinthians 3:5-9).

You see, Satan loves to sow seeds of discord, jealousy and division among the children of God. Satan knows that if he can get our focus off of him and keep us fighting among ourselves, we won’t remember who the real enemy is.

Why are we fighting each other? Aren’t we serving the same God? If we are on the same team, there should never be what is referred to as “friendly fire.” Anything that wounds or kills you is not friendly. The reason it’s termed “friendly fire” is because the person who is responsible for the fire is on the same team or side of the person wounded or killed. The problem lies in the fact that someone failed to recognize the victim as being part of their team. Many times we act as though other believers are not on the same team. We fight against them the way we should be fighting Satan. We are one Body with many members, and each member has a different function, and each function is important. No one is more valuable in the Body than anyone else. Just like our physical bodies are designed

to work together, so are we (the Body of Christ) designed to work together to fulfill God's plans (Romans 12:4-6, 1 Corinthians 12).

The Word of God tells us in 2 Corinthians 2:11 that we are not unaware of the schemes or devices of the enemy. Remember, Satan is a liar and a deceiver. He will use whatever method is effective to try to defeat us. In order to defeat the enemy, we must know how he operates. Being equipped with information from the Word of God is essential for our victory.

We can defeat the enemy when we begin living the Word and stop just talking about it. We defeat the enemy when we begin really loving our brothers and sisters, instead of treating them as though they are on an opposing team. We can defeat the enemy by covering each other's short comings (not covering up). We can defeat the enemy when we stop competing against one another and begin to work together for the cause of Christ. Lastly, we can defeat the enemy when we are not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Sowing discord within the Body weakens the entire Body and brings dishonor to God. There is nothing Satan fears more than praying Christians who are unified. A unified Body results in a more powerful Body. According to the Word of God found in Deuteronomy 32:30, one can chase a thousand and two can put ten thousand to flight. Let's determine to sow unity and not discord within the Body of Christ. God will be glorified, the enemy will be horrified, and take flight and run.

In His Service,

Shirley Freeman
President/Founder

“A Thankful Heart”

(Hannah’s story)

1 Samuel 1 - 2:11

The story of Hannah is one of pain, perseverance and praise. Chapter one opens by giving details of her family situation. Hannah, one of Elkanah’s two wives, was his favorite. Hannah was barren, but Peninnah, his other spouse, had children. The situation in this story is similar to the one in the story of Leah and Rachel, sisters who were married to Jacob. Rachel, the favorite wife, was barren, but the Lord blessed Leah to be fruitful (Genesis 29:31). In both cases, when God saw that one was treated better or loved more than the other, He created a way to make the situation more equitable.

To a Jewish woman, being unable to conceive was seen as a curse from God. Even though Elkanah loved Hannah deeply and gave her double of what he gave Peninnah, it could not fill her empty womb or mend her broken heart. Peninnah was envious of the love Elkanah had for Hannah and would provoke and ridicule her regularly, probably reminding her of her inability to conceive. The enemy has a way of taunting us whenever God has us on hold. If we are not careful, we will become discouraged and begin to believe his lies. Can you imagine how hard it must have been for Hannah to live under the same roof with this woman who desired only to cause her pain?

While in the tabernacle at Shiloh, Hannah decided to stop feeling sorry for herself and take her situation to the only One who was able to turn things around. She began to pray and weep with her whole heart. The Word of God says she was praying within her heart, but her lips were moving. The High Priest Eli mistook her for a drunken woman. She explained that she was not drunk, but was a woman with a sorrowful spirit. After realizing his mistake, Eli told her to go in peace, and he asked God to grant her request.

We should always be careful how we treat others, especially those who may be at a disadvantage, because God has a way of turning things around. Those who are up today may be down tomorrow. Those who are on top may find themselves at the bottom. What others may not see, God sees. In His own time, He can turn things upside down. God remembered Hannah, and she conceived, gave birth to a son and named him Samuel. Samuel’s name means asked of God. The pain that Hannah suffered at the hands of her enemy was soon forgotten. Her ability to persevere in the midst of adversity paid off, and her pain was turned into praise.

In chapter two Hannah begins to thank and praise God for her many blessings. She delights in the Lord and worships Him for who He is and for delivering her from the hand of her enemy. She thanked Him for reversing the curse, turning things around and executing judgment on the wicked.

Hannah's story should be an encouragement to anyone who feels empty or barren in a certain area of life and anyone whom God has placed in a holding pattern. The enemy may be using this time to bring doubt, discouragement and fear. Remember, God's timing is always perfect. He has a time set for your breakthrough or deliverance. He has not forgotten you. Follow Hannah's example by praying past your pain and having a thankful heart. Then God will turn your pain into praise!

Happy Thanksgiving!

“Seven Things...continued”

“There are six things the Lord hates, *seven* that are detestable to Him.”
Proverbs 6:16 (NIV)

In our last article we focused on the sin of pride, recorded in Proverbs 6:17, which is the first sin mentioned as one that God hates. This month’s focus is on the next five which are *a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to do evil, and a false witness who speaks lies* (Proverbs 6:17b-19a NKJV).

All of the aforementioned sins are actively operating in the word of God found in 1 Kings 21. It begins when Ahab, the King of Israel, covets Naboth’s vineyard. He made Naboth what seemed to be a very good offer to purchase the land. Naboth refused to sell it to Ahab because it was his family’s inheritance. The Mosaic Law stated that ancestral property was to remain in the family (Leviticus 25:23-25). So, if Naboth sold his property to Ahab, he would have been violating God’s law. How many of us would have refused such a request from our country’s leader today? Ahab was King and was probably sure that his request would have been granted. When it wasn’t, he felt rejected. He refused to eat and went home and began pouting like a spoiled child who could not get his way.

When his wife (Jezebel) arrived, it was apparent that something displeased the King. After learning what had happened, she informed her husband to eat, drink and be merry because she would take care of the situation and get him what he desired. She began by writing letters in her husband’s name and sealed them with his seal. Then she sent the letters to the nobles and elders of the city in which Naboth lived. She then devised a plan to have these men trick Naboth into thinking he would be honored. Present at that meeting were two men who didn’t mind lying. They accused Naboth of blasphemy, which was punishable by death. Naboth was taken outside the city and was stoned to death. Jezebel, the elders, the nobles and the two false witnesses were all pawns used by Satan to carry out his evil plan.

The person behind every evil deed is Satan himself. The Bible tells us that Satan has come only to steal, kill and destroy (John 10:10). The word of God also said that he (Satan) was a murderer and liar from the beginning and the father of lies (John 8:44). So, when he lies he is doing only what is natural to him. He is always on the lookout for those available for him to use. Ahab’s pride and greed for more land, Jezebel’s desire for power and control, and the others’ desire to please their King, even when it meant disobeying God, gave Satan the opening he needed. My mother use to say about Satan, “If you let him ride, he will want to drive.” He’s

never content with being a passenger; he desires to take the driver's seat in our lives.

An innocent man lost his life due to someone whose heart devised a wicked plan, those who did not hesitate to carry it out, lying tongues, false witnesses and lastly, those willing to shed innocent blood. The guilty will not go unpunished. God who sees and hears every plan ever conceived, would repay Jezebel and Ahab for their wickedness (read 1Kings 21: 17-25).

As children of the Most High God, let's make sure that Satan is unable to influence us to commit any of the sins mentioned. Don't allow him access into your life by exhibiting pride, which is an opening that can, and sometimes will lead to other sins. The word of God found in James 4:7 admonishes us to submit to God, resist the devil and he (the devil) will flee.

Next month we will conclude our study with the seventh sin, sowing discord among brethren.

In His Service,

Shirley Freeman
Founder/President

STAND

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

Isaiah 41:10 (NIV)

The word **STAND** means to Remain Erect and to Maintain. It also refers to the permanent, secure position Believers enjoy in God’s Grace. (Romans 8:31)

We have all been in hostile situations in our lives - on the job, school, our family and maybe even in the Church. At times, there may not seem to be a way out. But by the Grace of God we came out, because as the Scripture says in Romans 8:31 – “If God be for us, who can be against us”. 1 John 4 tells us “Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.” If we truly believed the scriptures, we could achieve so much more spiritually.

Exodus 14:13 says “Fear ye not, **STAND** still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will shew to you today: for the Egyptian whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.” Isn’t that comforting to know that the Lord our God loves us so much and cares about every little detail that pertains to us?

If we move up to verse 11 of Exodus 14, there we find the Israelites grumbling and complaining. Their lack of faith in God is startling. Yet, how often do we find ourselves doing the same thing? When trials come our way, we sometimes begin complaining over inconveniences or discomforts. The Israelites were about to learn some tough lessons. Had they trusted God and **STOOD** and waited on the Lord, they would have been spared much grief, but instead, they became hostile and despairing.

Moses, their leader had a positive and humble attitude (His story is found the books of Genesis – Deuteronomy). He encouraged them to watch the wonderful way God would rescue them. When it looked as if they were trapped, Moses called upon God to intervene. He knew how and when to **STAND**. We may not be chased by an Army, but we may still feel trapped with no way out. Instead of giving in to despair, we should adopt Moses’ humble and faithful attitude, to “STAND still, and see the Salvation of the Lord”.

Like many, I’ve been in situations that made me want to give up, because I felt that God was not listening to my prayers. I was going through hard times, hurting, crying, and feeling abandoned by God. I would give God my situation totally one day, and then when the situation came around again, I would take it back and try to handle it myself. Then God gave me a word from Isaiah 41:10 which inspired, motivated and strengthened me. Now whenever situation comes, instead of getting frustrated and angry, I take a hold on God’s Word and **STAND**.

BIO

Malvia Lewis (Formerly Bailey) has been a member of the Word of Faith Church in San Pablo for over 11 years. She serves as an Altar Worker, Usher and as an Intercessory Prayer team member. She is the mother of three children, Christopher and Shari. She lost her second son in 2007, but was blessed in that same year by marriage with a new son, Lester III. Malvia has been a Daughter of Zion for over 8 years and is also a member of Women of Valor ministry in Milpitas.

“The Greatest Gift”

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.” Ephesians 2:8 (KJV)

The Christmas season is a wonderful time of the year. Many are often busy attending parties, buying gifts for their love ones and friends or planning their own celebration. It's a very exciting and joyful time for some, but a sad time of year for others.

The true meaning of Christmas has been lost in the midst of materialism, self-indulgence and a desire to keep up with everyone else. During the past two years, our country has gone through tough economic times. Some have lost jobs, retirement funds, and in other ways, fallen on hard times. Focusing only on ones inability to purchase gifts during this time of the year can create a tremendous amount of stress.

Christmas should be one of the best times of the year, for all of us who have received God's wonderful gift. The greatest gift of all has been recorded throughout scripture. John 3:16 is probably the best known of all, *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life”* (KJV).

In response to this scripture Martin Luther is quoted as saying, “these words are able to make the sad happy, the dead alive, if only the heart believes them firmly.”

John 3:16 tells of God's great love for mankind. His love is truly amazing. I cannot imagine sacrificing my only son for sinful man. God's love blows my mind! It's unfathomable, unselfish and unrelenting. The word of God recorded in Romans 5:8 tells us that *“God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (NIV). God did not wait until we got it right before sending His son down to earth to die so we might live. His gift of salvation was motivated only by His love even before we came to the knowledge of the truth. Jesus did not live a life of comfort and wealth, because that was not His purpose for coming to earth. His life was characterized by self sacrifice, love and compassion (read Isaiah 53: 3-7).

You may be experiencing one of the greatest challenges of your life right now. You may be going through a fiery trial that is testing your faith. It may even look like you are all alone and that God has forgotten you. Please remember, that even if no one else knows your struggles or your heart's deepest hurts, God does. He has you on His mind. In this Christian race we will all experience trials and challenges that will test our faith, but remember we are never alone. Jesus promised that He would never leave us or forsake us. He said He would be with us until the end of time (Matthew 28:20, Hebrews 13:5b).

According to Ephesians 2:8 God has provided for us a most precious gift that was purchased with the blood of His only Son, Jesus. This gift is available to all who will by faith; believe in Him (Jesus). This gift is eternal life in Jesus Christ. We

cannot earn salvation; it is a gift from God. If you have accepted Jesus as your Savior and Lord, according to God's Word, you have that gift (Romans 10:9). If you have not accepted Jesus as your Savior, this Christmas season is a great opportunity to receive the greatest gift of all. Someone loves you with an everlasting love and is waiting on you to receive His precious gift of salvation. All you have to do is open up your heart and mind and sincerely ask Jesus to come into your heart and make Himself known. You will then need to pray about finding a Bible teaching church that will help you mature in your relationship with the Lord.

If we never receive another gift in this life, we have received the greatest gift of all, which is eternal life in Christ Jesus.

Have a Merry Christmas!

In his Service,

Shirley Freeman
Founder/President