

## “At Home in God”

*“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. These things have I spoken to you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” John 15:4-5, 11*

What does the word “Home” mean to you? Safety, relaxation, rest, peace and quiet, comfort, contentment, acceptance, frankness, openness, trust, and warmth are terms that come to mind for me. Home is the center of concern, caring, and love, the kind of place anyone wants to be. There a person finds the encouragement, support; correction, direction, and assistance he or she needs to keep going through the roughest times. But there is more than this for us at home in God. He doesn’t want just to somehow see us through. He holds out to us something of the delights of a perfect eternity beginning even now in this wicked, sin-sick world.

Abiding in Christ surely begins with trusting in God. He is entirely willing and able to care for every circumstance of our lives and bring from each eternal benefit for us and others, and glory to His own name. We need to become willing to let the Lord humble us to accept His pruning and purging. We must accept it from Him whether it comes through His servants’ instruction, or from abrasive fellow-Christians, or the pain and suffering of affliction. Before the fruit of the Spirit can bloom and grow in our lives, we must accept His humbling.

I have grown and have been pruned many, many times. Thankfully He has put many people in my life to help me along the way with encouragement, support and direction. After a very painful divorce in 1996, I moved back to Vallejo to take care of my mom, my grandfather and grandmother- all were very sick with diabetes and high blood pressure. Two years later, both of my grandparents passed away, and my mom was in and out of the hospital. I continued to attend Bible study, go on retreats, and I even traveled to the Holy Land (my mom said I needed to go so I could forgive myself and be closer to God). I give thanks to God each and every day for the joy in my heart, for the strength that He gives me so I can be there for my mom and my family.

*Trust yourself to God and His love. Wait at home in God and His love. Rely on God and His love. Be confident in God and His love.*

### **MaryAnn Bernardo**



MaryAnn Bernardo has been married for almost 6 years now to Rey Bernardo and they live in American Canyon. She is a member of The Daughters of Zion Women’s Ministries for more than 14 years. They are parishioners of St. Vincent Ferrer Church in Vallejo and they sing in the choir. MaryAnn works in San Francisco and has a part time ministry educating people about Healthy Water and having a balance in life. She also helps women undergoing divorce by giving them guidance and support.

## “Be Good Listeners and Followers of Instruction”

We live in the information era. One can find information on a computer on any topic by typing a word or phrase. The computer's search engine displays several websites on which the data can be found. Additionally, on television and radio, there are talk shows and political and social pundits who are anxious to share their opinions with whoever will listen. Everyone has an opinion and is anxious to share it.

However, the Word of God found in James 1: 19 tells us to be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to take offense. For most of us, that is easier said than done. We are very opinionated and sometimes feel it's our duty to share out thoughts and opinions with others--whether they've asked for it or not. The Bible admonishes us to be quick to listen and slow to speak. Kenneth A. Wells, author of *Guide to Good Leadership*, wrote, “*A good listener tries to understand what the other person is saying. In the end he may disagree sharply, but because he disagrees, he wants to know exactly what it is he is disagreeing with.*” Most do not listen well enough to know whether or not they agree or disagree. Furthermore, we may even interrupt the person speaking so that we can offer our opinions.

Following instructions, like listening, does not come easily for most, including those who are professed believers. There is a spirit operating in many that causes them to want to do things their way in spite of what has been instructed. Is it because we don't take the time to listen or is it a spirit of rebellion operating? Either way, the Word of God is clear in its instruction to obey those who are in authority. Hebrews 13: 17 (NIV) says it this way, “*Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you*” Our lack of obedience to those in spiritual leadership is a direct reflection of our lack of obedience to God. Every person in authority is there because God allows it (see Romans 13: 1-7, Daniel 2:21).

Throughout the Old Testament, the disobedient, rebellious spirit in God's people caused them unnecessary trouble. Whenever they failed to follow the instruction of God's chosen leaders, it was as though they were disobeying God. We all have opinions as to how things should operate, but the only opinion that matters is God's. Jesus Who is Lord and Master obeyed the laws of the land and the Father's will for His life. Is the servant greater than his master?

Sisters and brothers, let's strive to be good listeners and followers of God's Word!

Minister Shirley Freeman  
Founder/President



## “God’s Blessings”

1 Chronicles 4:9-10 records a story of a man named Jabez whose name means, “One who gives pain.” According to the scriptures, he was more honorable than his brothers but still lived with a name that meant pain.

Jabez did not allow what someone else called him to determine his future. One day he asked God to bless him indeed in a big way and enlarge his territory. The Bible does not tell us that he asked his mother why she gave him this name which means pain. No, he went directly to the one who could take away the pain. Jabez did not ask the Lord only to bless him and enlarge his coast or territory, but to take away the pain also. We serve a God who is able to do exceedingly, and abundantly, above all we could ever ask or think and He invites us to come boldly before His throne and request the things we need (Ephesians 3:20, Hebrews 4:16). That’s exactly what Jabez did!

He was not satisfied with his condition. The name that was given to him emanated from his mother’s pain. He asked that the Lord’s hand be with him. He knew that God alone had the power to turn that situation around. This lets us know we should always request God’s guidance before seeking outside help. Proverbs 3:5-6 tells us to, “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”

Jabez wanted God to do something big in his life, and it’s all right to ask God to do something extraordinary in your life also, especially if what you are asking will bring glory to His name. Just as Jabez wanted God to expand his territory, we Christians should desire to expand our outreach for Christ. If God increases our area of influence, this will give us more opportunities to share His love with many.

Lastly, Jabez asked God to keep him from causing pain as his name suggests. Because he was an honorable man, Jabez was concerned about causing pain to others. He was not just asking for a blessing for himself, but he was asking God to bless him, so he could be a blessing. Jabez’s prayer is a great example for all of us. It is your Father’s good pleasure to bless you. To bless in the biblical sense means to impart supernatural favor. God honored Jabez’s request.

During this Christmas Season it may be easy to forget the greatest gift given to mankind, which is the gift of salvation (John 3:16). Jesus came to heal the brokenhearted, set the captives free and to seek and to save those who are lost (Luke 19:10, Psalm 147:3). Like Jabez, you can ask the Lord for whatever you need today. He will not withhold any good thing from those who walk uprightly. (Psalm 84:11)

The Daughters of Zion Women’s Ministries wish you God’s supernatural favor and blessings during this Christmas Season!

Minister Shirley M. Freeman  
Founder/President

## Facing Spiritual Deception: The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing Matthew 24:4-11

Jesus said on the Mount of Olives, "For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many." (Matthew 24:5.) Deception will be the cultural identity of the last days. Even some of God's very elect will be deceived by false teachings. Many will become confused. Good will be called evil and evil good. (Isaiah 5:20). Men will give up light and seek darkness. Apostasy, which means to abandon or desert one's religious faith, will rule in the last days. Apostasy will separate our families. It will destroy our churches. Denominations that once stood on Christ will fall. Many will see their faith shattered by false teachings and prophesy.

Christians must be especially aware of what is going on in the earth. The deceptions that will overtake many in the last days will target Christians. The end time predictions will not affect the ungodly for they have no faith. However, the deceiver will present the ultimate test of faith for God's people. And, like most tests designed to separate those who really study from those who read the chapter summaries the answers may all seem right but only one is correct.

Of course, the devil first has to seduce us before he can deceive us, and he will usually start with something that seems or sounds good. The Word of God warns us that one sin can lead to another sin -- read the story of King David and Bathsheba on this point. It is also true that one error can lead to another error -- just ask an Accountant. When speaking of deception, we should know one wrong belief can cause us to believe many wrong things.

To pass the ultimate test of our faith we have to know God's Word. The deceiver may just change one word in the scripture and that one word can change the truth. We must be aware of efforts to manipulate the truth in ways that entice, trick and attack us at our most vulnerable moments. After all, the Apostle Paul warned us that Satan transforms himself into an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14).

You may ask, with the written Word of God and all its warnings about deceiving spirits as a guide how does deception succeed? One way believers are deceived is through ignorance of the God's Word and God's ways. (II Timothy 2:15.) Deception also finds a doorway in our hearts through the things we idolize. Idolatry is always a danger. Seeking after things of the flesh, such as companions, money, fame or power, which are not in God's will for us is a form of idolatry. The Apostle Paul lists idolatry as a work of the flesh (Galatians 5:20).

If we want to avoid being deceived we must be prepared to give up everything in this world. (Matthew 16:25.) We must know and follow God's Word even when other words appeal to us more. God's Word never instructs us to do something God's grace will not empower us to do. The fight to destroy our faith in God has begun, and we have already been assured of victory. So, let us put on the whole armour of God so the deceiver cannot penetrate our thoughts and we can hold our ground. (Ephesians 6:11-17.) If we keep our faith, the heavenly city awaits us with streets paved with gold and every day is the best day ever.

Carmen Rutherford

# 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.”

Joyce Stevens is a member of Second Zion Baptist Church in New Orleans, LA, under the leadership of Pastor Gary Curtis. She has been in the service of the Lord for many years. She serves on the Usher and Deaconess Boards and on various committees.

## “Finish Well”

There are many examples in the Bible of great beginnings that have horrible endings. Many began their journey with great enthusiasm, passion, and vigor, only to end with less than a flicker of the fire they once possessed. It's not how well you begin that matters but how well you finish.

Solomon is a great example of someone who began well but ended miserably. He was a shining star with great potential; someone who would have been voted, most likely to succeed. He began his reign by asking God for wisdom to rule God's people. In addition to giving him great wisdom, God also gave Solomon great wealth. He was the wisest man who ever lived and was also the richest King of Israel. Although Solomon made wise choices at the start of his reign as king, he later began to make choices that would turn him away from his devotion to God.

Solomon sinned against God by aligning himself with foreign kings and marrying their daughters for political reasons (Nehemiah 13:26). Solomon forgot that God was his shield, covering and refuge. Instead of seeking God's counsel and relying on His protection, Solomon chose to rely on his own strength and resources. In the end, the wisest man that ever lived behaved as one who was unwise. His life demonstrates that knowing what's right to do, does not guarantee that one will do it. The good that we know must be put into action, or it is useless. Many are eager to offer advice to others but are slow to act upon that advice for themselves.

Conversely, Jacob, the son of Isaac, began life differently from that of Solomon. Jacob's name means “He that Supplanteth or Trickster.” The beginning of Jacob's life can be characterized by deception, selfishness, and a desire for riches. He bargained with his brother Esau for his birthright and deceived his aging, blind father at the urging of his mother, Rebekah. Jacob had to flee his homeland in fear of his brother. Following his mother's instructions, he went to live with his Uncle Laban. There Jacob reaped a harvest of deception when he was tricked into marrying Leah, the older sister of Rachel, the woman he worked seven years to marry. The “Trickster” was tricked and the “Deceiver” was deceived.

God used all of the circumstances of Jacob's life to transform him from a deceiver and a man with little integrity into a prince. Jacob lost the wife he loved deeply in childbirth and his favorite son to slavery. Jacob's older sons sold their younger brother, Joseph into slavery and lied to Jacob about his death. One day God wrestled with Jacob all night, and he was never the same. Jacob's name was changed to Israel which means prince, and his sons became the twelve tribes. Jacob is also mentioned in Hebrews 11. Jacob's life lets us know that our life does not have to end the way it began.

None of us can go back and change our past, but we can do something about our future. Don't allow what has happened in your past to destroy your future. If you have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, your slate has been wiped clean. All of your sins (past, present and future) are covered under the blood, and you've been given a new beginning (2 Corinthians 5:17). Whether you are more like Solomon or Jacob, ask the Lord to help you finish well.

**Scripture References:** Genesis 25:29-34, 27: 1-29, 43, 28: 1-5, 10-22, 29: 15-30, Hebrews 11:21, 2 Samuel 12: 24-1 Kings 11:43, Nehemiah 13:26

Minister Shirley Freeman

*“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” 2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV)*

I have recited this verse for probably over twenty years, along with my church’s congregation, and I know it from memory. I attend Bible study where my teacher, Minister Shirley Freeman, has stressed the importance of memorizing scripture. She gave us one scripture to remember, Ephesians 2:8-9, and it took some of us over three years to remember these verses. How can you or I rightly divide the word of truth, if we do not know what the Word says? So many times we attend church service where pastors and ministers misquote God’s Word, but if we do not know the Word for ourselves we can be deceived. Consistent and diligent study of God’s word is vital.

Why is it so vital to remember Scripture? “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it.” (Amos 8:11-12.) God has informed us that it is important for us to remember His Word.

God’s Word has answers that convert sinners and reveal His promises to us. He is a promise keeper. One of the most important promises in God’s Word is “Salvation.” For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16.) After we believe, He says that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead you will be saved. (Romans 10:9.) God’s Word answers every concern we might have.

Many realized the importance of prayer and faith, but have we really given thought to the importance of remembering scripture. Psalm 119:11 says, “Thy Word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against thee.” We must know what the word of God says so we sin less.

I have the challenge of memorizing scripture and realize that if I do not revisit the Word often I forget and I misquote scripture. The Word says, “. . . but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. (Joshua 1:8.) This is my GOAL, and I pray you will make it yours.

Let us remember the Word of God, so when the day of famine for the Word comes, we will be prepared.

God’s Blessings!

Frankie Nickson

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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".

## “Giving Myself Away and Surrendering It All”

### Hebrews 12: A Letter to Christians

The lyrics to *I Give Myself Away* and *I Surrender All* are declarations of submission to God. The songs have beautiful melodies, but the declarations raise questions. Do we truly want to submit to God? Can we give ourselves to Him? Will we give up our way of thinking and allow God to use us wholly? Can we get beyond emotions in the music and the singing and live out the words in the songs?

Submission is a struggle (*Ephesians 6:12-13*), but we must continue to resist the devil (*James 4:7*) and our carnal mind will give way God’s will more each day (*Roman 8:12*). When we believed in Jesus Christ as our Savior we received eternal life, but our lives did not change completely at that time. Our way of thinking did not change. We still needed some work on the inside. In fact, it does not matter how long we have had salvation we will always need some work done on the inside. The old man does not want to let go of everything, and some undetected issues are lying dormant waiting to be discovered. Transforming our minds and sacrificially submitting ourselves to God is a process. (*Romans 12:1-2 and Hebrews 12:1*). Once the process starts it gradually changes the heart, and the change in our life becomes evident.

The transformation process requires ongoing practice. Practicing transformation has to become a habit and a lifestyle. Daily depending on God, trusting and believing in Him, and allowing him to increase our faith will lead to sustained change. Denying ourselves things that simply look good, smell good or make us feel good is part of the process. Giving up bad habits, unhealthy relationships and familiar places can turn us into someone that others no longer recognize. Indeed, a transformed life will take us out of our comfort zones, but we must be willing to sacrifice our comfort for God’s perfect plan.

Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice to implement God’s salvation plan for man. Now Jesus sits at our Father’s right hand. Remember the lyrics, “*I give myself away so you can use me,*” and “*I surrender all.*” These words are our declaration of willingness to make the ultimate sacrifice. Our sacrifice and our transformation can help change others and lead them to Christ. Without transformation our testimony is weak. We cannot persuade others to try Christ if our lives are not changed. There is no point in going to church and continuing to act like people in the world. Christians tipping and dipping in sin cannot build up, but may tear down, the Kingdom of God.

So, let us daily practice truly surrendering to the Lord. Let us give up the old man and love the new man who reaches out to God for guidance every step of the way. Let us allow God to change us so our lives can encourage others. This holiday season and everyday give yourself to God so He can use you.

Helen Gill-Smith

## Got Power?

### Acts 1:8

Have you ever been without electricity for an extended period of time? If so, you realize just how important that power source is for your daily activities. Most household appliances are powered by electricity. One of the worst experiences to have is planning the use of an appliance, plugging it in, and discovering there is NO power. The power we receive from electricity is something we take for granted until it is no longer available.

In Acts chapter one, Jesus instructs His disciples to remain in Jerusalem until they receive power. "Power?" you may ask. Aren't these the same men who cast out demons and healed the sick (Luke 10:17)? Didn't they already have power? Yes, they did. Jesus gave them limited power to minister in the areas needed at that time. While on earth, Jesus was their power source. All they needed was for Jesus to say the word or to lay hands on them, and they were empowered to do whatever was needed. *"Then Jesus called together the Twelve [apostles] and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. And He sent them out to announce and preach the kingdom of God and to bring healing."* (Luke 9:1-2 Amplified)

The power they were going to receive would always be available to them, because He will reside in them. That power is the Baptism of the Holy Spirit! Jesus said to His disciples, *"For John baptized with water, but not many days from now you shall be baptized with (placed in, introduced into) the Holy Spirit* (Acts 1:5 Amplified).

The Holy Spirit is the Believer's power source. He empowers Believers to live victoriously for Christ. He gives us holy boldness to witness and to speak and do as God has instructed. He warns us of impending danger, and He also helps us to persevere during trials and testing. There is NO power apart from the Holy Spirit. You either have it or you don't. Remember what happened to the seven sons of Sceva in Acts 19:13-16. The Disciples of Jesus would never be the same after receiving the power from on high!

Let's take a look at the Apostle Peter before and after Pentecost:

#### **Before Pentecost**

Rash/Spoke before thinking (Matthew 17: 1-4)  
Fearful (Matthew 14: 29-30)  
Boastful (Luke 22:33)  
Did not heed warning (Luke 22: 31)  
Denied Christ/Wavering Faith (John 18: 25-27)

#### **After Pentecost**

Bold (Acts 2:14-40)  
Courageous (Acts 4)  
Ready to die for Christ (Acts 4:18-20)  
Adheres to The Holy Spirit (Acts 10)  
Full of Faith (Acts 3:1-10)

The first step in receiving this power is belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, His death, burial and

resurrection (Romans 10:9-10). Studying God's word, prayer, walking in love and obedience to the will of God helps us to walk in the Spirit. The Apostle Paul says in Galatians 5:6 (Amplified) *"But I say walk and live [habitually] in the [Holy] Spirit [responsive to and controlled and guided by the Spirit]; then you will certainly not gratify the cravings and desires of the flesh (of human nature without God)."*

Got power? If not, and you are a born-again Believer, why not?

Minister Shirley Freeman

## Happy New Year!

I want to thank God, all of the Daughters of Zion, friends and supporters for an amazing year during 2010. God has been and continues to be faithful!

Last year we were blessed to study the book of Romans in its entirety. It was both a challenge and a blessing. Everything anyone would like to know concerning God's wonderful plan of salvation is within that book and more. We were challenged to live lives that are pleasing to God. We were also challenged not to conform to the world's standard but to live as those who have been set-apart by God.

Our theme during 2010 was "A Transformed Life." God was getting our hearts and minds ready to draw even closer to Him by changing our behavior and our old way of thinking. We came to the realization that one cannot become transformed before the mind has been renewed. It all begins with the mind, gets into our hearts and then we act upon it. The word of God tells us in Proverbs 23:7a (KJV), "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he."

In May of 2010 during our Prayer Shut-In the ministry's focus was, "Knowing Jesus and Making Him Known." We prayed to make Him known through witnessing and evangelism, Making Him known by our lifestyles, Making Him known by having a heart of compassion, and Making Him known by exhibiting a quiet and gentle spirit. The year ended with a powerful retreat that transformed our lives. God was gracious and the Spirit of God moved in a powerful way! We will never be the same due to the Holy Spirit's transforming power.

We are all so grateful to God for His many blessings and faithfulness toward us. We desire to honor Him, not in what we say, but in what we do. Our desire for 2011 and beyond is to "Know Jesus and Make Him Known." The women who had prayer focuses during our 2010 shut-in will share their articles with you on the Inspirational Page each month. I know you will be encouraged by what they will share.

That God richly blesses you, is our prayer!

Minister Shirley Freeman  
Founder/President

## “He will Fight for You”

### *2 Chronicles 20: 1-27*

Bullies are like predators that seem to instinctively know whom to attack. Cowards at heart, they seek out the fearful, the small, the weak, or the timid. While growing up, I encountered a number of bullies. Since fighting back did not come naturally, this was a problem. Knowing that I did not like to fight, my mother would always pray and ask the Lord to fight for me. Additionally, I had many brothers and a sister who were always willing to defend me. Unfortunately, they weren't always around when the battles began. There were times when it was necessary for me to STAND.

In 2 Chronicles 20, King Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah were faced with an impending attack from three powerful enemies (Moabites, Ammonites and Mount Seir). Sometimes the first reaction upon hearing about an imminent attack is to become fearful. King Jehoshaphat became alarmed, but he resolved in his heart to seek God's guidance. He summoned all of the people of Judah and called for a corporate fast. Jesus said in Mark 9: 29 that some things only come as a result of fasting and praying.

In his book entitled, *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader*, John Maxwell writes, “One thing a leader cannot delegate is responsibility. The leader must be accountable, trustworthy and one who keeps his word. Whenever a crisis arises, the leader has the options to give up—back up—or stand up.” King Jehoshaphat chose to stand up. He began by leading the people in a very powerful prayer. He praised God for who He was and acknowledged His power and majesty. He reminded God of all that He had promised them as His chosen people. He also reminded God of His instructions not to harm these same enemies when they had an opportunity in the past. The King acknowledged that he did not know what to do and how they were powerless to resolve this matter, but he continued to say, “*But our eyes are on you*” (verse 12). That's exactly what God was waiting to hear!

While the King was still praying, the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel, a Levite, and said to the people of Judah and King Jehoshaphat in verse 15b, “*Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's.*” Isn't it reassuring to know that the LORD will fight for us? God informed them of where the enemies would be gathering, and what they should do. He told them to position themselves and see the salvation of the LORD. The Hebrew word translated “*take your position*” means to hold one's ground—to confront—and to commit oneself. We will never conquer what we won't confront.

The position they were to take was that of praise. King Jehoshaphat appointed some of his people to sing to the Lord. While they were singing and praising God, their enemies became confused and began to destroy each other. In addition to destroying those that were trying to destroy them, God gave them all that they had.

Do you feel powerless to overcome an enemy's attack? Do what King Jehoshaphat did and look to God, who is willing and ready to fight for you. Remind Him of His promises, because God is faithful, and will do what He said He would do. This battle is not yours, it's the Lord's. He will fight for you!!!

Minister Shirley Freeman

Founder/President

*“Knowing Jesus and Making Him Known by Our Lifestyle”*

Paul affectionately referred to the Corinthian Christians as *Christ’s letters* read by everyone. (2 Corinthians 3:2-3.) Several centuries later Saint Francis of Assisi reportedly coached his followers to “Preach the gospel at all times and when necessary use words.” Today, Edgar A. Guest’s line, “I’d rather see a sermon than hear one any day” is a quick and humorous response to a worship service invitation. Although written at different times, these phrases share a common theme – people learn by watching others.

Because others actually do learn by watching us we are willingly or unwillingly teachers. This is a good reason to ask ourselves, “What do I want to teach?” The easy answer for us who know Jesus is to teach about the one who changed our lives. If we claim that we know Jesus as Christ and Lord, then there must be some sign, which starts within our conscious mind. Our thoughts gradually change from negative to positive. Our new hope in Jesus shows in the way we walk, talk, and live.

Knowing Jesus gives us courage to walk in authority, walk in victory, live with power, and influence. Knowing Jesus puts a desire in our heart to want to change for the better each day. Knowing Jesus leads us to study the Bible to become more like Him. The written words in the Bible teach us how the Living Word, Jesus, acted, walked, lived, talked, prayed, treated others, and about His relationship and with God. As we read the Bible and pray we get better at imitating Jesus in our daily interactions.

But, God does not share this special knowledge of Jesus with us so we can hoard it all to ourselves. As a singer, I think lyrics such as “*They will know we are Christians by our love,*” and “*This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine . . . Everywhere I go I’m gonna let it shine,*” encourage us to make Jesus known to others. When you learn something about Jesus or when you experience the goodness of the Lord, you should share it. This sharing does not have to include words. In fact, others will likely understand Jesus better if we practice giving of ourselves daily and allow God to replenish us to give again.

In addition to sharing our knowledge of Jesus, we have God-given assignments for the perfecting of the saints. (Ephesians 4:12.) Working on our assigned tasks builds the church while teaching unbelievers about Jesus. Teaching can take many forms. But, the most effective way to teach others about Jesus is by the way we live. Living a life patterned after Jesus makes us shine. Since we are the light of the world, we should shine to lead others out of darkness. We can start lighting the dark places in our homes with our Christ-like life. Those that are closest to us may be encouraged to know Jesus. After shining in our homes we can go into the world and shine. When we shine in the world we follow Jesus’ final instruction to teach others the lessons He taught. **(Matthew 28:19.)** And, when we shine we show that our lives **are** His message.

Helen Gill-Smith

**“KNOWING JESUS AND MAKING HIM KNOWN”**  
**Philippians 3:10, John 17: 26**

**To know JESUS is to love HIM**

I first looked up the words knowing and known. I found that the word knowing means possessing knowledge, information or understanding. The words known, knew or know (present or past tense) means to be intimately familiar with, to distinguish, recognition of truth by personal experience, to perceive and to be acquainted with.

Philippians 3:10 reads “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death” which means knowing Christ not only means experiencing the power of the risen Lord, but also sharing in his sufferings, because when we know Christ by completely trusting in Him, that same power enables us to live morally renewed lives. But before we can walk in newness of life, we must also die to sin meaning, be made conformable unto His death. Just as His resurrection gives us His power to live for Him, His crucifixion marks the death of our old sinful nature.

Our ultimate goal as Christians should be to know Jesus in an intimate way. In the Bible, when a man and woman come together in intimacy, it is referred to as KNOW, KNOWN or KNEW. Genesis 4:1 states “And Adam knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain. Therefore, our desire should be to know Jesus and be in intimacy with him. We can become intimate with Jesus by first having complete trust in Him (proverbs 3:5-6) because when we trust Him, we can experience the power of the Holy Spirit in us, (John 14, 16) we can have assurance of forgiveness, (Colossians 2:13) freedom from evil desires, (Colossians 2:11) happiness (Colossians 2:7) and personal growth (Colossians 1:28). It’s a process that takes time commitment and dedication to knowing Jesus.

When we know Jesus we realize that Jesus himself is the way the truth and life that makes us free. (John 8:36) He is the source of truth, the perfect standard of what is right. He frees us from the consequences of sin, from self deception and from deception from Satan. He shows us clearly the way to eternal life with God. Thus Jesus does not give us freedom to do what we want but freedom to follow God. As we seek to know God and serve God, Jesus’ perfect truth frees us to be all that God meant us to be.

When we get to really know Jesus and live in total union/trust in HIM day by day, knitted together in His love, become solely dependent on Him, we can then experience the joy of knowing HIM in a deeper and more intimate way. It’s the perfect example of what intimacy means, oneness and total knowledge of the other person. Intimacy will enable us to conceive spiritually and eventually give birth to God’s purpose for our lives. Yes! Love will manifest love when we know Jesus in that intimate way.

John 17: 26 “And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith thou has loved me may be in them, and I in them. This verse illustrates how much God loves us and desires intimacy with us. It’s that same love that caused Jesus to leave the Splendor of Heaven to come to Earth with one goal in mind, to save mankind from hell. He came because of His awesome love for us. He gave His life freely. He could’ve called 10,000 Angels as the songs says to destroy the world and set HIM free, but because of love, he endured the pain, bare the shame, rejection and anguish for us all. Jesus’ pure love for us kept Him on the Cross, that the captive would be free, delivered, healed, revived, and be restored to Him. His desire for us is to be complete in HIM, spiritually, physically, mentally, emotionally, relationally and even financially. He gave Himself for us all.



Now it's our time to make Jesus known to the entire world. It's our responsibility to spread the good news of Salvation, (Mark 16:15). We must let it be known that Jesus is alive, that He lives in our hearts and minds, that He is sovereign, omnipotent, superior, all mighty, Love, Holy, pure, good, faithful, righteous, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, all knowing, all seeing, that He's Abraham, Moses, Isaac and David's God, my Jesus, your Jesus who is our keeper and He loves us with an everlasting love that cannot be compared to anyone or anything. Oh, to know JESUS is to love HIM, and make HIM known.

Wouldn't you like to know JESUS and make Him known?

**PRAISE GOD!!!**

Malvia Lewis

## “Distractions”

The Daughters of Zion have just completed a study on spiritual warfare. It reminded us that we have a real enemy who is out to destroy us. He is relentless and will use whatever method he deems effective to defeat us. The word of God says it like this in 1 Peter 3: 8, *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”* We cannot afford to be asleep (spiritually); we must always be on guard against the tactics and tricks of our adversary.

One of his favorite weapons is distractions. The New English Dictionary defines distraction as *an interruption; an obstacle to concentration*. Have you ever prayed and found yourself thinking about everything other than God? That’s a distraction. Uncontrollable thoughts broke your concentration and interrupted your prayer. The enemy uses any and everything to distract us. His purpose is to take us off course, so we will not fulfill our God-given purpose.

Many accidents have occurred, because someone was distracted. While driving a car or operating certain types of equipment, distractions can be dangerous--even fatal. A doctor who becomes distracted while performing surgery endangers the life of his or her patient. Indeed, distractions have been the cause of many lives being destroyed.

In the book of Judges (13-16) we read about Samson, a man who God chose to deliver the Israelites from their Philistine enemies. A Nazarite from birth, he was set apart for the service of God. He was forbidden to cut his hair or to drink strong drink, and he was supposed to keep his vows all the days of his life.

Although he was given supernatural physical strength to conquer Israel’s enemies, Samson was weak in other areas. He was lustful, never sought the Lord for direction and did not honor his vows. He visited prostitutes frequently and made unwise choices in his relationships. He even used his God-given strength on occasions for selfish reasons. He lost focus of his purpose. The things that he should have destroyed, he began to pursue. He became so distracted by his own lustful desires that he began feeding his enemies information which led to the loss of his strength, sight and his life.

Are you becoming distracted by unimportant things or people who are not a part of God’s plan and purpose for your life? Have you gotten sidetracked and lost your focus and concentration? Take heed of Samson’s mistakes, and don’t allow distractions to get you off course. Satan will send distractions of every sort, but we can counter those attacks by praying and by reading and meditating daily on the Word of God.

Let’s Pray: Father, help us to remain focused on the plans and purposes you have for our lives. Remind us that our God-given gifts are not for our own selfish reasons but are for Your glory. Help us always to remain faithful. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Minister Shirley Freeman  
Founder/President

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## “Live with Love”

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

In life there are many opportunities where we may have a chance to show love and for whatever reason we fall short. But to be a Christian we must exemplify the life of Christ, but in order to do that, we must know the life of Christ. Christ always demonstrated love even to those who meant him harm. Would we be willing to invite someone to our home for dinner if we knew for certain that individual was going to harm us? I'm not going to be so quick to say I would, but that's the love Christ showed Judas.

After Jesus revealed the events leading to his death, Peter confessed that Jesus was the son of God, but soon after, he tells Jesus to abort His mission. Instead of Jesus condemning Peter, He rebukes the spirit of Satan that was influencing him. We may have someone in our lives who constantly oppose us, but we must follow Jesus' example and still love that individual.

Also, there are times when our own actions may be the thing that's causing the opposition. If actions are made with love no matter what may transpire between ourselves and someone else, we will be much closer to the Father. But "What have they done, for me to love them!" In rebuttal, what have we done for Christ to die for us?

It's only through the love and grace of God that Christ would die for those who denied him, so that we could love those who defy us. He died for those who were blind, so that we could see each other with love. He died for the world, so we can be better than what the world wants to make us. We must be careful how we treat one another regardless to our history. Often time others are given power over our spirit and try to show someone harm or exclusion; especially in the church. How can we move forward if we are pulling in different directions. It's so easy to find fault and try to tear someone down that may have hurt us, but let's emulate Christ, and invite them to supper at our Father's house.

May God bless you to demonstrate His love.

Minister Marcus Moore

## “LOVE”

John 3:16 is the most famous verse in the entire Bible. Most of us, including sinners, can quote this verse if asked to do so. Sadly the verse means nothing to many.

The emphasis in John 3:16 is on love. God sacrificially gave His only son because of his unconditional love for us. He gave His only son for a specific reason – to get us back from Satan’s bondage because God loves us.

The Greek word for love is agape. The word agape means unconquerable, benevolence and undefeatable goodwill. Those with agape seek the highest good for man. They do not rely on chemistry, an affinity or feeling to motivate them to do good for others. They have plain love in its highest form.

God commanded us to love one another. This is one of His greatest commandments. When we love each other as God commands us it opens our hearts to see and know Jesus clearly.

Another important scripture on love is 1 Corinthians 13:1, “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity (*love*), I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.” This verse says we may sing with an anointing that brings down heaven, preach and bring deliverance, pray and bring healing, but without love we are empty. We can sing, preach or pray under the anointing, but the anointing may leave us when we stop singing, preaching or praying. I know getting cut off on the freeway can cause the anointing to quickly go. But, the agape love in 1 Corinthians 13, keeps us steadfast in the will of God regardless of conditions or situations.

Agape love strengthens us and enables us to do all things through Christ Jesus. Nine fruits of agape love are:

Patience --- not hurried, suffers long, hopes, believes and endures all things.

Kindness --- gentle, never acts rashly or insolently.

Generosity --- not envious or jealous, giving from the heart.

Humility --- humble, not puffed up or proud.

Courtesy --- never rude or discourteous, always polite.

Unselfishness --- never selfish, sour, or bitter, seeks only good of others.

Good temper --- never irritated, never resentful.

Righteousness --- hates sin, never glad when others go wrong.

Sincerity --- never boastful and conceited, not hypocritical, always honest.

These are the fruits of agape love Jesus wanted to see in Peter when Jesus repeatedly asked, “Do you love me?” (John 21:15-17.) These are the same fruits Jesus wants to see in us. How many of

the fruits of agape love do we possess? How many are we in the process of acquiring? How many are we showing to others?

Agape LOVE opens hearts and gives others a glimpse of God's sacrificial gift. It is the love that Jesus demonstrated on the cross and that requires us to love others unconditionally and at great personal inconvenience. But, we cannot have agape love unless we receive it from God. Pray that God will give you agape love to lead others to Christ. Amen.

## Making Jesus Known by Exhibiting a Kind and Gentle Spirit

*<sup>11</sup> The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. <sup>12</sup> After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. 1 Kings 19:11-12 NIV*

This Old Testament story of God visiting Elijah reminds us that even with His terrifying power, God chooses to reveal Himself to man in quiet and gentle ways. Chaos and calamity will certainly grab our attention, but God speaks to our hearts in tender merciful ways. Indeed, as Jesus was crucified the earth shook, the sun went dark and strange phenomenon occurred, but those gentle words from the cross still capture our hearts.

With this in mind, how can we help others know Jesus? He left the earth over 2,000 years ago. Since his departure men have written enough on his life and time to fill many libraries. You can research his birth, his family tree, his national origins, his occupation, his ministry, his horrible death and the controversy surrounding his resurrection. With all the historical data we can certainly know a lot about Jesus. Yet, this information alone cannot replace the life-changing experience of really knowing Him.

Many believe we really know a person when we can predict how he or she will react in certain situations. I know my Mom will offer anybody who walks through her door food because she is warm and hospitable. Knowing Mom well enough to predict her behaviors follows years of close observation. It is her nature to kindly serve all who enter her home. However, Mom will readily admit that her natural tendency for caring and kindness comes from knowing Jesus.

Jesus was compassionate, giving and loving. He did not want people to suffer. Although He was God's son, and also God, he came to earth as a man to die for our sins. He showed great love by offering himself as a sacrifice for our evil deeds. He had power and authority as God's son, yet Jesus took time to address individual needs. While walking with an admiring crowd, He stopped to cure a poor woman with a blood disease. (Mark 5:25-33.) In route to a feast in Jerusalem, He stopped to heal a crippled man. (John 5:1-18.) On a trip to Galilee, he took time to minister to a promiscuous Samaritan woman. (John 4:4-42.) By nature Jesus was kind and gentle.

Kindness and gentleness should be character traits in all who know Jesus. These traits show our love for Him. Paul counseled the Philippian Christians to have the same mind as Jesus when interacting with one another. Paul reminded them, and us, that although Jesus was God, He did not use His powerful advantage over man. Instead, Jesus humbled himself to serve man. (Philippians 2:4-8.) Restraining anger and judgment to show kindness and gentleness when others make mistakes is an effective way to impact another life. It is also a sure way to help others know Jesus. In fact, exhibiting a kind and gentle spirit is the way God wants us to introduce Jesus to others. (. . . *I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.* Jeremiah 31.3 NIV.)

**“KNOWING JESUS AND MAKING HIM KNOWN”**  
**Philippians 3:10, John 17: 26**

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Wouldn't you like to know JESUS and make Him known?

**PRAISE GOD!!!**

Malvia Lewis

## “Born Again?”

John 3: 3-7

My husband has been clean for over twenty years. He had addictions, which included alcohol, drugs and cigarettes. Once he made up his mind to change, God helped him to get victory over all of them. Although he is a member of Narcotics Anonymous, his faith in God was the most important factor in his success at staying clean, one day at a time. He no longer considers the day he was born into this world as his birth date, but rather, the date when he became free of his addictions. He said he was given a second chance at a first class life.

In John chapter 3, Jesus said to Nicodemus, “*You must be born again.*” Jesus was not speaking of another physical birth but a spiritual birth. To be born again literally means *to be born from above*. Flesh only gives birth to flesh—but spirit gives birth to spirit (John 3:6).

The new birth begins when, by faith, one believes in Jesus Christ (Romans 10:9-10). We are not saved and given new life by good works or our own righteousness—but by grace. Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV) says, “*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.*”

The reason we all need the new birth is because we have all sinned (Romans 3:23). According to the scriptures, we are born in sin and shaped in iniquity (Psalm 51: 5). For example, no one has to teach a child to lie, they do it instinctively. However, they must be taught the importance of telling the truth.

As a child, I enjoyed going to church with my mother and brothers. Though I attended church regularly, I later realized that I was not saved and did not understand the gospel message of salvation. I, like a lot of others, thought that water baptism, church attendance, and doing the right things guaranteed my salvation. Shortly after the birth of my son, the Lord began to work in my heart. One day while washing dishes, I turned on the radio to the teaching of Dr. Charles Stanley. His message was entitled, “*God’s Wonderful Plan of Salvation.*” After listening to Dr. Stanley’s message, I felt like the man in John chapter 9 who had been blind his entire life, until he encountered Jesus. He said in verse 25, “*I was blind, but now I see.*” The spiritual scales fell from my eyes, as they did for the Apostle Paul in Acts chapter nine, and I was able to clearly see the relationship God wanted to have with me. I was overcome with emotion, and asked Jesus to come into my heart and save me.

I began reading the Gospels and fell in love with the Man, Jesus. I met with Him regularly through the Word and prayer. The transforming power of the Holy Spirit was activating in my life. The former church attendee was becoming a disciple of Christ. 2 Corinthians 5: 17 says, “*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*” Like my husband, I was given another chance at a first class life. I, too, had a new birth date, because I was born again!

Minister Shirley Freeman  
Founder/President

## "KNOWING JESUS and MAKING JESUS KNOWN THROUGH EVANGELISM"

When it comes to knowing Jesus many questions arise. "Who is Jesus to me?" "Is He a character in Bible stories?" "Is he someone I know personally?" Finding answers to these questions can lead us to accept Jesus as Savior and Lord while actually transforming our lives. Both the legendary Jesus and the living Jesus exist in God's word. By studying praying and meditating on God's word we discover Jesus' great love for us and His role in completing God's plan to free us from sin. Studying Jesus' life allows us to see ourselves through God's eyes. His teachings help us acknowledge our shortcomings and value our gifts. Above all we discover the greatest gift -- abundant life through Jesus. Really knowing Jesus causes us to want others to know Him too.

Indeed, Jesus wants us to share His story with others. His Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 instructs us to do three things: go, teach and baptize. Jesus emphasized the importance of teaching others about Him by using the word "teach" twice in the two short verses that make up the Great Commission. In fact, the only thing greater than teaching about Jesus is receiving His truths. But, Jesus emphasized teaching because we cannot receive His truths without some form of information sharing.

Jesus also stressed that He, personally, would be with us ". . . always, even unto the end of the world." He reminds us that we are not alone, nor are we expected to fulfill the Great Commission by our own strength. When sharing Jesus' story with other, both His presences and His power are with us. He promises to sustain us while we do our part in sharing how Jesus completed God's awesome salvation plan.

Sharing Jesus' story is also a natural overflow of His love and an expression of our transformed life. Most of us can attest to the fact that knowing Jesus has changed our hearts, minds and perspectives on life and the world around us. I know the sense of peace and stress-free assurance that Jesus cares improves my outlook. But, what got me to the point of accepting Jesus in the first place? It was someone who took the time to share their faith in Jesus with me. It was someone praying for me when I did not even know they were thinking about me. It was someone offering Jesus' words of wisdom and encouragement when I was depressed and feeling alone. It was someone inviting me to a worship service or a Bible study to hear about Jesus. All these expressions were from people who took time to give me a new hope and comfort through Jesus.

Many of us have relationships with Jesus today because others shared His love with us in some way. These simple acts of sharing Jesus are the core of evangelism. Once we know Jesus the responsibility for sharing Him with others is ours. Who will we teach about Jesus? Is there a neighbor or co-worker with whom the Spirit is prompting us to share our faith in Jesus? We are reminded in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 that God comforts us so that we may comfort others. I pray that we willingly introduce others to Jesus the same way someone once introduced us.

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## Recognizing Your Season

*“To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.”*  
Ecclesiastes 3:1 (KJV)

Can you recognize your current season by the circumstances you are experiencing?

Winter: A time of loss, barrenness, brokenness, storms, delays (short days/long nights)

Spring: Preparing for summer, blooming flowers, some growth (longer days/shorter nights)

Summer: Time to produce, fertile, abundance of blessings (long days/short nights)

Fall: Transition from summer to winter, falling leaves, harvest time (shorter days/longer nights)

King Solomon, who was considered the wisest man of his era, wrote the book of Ecclesiastes. He begins chapter three by informing us that everything that happens in life has a set time and purpose. God uses all of our experiences, both good and bad to shape our character and to get us to the place He wants us to be. He allows us to go through times (seasons) of testing, brokenness, barrenness and blessings to prepare us for our destiny. It is during the difficult times when we will either move closer to God and draw from His strength, or become discouraged and turn away from Him. Hard times will either make us bitter or better.

It is important to remember that seasons come and seasons go. It is the same in the spiritual as it is in the natural. Although it may seem as though a difficult season is lasting an eternity, God has a set time to turn things around. Regardless of how long you’ve been waiting, things will not change until its purpose has been accomplished. I can attest to this in my own life. I didn’t realize during my seasons of brokenness and barrenness that God was going to cause all of it to work out for my good and for His purpose (Romans 8:28). At times I felt as though things would never change, but God knew the time and date He planned to deliver me. I survived the harsh winter seasons by drawing strength from God’s word and praying. I would not change anything about those times (though they were hard), because it brought me into a closer and more intimate relationship with my God. I was assured of His love during the times of loneliness, rejection, feelings of abandonment, tears and pain. My God was there through it all. He promised never to leave nor forsake me—and He always keeps His promises.

This reminds me of one of my favorite Old Testament personalities, Joseph whom God allowed to go through seasons of blessing, testing, and brokenness to prepare him for greatness. The greater the task or blessing, the greater the tests will be. I am impressed by Joseph, because he was a remarkable young man. He was a person of great integrity. He was loyal, intelligent, faithful, and yes, handsome (Genesis 39: 6b). Jacob favored Joseph because he was the son of his favorite wife, Rachel and was conceived in his old age. We are introduced to Joseph in Genesis 37.

Due to Jacob’s constant display of affection and favoritism for Joseph, he incurred the hatred and wrath of his brothers. Jacob demonstrated his love for his younger son by presenting him with a coat of honor. He also showed confidence in Joseph’s ability by sending him out to check up on his older siblings. Joseph was enjoying a great summer season. He was a dreamer, and God had given him a vision of his future which he shared with his brothers and father. Sometimes God will give us a glimpse into our future, but we must be wise not to reveal it before the right time. By speaking prematurely, we can unwittingly give the enemy information he needs to hinder us.

Unknown to Joseph, his season was about to change. He was ridiculed by his brothers and rebuked by his father upon revealing his dreams (Genesis 37: 5-10). Don’t expect everyone to be happy

about your successes, not even members of your own family (natural or spiritual). The warm/hot days of summer were changing to the cool days of fall.

Joseph's brothers saw an opportunity to get rid of their younger rival by selling him into slavery. Because of his excellent spirit and God-given abilities, Joseph, though a slave in Potiphar's house, was given a position of leadership. He endured daily temptations by Potiphar's wife but remained faithful to both God and Potiphar (Genesis 39: 7-19). Scorned by Joseph's rejection, the woman creates a lie that lands him into jail (winter has begun).

Joseph was blessed even in prison. He remained faithful and trustworthy during those trying times. He used God's gift of interpreting dreams, which would eventually change his life, to minister to two prisoners. His response to adversity demonstrated his confidence and trust in God. After successfully interpreting the dreams, Joseph is hopeful of his imminent release from jail (transitioning from winter to spring).

Two years passed and God remembers Joseph. Pharaoh had a dream that no one could interpret except Joseph, because the Lord was with him. He was given great power and position, second only to Pharaoh (Genesis 41). Even when God was silent, He was there working things out in Joseph's favor. God's purpose in allowing him to experience all of the trials and adverse circumstances was so He could preserve His people, Israel.

Joseph told Pharaoh there would be seven years of plenty (summer) and seven years of famine (winter). The solution to surviving the harsh winter years was to store up during the years of plenty, so when the seasons changed, they would be prepared. We must do the same spiritually. Never become complacent, lazy or worse, overly confident (arrogant) during the summer seasons and forget God. Be prepared for whatever may occur by relying totally on Him for direction and provision. Pray in season and out of season (when things are going well and when all hell is breaking loose). Remember, it is God who has allowed us to gain wealth, enjoy good health and prosperity. Summer can be the most dangerous season of all (Deuteronomy 8:1-14).

Do you recognize your current season? Whatever your season may be, just remain faithful to God and hold on to His promises, so that His purpose can be accomplished in you and through you.

Happy New Year!!!

Minister Shirley Freeman  
Founder/President

## *“Determined and Committed”*

What do the words determination and commitment mean to you? To some it means never giving up and desiring to fulfill an obligation. The dictionary defines determination as the act of coming to a decision or of fixing or settling a purpose. Commitment is defined as a pledge or promise; an obligation.

Whenever I think of determination and commitment, I think of Joseph, Daniel and his three companions, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, five remarkable young men who were determined and committed to live for God. Though they were enslaved in foreign lands, they did not allow their circumstances to determine their destiny. They were willing to suffer, even at the point of death, to honor God. Indeed, compromising with those who did not know or serve God was not an option for them.

We must not allow this world’s attractions to get us off course. Anything that causes us to abandon the purposes and plans God has for our lives must be aborted. We have a real enemy who is determined to defeat us. He will use any and everything available to derail us. The Bible says it this way in 1 Peter 5:8 (Amplified), *“Be well balanced (temperate, sober of mind), be vigilant and cautious at all times; for that enemy of yours, the devil roams around like a lion roaring [in fierce hunger], seeking someone to seize upon and devour.”*

The lion’s roar can be heard five miles away and is utilized to place fear into the heart of its quarry. Its roar is so fierce that it often paralyzes it, and thus, brings about its capture. Then, the lion stands over its captured prey, throws its head back and roars (announcing its victory). Satan, our enemy, imitates the lion by roaring into our lives, creating panic and fear.

Satan roared in the lives of these five young men. For instance, after being sold into slavery by his brothers, Joseph encountered a lustful woman who tried to seduce him. Falsely accused of rape, he was thrown into prison, but God did not forget him. At the appointed time, He rewarded Joseph for his faithfulness and commitment (read Genesis 37- 50). Daniel and his three companions had purposed in their hearts to honor God regardless of the consequences. Daniel was placed in a lion’s den because of his commitment to prayer, but God locked the mouths of the lions. Additionally, his three companions, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, were cast into a fiery furnace for refusing to bow down and worship anyone but God. They walked out of the fiery furnace without a smell of smoke (read Daniel 1, 3 & 6).

All of the young men mentioned demonstrated great commitment and determination. We must possess no less a resolve to live a life that pleases God. He is worthy of our devotion and commitment!

Are you determined and committed to live for Jesus? If not, why not begin now?

Minister Shirley Freeman  
Founder/President

## “It’s All in Your Mind”

*“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” Ephesians 4: 22-24 (NIV)*

There are a myriad of self help books on the market, which instruct their readers how to succeed. One such book is entitled, *“Change your mind, Change your life.”* In it the author asserts that having the right mindset is vital to reaching desired goals. Although I have a great appreciation for a variety of books, I believe the Bible is the best self help book available. It contains everything one needs to succeed.

The Bible’s idea of success differs from that of the world. Success God’s way is to conform to the image of Jesus, that is, to become similar in character and form. In order for transformation to occur, we must first renew our minds (change the way we think). This transformation will not occur overnight, it’s progressive. As we grow in the knowledge of the Lord and are obedient to His Word, change will begin.

That’s why Satan is after our minds! He wants to fill our lives with so much stuff, so we are too busy to read God’s Word and hear His voice. He knows that God’s Word transforms the lives of those who hear and apply it. God’s desires will become our desires, and our way of thinking will begin to line up with His Word.

The story of the Samaritan woman in John chapter 4 is a great example of the transformative power of Jesus. Her encounter with Jesus caused her to reconsider the way she was living. He planted seeds of righteousness within her. By conversing with her, He proved to this woman, who had been abused, neglected and rejected, that she was valuable to Him. The word she received that day gave her confidence, and ignited a fire within, she didn’t realize was there.

One word from the Lord turned the Samaritan woman’s life around! She dropped her water pots, ran to the town and told the people, *“Come see a man who told me everything I ever did.”* That day, the once loose woman became an Evangelist (John 4: 28-29). Jesus can take a mess and change him or her into a missionary. If you ever have a real encounter with Jesus, you will never be the same!

Are you longing for a change in your life like the Samaritan woman? Do you desire to be more like Jesus, but find it difficult? Begin by praying and reading your Bible regularly. Admit your inability to change on your own. Then ask you your heavenly Father to give you a heart and mind like Jesus. God loves to see a reflection of His Son in everyone who believes.

Remember, you have the ability to change and to accomplish whatever it is you desire, and it all begins in your mind! (Proverbs 23:7)

Minister Shirley Freeman  
Founder/President

## “The Source of My Strength”

I have been holding on to the book of Philippians, all four chapters, for over a year. The book has been a source of strength and encouragement for me and I would like to share it with you.

As Christians we forget that we are connected to this unlimited power source -- Jesus the Christ. Philippians 4:13 says, “I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me.” (KJV.) That is my proclamation, “I can,” not because I am strong, but because I am holding on to Jesus the source of my strength.

So when my account is in the negative, and when I am afraid or alone, I can. On the days when every thing that can go wrong, goes wrong and I feel as if two concrete blocks are tied to my legs, I can. When all I want to do is cover my head and stay in bed, I can. I turn to Paul’s book Philippians where he is constantly saying “Rejoice in the Lord.” (Philippians 2:16, 3:1, 3:3, 4:4 and 4:10.)

In my weakness I ask, “How can I rejoice when my world is falling apart around me?” You see, that liar, the devil, told me that I need to always be in control. That is the lie. It is the lie we try to live and we fail at because we are leaning on our own strength. Depending on our own strength causes uncertainty and fear. If we allow ourselves to live in a state of constant fear and heightened worry, we have already lost the battle as a Christian. But, when we rejoice in the Lord in spite of our situations, we throw the devil a curve ball.

As Christians we have power. Our power comes through our faith. Our faith allows us to believe, “Yes! I can do all things through Christ which is my strength.” I have strength that allows me to “press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:14.) JESUS’ name is above all names and at His name every knee should bow. (Philippians 2:10.) I have learned to say Paul’s words, “For me to live is Christ. . . .” (Philippians 1:21.) I know that I would have lost my mind, or be dead by now, if I was not leaning and depending on the strength of Jesus. I could not have made it this far without Jesus.

We must let go of all the stuff in our lives that we think we are controlling -- but really the stuff is controlling us. We have to get out from under the covers and into the light. We must get up, dust ourselves off, and press forward believing that we can do all things through CHRIST our strength. I can. You can. We can.

God Bless You!

Carmen Rutherford

Carmen is a License Vocational Nurse who enjoys cooking and baking. She grew up in a large family and considers herself the ultimate hostess. Carmen has been a member of New Providence Baptist Church. for over twenty years and is also an active member of the Daughters of Zion.

Although she has learned much from others, her mother, Mother Carmel Rutherford is her greatest mentor. She has witnessed her mother’s great faith, love for God and God’s people throughout her life. She thanks God for such a wonderful expression of His love.



## Praise and Thanksgiving Always and In Everything

“In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Jesus Christ concerning you.”  
(1 Thessalonians 5: 18)

The Thanksgiving season reminds us that we have much to be thankful for. On Thanksgiving many families gather to share what they are grateful for. It is our special time to give thanks for the obvious – life, food and shelter -- and for the multitude of other blessings we receive each year. Gratitude grows in the heart from feelings of thankfulness and appreciation. Gratitude leads to praise, which should be a continuous part of our lives.

But, consistent thankfulness is not always easy. Thankfulness is easy when things go smoothly in your life. However, daily challenges tend to remind us of bad experiences rather than good ones, and we forget to give thanks. Giving thanks takes daily practice. We get better at it over time. In one of the darkest moments in my life, I started a practice of gratitude. It served as a lifeline for me. At that dark time I could have easily thought about what was not working in my life, but focusing on my blessings and the brighter side of life enabled me to feel more thankful.

These scriptures help me practice gratitude: “I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.” (Psalm 34:1.) “Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever.” (Psalm 145:2.) Paul’s encouragement to Timothy, “be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 2:1.) Gratitude also grows from grace. We have so much to praise God for. We praise God for his unbroken promises, His protection, His care and His presence.

Gratitude is a key indicator of our spiritual life. Actions in our spiritual life reflect our relationship with Christ. That relationship should follow guidelines given in the Bible. I remember a time in my life when I neglected studying God’s Word. I only attended church and listened to the preacher’s message. However, since I started searching scripture diligently, I have been wonderfully blessed and I am so thankful.

Daily thanksgiving is a sacred opportunity to live in appreciation for God. It is a time to show love and grow by thankfully accepting people as they are. I have learned to be grateful for everyone and everything. We can all become more thankful everyday with the transforming power of God.

Life is full of trials, tribulations, storms, disasters and catastrophes. Always and in everything we can give thanks. Like the psalmist we can “be thankful unto him, and bless his name.” (Psalm 100:4.) Giving thanks is a powerful tool that can dramatically improve our lives. This Thanksgiving season embrace gratitude and make it a habit. “AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD.” (Romans 14:11b, NASB)

Irma Williams

“Total Commitment”  
Acts 20:2-24, 21:10-14

The word commitment is often used loosely, and without any thought as to what it truly means to be committed. When we make a commitment we vow, or pledge, to do what we promise. We have all made promises or commitments that we could not fulfill due to circumstances beyond our control. Those broken promises, though disappointing, are understandable. However, some make promises or commitments they have no intention of fulfilling.

Faithfulness and commitment are important to God. God always keeps His promises. He does what He says He will do, and when He says He will do it. God expects nothing less from those who profess to be His followers. Despite God’s example, we often fall short in the area of commitment. Marriage vows are broken on a daily basis. Friendships and other relationships suffer because someone fails to honor their commitment. These failures should be the exception and not the rule for those of us who are followers of Jesus. We should make every effort to keep our promises. The word of God found in Ecclesiastes 5:4-6 (NIV) says it this way, *“When you make a vow to God, do not delay to fulfill it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow. It is better not to make a vow than to make one and not fulfill it.”*

In Acts chapters 20 and 21, the Apostle Paul is informed by the Holy Spirit, and the Prophet Agabus, that suffering lay ahead of him. Yet, Paul was not concerned about what he would suffer, or about saving his own life. His only concern was to be able to finish the mission entrusted to him by Jesus. He was not only willing to suffer for Christ, but to die for Him as well.

Is there anything or anyone to whom you are totally committed? Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is quoted as saying, *“If a man hasn't discovered something that he will die for, he isn't fit to live.”*

The Apostle Paul found someone he was willing to die for -- Jesus! Paul always looked for ways to be identified with Jesus and to honor Him. (Galatians 2:20, Philippians 3:10-11, 2 Timothy 4:7.) Threats of suffering and death did not deter Paul from his mission, and he remained faithful to the end.

The Lord Jesus Christ was totally committed to the Father and to finishing the course set before Him. (John 8:29.) Are you glad Jesus didn’t abandon His mission? Are you grateful Jesus honored His commitment? Indeed, Jesus was willing to endure humiliation, pain and death for our salvation.

The late Erma Bombeck said, *“When I stand before God at the end of my life, I would hope that I would not have a single bit of talent left, and could say, “I used everything you gave me.”*

My desire is to do the same. Are you totally committed to Jesus? If not, make a decision to do so today.

Happy Resurrection Day!

Shirley Freeman  
Founder/President

## “WHAT IS YOUR NET WORTH?”

### Luke 15

Forbes Magazine publishes a yearly list of the wealthiest people in the world. You might know some of the people on that list. This year Bill Gates topped the list, again, with a net worth of \$54 Billion. Trailing close behind Bill is Warren Buffet with \$45 Billion in net assets.

Obviously, Bill and Warren’s great financial worth have earned them tremendous respect. People compete for their attention. Writers study their lives and have written books on their success. They are considered among the most influential men in American, and perhaps, the world. Their fame underscores the fact that great wealth is associated with having great personal value in our society. We cater to the rich and neglect the poor.

In Luke 15 Jesus tells three stories to explain how God measures the net worth of a person. The first two are short stories about a lost sheep and a lost coin. Jesus begins the sheep story by posing the question, “If a Shepherd has 100 sheep and loses one will he leave the flock of 99 to go looking for the lost one?” No one would blame the Shepherd if he said, “I still have ninety-nine,” and decided to settle for his loss. But, the Shepherd in Jesus’ story prizes each of his sheep. We know this because only a Shepherd who regularly counts his flock would recognize that one sheep is missing. And, a Shepherd who meticulously counts his flock cannot settle for losing even one sheep. So, in answering the question Jesus says a Shepherd who values his entire flock cannot rest until the lost sheep is found.

The coin story is the same. A woman had ten silver coins but she lost one. The woman could not rest until she had found the one, lost coin. She cleaned the whole house to find the coin. And when she found the lost coin, she called her friends and said, “Let’s party! I found my lost coin.” Do you hate to lose something of value that belongs to you? The woman in Jesus story certainly did not take losing one of her ten coins lightly.

If you are lost, Jesus is searching for you day and night. He is looking to find you to put you back where you belong in his good care. To Jesus you are a lost treasure. Jesus finds you when you accept Him as the master of your life – give Him control over you. He finds you when you believe He is the Son of God who values you so much that He actually died so that sin and death would not make you their slaves.

Being found also requires you to confess that you have sinned and need God’s mercy and forgiveness.

Your true worth has nothing to do with money or popularity. It has everything to do with being a unique creation by a God who put His best effort into designing you. As you live remember your extraordinary worth.

Janie White.

Janie White loves studying God's Word. She mentors young women and is active in both her church and the Daughters of Zion. 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.