

What to Do When You Don't Know What to Do

(God Will Make a Way for Your Life!)



Horatio G. Spafford was a successful lawyer and businessman in Chicago with a lovely family - a wife, Anna, and five children. However, they were not strangers to tears and tragedy. Their young son died with pneumonia in 1871, and in that same year, much of their business was lost in the great Chicago fire. Yet, God in His mercy and kindness allowed the business to flourish once more.

On Nov. 21, 1873, a French ocean liner was crossing the Atlantic from the U.S. to Europe with 313 passengers on board. Among the passengers were Mrs. Spafford and their four daughters. Although Mr. Spafford had planned to go with his family, he found it necessary to stay in Chicago to help solve an unexpected business problem. He told his wife he would join her and their children in Europe a few days later. His plan was to take another ship.

About four days into the crossing of the Atlantic, the ship collided with a powerful, iron-hulled Scottish ship. Suddenly, all of those on board were in grave danger. Anna hurriedly brought her four children to the deck. She knelt there with Annie, Margaret Lee, Bessie and Tanetta and prayed that God would spare them if that could be His will, or to make them willing to endure whatever awaited them. Within approximately 12 minutes, the ship slipped beneath the dark waters of the Atlantic, carrying with it 226 of the passengers including the four Spafford children.

A sailor, rowing a small boat over the spot where the ship went down, spotted a woman floating on a piece of the wreckage. It was Anna, still alive. He pulled her into the boat and they were picked up by another large vessel which, nine days later, landed them in Cardiff, Wales. From there she wired her husband a message which began, "Saved and alone, what shall I do?" Mr. Spafford later framed the telegram and placed it in his office.

Have you ever been here? Alone and not knowing what to do? Have you ever asked God in desperation, "What shall I do?" "Lord, what should I do when I don't know what to do?" Have you ever had the wind knocked out of your sails? Have you ever come to the end of yourself and did not know which way to turn or what to do? Our brain can sometimes feel clogged and we really don't know how to resolve a certain problem or what direction to take. Sometimes in life, we find ourselves at a dead end, or a crossroads, or on a path that seems to be going nowhere and we say "I don't know what to do at this point in my life. I don't know how to resolve a certain situation or how to make the right decision." There are times we can enter a state of feeling lost in life. It's as though we are moving from one point to the next, unsure of what's around the next bend, too afraid to take the next step. In times like these, we must reboot and refocus in life, wait on the Lord, and see the next step that God has for us.

The underlying premise of this study is that God wants to make a way for our lives. This means He wants to take us in a new direction, give us a fresh start in life, grow us, deliver us, and enable us to go on when our world turns upside down. But God cannot do this if we are stuck in the mud and not following the basic order that He outlines in the His Word (the Bible).

Deuteronomy 8:6 says:

“Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him.”

Psalm 128:1 adds:

“Blessed *is* every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways.”

God has His ways and they work! What we must do is learn to obey them and find God’s way for our life. The Bible also promises that God will always make a way of escape for us as we pass through our trials (1 Cor. 10:13). It promises that God will always guide and direct our lives when we are confused and don’t know which way to turn. It also reminds us that sometimes God changes the way He has for our lives, redirecting us, since His ways are not always our ways (Isa. 55:8-9).

Psalm 32:8 gives this promise:

“I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.”

God’s way is the right way, the victorious way, the way of renewal and revival, the way of deliverance, spiritual transformation and growth. God always makes a way for us so we can go on in life, find emotional well-being and spiritual stability. In fact, He makes a way right up to the end of our days on earth. He makes a way for us even when we are ready to depart to be with Him in Heaven.

Psalm 23:4 declares:

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou *art* with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”

God as our Great Shepherd will even lead us safely and peacefully through the valley of the shadow of death and bring us on the shore of Heaven. But until we get to Heaven, we know that there have been times when we have seemingly hit a wall in this life. Life seems to come crashing down upon us. Sometimes in the midst of hardships and life’s great challenges, many of God’s children find themselves expressing that “they don’t know what to do!” We have all been in these situations and circumstances. As Christians, we need to explore the Scriptures and discover

the practical answers to the question, “What to do, when we don’t know what to do?” We need to answer this question from a Biblical and Christian perspective (not a psychological and humanistic viewpoint). We can determine what all Christians must do when they don’t know what to do, when they come to a roadblock, a barrier, or crossroad in life.

I typed this question into the internet browser (“What to Do When You Don’t Know What to Do?”) and I got all kinds of pop-psychology answers. Keep dreaming, try new things, realize your potential, and all of these “somewhere over the rainbow” “wishy-washy” answers and secular viewpoints on life. We want to answer this most important question from a Biblical perspective and find God’s answer on how God makes a way for us when we don’t what to do.

“God will make a way
Where there seems to be no way.
He works in ways we cannot see.
He will make a way for me.”

What should we do when we don’t know what to do? God’s Word gives us guidelines to follow when we don’t know what to do. As Christians we need to explore the Scriptures and discover the practical answers to the question, “What to do, when we don’t know what to do?”

1. Admit your faults and sins.



This is one thing we must absolutely do when we don’t know what to do! God makes a way for us where there seems to be no way, when we make a point to confess our sins and get our lives in spiritual order. When we find ourselves in a dilemma in life and don’t know what path God wants us to take, we can be sure that this is one thing we must always do.

We must admit our sinfulness before God, those areas of known sin. When we do this, it opens us up (our hearts and lives) to know God’s path and purpose for our

lives. Sin, which disobedience to God, blocks us from knowing what to do! It keeps us from doing what we should be doing when we don't know what to do! In other words, we will never know what to do (the next step for our life) if we have blocked ourselves from the blessing of God and the guidance of God.

Proverbs 28:13

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh *them* shall have mercy.”

The Bible teaches that sin in our lives keeps us from prospering or flourishing in our spiritual life. It keeps us from God's true blessing in our Christian life. David knew this in connection with his sin with Bathsheba. Sexual relationship outside the realm of God's will stifle our spiritual growth. We used to call it “shacking up together” but today they call it “living with one's significant other.” Folks, sexual relationships (fornication and adultery) are outside the realm of God's will and way for our lives. We need to come face to face with them and abandon them if we want the real blessing of God upon our lives. Instead of covering up our sins, hiding behind them, making excuses for them, we need to forsake them, whatever those sins might be!

1 Thessalonians 4:3

“For this is the will of God, *even* your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication.”

What should you do, when you don't know what to do? Forsake your sin! Whatever sin it might be – gossip, jealousy, and unforgiving heart. Clear the air with God. Say goodbye the corrupt culture and stand out as a shining light for Jesus Christ. You will never know what God has for your life and wants to do with your life, until you first confess your sin before God and abandon your sinful rebellion against God. You need to get on God's side and then God will begin to wonderful things in your heart and life and open up new paths for you. God makes a way for us to once again receive His blessing and direction for our lives, when there seems to be no way, when we are willing to confess our sins, inadequacies and shortcomings.

1 John 1:7-9

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

There are the “if we doers” (“if we walk in the light” and “if we confess our sins”) which refer to those Christians who are practicing holy and godly living. Light is a metaphor for God’s holiness. There are also the “if we sayers” (“If we say that we have no sin”) which are those who claim that everything is okay in their Christian when all along they are harboring sin in their heart and committing open acts of rebellion against God. It’s these type of Christians who deceiving themselves into thinking they are living for God, when in reality they are living for their flesh.

What should we do when we don’t know what to do? We need to stop living in a fool’s paradise! We need to make sure that we are not deceiving ourselves about our sinful relationships, our sinful paths, and our sinful actions. Hebrews 3:13 talks about the “deceitfulness of sin.” Instead of allowing sin to deceive us, we need to face our sins and deal with them through confession. Confessing our sins before God means that we agree with God about our sins (say the same thing God says about our sin), and we confess our sins with the heart attitude of repentance, which means to forsake our sins (“but whoso confesseth and forsaketh *them* shall have mercy” – Prov. 28:13). You cannot separate true confession from forsaking our sins. We need to tell God that we are sorry, sorry enough to abandon the sin and seek God’s righteous will for our lives. Confessing our sins means that we must learn to own our own faults and weaknesses.

Genesis 3:11-13 presents the original blame game between Adam and Eve:

“And he said, Who told thee that thou *wast* naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest *to be* with me (Adam blamed God), she gave me of the tree (Adam blamed Eve), and I did eat. And the LORD God said unto the woman, What *is* this *that* thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat” (Eve blamed the devil).

This is the age-old circle of blame. Adam blamed God and Eve for his sinful failure and Eve blamed the devil (“the devil made me do it” routine). So, everyone was at fault but the person who actually did the sin! If you are going to find God’s way for your life, how He wants you to live and what to do in life, then you are going to have to own up to your faults and accept blame. We must own up to the things we have done wrong and stop deceiving ourselves (Heb. 3:13).

The reverse side of assigning blame is taking ownership. When we take responsibility and ownership for what happens in our lives, we are empowered to make changes. There is great blessing that comes into our lives when we confess up, own our own failures, and begin to take charge of our own circumstances and life through God’s transforming touch of grace (2 Pet. 3:18).

What do you do when you don’t know what to do? Make sure you do this. Confess all of your known sins with the intent of forsaking them, so God can begin to work in your heart and life in new refreshing and revitalizing ways. Doing this will allow God to make a new way for your life. He will give to you fresh spiritual blessings, guidance, and a new song in your heart.

In Psalm 32, David has just repented of the horrible pit of sin he had been covering up for weeks and months. This is where we find him in Psalm 32.

Psalm 32:1-2 says:

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.”

Blessed! O how happy and fulfilled is the man whose sins are forgiven! David writes this song to express what it means to return to God and receive, experience, and possess God’s forgiveness. This is literally “The Song of a soul set free!” When we get right with God, we get rid of our sin, and it’s then that God can begin to truly lead and direct our lives. It’s then that God will make a way for our lives – His way. Here is the point. We will never know what God’s future plan is for our lives, when we are not willing to confess our sins and let God take control of our life.

Someone asked an elderly Christian lady, "Does the devil ever trouble you about your past sins?" She answered, "Yes." When the inquirer asked what she did then, she replied, "Oh, I just tell him to go east." "What do you do if he comes back?" "I tell him to go west." "And when he comes back from the west, what do you do then?" She said, "I just keep him going from the east to the west."

The Bible says in Psalm 103:12:

"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us."

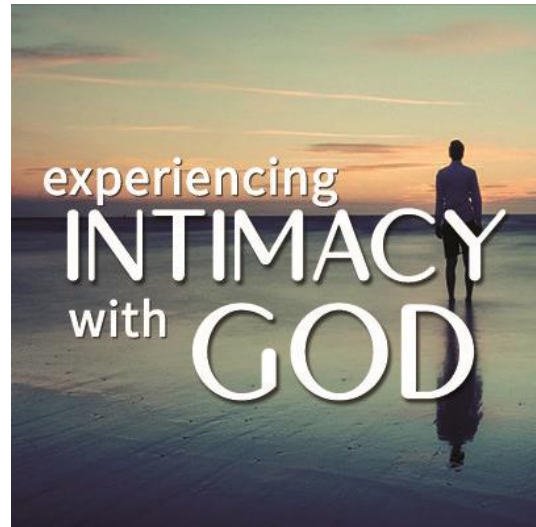
The spiritual blessings that flow out of forgiveness are very wonderful! There is a one-time HEAVENLY forgiveness that we receive by placing faith in Christ which grants us acceptance in the presence of God forever (Eph. 1:7). But there is repeated EARTHLY forgiveness that we need in the Christian life to restore our fellowship with God within our daily living (1 John 19). This thought will lead into next point.

It's time to admit that you are a sinner who needs the Lord's teaching, reproof, correcting and training in righteousness that the word of God provides. (2 Tim. 3:16,17). Be willing to admit that you need cleansing from all unrighteousness that involves the sins of commission, sins of omissions, and sins of wrong attitudes. The Lord only teaches the humble His way! Too many people do not find the way out of their problems and receive God's fresh redirection in their lives because they are not willing to humbly confess their sins and ask God to cleanse them from all unrighteousness.

In this first point, we have learned the importance of confessing our sins and keeping short accounts with God. Until we do this, God cannot make a way for us. He cannot guide our steps, reshape our lives, and take us in a new spiritual direction. We must be clean before Him so He can open our pathway and give us His supply of grace and redirection in life.

2. Maintain fellowship with God.

What should we do when we don't know what to do? What do we always need to do when we find ourselves confused and in a difficult situation, not know which way to turn or go? We should seek to walk with God, stay close to Him, and fellowship with Him on a daily basis. This is another thing we must absolutely do when we don't know what to do! God makes a way for us where there seems to be no way, when we maintain our fellowship with God. Staying in communion with God keeps us spiritually stable in our Christian life when we are passing through the valleys and waiting for God's direction. This second point naturally flows out of the first one. When we confess our sins it means that we are seeking to have fellowship with God.



1 John 1:7 – TURN

“But if we (the Christian) walk in the light (the light of God's holiness), as he (God) is in the light, we (both the Christian and God) have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

To fellowship “one with another” in this context speaks of the communion or fellowship the believer can have with God, when he walks in the light of God's purity.

“And He walks with me
And He talks with me
And He tells me I am His own
And the joy we share as we tarry there
None other has ever known.”

Staying in fellowship with God, through purity of living, keeps us open to God's direction and guidance for our lives, so we can discover what His next step is for us. When all else seems to fail in life, keep fellowshiping with God! Walk in communion with Him on a daily basis. Develop and deepen your relationship with Him.

James 4:8

“Draw nigh to God (our response to God), and he will draw nigh to you (God’s response to us). Cleanse *your* hands, *ye* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *ye* double minded.”

James also reminds us that to maintain communion with God, we must remain clean spiritually. Communion and cleanliness go together. The words “cleanse *your* hands” (a reference to the outer life) and “purify *your* hearts” (a reference to the inner life) reminds us that purity precedes fellowship with God. When sin is in our lives and hearts, this separates us from God’s fellowship. James teaches that fellowship is a reciprocal response. We respond to God and God responds to us. We need to keep our heart in tune with God and His holy purpose for our lives. We do this through prayer, when we speak to God, and through Bible devotion, the time God speaks to us. Both are very important to maintain fellowship with God.

Psalm 5:3

“My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct *my* prayer unto thee, and will look up.”

“Whisper a prayer in the morning,
Whisper a prayer at noon,
Whisper a prayer in the evening,
To keep your heart in tune.”

God will make a way for you! He will help you maintain your spiritual equilibrium when you keep worshipping Him. When you don’t know what to do, always remember to do this. Stay in tune with God! When we maintain our communion and fellowship with God, it’s only then that we will be in the place to hear from God and receive direction from Him. When you are down and discouraged, when you don’t know which way to turn anymore, always remember to talk and walk with God!

3. Keep your worship fresh and real.



Here is something else that we must do when we don't know what to do! We should maintain our personal worship and keep our hearts open to God. Worship keeps our heart open to God and promotes spiritually stability. It keeps our minds on God, His

greatness, His ways, and His power to change our lives and situations. It keeps us in the realm of faith and victory! It enables us to realize that God is greater than our problems and that He is always there for us as we pass through the hard times of life. God makes a way for us where there seems to be no way, when we keep our hearts open to God and worship Him in spirit and truth (John 4:24).

Abraham expressed his communion and fellowship with God when building and altar and worshipping God in the place called Bethel.

Genesis 12:8

“And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, *having* Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD.”

The word “Bethel” means “house of God” and reminds us how Abram revolved his life around worshipping God. He saw the need to keep his worship fresh, real, and vibrant. Abraham not only pitched a tent for himself but also built an altar to the LORD. This says a great deal about the priorities of this man of God. He saw the important need to keep worshipping God as God was directing his life through his wilderness journey.

In our next point, we are going to talk about Abraham's faith. But there was a time when Abraham apparently lost sight of God's will to remain in the land God promised to him (Canaan). There was a temporary setback in his life of faith which can happen to anyone of us. Because of draught, he became scared and took his family to Egypt to receive of their provisions. Out of fear of losing his beautiful wife to Pharaoh, he concocted the story that his wife was actually his sister. In doing this, he created a heap of trouble for his family and Pharaoh's own house (Gen. 12:9-20).

Genesis 12:10

“And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine *was* grievous in the land.”

You will notice that the trouble began when Abraham “wend down into Egypt” which was the path of rebellion and unbelief. This was a temporary setback in Abraham’s faith and worship of God. There is no record of Abraham worshipping in Egypt! Egypt is an illustration of the world system which seeks to capture our hearts and lives (1 John 2:15-16). Whenever we follow the world, we begin moving in a downward direction in our Christian life.

Abraham’s trip down into Egypt reminds us that whenever we disobey God and try to do things our way, we create trouble not only ourselves but for others. Sometimes when we are knowingly disobeying God, and move in a downward direction without God’s approval, we effect the live of other people. When we take a step in the wrong direction because of our lack of faith, we can affect the lives of others.

After much heartache, Abraham came to his spiritual senses and left Egypt. He got back on the trail of faith and reconnected with God and His original purpose for his life.

Genesis 13:1

“And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south.”

Abraham eventually “went up out of Egypt” in obedience to God. When we lose our way, we must come out of the hole that we’ve made and reconnect with God again.

Genesis 13:3 records Abraham’s return to worship:

“And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai.”

This is a very precious verse. Abram's return to Bethel, the place where he previously fellowshiped and worshipped God, becomes a reminder to all of us that there are times we can drift away from personal worship and lose out connection with God. What do we do when we don't know what to do? We go back to Bethel! We must return to a closer walk with God and reengage our hearts and lives in worshipping of God once again. Some of us need to rebuild the altar of worship in our lives. We have moved away from the most important ingredient in our lives and that is our worship of God.

Psalm 5:7

"But as for me, I will come *into* thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: *and* in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple."

Psalm 95:6

"O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker."

The French have a proverb, which states, "A good meal ought to begin with hunger." It is hard to enjoy a meal when you are not yet hungry. All true worship begins with a hunger for God. When we don't know what to do, when we hit a brick wall in life, when we don't know where to take our next step, what can we do? We must bow our knee before the God of eternity, the God of our salvation, and the God of love and mercy, and worship Him! We must come into His presence and open our hearts to Him again so that we will not allow our present situation, our crisis, and trials to overcome us.

"Here am I holy Lord, Seeking now Your face,
Thankful for Your grace, As I worship You.
Here am I holy Lord, In this quiet hour
By Your Spirit's pow'r, Cleanse my heart anew.
O Lamb of God, The One that I adore.
I long to sing, Your praise forevermore.
I worship You with songs of praise.
In You alone my heart rejoices.
Accept this offering of love,
O God above, I worship You."

Worship is something we must always do no matter what predicament we are facing in life, no matter how bleak the circumstances might be. Our hearts must engage in worshipping God for it's in God's presence and enjoyment that we find peace and spiritual strength.

I was talking to a Christian about this sermon "What to Do When You Don't Know What to Do" and he jokingly gave me his answer, "Pretend that it's Friday!" Well, I'm glad that we don't have to pretend that we are living the Christian life. We don't have to pretend that we are always on top of the world. What we can do is acknowledge our inability to resolve certain situations, our inability to go on in life without God's strengthening grace, and open our hearts in worship, pouring out our souls in worship to the One who is greater than our problems, greater than our situation which we are facing, and find our solace and strength in Him!

A. W. Tozer said:

"God is trying to call us back to that which He has created us, to worship and enjoy Him forever!"

4. Walk by faith.

There is something else that we must do when we don't know what to do. We must remember to maintain our faith in God.

Mark 11:22

"And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God."



What can we do when we don't know what to do? Have faith in God! The well-known American motto is really a spiritual motto for the Christian life: "In God We Trust." When we are seemingly stuck in life, when we are confused, when we don't know where to turn or what is our next step, we can always remember that we must walk by faith. We must put our trust in God's purpose for our life at this particular time and keep believing that He will show us the next step. God makes a way for us where there seems to be no way, when we continue to walk by faith in

God's future plan for our lives, whatever that plan might be. God's way is to walk by faith and when we do, God can open up the direction that He wants us to take.

The life of Abraham is an example for all Christians to follow. God has called us to walk by faith in His Word and promises.

Genesis 12:1

"Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country (Ur of Chaldees – southern Iraq), and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee."

Imagine this! Abraham was directed by God to just start walking and later on God would show him the land that was promised to him. This was a real act of faith in God's word and promise. God says, "Just start walking and keep walking and eventually I'll show you where to go and what to do." Sometimes God puts into a wilderness journey where we must simply walk by faith and wait on Him for further instructions.

So, what should we do when we don't know what to do? Just keep walking by faith like Abraham. Cling to God's Word and promises and trust Him for the future. Abraham didn't know when and how but He did believe that God would guide him and show him the next step. Of course, faith is not about everything turning out okay; Faith is about being okay no matter how things turn out.

You will notice that this call of Abram is in the past tense ("had said"). This indicates that there was an original call made to Abram to leave his own country and people and this original call is found in in the book of Acts.

Acts 7:2-4

"And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell."

Genesis 12:1 is looking back to God's original call for Abraham to launch out in faith. It was a time when Abraham came to faith through God's revelation (Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6) and began on a new journey of faith, not only possessing faith in God's promise, but also expressing faith in God's future provision for his life. Faith is comparable to a journey and every day is a journey that requires faith in God. This is because we don't know what each day is going to bring forth.

Proverbs 27:1

"Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

We don't know about today or tomorrow and therefore we must learn the secret of continually walking by faith in God's Word and His promises.

Joseph Parker wrote:

"Great lives are trained by great promises."

Hebrews 11:8-10 points to Abraham's initial faith:

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as *in* a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise (the Abrahamic promise regarding his descendants): For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God."

Someone said,

"If God built a bridge a yard ahead, it could not be a bridge of faith."

It's the first step into the unseen that proves we have faith. Abraham went out, not knowing where he was going (Heb. 11:8). He obeyed God and relied on Him to clear the path and show him the next step.

Just to let the Father do,
What He will:
Just to know that He is true,
And be still.

Just to follow hour by hour
As He leadeth.
Just to draw the moment's power
As it needeth.
Just to trust Him, that is all,
Then the day will surely be
Peaceful, whatso'er befall,
Bright and blessed, calm and free.

Sometimes God calls us to do something (“when he was called”) while at the same time God wants to test our faith and not show us the entire plan or blueprint (“which he should after receive for an inheritance”). All that God expects of us is that we obey His Word (“obeyed”) and start walking on a new path and journey of faith which is sometimes filled with uncertainties (“not knowing whither he went”).

God does not always give us all the details or all the reasons. He doesn’t have to do this because He is God! He doesn’t have to reveal everything to us. We must just believe that He knows what is best for our lives, at any given point in this journey of faith. Many times we are simply called to walk by faith and wait for the fulfillment of God’s plan. Waiting can be one of the most difficult disciplines of life. However, true faith is able to wait for the fulfillment of God’s purposes in God’s time. After all, in His time, God makes all things beautiful! In other words, He brings His will to pass and we find the beauty of His all-encompassing purpose and plan coming to completion in our lives.

God’s will was progressively revealed to Abraham but his faith took him into “the land of promise” and this is where we must live every day of our lives – in the land of God’s promise! For Abraham it was the promise of the land of Canaan for all of his future descendants but for you and me today it is the promise of God’s guidance, power, peace, and spiritual protection which He gives to us today. We have our set of spiritual blessings and promises today (Eph. 1:3) that we can claim as we launch out in faith.

“By faith he sojourned in the land of promise.” Have you been walking by faith in your own wilderness journey? Abraham was said to be in “a strange country,

dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob.” Sometimes from our perspective, we sense that we are at a strange place in our lives. We are dwelling in tents out in the wilderness and cannot see anything but a vast and barren landscape before us. But be sure, God’s promises are true! God did not give Abraham reasons or explanations; He simply gave him promises. Faith is both an attitude and action. In believing, you must submit to His will and way for your life.

Just keep walking by faith and God will sustain you in the wilderness and He will continually guide your steps on your journey of faith. He will get you to where He wants you to be. You can be sure about this.

“I just keep trusting my Lord as I walk a long
I just keep trusting my Lord and He gives a song
Though the storm clouds darken the sky o'er the heav'nly trail
I just keep trusting my Lord, He will never fail
He's a faithful friend, such a faithful friend
I can count on Him to the very end
Though the storm clouds darken the sky o'er the heav'nly trail
I just keep trusting my Lord, He will never fail.”

It’s interesting that living in tents within the wilderness did not bother Abraham. Why? It’s because he had his eyes on the future heavenly city that God had prepared for His children (“For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” – Heb. 11:10).

Dr. George Morrison, a great Scottish preacher, once said:

“The important thing is not what we live in, but what we look for.”

These men and women of faith lived in tents, but they knew a heavenly city awaited them. We must remember that God always fulfills His promises to His believing people, both in this life and in the life to come. In Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, we have four generations of men who practiced living by faith. Of course, these men sometimes failed, but basically they were men of faith. No, they were not perfect, but they were devoted to God and trusted His Word.

What should we do when we don't know what to do? Keep walking by faith in God's promises and in His power and provision for our lives. Have faith in God! We may not know all the details of the future (Abraham did not) but we know the God who holds the future in His hand! He is ready to sustain for the here and now and guide us each day of our lives to bring about His purposes related to our days on earth. We must trust in the Lord with all of our hearts. The tests of faith can be difficult while we walk with God, but the rewards are more wonderful!

God will make a way for us if we walk by faith and not by sight. God's way is a DIRECTIONAL way. He directs us in the path He wants us to go as we launch out in faith. But remember that the way of God is sometimes different than what we expected and even a better way!

Proverbs 3:5-6

"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."

Not knowing what to do can bring discouragement and self-pity into our heart and life. This why we must walk by faith and keep an optimistic outlook by believing that God is still on the throne and able to direct our lives. God makes a way for us when there seems to be no way, when we continue to walk by faith in God's future plan for our lives, whatever that plan might be.

God's promise of guidance is sure.

Psalm 32:8 once again states:

"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye."

Psalm 48:14

"For this God *is* our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide *even* unto death."

Psalm 73:24

"Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me *to* glory."

“God has measured time's duration,
Night and day are His creation.
And the changing seasons of the year;
He's the one who watches o'er me
And prepares the way before me
There is nothing now I need to fear.

Life's uncertainties may haunt me,
Foolish fears may try to taunt me
Till my heart is filled with doubt and dread;
He who set the planets spinning
Sees the end from the beginning
He will keep me through the days ahead.

All the world is in confusion,
'Peace on earth' is but illusion
And the phrase seems only a cliché;
But in trying times so fearful
I can still be calm and cheerful,
And with glad assurance I can say:

God knows all about tomorrow
He can see beyond today;
Be it filled with joy or sorrow,
He has planned it that way.
So I do not fear the future,
On His promises I stand;
God knows all about tomorrow
For He holds it in His hand!”

As the golfer approached the first tee, a hazardous hole with a green surrounded by water, he debated if he should use his new golf ball. Deciding that the hole was too treacherous, he pulled out an old ball and placed it on the tee. Just then he heard a voice from above say loudly: "Use the new ball!" Frightened, he replaced the old ball with the new one and approached the tee once again.

Now the voice from above shouted: "Take a practice swing!" With this, the golfer stepped backward and took a swing. Feeling more confident, he approached the tee when the voice again rang out: "Use the old ball!"

Of course, this is a rather silly illustration, but sometimes we find ourselves in this type of predicament within life, not knowing which way to go, or what direction to take. We are waiting and wondering what to do. We sometimes feel like we have fallen into a pit with no way out. We are totally confused and don't know which way to turn or what to do. Have you ever been there?

There may be a marital strife, financial concerns, physical issues, family circumstances, addictive behaviors, unreasonable demands, and some other unexpected changes that occur in our lives. The list of challenges Christians face as they experience daily life is endless. Living in the midst of these pressures can cause us to respond in anger, fear, anxiousness, and despair as we try and navigate through the difficult and changing seasons of our lives.

As we face hard times and bewildering circumstances, we can sometimes come to the place where we say, "Lord, I don't know what to do. We then ask: "Lord, what should I do when I don't know what to do?" This is what we have been studying about. When we experience brain fog and are confused regarding what to do, we need to go back to the basic things that will give us help and guidance during these times.

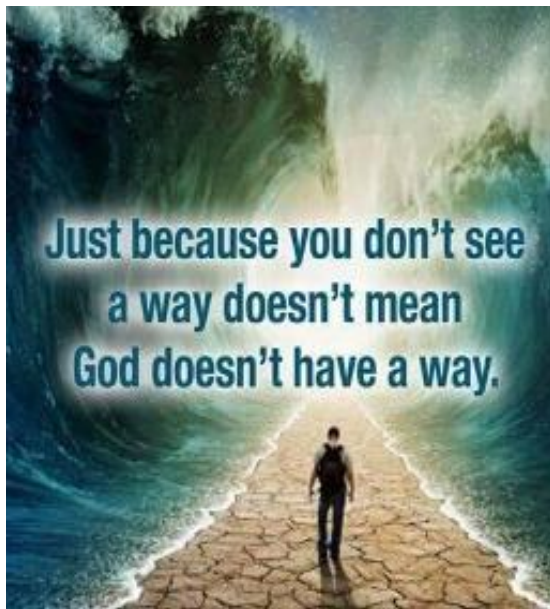
5. Practice being patient.

What should we do when we don't know what to do? Be patient! God makes a way for us where there seems to be no way, when we maintain patience and learn to wait on the Lord's timing to reveal His will. When we are impatient, many times we step outside the parameters of God's will for our lives. We make decisions based upon impatience and they are never the right decisions. Don't be impatient when you are at a crossroad and confused.

Psalm 27:14

“Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.”

God is not in a hurry! God wants us to learn to wait and possess patience when we are confused and don't know His direction. Too often we want to rush ahead and doing that we miss what God really wants us to do.



Isaiah 40:31

“But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; *and* they shall walk, and not faint.”

Sometimes God puts us in His waiting room. He wants us to learn patience so that we do not run ahead of His way or will for our lives. In time, God will show the way He has for us but patience is sometimes the way He chooses for our lives before He can reveal the next step for us.

Lamentations 3:25

“The LORD *is* good unto them that wait for him, to the soul *that* seeketh him.”

Waiting involves patience. But this is what God wants to teach us many times as we seek His direction. In waiting we learn to rest in God's TIMING concerning His will. In waiting we also learn to rest in God's REDIRECTION concerning His will.

A little boy was standing at the end of an escalator. The sales lady asked, “Son are you lost?” “No ma'am, I'm waiting for my chewing gum to come back.” Now there is a patient boy! Of course, we must visit the book of James since he has much to say about patience.

James 1:3-4

“Knowing *this* (something we must know), that the trying of your faith (something we must experience) worketh patience (something we must produce). But let

patience have *her* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing” (something that we become).

We tend to become childish when things don’t happen when we want them to, or when things don’t go according our plans. The key to survival when you don’t know what to do is to maintain patience in your heart and life as you pass through your difficult circumstance. When we become unhinged it’s because we have lost our patience and faith.

Patience speaks of that spiritual perseverance and stamina that we need to go on in life. The idea of patience means to stand fast under pressure, to possess what we might call “a staying power” that allows us to turn adversities into opportunities for spiritual growth and advancement. This is what James is teaching in his epistle.

Don’t be like the person who says:

“Lord, please make me patient—and do it right now.”

One great purpose that God has in mind in allowing us to face the trials of life is to teach us patience. The word for "trying" can be literally translated "proof." The term means to be “tested” or “approved” and was used for coins that were found to be genuine and not debased.

1 Peter 1:7 bring out this imagery of testing our faith when stating:

“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”

Quite frankly, our faith is tested and proven when we pass through hard times. The idea is that our faith is tested through the fiery trials of life so that it’s genuine character and nature can be proven. Our faith is proven, how genuine, strong, and reliable it really is, when we pass through times of testing. The word “trying” (James 1:3) also carries the thought of a yoke of oxen being put to the test (Luke 14:19).

Our faith in God’s purpose, providence, power, and promises is always tested. As we saw in our last point, when God called Abraham to live by faith, He tested him

in order to increase his faith. God always tests us to bring out the best in our lives but Satan tempts us to bring out the worst in us. We must always remember that testing works for us – not against us. Testing is designed to produce patience and spiritual growth in our hearts and lives.

Someone said:

"Temptation says, 'Do this pleasant thing; do not be hindered by the fact that it is wrong. 'Trial or proving says, 'Do this right and noble thing; do not be hindered by the fact that it is painful.'"

James says the testing of our faith is necessary so we can grow spiritually or mature in life. The “perfect work” that patience does in our life is that it produces spiritual growth and maturity. The expression “that ye may be perfect, entire, wanting nothing” means that when we develop patience we reach a goal and level of maturity in our Christian life (“perfect”), we develop spiritual completeness or wholeness (“entire”), and do not lack spiritual living and vitality (“wanting nothing”). In other words, we will be all that God wants us to be in our Christian life.

What does God want to produce in our lives? He wants to produce patience, endurance, and the ability to keep going when things are tough. When we develop patience in our hearts, it's then that we are growing, maturing, and developing in our Christian life.

One preacher said:

“After over a quarter century of ministry, I am convinced that spiritual immaturity is the number one problem in our churches.”

Immature people are always impatient but mature people are patient and persistent. God wants to make us patient because this is often the key to many other spiritual blessings. For instance, a little child who does not learn patience will not learn much of anything else. It takes patience to learn to read, to spell, to write, and to master multiplication tables. In a similar way, it takes patience to grow! Spiritual graces and growth evolve out of patience. Patience is the crowning virtue of our Christian growth and life and out of patience comes many other spiritual

blessings. When we learn to wait on the Lord, then God can do great things for him. When we fail to wait, we can get ourselves in a lot of trouble. Abraham ran ahead of the Lord when he married Hagar. This brought great sorrow into his home (Gen. 16). Moses ran ahead of God, murdered a man, and had to spend forty years with the sheep to learn patience (Ex. 2:11-12). Peter almost killed a man in his impatience (John 18:10–11). It is important to remain patient! It also pays dividends when we remain patient.

James is teaching that the only way the Lord can develop patience and character in our lives is through trials. And there is something else we should never forget. Spiritual endurance or staying power (patience) cannot be learned by reading a book, listening to a sermon, or even praying a prayer. We must actually go through the difficulties of life, trust God, and obey Him. The result will be patience and character.

Trials can do a lot in us and for us, when we accept them from God, pass through them, develop patience and spiritual growth. But sometimes when problems come into our lives, we become desperate, and use frantic means to cut the trial short. We conclude: “Alright, let’s fix this in our own way.”

We do this without remembering that God has a purpose for our trials and try and artificially resolve the trial through our own means. However, by doing this, we may actually may be thwarting God’s program and purpose in our lives. We should not short-circuit the development of patience or endurance in our lives. Many times it’s wise to wait before making important decisions or taking actions that could change the direction of our lives and the lives of others. People who do not know what to do often make rash decisions and rush into actions which later bring regret and disappointment. However, by cooperating with God and developing patience, we will become mature, well-rounded Christians, lacking in none (“wanting nothing”) of the virtues and graces of the Holy Spirit.

Folks, no problem is too great for our Father. Some problems in life are removed when we have learned our lessons from them. When the Refiner (God) sees His reflection in the molten metal, He may turn off the heat. Thank God when He does this. However, some problems related to old age and other trials are never

removed. We must learn to accept them and to prove that His grace sufficient. Paul asked the Lord three times to remove a physical infirmity. The Lord did not remove it, but gave Paul the grace to bear it (2 Cor. 12:8–10). When we face problems in life that God obviously isn't going to remove, we should be submissive to His will and experience God's spiritual development in our lives.

The gifted blind hymn-writer wrote these lines as a girl of eight:

“O what a happy soul am I
Although I cannot see;
I am resolved that in this world
Contented I will be.
How many blessings I enjoy
That other people don't.
To weep and sigh because I'm blind
I cannot and I won't.”

Yes, James reminds us that “the trying of your faith worketh patience.” In other words, the fruit and Christlike virtue of patience can be developed when we pass through trials and difficult times and this in return causes us to grow in our Christian life.

Romans 5:3-4 also verifies this:

“We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience (proof of character); and experience, hope” (for today and future).

In the Bible, patience is a courageous perseverance in the face of suffering and difficulty. It is that wonderful fruit and virtue that is produce by the Holy Spirit in our hearts (Gal. 5:22).

James 5:7-8

“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman (farmer) waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long

patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.”

James 5:10-11

“Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.”

Job was a man of patience. He demonstrated patience during His afflictions by not allowing his trials to destroy and overcome his spiritual life. In fact, he ended up worshipping God as a result of the trials he passed through. Job lost his family, fortune, and fame but he did not lose his faith. And God supplied Him with the mercies he needed to face his trials. We must allow God to work out patience in our lives while we pass through the refining fire. And remember this: God is not in a hurry!

F. B. Meyer who used to say:

“God’s delays are not God’s denials.”

God’s delays are usually the means which He uses to prepare us for something better. God is always at work for the good of his people and he is working in all the events of our lives (“all things work together for good” - Rom. 8:28). This includes the things that perplex us and that pain us. We must understand that the only way God can teach us patience is to test us and try us, and the only way we can develop patience is to surrender and let God have his way. When in doubt, do nothing, but continue to wait on God.

Perhaps the hardest place to be patient is in the furnace of suffering. God does not always explain what he is doing or why he is doing it. But it is in the hour of suffering that we learn patience and develop Christlikeness in our lives.

“Why has God made me this way?” a suffering saint once bitterly asked her pastor. Gently, he replied, “God has not made you—he is making you.” How true this is! And how easy it is for us to forget this truth!

What should you do when you don't know what to do? Here is some good advice. Don't take matters in your own hands. Ask God to develop patience in your heart and life so you can grow and mature. Surrender to Him and let Him have His way with you.

A woman rushed up to famed violinist Fritz Kreisler after a concert and cried: "I'd give my life to play as beautifully as you do." Kreisler replied, "I did give my life." Folks, we must surrender to the Lord's will and purpose for our lives, even when we don't fully understand it.

We sometimes pray: "Lord, make me patient!" God will answer this prayer, often in ways that will startle us, but the perfect work that patience produces in our lives, it worth the suffering.

When it comes finding God's way for our lives regarding the future or the next step for our life, we must also learn to wait and be patient. When God makes a way for us, it usually takes time, so we must allow time for God to work. In other words, in order to find God's way, we must allow His process to happen. This is why the Bible teaches us to "Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him..." (Psalm 37:7). Finding God's way for our lives takes patience. Many times we must adopt to the season of our lives which we are passing through and wait for the harvest of the next season. The season of life that you are presently in may be preparing you for the next season and step that God has for you. Take life as it comes! Be patient!

James 5:8 says:

"Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

Michael Jordan is probably the best player the NBA has ever seen. He gave this insightful look into the incredible success that he enjoyed: "I've missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. Twenty-six times I've been trusted to take the game-winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed."

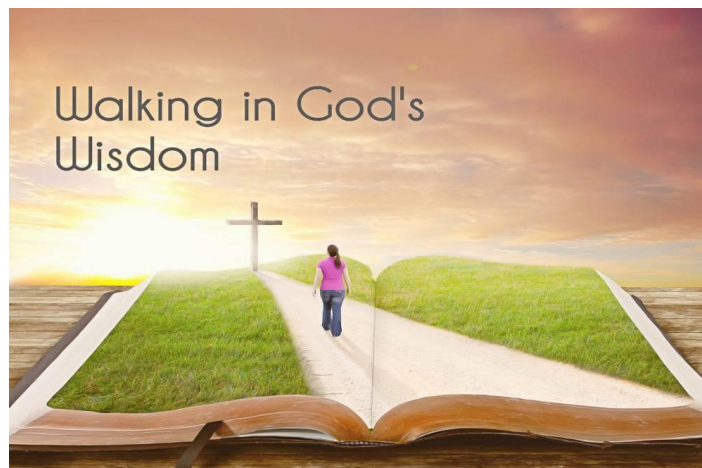
Now this is perseverance! What we need to possess is patience or staying power in spite of spiritual failures and the situations that we are facing in the home, on the

job, and in our daily living. We must press on in our Christian lives by God's power and learn the lessons that He wants to teach us, even when we fail, so that we might through it all experience ongoing spiritual success in our Christian lives and find God's next path for our lives. This brings us to our next point.

God will make a way for us as we face our trials and tests in life with patience. If we are not patience, we can miss God's way and follow our own way. We can walk through stop signs that God has placed before us and create our own way. But remember that God's way is always the best way and the pathway of greatest blessing.

6. Pray for wisdom.

What do you do when you don't know what to do? You should pray for God's wisdom so that God can guide you through the trials that you are facing. Here is something to ponder. God knows what to do even when we don't know what to do! So, we must follow what God wants us to do and pray for wisdom. God makes a way for us where



there seems to be no way, when we pray for wisdom to resolve our conflicts, asking for guidance, work through the trials of life, and when we are seeking to know His will and purpose for our lives.

James 1:5 says:

"If any of you lack wisdom (regarding what God wants to accomplish through the trials we are facing), let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally (generously), and upbraideth not (not grudgingly); and it shall be given him."

When we feel confused and frustrated in life, we can pray for God's wisdom. Praying for wisdom is placed in the context of trials. Here is good news. We don't have to

face the problems of life in our own wisdom. James is teaching that the wisdom we need to pray for is to see our trials from God's viewpoint – not our own. Wisdom is seeing life from God's perspective.

The wisdom that God gives His children is not always information on how to get out of trouble but rather insight on how to learn from one's difficulties in life (Prov. 29:15) and pass through it successfully. Wisdom is not more information about how to avoid times of testing but instead a new perspective on trials. Most of us lack wisdom to view the pressures of life from God's standpoint. We adopt only a short-range view. We occupy ourselves with only our immediate discomfort but forget that God's purpose is to enlarge our spiritual lives through pressure.

So this is what James is teaching. First, we need to pray that we would possess the wisdom to see our trails from God's perspective and not our own viewpoint. Trials are designed to grow us – not suffocate us! We need the wisdom to understand this.

Second, we need to pray for the wisdom to use our circumstances for our spiritual good and God's glory. Third, we also need to pray for wisdom in dealing with our trials and receiving His direction and guidance through them. God's wisdom is important when it comes to finding God's way.

Dr. Warren Wiersbe shared this insight:

"An associate of mine, a gifted secretary, was going through great trials. She had had a stroke, her husband had gone blind, and then he had to be taken to the hospital where (we were sure) he would die. I saw her in church one Sunday and assured her that I was praying for her.

'What are you asking God to do?' she asked, and her question startled me. "I'm asking God to help you and strengthen you,' I replied. 'I appreciate that,' she said, 'but pray about one more thing. Pray that I'll have the wisdom not to waste all of this!' This woman knew the meaning of James 1:5. Our trials are designed to grow us and mature us in our Christian life.

We need to find the missing pieces of wisdom that would help us put our life back together. Many times we are in despair because we lack the important wisdom and information about our condition and its cure. But when we pray to God and begin to discover and apply key Biblical insights to our lives, our outlook changes. In fact, hopelessness is replaced by hope, and we get back on track again!

We need to also remember that God will make a way where there seems to be no way when we ask Him to help us to wisely choose the battles that are worth fighting. There are many battles that are just not worth fighting. Ask the Lord to help you to know what is essential and what is non-essential. There are many times in traffic when it is best to just let the angry driver who is in a hurry to pass on by. Stop trying to fight every little challenge that comes your way. You are wasting valuable energy on things that do not ultimately matter. God will give you the wisdom to know the best ways to go if you will only ask Him (James 1:5).

Praying for wisdom does not happen in a vacuum. In other words, as we pray to God for wisdom, we must also use God's Word to find the missing pieces of the puzzle (God's information) to enable us to put our life back together once again. Of course, the Bible does give us *many direct answers* on how to live and deal with the life (Exodus 20:1-17; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Thess. 4:3). However, it does not always give us every specific answer or detail to the innumerable problems that we face in our lives. It does not solve all of our problems in so many words, but God's word does give us general principles of wisdom to follow. We must apply these principles to problems as they arise day by day. Spiritual wisdom is the practical application of the Bible to our everyday situations. As we pray for wisdom, we must do so surrendered to God's Word for spiritual guidance and direction.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

"All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."

Then too, we can also pray to God for wisdom while we talk with others about our given situation. There are other Christians out there who know how to deal with your situation from a Biblical perspective. They have the right knowledge and

experience. So after praying to God for wisdom, don't be afraid to talk to other mature Christians.

Proverbs 11:14

"Where no counsel *is*, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors *there is* safety."

Proverbs 12:15

"The way of a fool *is* right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel *is* wise."

The way of a fool means that this person's mind is made up. It's wrong, but it's made up. We can be like this person at times. Do we possess ideas that other godly people have told us are wrong? Have we been listening to good advice as we seek God's will in a certain matter?

Proverbs 19:20

"Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end."

This means we can get a better ending when we listen to sound advice.

Proverbs 27:17

"Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend."

It used to be common for the host at a table to sharpen the carving knife by drawing each side of the cutting edge against a hardened steel rod with fine ridges. This is how tools were sharpened in olden days and this really has not changed today.

My wife wants me to sharpen her knives from time to time. I have a device that has a steel wheel. I run the knife against that wheel and it sharpens the knives. Here is the point of this proverb. Just as the action of iron against iron sharpens, so the interchange of good and godly ideas among people makes them sharper and wiser in their thinking. Receiving guidance from mature Christians is an important step when you don't know what to do. Whatever your challenge, others have been there and gotten through it.

No, you don't have to reinvent the wheel to find guidance through your situation. You just have to find wisdom and guidance that can be obtained from others to help you through your situation. Yes, we pray to God for wisdom (James 1:5), but we use the means of His Word and others to help us through our trials. God grants us wisdom to deal with life's situations through the Scriptures and the saints.

Wisdom produces hope!

Proverbs 24:14

“So *shall* the knowledge of wisdom *be* unto thy soul: when thou hast found *it*, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off.”

Remember that in God's economy, getting to the end of yourself is the beginning of hope! When we feel hopeless in life, it often comes from a sense of not knowing what to do in a given situation. But when we pray for wisdom, we can be sure that God will make a way for us to deal with our situation and pass through it victoriously.

God will make a way for you. But since He is a God of order, you must go to His sources of wisdom and find His way and discover the wisdom that applies to your situation. So pray for God's wisdom and then search for His wisdom wholeheartedly and apply it to your trial and situation. When you don't know what to do, pray for wisdom! I came across this “message from God” that shows His love and concern for you and Me as His children.

My Precious Child,

“I am in control. I am sovereign. I am able to make things happen the way I want them to go. Yes, I allow you to make your own choices. And I know you don't fully understand how these ideas can operate side by side. But I'm able to work within and around the choices you make to cause My ultimate purposes to succeed. For this, you must trust Me. Ask Me about your choices and plans. My wisdom is yours if you'll ask.”

We have learned the importance of walking by faith, possessing patience, and asking for wisdom. When we do these things, God will make a way for us – His way!

Do you want God's way? This is the important question. We must yield to it and go with it when it is revealed to us. God's wisdom results in God's way coming to pass in our lives. It enables us to see how God is working in our lives and where He wants to take us. So, we need the wisdom to accept His way for our life and follow it with all of our hearts.

In 2006, a psychiatrist by the name of Edward Hallowell published a book entitled "Crazy Busy: Overstretched, Overbooked, and About to Snap." In the book, Hallowell talks about realizing how busy his life had become when he found himself staying at a vacation home, and becoming angry at a rotary phone. He couldn't use his cell phone, and it irritated him to have to wait for the dial to return to start.

Most of us can relate to the title of Hallowell's book. If we are honest, our lives have become "crazy busy." Every morning brings a new set of deadlines and duties that seem to demand more time than we have to give. The cell phones on our sides, the lists in our pockets, the sticky notes on our desks, and the mailboxes full of emails only serve to remind us that we have got too much to do. The reality is that our lives have become cluttered. We have committed ourselves to so many things, that nothing really gets the attention it deserves. We have become jacks of all trades and masters of none. Our jobs suffer, our spouses suffer, our kids suffer, our church suffers, and most dangerous of all, our relationship with the Lord suffers.

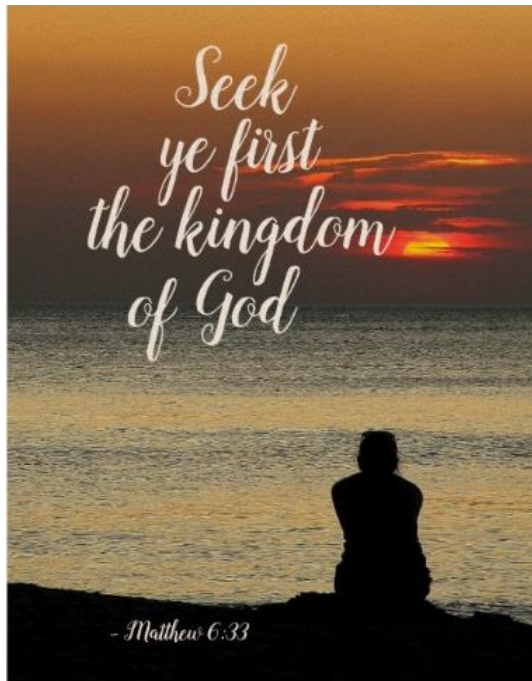
Someone has called Matthew 6:33 the "The Cure for a Cluttered Life." This is what we are going to look at next in our study.

7. Keep a right priority in life.

Matthew 6:33

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

What should we do when we don't know what to do? Jesus gave us a very straightforward answer about this in the Sermon on the Mount. When we don't



know what to do, when we are not sure how things are going to turn out and what our future holds, when we are confused and unsure about many things, and when our world comes crashing down, we must always put Jesus first in our lives! This is the “first priority principle.” We must put spiritual things before anything else in life for the spiritual things will result in God’s blessing being showered upon our life. God makes a way for us where there seems to be no way, when we make right priorities in our life, which are based upon His general will for our daily lives.

Too many Christians can waste their lives when using wrong priority thinking. We might pursue concepts of success but at the same time be miserable failures before God. Jesus wants us to focus on Him and His righteousness priorities. We must learn to order our life more around God’s priorities than our own natural tendencies to take care of our own business first or our own natural impulses and desires.

Here is the point. We must never lose sight of the right things we must do when we are not sure how to answer the where, what, when, and how the future will turn out for us. In other words, we must maintain a proper spiritual priority in our lives, if we want God to truly direct us in the path that He wants us to go. We must follow the way God has already ordained for our lives before we can follow the way or direction that He for us in the future. If we don’t stay focused on spiritual and eternal things, then we won’t have God’s future direction.

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God.” Let us never forget the principle of putting the first things first! If we forget this, we are going to make a mess of our lives. In one sense, when we don’t know what to do, we can always know what to do! We must put Jesus first in our lives, follow His priorities for us, His interests, and His spiritual guidelines for our lives. This will keep us on track spiritually when we are not sure what the future holds and how things are going to turn out in a given situation.

Seeking implies desire, intent, ambition, will, and real purpose. What have you been seeking in life? What is most important to you? Remember that what is important to us is what we will seek! When we seek our interests and goals, we lose focus on the purpose for our Christian existence which is to glorify God with our obedience and lives.

Jesus mentions two important life priorities.

- a. There is the matter of possessing a kingdom priority - “But seek ye first the kingdom of God” - 33a

In the context of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus was referring to putting first His kingdom interests which referred to the earthly theocracy or kingdom that Jesus was promising to establish.

Seeking first the kingdom would speak of seeking the PRIORITY of Christ’s earthly kingdom that He would one day establish over the earth. This means that Christ’s followers (kingdom citizens) are to live out the principles of kingdom living that Jesus outlined in the Sermon on the Mount regarding such things as the priorities of prayer, purity, proper discernment and judgment, fasting, finances, eternal things, along with spiritual matters and living. Living out a kingdom life means to prioritize Christian virtues, spiritual living and commitments to God before anything else.

We are to put these things first in our hearts and lives and obey and practice them! If we don’t – we set ourselves up for heartache & misery. If we don’t follow the “first principles and priorities” of Christian living and commitment to God, then we won’t be in the right place to seek God’s direction for our lives. We won’t know God’s next step for our lives.

- b. There is the matter of possessing a righteous priority – “and his righteousness” – 33.

Seeking first his “righteousness” would speak of reflecting the PRIORITY of living out the righteous ways of the King (Jesus), who will one day establish the earthly

Kingdom. In other words, we should constantly be seeking to follow after and reflect His righteous living in our daily lives. His righteousness would include such things as righteous attitudes, actions, and aspirations in life that are in submission to God's will and purpose for our daily lives.

Matthew 5:6

"Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

Matthew 5:10

"Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Righteousness must come first! Don't tell me you love Jesus if your refuse to submit to His righteousness and allow Him to be lord over your life!

First things first! Many Christians, and maybe you are one of them today, have put last things first and first things last! When you do this, you become misdirected and confused in life. You begin on a path of slow spiritual deterioration and eventual destruction.

Tennessee Titans' center, Kevin Long, who played under Coach Bobby Bowden at Florida State University, said his college coach inspired the team with parables. Kevin recounted a favorite story: Bowden was playing college baseball, and he had never hit a home run. Finally, he hit one down the right-field line, into the corner. He rounded first and looked to the third-base coach. He turned at second, was halfway to third and the coach was still waving him on to home plate where he arrived safely. He had his first home run. He was so excited and everybody was slapping him with high fives. Then the pitcher took the ball, threw it to the first baseman, and the umpire called him out. Long had missed stepping on first base. Coach Bowden said, "If you don't take care of first base, it doesn't matter what you do. If you don't honor the Lord first, it doesn't matter what else you do."

Tom Landry, former coach of the Dallas cowboys said, "The thrill of knowing Jesus is the greatest thing that ever happened to me ... I think God has put me in a very

special place, and He expects me to use it to His glory in everything I do ... whether coaching football or talking to the press, I'm always a Christian ... Christ is first, family second and football third."

Jesus is teaching us that He must be first in our personal lives, first in our marriage, first in our home, first in our business and finances, first in everything!

- Have you been honoring God with your life?
- Have you been honoring God with your time?
- Have you been giving Him His rightful place in your heart and life?
- Has Jesus and His will been first in your life?

A.W. Tozer said:

"As God is exalted to the right place in our lives, a thousand problems are solved all at once."

“Life is full of changes
Each day rearranges the things that count for you.
Things that mean so much today
Can mean much less tomorrow
Even if your dreams come true.
But there is Someone I have found
A rock to build your life around.

Put Jesus first in your life.
Let him take the burden of sin away.
Put Jesus first in your life.
Let him handle all the problems that stand in your way.
You have searched in vain for that something.
Now you don't want that something you've found.
Put Jesus first in your life
And turn your life around!”

That is what Jesus is saying to each one of us today! We need to make the decision to put Him first in our lives once again. This means I put His interests before my own

and His interests actually become my interests. I seek to live a righteous life, I attend church, I give faithfully to His work, I walk with Him, I live close to Him, I witness for Him, I give him the throne of my heart and life. I put Him before my family, job, hobbies, or anything else.

Unless I put Jesus first in my life (His righteousness and ways), then I won't have a proper relationship with my family and live for Him. I cannot be a godly father to my children, a spiritual husband to my wife, an example to my family, if I don't put God first in my life, through obedience to Him and His Word.

Jesus ends His teaching by saying that when we follow a right priority of living, it's then that "all these things shall be added unto you" (vs. 33b). Jesus says, in effect, "If you will put God's interests first in your life, I will guarantee your future needs. If you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, then I will see that you never lack the necessities of life."

You need to get this and really let it sink into your head and heart! You put Jesus first, and Jesus will be sure to take care of you! Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. This means I put Him first in my life. I walk with Him, I live a righteous life, and put spiritual things before other things. I do what I know I should be doing, then I can know that He will bless my life by meeting all of my needs! We need to get this through our thick skulls! Do what you know is right and then see what God will do!

Many times we put our things (our agenda, desires, goals, sins, selfish desires) first and still want God to bless us. It does not work this way. No wonder our lives get our-of-sync! It's no wonder our lives are in such a mess! Stop being downright disobedient! Put Jesus first in your life! Make Him your Master and Lord! Do what is right! Live a righteous life! Put His interests first and then see the blessings of the Father's provisions come into your life!

Proverbs 3:9-10 states the same principle:

"Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine."

This is one example of putting God first in your life. Instead of giving Jesus the skim milk of your finances – give Him the first fruits and then see what happens! Don't become stingy with God. Be generous and do what you know is right and then let the fireworks of His blessings and provision begin! As we are a disciple, serving the Lord and living for Him, God promises to meet our needs. We should not worry about our daily provision, but in a similar manner, we should not worry about the future. We should not worry about today or tomorrow! Just put Jesus first in your life and enjoy the ride. God will provide for you!

Remember that making a life is more significant than making a living. By this I mean, we should not put making a lot of money before God's will for our lives.

In Matthew 6:33, Jesus is speaking here of Life's Greatest Priority!

- It begins with a consistent desire – seek ye first
- It involves clear direction – kingdom of God and his righteousness
- It ends with countless dividends – and all these things shall be added
unto you

Someone has said:

“When our priorities are God's priorities, He is free to work in us and through us to accomplish great things; but when our priorities are not His priorities, He can do little with us because He has little of us.”

If we do not make proper priorities in life, in accordance with our time, we will not serve the Lord effectively (Eph. 5:17). Many times we reason to God that we simply ran out of time to serve Him. However, this is not the case. We must remember that there is always time to do God's will! The Lord graciously gives to each one of us the same amount of time. It is what we do with our time that counts. Therefore, we must make time and take the time to do God's will, what we know is right, and then we will find true satisfaction and blessing in life.

We must take time to be holy! This means we are to take time for devotions and worship (Psalm 119:47; Mark 1:35) and plan within our days to serve the Lord (Col. 3:24) and be obedient to what we know He wants us to do such as attending church faithfully (Heb. 10:24-25) and living separate from the world system (Rom. 12:1-2).

We must learn the secret of establishing right priorities in relationship to our time and not allow the secular things of life to crowd out the spiritual things of life (Matt. 6:24-33). We should learn to place the spiritual things on a higher plain than the secular things of life. We cannot live in two worlds at the same time – the secular and sacred. We must choose which one is our master. Psalm 90:12 reminds us of the importance of establishing right priorities: “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”

Do you have your priorities right? God cannot make a way for you or direct your life if you have lost your priority principle. I want to give you an Old Testament illustration of Matthew 6:33. It involves Abraham’s servant being in the place of blessing, doing what was right, so that God could lead and direct his life in the right way.

An anonymous servant (perhaps Eliezer) had been searching for a wife for his master’s son (Isaac). So, he set off trusting the Lord to guide and direct him. And did He ever!

Genesis 24:10-15

“And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master *were* in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor. And he made his camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water at the time of the evening, *even* the time that women go out to draw *water*. And he said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold, I stand *here* by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water:

“And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: *let the same be she that* thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master. And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder.”

We can see that this man lived and served only to please his master, and this is a good example for us to follow today, when it comes to our Master who is God. This was his first priority in life – to please and obey his master. This has Matthew 6:33 written all over it! This servant of Abraham got his orders from his master and he did not change them. When he made his vow of obedience to Abraham, he meant it and kept it. I wonder if we have this attitude toward our Master today? Are we really following His will for our lives today? Have we knowingly strayed from it? Are we doing our own thing?

Genesis 24:43-48 gives the rest of the Biblical narrative:

“Behold, I stand by the well of water; and it shall come to pass, that when the virgin cometh forth to draw *water*, and I say to her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water of thy pitcher to drink; And she say to me, Both drink thou, and I will also draw for thy camels: *let* the same *be* the woman whom the LORD hath appointed out for my master's son. And before I had done speaking in mine heart, behold, Rebekah came forth with her pitcher on her shoulder; and she went down unto the well, and drew *water*: and I said unto her, Let me drink, I pray thee. And she made haste, and let down her pitcher from her *shoulder*, and said, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: so I drank, and she made the camels drink also. And I asked her, and said, Whose daughter *art* thou? And she said, The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bare unto him: and I put the earring upon her face, and the bracelets upon her hands. And I bowed down my head, and worshipped the LORD, and blessed the LORD God of my master Abraham, which had led me in the right way to take my master's brother's daughter unto his son.”

In His providence, God brought Rebekah to the well just as the servant was praying; and she did exactly what the servant had been praying about. The servant did what Gideon would do years later, who “put out a fleece” (Judges 6:36–40). This kind of approach to discovering God’s will is debatable. I don’t think this is the best way for God’s people to determine the will of God for their lives, since the conditions we lay down for God to meet might not be His conditions and in His will. In these cases, we are walking by sight and not by faith, and we may end up tempting God!

If we practice this type of approach to finding God’s will for our life, we might discover that God does not show us His will in the exact way or manner that we

have planned. When our plans flop, this means that God has another way or plan to show us His will for our lives. However, in this case, God did accommodate Himself to the needs of the servant (and Gideon) and guided them as they requested.

Now think of this! Little did Rebekah know that doing a humble task for a stranger would make her the bride of a wealthy man who was in a covenant relationship with God. She would become the bride of Isaac (the man in the line of blessing), the mother of Jacob, and Jacob would become the father of the twelve tribes of Israel! This reminds us that we must make every occasion a great occasion to serve God, for you can never tell when someone may take our little act of service and increase it to great spiritual proportions.

Within this whole story, Genesis 24:27 gives us the best illustration of Matthew 6:33: "And he said, Blessed *be* the LORD God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth (promised made): I *being* in the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren." Abraham's servant recognized that he found a wife for his master's son because he was in the place of blessing and ready to be led or directed by God. We see the pairing of two concepts here! God did not lead this man when he was being lazy, but when he was obedient to his master, and when he was actively pursuing the will of God.

It has been said:

"Some people get in the way, and others are in the way so God can lead them."

Maybe you have gotten in the way of the Lord's will for your life? You have your dreams and goals but are they God's way? You see, we can be moving in our own way and direction, instead of God's way for our life. We can frantically create our own way and in the end discover it's not God's way. However, when we remain obedient to our Master who is God, it's only then that we can remain in the place of blessing and find God's true leading and direction.

This reminds us once again that God will make a way for our lives, if we are in the way of blessing, if we are obedient to our Master and following His known will and purpose for our lives (Rom. 12:1-2). God wants to open the way for us, the next step

in our life, but He cannot do this unless we are in the place of blessing, yielded to His general purpose for our life. This means we must put Him, His interests, and righteousness as a first priority in our life. If we are seeking spiritual things (His kingdom and righteousness) then we can be sure that the other things will be added unto us. If we put first things first (our obedience to God) then we can be sure that God will make a way for us. He will show us the next step for our lives. Whatever it is, God will make a way for you, perhaps in very unexpected ways! Yes, He might direct or redirect us in ways that are different than we could ever imagine.

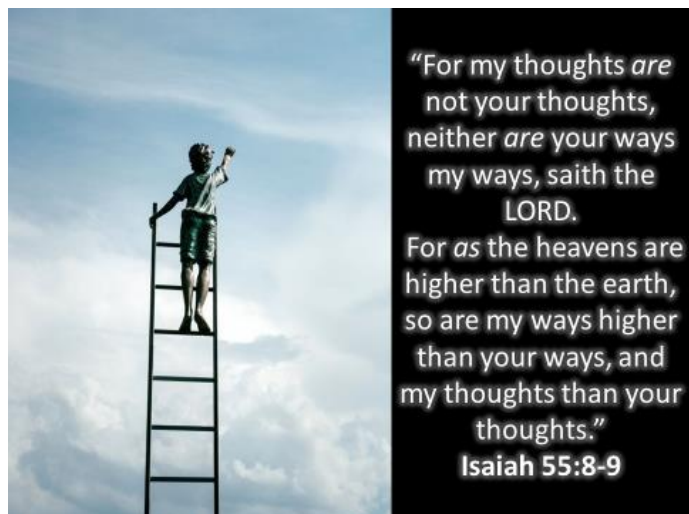
God makes a way where there seems to be no way when we admit that human ways are often contrary to His ways.

Isaiah 55:8-9

“For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

In this context, God was teaching that sinners need to forsake their ways and thoughts (actions and attitudes - vs. 7) because they are not His ways and thoughts. This is because no one can fathom the depths of God’s ways and wisdom. Therefore, we should just surrender to His ways. God’s ways are far above our way of thinking. This is true regarding the way He created the world and the plan of salvation. But it’s also true regarding His purpose and will related to our daily experience and living. We must learn the secret of allowing the Lord to work in ways that are beyond our own human reasoning.

By way of practical application, God’s ways are not always our ways. His ways and thoughts are much higher and wiser than our own. We must come to grips with this reality if we are going to discover God’s will for our lives. We must come to the place where we realize that God has a way or direction He wants us to take which is sometimes contrary to



“For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”
Isaiah 55:8-9

our way and thinking. This is when we must conform our way to His way. We should not second guess God's way for our lives! We must sometimes trust Him to lead us in ways that may not seem to make sense at the time. We should not demand to understand but simply trust and obey for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey!

Dr. Henry Cloud said:

"On your journey with God, sometimes His way will be truly miraculous and sometimes it will involve a lot of work, growth, and change on your part. Sometimes it won't be the way you thought that you needed, but a different and even better one. But when God makes a way, it is real, meaningful, and enduring."

As we think of God making a way for us, we must remember that He does His best work when we are at the end of ourselves, when we come to the end of our rope. So, when you don't know what to do, keep doing one thing, keep God first in your heart and life. Obey Him and live a righteous and holy life. It's only then that we will be in the way of blessing, so God can truly lead and direct our lives and show us the path He wants to take us.

Here is the point. We must stay on the right path if we want to follow the next path that God has for our life. We cannot make a decision that is in the will of God when we are outside the will of God. For this reason, God's way sometimes involves chastening (Heb. 12:5-8) and pruning (John 15:1-3) to bring us back to the place where God wants us to be and take us to the next step He has for our lives. We must accept God's disciplinary way and pruning that He sometimes allows to occur in our lives. God works in His own ways to make a way for our lives.

The story is told of a young boy was driving a big hayrack down the road and it turned over right in front of a farmer's house. The farmer came out and saw the young boy crying and said, "Son, don't worry about this, we can fix it. Right now dinner's ready. Why don't you come in and eat with us and then I'll help you put the hay back on the rack." The boy said, "No, I can't. My father is going to be very angry with me." The farmer said, "Now don't argue, just come in and have some lunch and you'll feel better." The boy said, "I'm just afraid my father is going to be very angry with me."

The farmer and the young boy went inside and had dinner. Afterwards, as they walked outside to the haystack, the farmer said, "Well, don't you feel better now?" The boy said, "Yes but I just know that my father will be very angry with me." The farmer said, "Nonsense. Where is your father anyway?" The boy said, "He's under that pile of hay."

Here is the moral of the story. We must unearth God "from under the pile of hay" where we sometimes try to keep Him, and put Him back in the most important place of our lives, which is first place. We must once again put Him in the front, before anything or anyone else, so that He can truly direct us in His way.

8. Experience God's resource and power.

What should you do when you don't know what to do, when you seem stuck, not knowing what direction to take, and how things will work out for you? What should you do when you face discouragement and bewilderment because of the circumstances you are facing? It's during this time that we must remember to rely upon God's amazing sustaining power. When we find ourselves becoming discouraged, beaten-up in life, and not knowing which way to turn, we must come back to the constant supply of God's power for strength and His staying power. God can and will make a way for you. His sustaining grace can get you through painful and tragic events. God makes a way for us where there seems to be no way, when we avail ourselves to His unchanging grace, which enables us to go on in life.



1 Corinthians 10:13 gives this wonderful promise and is a key verse that speaks of a specific way that God has made for us: "There hath no temptation (any trial of adversity, a test that comes from God or a temptation that comes from the devil) taken you but such as is common to man (COMMON trials): but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted

(tested or tried) above that ye are able (CONTROLLED pressures); but will with the temptation (trial or test) also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*" (CONQUERING grace).

This verse reminds us that God will make a way! In other words, during the time of trial that we face, whatever kind of trial it might be, even the temptations that come from the devil, we can be sure that God will not give us more than we can handle and that He will make a way for us to escape the trial. God's power and resource is equally available to everyone. God will make a way! And God's way is seen here as a DELIVERING way. The Bible says that he will "make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

The way of escape is not always the removal of the trial. Sometimes God does keep us from certain trials and temptations. But Paul is teaching us that the way of escape is the strengthening and enabling grace to pass through the trial which in this verse seems to be the temptation that comes from the Evil One. God's way is His resources and power that helps you to go on, grow, increase your faith, change your heart, and get you through the hard times.

"God has not promised
Skies always blue,
Flower-strewn pathways
All our lives through.

God has not promised
Sun without rain,
Joy without sorrow,
Peace without pain.

But God has promised
Strength for the day,
Rest for the laborer,
Light for the way,
Grace for the trials,
Help from above,
Unfailing sympathy,
Undying love."

In early Greek usage, the term “escape” had the sense of a landing place. It was a nautical term. The idea is not that He will enable us to bypass temptation and be totally delivered from it, but that through it all He will enable us to land safely on the other side victoriously. The idea that we can “bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13) means that many times the way of escape is to endure the trial by God’s grace and pass through it unscathed and victorious (James 1:12). God always provides a way to escape during our times of trials, if we will trust Him and take advantage of His sustaining power and grace.

Psalm 91:1

“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.”

The secret place of protection and deliverance for New Testament saints is the endless supply of God’s divine enablement. God is so good that He will not allow believers to experience anything for which He has not prepared them. He will give every believer the grace and power to endure their trial and through His enduring strength, be able to victoriously escape the specific trial we are facing in life.

Two frogs fell into a tub of cream. One looked at the high sides of the tub which were too difficult to crawl over and said, “It is hopeless.” So he resigned himself to death, relaxed, and sank to the bottom. The other one determined to keep swimming as long as he could. “Something might happen,” he said. He kept kicking and churning, and finally he found himself on a solid platform of butter and jumped to safety. The application of this to what we are studying about is very clear. God always makes a way of escape for us! Sometimes we must make butter, but God will always give us His way of escape.

Our faithful God is in control of our trials. All of them. He knows when to give them and when to relieve us of them. He also keeps them numbered. If He puts an extra burden on us in one way, He sometimes takes something away in another area. God sends our trials at the right time and allows them to leave us in the right time.

John Bradford, the famous martyr, suffered with rheumatism and depression. Yet when they imprisoned him in a foul damp dungeon, and he knew that he would

never come out except to die, Bradford wrote, "It is a singular thing that ever since I have been in this prison and have had other trials to bear, I have had no touch of my rheumatism or depression."

God has promised to keep our pressures under His providential control and has always promised to give us what I call, "The Grace Escape." This is the enduring and strengthening grace to pass through our trials victoriously. When things seem to be piling up and we don't know what to do, we must always avail ourselves to God's unchanging grace. He will make a way for us.

1 Corinthians 10:13 says that God will make a way for you! This is because the Bible states that God "will with the temptation also make a way to escape." Yes, God will make a way for you!



Of course, His way is His constant source and supply of grace or divine enablement. which keeps your life spiritually secure and stable, even when you pass those seasons of life that find you broken, hurt, and confused regarding the future.

James 4:6 is placed in the context of possessing victory and states:

“But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.”

Yes, it takes grace to go on in life. It does not take psychology, psychotherapy, or manmade therapies and techniques. Grace speaks of the strength we need to keep a spiritual edge in life, even when we don't know that to do.

“He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater,
He sendeth more strength when the labors increase,
To added affliction He addeth His mercy,
To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace.

When we have exhausted our store of endurance,
When our strength has failed ere the day is half-done,
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources,
Our Father's full giving is only begun.

His love has no limit, His grace has no measure,
His power no boundary known unto men,
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus,
He giveth and giveth and giveth again.”

“God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able.” This verse has been tremendous comfort to the saints. It speaks of God's faithfulness in controlling our trials and temptations. Young believers have clung to it as they would to a life-line or life preserve and older believers have leaned upon it as upon a soft pillow. God will faithfully take us through our time of affliction and trial by strengthening and sustaining us by His grace. The way out is still His grace! This is His promise to each one of us as His children.

There was once a young boy whose dad left him on a downtown corner one morning and told him to wait there until he returned in about half an hour. But the father's car broke down and he could not get to a phone. Five hours went by before the father managed to get back, and he was worried that his son would be in a state of panic. But when the father got there, the boy was standing in front of the dime

store, looking in the window and rocking back and forth on his heels. When the father saw him, he ran up to him and threw his arms around him and hugged and kissed him. The father apologized and said, "Weren't you worried? Did you think I was never coming back?" The boy looked up and replied, "No, Dad. I knew you were coming. You said you would."

When you seem to be beaten, when you are going down for the last time, remember that God will make a way for you! God will be there for you and His strengthening grace will put a life preserve around your neck, pick you up, and plant your feet on stable ground once again.

2 Peter 1:3 says something very similar:

"According as his divine (Godlike) power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue."

This is literally Godlike power because God Himself resides within us to enable us to face life's demands and trials. His life and touch means that we can depend completely upon Him for strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow! Peter's teaching sounds like that of Paul when he declared "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13).

Like Peter, Paul understood how God makes a way when there seems to be no way when he wrote, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." (Phil. 2:13-14). In order to be more like Jesus Christ, we need to allow the Lord to empower and enable us to do the things that seem humanly impossible. Elsewhere Paul stated: "We faint not" (2 Cor. 4:1). This reminds us that during the trials of suffering we pass through in life, that God will make a way for us. He will keep us spiritually stable and strong if we trust in His sustaining power.

We must realize that God is constantly at work in our lives to motivate and enable us to accomplish all of His will for our life. We must refuse to be driven and tossed about by all the adverse circumstances of life or by the opposition from evil that we fight against every day. Instead, we can rely on God's omnipotent power and ask the Lord to make us increasingly more like Christ in our thoughts, words and deeds.

“May the mind of Christ my Savior,
Live in me from day to day.
By His love and power controlling
All I do and say.”

How do we maintain our spiritual edge in life? By tapping in to God’s infinite source of power. We have God’s power (divine power) working on our behalf! Let us learn how to utilize God’s power in a way that we can always find a way out of whatever predicament we find ourselves.

Today we live in a psychologized world. Like never before, Christians are relying on man’s humanistic therapies and techniques to find their way in life. Instead of the sufficiency of God and the Scriptures, the church on a large scale has turned to “mind sciences” to find answers, instead of to the Scriptures and God. The secular world promises all kinds of solutions and answers from their so-called experts. Yet most of what they offer is void of Christ and God!

God will make a way when there seems to be no way when we rely on the Holy Spirit’s power. Zechariah 4:6 reminds us: “... Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.” We must allow the Lord’s Spirit to infuse you with His power, love, and self-discipline (2 Tim. 1:7). Too many Christians fail to find a way out of their difficulties because they prematurely give in to discouragement, frustration or fear. The Lord is strong and can deliver you from your problems, not always by resolving every detail of our problems, but by granting you the power to pass through them victoriously.

The Bible says we have been given power from God (God’s divine or godlike power) to enable us to pass through our heartaches and trials (2 Peter 1:3). Even more than this, God has given to us His precious promises and personal nature (a divine or Godlike nature) to give us the right desires in life.

2 Peter 1:4 goes on to say:

“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises (Bible promises): that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature (through sharing God’s nature), having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

Peter promises us that we have complete sufficiency to deal with life's demand and live a godly and righteous life. We have God's power, God's promises, and God's personal nature to guide us in the right way, the path of victory, and keep us spiritually stable in life.

“Standing on the promises that cannot fail,
When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail,
By the living Word of God I shall prevail,
Standing on the promises of God.”

When you don't know what to do, believe that God has a made away for you to go on in life and live a victorious, fruitful, and a productive life. His power, promises and personal nature will enable you to keep your spiritual grip and edge in life.

One New Year's Day, in the Tournament of Roses parade, a beautiful float suddenly sputtered and quit. It was out of gas. The whole parade was held up until someone could get a can of gas. The amusing thing was this float represented the Standard Oil Company. With its vast oil resources, its truck was out of gas.

Even though Christians have access to God's omnipotence, if we do not avail ourselves to it, we will run out of power. When you say, “I can't, that is when God says, “I will.” When we come to the end of our rope, when all hope seems to be gone, God says, “I will make a way for you. And My way is to experience My personal presence and power in a new, refreshing, revitalizing, and dynamic way.”

God always provides us with whatever is needed to succeed spiritually in life and find His perfect will for our lives! God always provides a way for us through life. Someone wrote these words:

“When your world is upside down and it crumbles and falls
And it's so hard to make it through another day.
You've got mountains to move and they seem so tall
But you're not giving up because His promise to save.

God will provide a way,
I know He'll provide a way,
Cause His word is true and He will do it for you,
God will provide a way.
God will make a way!

It may be at the very last moment
When your faith is all that is pulling you through
It may be in the most unexpected way
But He'll provide and answer for you!

So turn your back to your problems and your face to the Lord
And let Him come and lift your burdens away.
As you pass through the night and your days turn to sight
You'll have been there before so you'll know just what to say.

God will provide a way,
I know He'll provide a way
Cause His word is true and He will do it for you
God will provide, I know He'll provide a way.
God will provide a way."

This is the message of God for us today. God never shortchanges us or hangs us out to dry, so to speak. He always provides us with a way of escape from trial, temptation, and tribulation. He is a good, loving, and very gracious and merciful God!

Two men were out hunting in the northern U.S. Suddenly one yelled and the other looked up to see a grizzly charging them. The first started to frantically put on his tennis shoes and his friend anxiously asked, "What are you doing? Don't you know you cannot outrun a grizzly bear?" "I don't have to outrun a grizzly. I just have to outrun you!" This guy was not the best of friends!

9. Choose the right traveling companions.



Choosing the right friends is important in life. They can help make you or break you. When you don't know what to do, when you are in limbo and are not sure what your next step is in life, be sure to hang around with good company. Choosing right relationships is important when it comes finding God's way. This is because the unsaved and unspiritual are not concerned about God's way for your life.

This means we need to maintain godly relationships if we are going to follow God's way for our life. God makes a way for us where there seems to be no way, when we make right choices regarding our companionships in life.

We have already discussed how important it is to have wise and godly counsel – not worldly advice. Scripture often warns us to avoid harmful influences. Regardless of our age or spiritual strength, over time, unwise influences will negatively affect our walk with the Lord. Satan is determined to pull us into sin and wreck our lives, and he often uses wrong influences to accomplish his goal. God will make a way for you. But you must make a point to connect with people who are traveling the right way! Those who are saved and sanctified in their Christian life can be used of God to point us in the right direction.

Proverbs 12:15

"The way of a fool *is* right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel *is* wise."

People who rise to become the best in what they do (their profession) usually don't get to the top alone. They have good advisers. We need to surround ourselves with godly Christian people who are committed to support us, encourage us, assist us, and pray for us. When you get away from this, then look out! You are headed toward a fall. Part of God's program to make a way for you (show God's direction for your life) is to put good people round you who are gifted to help and who can get you

where you need to go. This is illustrated in Paul's journey with sailors who were afraid their ship was going to sink!

Acts 27:20

"And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away."

There can be no doubt that the ship had been taking a lot of water, and it was therefore necessary to lighten its load to prevent it from sinking. They were bailing water! All hope seemed lost. They thought that they were going down with the ship! Have you ever felt like this from a spiritual perspective? Have you felt that you were about to go under? It's in these times, we need the reassurance of godly friends.

Acts 27:25

"Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me."

Paul had a close connection with these mariners who were with him on the ship. He delivered a message of hope for them. He encourages them by revealing to them that they would pass through the dangerous voyage. Their lives would be spared even if the ship was not spared. This is the kind of companion we need on our voyage of life. We need people who will stay with us on the storm-tossed ship! We need people who are there to give us guidance and help us along the way, and show us that there is a way out!

We need their support, courage, feedback, wisdom, experience, modeling, godly values, and accountability so they can monitor our progress. They can ask us, "How strong is your faith?" and "Where are you failing?" and "What kind of help do you need?" We are talking about people who are not afraid to correct you when you are wrong! There is safety in numbers and a support team. We need godly mentors who will help us move in the right way.

1 Corinthians 15:33 gives us a warning:

“Be not deceived: evil communications (companionships or associations) corrupt good manners” (good moral habits or ways of conduct).

Our system of values will guide us so we can follow God’s way. But personal values are not created in a vacuum; they are formed in the context of community. This is why God’s Word reminds us to choose our traveling companions wisely. Paul is talking about how close alliances with evil and worldly or carnally- minded people can have a morally corrupting effect on our habits or way of living. By their word or through example of living, evil friends are a corrupting influence. Here is the point. If you hang around with creeps, you might just become one!

Some believe this was a common proverb in Paul’s day and he is quoting it as containing an important truth, even though it was from a “secular” source. We would say today, "You become like the company you keep," or "Birds of the same feather flock together." By keeping evil company, the Corinthian Christians were being conformed to this world. However, what they really needed was to be transformed by the renewing of your mind (Rom. 12:2). Christians must let the Word of God shape their thinking, not the evil company of this world.

John MacArthur said:

“People who think wrongly invariably behave wrongly. Wrong behavior comes from wrong thinking, from wrong beliefs and wrong standards. It is impossible to associate regularly with wicked people without being contaminated both by their ideas and by their habits.”

One day a farmer grabbed his shot gun to shoot at a flock of pesky crows. Unfortunately, he didn’t see his sociable parrot that had joined the crows. After firing a few shots, he walked over to the fallen birds and was surprised to find his parrot badly ruffled with a broken wing. When the farmer’s children saw the injured bird, they asked, “Dad, what happened?” The farmer simply replied, “Bad company.”

Psalms 119:63

“I *am* a companion of all *them* that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.”

This is a good practice to apply to our daily lives. We must embrace friends who are not carnal, worldly, and which can direct us away from godly living.

Proverbs 13:20 states:

“He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.”

Remember that a person is known not only by the company he keeps but also by the company he avoids.

Proverbs 24:1

“Be not thou envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them.”

It’s amazing how the Bible repeatedly warns us about wrong relationships. Worldly companions and relationships can very easily corrupt us. We should do all we can to avoid them. We are not talking about befriending and witnessing to the unsaved but becoming a companion with them and following their ways.

Proverbs 1:15-16 gives this sage advice:

“My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path: For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood.

Psalms 1:1 adds:

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.”

If you want to be a blessed man, a person that experiences true happiness and fulfillment in life, then you must choose your companions wisely. Why? It’s because bad company can have a corrupting influence on your life. There is a progression of compromise that can happen over a period of time. It’s seen in this verse. We walk, stand, and then sit with sinners, mimicking their actions and ways. We see a downward progression in what can happen to us if we are not careful. Choose your companions wisely. Their ideas, worldliness, carnality, and debased values can rub off on us.

A.W. Tozer said:

“To seek to be friends with those who will not be the friends of Christ is to be a traitor to our Lord.”

Deuteronomy 7:3-4 gives us another warning about bad companionships:

“Neither shalt thou make marriages with them (the unsaved heathen); thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly.”

All of the verses we have looked at under this point give us a warning to us. We can lose our way because of wrong relationships and companions. God wants to make a way for us, redirect our steps, or grant us a new victory, but many times bad company or wrong relationships can keep us from experiencing God’s way for our lives.

Someone has said:

“If you have to do wrong to stay on the team, you are on the wrong team.”

If you need to, get off of the team! The issue is not making or maintaining friendships, but pleasing the Lord and maintaining a consistent testimony. You should never go into the mud with a pig. You will both get all dirty.

2 Timothy 2:22 reminds us to “follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” We are to hang around with godly people and refuse to become friends with the world in any way, which includes its evil people, places, values, philosophies or culture (James 4:4). D.L Moody said that Christians would not have to give up the world when they get saved because the world will give them up. The ungodly people of this world, who want to play with their sin, will not want you around, if you really want to live for God. A Christian who does not enjoy the fellowship of God’s people, but feels more at home with those who are following carnal and selfish pursuits, is worldly.

2 Corinthians 6:17 gives this timely command for us to follow:

“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.”

You will notice that separating from ungodly people, not forming alliances and close friendships with them, keeps us from touching the unclean thing. It keeps our life pure and free from moral corruption and compromise. Biblically-based guidelines and boundaries are very important to maintain sanctification and separate (holy) commitment to our God. God way is always the sanctifying and holy way – not the way of compromise. So, when you don’t know what to do, remember to keep boundaries in your life that keep you separate from the enemy’s powerful sway, seduction, and evil influences.

The old adage is still true:

“A man is known by the company he keeps.”

We eventually become like those who we hang around with. We are like the frog in the water. As the water becomes hotter, he does not realize it, and eventually the frog is boiled alive. The unbecoming values of others can rub off on us and this is why we must pick our company wisely.

Good and godly people, who are pursuing God, will help keep you on the way God has made for you. You will be amazed how a loving support group will help you on your journey. Do not trust your heart to those who are stagnate and going backward. They can turn you away from God’s way!

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

“Two *are* better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him *that is* alone when he falleth.”

There is a principle to take from this verse. Good companionship is important in life. What we need are friends that are available to help us spiritually, comfort us when we need it, show us more about God than we already know, and be willing to confront and redirect us when we are moving in a wrong direction. You may need to break with the old friends and find new ones that will support your desire to find

God's way for your life. They will be like a support group for you, give you feedback, and be available to provide accountability. Ecclesiastes 4:12 says "a threefold cord (a cord of three strands) is not quickly broken." There is safety in possessing good companions ("in multitude of counsellors there is safety" – Prov. 24:6).

Ephesians 4:11-13 reminds us that God gave us "... evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

Many times we cannot fully know the way of God for us unless we are willing to submit to the teaching and direction from gifted members of the body of Christ. As we have seen, God uses a whole range of spiritually gifted people to equip us, to motivate us and to teach us what we need to know in order to come to full maturity. So, when we are struggling on some specific area of life, remember to connect with God's gifted people who can give Biblical and godly advice to you.

People who try to find the way out of their problems alone many times miss the needed help and direction that others can give them. If we want to experience the full benefits of God's way, then we should be ready to cooperate with the whole range of God's spiritually gifted people. Not only do we need God's people for good counsel but also for their intercessory prayers. Never forget this! God will make way when there seems to be no way when we ask others to intercede for us. Too many people try to find the way out of their problems alone.

Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:18:

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

Remember to ask others and God to intercede on your behalf so that you can receive the maximum benefits of intercessory assistance in your time of need. The Lord often helps us find a way out of our fears, problems with anger, disappointments, hurts, unmet expectations or needy situations through the intercessory prayers of others. Maybe you are struggling to see how God might

solve your financial, emotional, or some social needs. Remember that He will provide a solution for every problem if you only ask for intercessory help.

So, what should you do when you don't know what to do? You may need to sever yourself from worldly-minded people and reconnect with God-fearing people who can influence your life in a spiritual way. You need godly people who will sail with you on the voyage of life.

A man dialed a wrong number and got the following recording: "I am not available right now, but I thank you for caring enough to call. I am making some changes in my life. Please leave a message after the beep. If I do not return your call, you are one of the changes."

Maybe you need to make some changes in your relationships of life. If so, do it. Don't wait for a better day or time. Right now we must sever bad relationships so that we can gain new ones that will help us embrace God's way for our life. God often reveals His way for us through the spiritually wise counsel and direction of others.

10. Attend Church faithfully.

When you don't know what to do, when you seem to be at Ground Zero in your life, when you don't know which way to turn and find yourself in a state of confusion, turn back to Church and God's people! This is nothing novel. God's House was designed for God's people and God's people can find God's way for their life when attending a strong, Bible-believing church. We will eventually lose our spiritual edge in life when we lose sight of the importance of meeting with God's people, in God's House, following God's way for our life, God makes a way for us where there seems to be no way, when we make the choice to attend a good, Bible-believing church faithfully and support it.



Hebrews 10:24-25 gives us this important reminder;

“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works (Christian friendship): Not forsaking (to desert or abandon) the assembling of ourselves together (Christian community), as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Christian Rapture).

This exhortation reminds us of the importance of assembling together with God’s saints “upon the first day of the week” (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2) as the early church did in honor of the resurrection of Christ (“the Lord’s Day” – Rev. 1:10). This is very important to grasp. We need to make a strong Biblical case for God’s people returning to God’s House on Sunday – the day God ordained for Christian worship and growth. God has created this weekly rhythm for a reason. Scriptural worship on the Lord’s Day is our best path toward once again experiencing God’s favor and spiritual blessings in our life. The Biblical tradition of setting aside the first day of the week for sacred things is a precious heritage. Perhaps the Biblical teaching of gathering together for worship may need to be recovered in your own heart and life.

Acts 2:42

“And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

This was on Sunday and it was the pattern of the original church. It was a practice that was established by the Christians because Christ’s resurrection occurred on Sunday. In other words, this doctrinal teaching, fellowship, and receiving of the Lord’s Table occurred on Sunday in commemoration of Christ’s resurrection. Think of it, Christians were known to be Christians because they identified with Sunday worship, which marked them as a follower of Jesus Christ who rose from the dead on Sunday. Sunday (the first day of the week) is God’s specific day for Christians to come together and worship corporately and learn the teaching of Scriptures.

The pattern and practice of the early church in meeting on Sunday is significant. It’s this specific day that Christians set aside for worship and this apostolic tradition was passed down through the centuries of the church.

2 Thessalonians 2:15

“Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.”

The Bible commands that we are “not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together” (Heb. 10:24). This was actually a command to the Jewish Christians to not abandon Sunday worship for Sabbath worship and go back under the rituals of the Mosaic Law. Nevertheless, this would also be a direct command that none of us stop attending the Sunday meetings. It’s an indication that the Christians were to follow the apostolic example of meeting together on Sunday (Acts 20:7). Now think of what the writer of Hebrews is teaching. If they were not to forsake (desert or abandon) meeting together with God’s people, this means they were expected to follow the Biblical example of meeting together on Sunday and not develop the pattern and fall into the temptation of altogether abandoning the assembly of the saints.

1 Corinthians 16:2 gives a direct command for the Sunday meetings:

“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye (you cannot do this if you are not in church!). Upon the first *day* of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as *God* hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come (so that he would not need to pressure the people about giving to the Jerusalem saints when he saw them).

What does this command mean? It means there was an apostolic tradition and precedence that was established which should be practiced today which involved coming together on Sunday and giving to God’s ministry. Paul expected the saints to be in church, the place where they could give and hear from Heaven. He did not expect them to be skipping out on church and abandoning the Sunday meetings for others reasons. Sunday was to be a priority in their lives.

We discover that during apostolic Christianity, Sunday replaced the Sabbath as a day of worship. The Sabbath laws of Moses had passed (“let no man therefore judge ... you of the sabbath days” - Col. 2:16). But in view of Christ’s resurrection, Christians began to identify with Sunday as the Lord’s Day and not the Sabbath.

Sunday became the new day of worship and Bible learning for the Grace Dispensation in which we live today.

It was a day of commemoration of Christ's resurrection. As the new day of worship dawned, Paul was flexible with Jewish worshippers regarding this specific day (Romans 14), but he urged the Jewish Christians to get passed the shadows of the Sabbath and get on board with Sunday (Hebrews 6:1). The apostolic precedence and practice was established for the future centuries of church history. The Christians were expected to follow Biblical and apostolic tradition and worship on Sunday. This was not a suggestion but a Biblical practice that every Christian was to make part of his life.

Many Christians will ask, "When do we forsake or abandon (Heb. 10:25) the assembling of ourselves together? How often must I miss church to consider myself as abandoning God's House?" Well, let me respond to these questions in this way. If we are asking these types of questions, it's probably because we are missing way too much church. You see, when we repeatedly miss meeting with God's people and question how many times we must be in God's House, it's normally because we possess a wrong spirit and our hearts are not right before God.

We might say, "I don't need to go to church every Sunday because I'm not under the Sabbath law. I have freedom under grace to make my choices." It's true we are not under living under the Sabbath laws which were connected with the last day of the week and the Mosaic system. Instead, we have a much higher priority today, we are living under the grace (Rom. 6:14), which motivates us to be obedient to all of God's commands and purposes given for New Testament saints. One of these is following the apostolic example and directive to meet with God's people on Sunday for corporate worship, giving, and Bible learning.

Of course, we do not see the direct commands "Thou shalt worship on Sunday" or "Thou shalt worship on every Sunday." But this does not mean that we should develop the attitude that we can just come to church occasionally and manifest no commitment to God's House. The Bible does not teach this. When you start trying to repeatedly dodge your privilege to meet together on the Lord's Day for corporate worship, and come up with a thousand excuses why you don't attend church, it's

probably because you have developed ingratitude toward Jesus Christ who died for you and rose again the third day to give you everlasting life.

Friend, we should not get up on Sunday and say, "Let's get this over with." We should get up with a grateful heart, motivated by grace, to come to church and worship the One (Jesus Christ) who died for us, washed away our sins through the shedding of His blood on the cross, and who arose on the first day of the week to give us the promise of eternal salvation and everlasting life.

We might explain it like this. Grace does not teach us to skip church; Grace motivates us to attend church (Titus 2:11-12). If grace is working in your heart, it will drive you to be with God's people on Sunday and to learn His Word. Beware of becoming indifferent and developing a lackadaisical attitude toward attending church, meeting with God's people, and listening to God's Word preached. When you start skipping church, it may be due to spiritual erosion occurring in your own heart and life. When it comes to Sunday worship, we are to follow the apostolic example and prerogative of meeting together on Sunday. and allow grace to stir our hearts again, to meet on Sunday, identifying with New Testament Christianity, the cause of Christ, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The New Testament sets the precedence for worshipping on the first day of the week and not abandoning this time of worship, but being very faithful and committed to one's church attendance. The EVENT of the resurrection is the background for Sunday worship (Matt. 28:1; John 20:1). The EXAMPLE or practice of the early church was to meet on Sunday (Acts 20:7). The EXHORTATION to give on this day and remain faithful in church attendance on Sunday is yet another reason we should worship on Sunday (1 Cor. 16:1-2; Heb. 10:24-25). The EXACT day (Sunday) is designated as the "Lord's Day" (the day of His resurrection) which indicates this was an important day for Christians and that they were committed to worshipping on this day (Rev. 1:10).

This phrase "the Lord's day" was understood as a reference to Sunday for some 2,000 years. If anyone were to argue that this is not Sunday, the burden of proof rests on them to demonstrate this was not the case. If Sunday was not the day of gathering for God's people, then what other day's observance is encouraged in the

New Testament other than the first of the week? If Christians become cares about this day, about their attendance, service, and giving on this day, then what will be the ramifications for our personal lives and families?

From the dawning of Creation, God established a seven-day rhythm or cycle of life. By design, both the Old Testament Sabbath (last day of the week) and the New Testament Sunday (first day of the week) were designed by God to give man a day for rest and spiritual recuperation. We need to get back on God's cycle! We need to follow God's rhythm. It's spiritually healthy for our lives to stay committed to God's House.

Entertainment, sports, and industry (work) are relentlessly eroding the Biblical and traditional Christian use of the Lord's Day as a specific, necessary, and apostolic requirement for corporate worship.

Charles Spurgeon once said:

"I believe that Sunday should be spent in re-creation ... Oh that everybody who talks about spending Sunday in re-creation would come to be recreated, regenerated, renewed, refreshed, revived, and made to rejoice in God."

Spurgeon was talking about the re-creation of our lives – not the recreation of our lives in sports and so many other things that can take us away from our Sunday worship. Of course, there is no specific list of legal and illegal activities that revolve on Sunday (unlike the Sabbath). We should not declare what is right to do and not to do on Sunday. But what God calls us to do is not to develop the attitude and mindset that we can decide whether or not we should attend church, that we can decide to not give to the local church and bypass meeting with God's people on Sunday.

I believe Christians will personally suffer and their churches are going to suffer spiritually if they fail to restore the Lords' Day to its elevated New Testament status. The right use of the Lord's Day is central to the spiritual life of the church and our own spiritual life.

Many will say today, "I have no choice, I must always work on Sunday." Well, we need to examine this statement. Why does a man have to work on the Lord's Day? If he replies that his company requires it, then a more correct statement would be, "I have to work on Sunday if I want to work for such-and-such a company." It's apparent that nobody is coercing him against his will to work on the Lord's day but that he has made a decision to do so because he values a certain place of employment. Which do you value more, your place of employment or your place with God's people on the Lord's Day? Your example to your children or your example to your employer?

Pastor Taigen Joose asked this soul-searching question:

"Who's going to win the battle for your spiritual welfare and that of your family and church when, as a Christian without a conviction, you encounter relentless pressure from a fiercely committed world system dominated by the Devil?"

In other words, we must make the decision to do what is right for our personal life and families. We must take the initiative to win the battle! We must wake up for the enemy is committed to destroying our faithfulness to God and our family. Now men, don't do something crazy and quit your job if you are working on Sunday. What you need to start doing is praying that God will make a way for you, a way to bring your family to church on the Lord's Day, a way to get back into God's rhythm for your life, which is to be in God's House with God's people on Sunday. Our greatest ambition and desire should be to meet with God's people on God's day!

It's time to come home! A solid, Bible-believing church it to be like a second home for us. It should be a home that is a haven for us, a place where we find encouragement, direction, help and hope!

Psalm 84:10 reveals this desire:

"For a day in thy courts *is* better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

There was a rather humorous letter written to a pastor to prove a parishioners sanctified reasoning for neglecting church attendance.

Dear Pastor,

You often stress attendance at worship as being very important for a Christian, but I think a person has a right to miss now and then. I think every person ought to be excused for the following reasons and the number of times indicated:

Christmas (Sunday before or after) --1
New Year's (Party lasted too long) --1
Easter (Get away for the holidays) --1
July 4 (National holiday) --1
Labor Day (Need to get away) --1
Memorial Day (Visit hometown) --1
School closing (Kids need a break) --1
School opens (One last fling) --1
Family reunions (Mine and wife's) --2
Sleep late (Saturday night activities) --4
Deaths in family--4
Anniversary (Second honeymoon) --1
Sickness (One for each family member) --5
Business trips (A must) --3
Vacation (3 weeks) --3
Bad weather (Ice, snow, rain, clouds) --6
Ball games (My children cannot let the team down) --4
Unexpected company (Can't walk out) --5
Time changes (Spring ahead; fall back) --2
Special on TV (Super Bowl, etc.) --3

Pastor, that leaves only two Sundays per year. So, you can count on us to be in church on the fourth Sunday in February and the third Sunday in August unless providentially hindered.

Sincerely,

Faithful Member

Let me share something with you that is very straightforward and practical. Over the years, I have witnessed that when God's saints frequently skip church and become very scanty in their church attendance, it's because they are involved in a spiritual battle of some kind. For the most part, they have no longer placed God first in their life. Then, while they are not attending church, many times out of disobedience to God (not for physical or age-related reasons), and when they are out of God's will for their lives, they try and figure out God's will for their life regarding some particular area. The results can be disastrous. Not only do they end up missing church, they end up missing God's will. Beware of this!

If you are not doing the right thing, then you have a 10 out of 10 chance that you won't make the right decision! When we are knowingly disobedient in some area of our life, then our minds get all gummed up and we cannot make an accurate assessment regarding God's will for our life. As a result, we make wrong decisions because we are already moving in the wrong direction within our lives.

If you are closer to abandoning church than being in church, you need to do a life check and get your heart and life in order again. God has ordained the local church as the gathering place for His people (Acts 16:5; 16:4; Gal. 1:2, 22; 2 Thess. 1:4; Rev. 1:4) and when we miss gathering with God's people, listening to God's Word, and allowing it to sink into our hearts and lives, it's then we begin to lose our spiritual edge in life.

What should we do when we don't know what to do? Get back to church! Run to church. Meet with God's people, find strength and solace in Bible teaching and promises. Men, bring your families to church. Set an example for your children for the years to come. God will make a way for you. And we can be sure that His way is the local church. If you miss this way for your life, then you are going to miss the direction and blessings that He wants to bring into your life and family. I speak this from a pastor's heart for I want the best for you and your family.

Were you ever in a hurry to get somewhere and all of sudden you hit a roadblock of some kind? Maybe there was roadwork in front of you and the traffic was backed up. This happened to me on Interstate 95 as I was heading north toward

Washington. There was miles and miles of backup traffic due to roadwork or a traffic accident.

We all face certain roadblocks in our lives. Sometimes we don't know which way to turn, how to proceed, and what we can do to get around the roadblocks and go on in life. We ask ourselves, "What can I do when I don't know what to do?" It's during these times that God has given us some clear advice on what we need to be doing even when we hit a roadblock or very difficult time in our lives. When we don't know what to do, God has given us some guidelines to follow. They are God's tried and true ways that we must follow when we find ourselves stuck, stopped, and stunned because of some specific event that has transpired in our life. These are important guidelines that we need to embrace for our lives if we want to find God's way.

Poor Jack was out jogging. As he passed a cliff, he got a little too close to the edge, and suddenly found himself falling. On the way down, he managed to grab a branch, nearly yanking it out of the cliff. When he caught his breath, he realized what a terrible jam he was in. He couldn't get up, and letting go certainly seemed to be a poor option. He began to scream, "Hello up there! Can anyone hear me?"

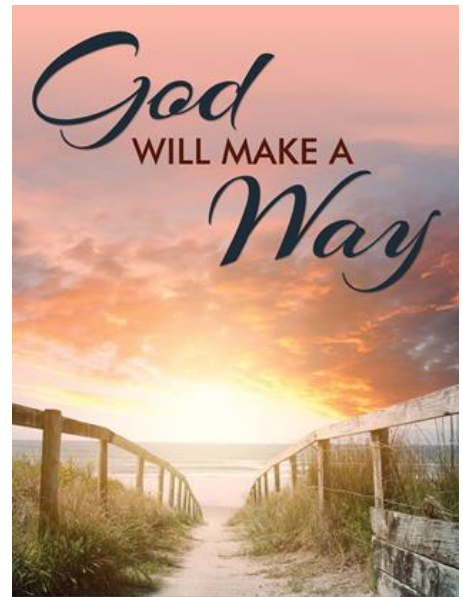
In a moment, a voice returned. "Jack, can you hear me?" "Yes, Yes, I can hear you. I'm down here." "I can see you, Jack, are you alright?" "Yes, but, who are you, and where are you?" "I am the Lord Jack, I am everywhere." "The Lord? You mean God?" "That's me."

"God, will you help me, I promise that if you get me down from here, I'll stop sinning. I'll be a really good person and serve you for the rest of my life." "Easy on the promises, Jack. First let's get you down, then we can discuss those." "I'll do anything, Lord, just tell me what to do, okay?" "Okay, let go of the branch."

"What?" "I said, let go of the branch. Just trust me, let go." There was a long pause, as Jack thought of the offer. In a moment, however, Jack let out a loud yell. "Hello, Hello – is there anybody else up there?!"

So it is with our Christian lives. Sometimes we don't want to really let go and give God full control over our lives. Our next point reminds us that we must take charge of our lives when we don't know what to do. But here is the secret. In taking charge or control over our lives we are really allowing God to take charge of our lives. We are willing to let go and let God have His perfect way in our hearts and lives.

In our next point, we learn the importance of taking control of our lives. As we begin, we must ask: "Who is in the driver's seat of your life?" What should you do when you don't know what to do? You need to begin to take charge of your life once again. God will make a way for us where there seems to be no way, when we begin to take control of our life. But as we said before, God does not work in a vacuum. By letting God have His way in your life, you can take charge of the destiny of your life, which is what God wants you to become and do. This begins by following the basic things related to spiritual success. This is important. God will make a way for your life as you yield to His overall plan for your life.



When we take charge of our lives, we will do several things.

a. Stay in the Bible

If we are going to take charge of our spiritual lives, we must stay in the Scriptures.

Joshua 1:8 gives this promise:

"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night (meditation), that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein (obedience): for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (prosperity).

The prosperity and success that God promises us has do with following His will and purpose for our lives. This is what Joshua and the Jewish people needed to realize.

They had to remain rooted in God's Word and obey it. Why? It's because God promised that they would conquer their enemies when moving throughout the land of promise if they would remain committed to the truth. If they wanted prosperity and success, they needed to remain rooted in Scripture and committed to obeying what God says.

It is no different for us today. If we expect to possess victory in our lives and have God's blessing upon our lives, we must maintain a steady diet in God's Word and become an obedient hearer, a doer of the Word.

James 1:22

"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."

We must be a listener but also a doer of God's Word if we are going to be successful in life as we follow God's will and purpose for our lives. Obedience results in the blessing of God to come upon our lives. We must remember that true success has to do with God's purpose coming to pass in our lives, whatever that goal and purpose might be. It does not necessarily have to do with a bigger bank account and a better set of circumstances.

Many people today view success from their own human perspective. But God often views success and prosperity from a spiritual perspective. Our culture is only concerned about success in the eyes of man. They base success on possessing material, worldly, and monetary means. The church has in many ways adopted what I call "the success syndrome" in trying to keep up with the world's ideas for success which often are rooted in fame and fortune. But God reminds us that true success, whether it be physical or spiritual in nature, comes into our lives when we are listening to God's speak to us through His Word and obeying it. We cannot expect to be truly blessed by God when we are disobedient to Him.

Joshua says that we can be assured of good success (God's success) when we fill our hearts and minds with God's Word and obey it. If we are not listening to God speak to us through His Word and obeying it, we cannot expect to find God's way for our lives. We cannot expect to see God's purpose come to pass in our lives which result in our prosperity and success. If you set out on your own to become prosperous

and successful, you may achieve your goal and live to regret it! Why? It's because your life is not rooted in the Bible, you are not growing and acting upon the truth, being obedient to how God tells you to live.

Scottish novelist George MacDonald once said:

"In whatever man does without God, he must fail miserably, or succeed more miserably."

The question God's people need to ask is this: Are we obeying the known will of God for our lives as he reveals it in His Word? If we can answer yes to this question, then our personal lives and ministry has been successful in God's eyes, no matter what people might think about it. You see, we must measure success from God's perspective and not the world's perspective. We must remember that when we obey God's Word, really internalize it and follow it, it's then that God will allow us to be successful in life.

b. Keep praying

If we are going to take charge of our spiritual lives, we must also stay in tune with God through prayer. We can slowly dry up spiritually when we begin to lose our life of prayer. When we don't know what to do, we must do this. We must take charge of our spiritual life by continuing to pray to God and stay connected with Him. The Bible commands us to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). This means we must possess a constant awareness of God's presence in our lives and always be ready to communicate with Him and talk with Him throughout the day. We should not ignore Him but be in touch with Him.

For the Christian, prayer should be like breathing. Just as breathing is the response of physical life to the presence of air, so prayer should be the response of spiritual life to the presence of God. We cannot stay on top or our spiritual living when we lose our dependence upon God and fellowship with God through prayer. We need to keep our prayers fresh and our hearts close to God. A life of prayer results in a life of dependence upon God, refreshment from God, and blessing from God. God makes a way where there seems to be no way when ask, seek and knock at the door of Heaven.

Jesus taught in Matthew 7:7:

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”

Jesus is encouraging His disciples to pray and keep praying! This speaks about the importance of persistent prayer with the result of God opening up a door and directing our lives. Too many Christians are not persistent in their asking, seeking and knocking, so they are unable to find the way through and out of their problems. God’s promise to provide a way but it is conditioned upon our tenacity to ask, seek, and knock until He opens the best door for us. Be assured that when one door closes He always opens up a better one. We must just keep praying for guidance and direction.

Dr. Paul Van Gorder once said:

“When we walk in obedience to the Lord and come upon a closed gate, we can confidently take the next step of faith. As we move forward we will see God open the way.”

Remember that it’s not our prayers that have power. Rather, it’s God on the other end of the line who has the power to do what you cannot do! Don’t take one step without talking to God about it. When we pray, we are to ask the Lord for guidance. You see, God makes a way when there seems to be no way when we ask the Lord to teach us the way to go.

Moses wrote in Exodus 33:13:

“Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people.”

David wrote in Psalm 86:11:

“Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name.”

This should be our prayer. We should put aside our way and ask God to teach us His way, whether it be God’s general will or specific will for our lives. We can ask the

Lord to fill us with the knowledge of His will with all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so we can learn more about His way for our lives.

Colossians 1:9-11 reminds us that our prayers should be focused on finding God's will way and way for our lives: "For this cause we also, since the day we heard *it*, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness."

As we pray and then find and follow God's will for our lives, it's only then that we will be able to walk in the way that pleases Him. It's only then that we can bear fruit in every good work as we increase in the knowledge of God. We should learn the secret of utilizing prayer so that we can find a way (God's way) out of whatever predicament we find ourselves in.

"Ere you left your room this morning,
Did you think to pray?
In the name of Christ our Savior,
Did you appeal for loving favor,
As a shield today?

Oh, how praying rests the weary!
Prayer will change the night to day;
So in sorrow and in gladness,
Don't forget to pray."

c. Take back territory that Satan has stolen

Satan is always trying to take advantage of God's people. We must learn to take charge of our personal lives by not surrendering ground to Satan and allowing Satan to get and rule a greater portion of our lives.



2 Corinthians 2:11 reminds us that Satan can take control of our lives: “Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.” The word “advantage” speaks of gaining ground and means that Satan is always trying to get a greater portion of our lives. It means that he is constantly trying to gain

greater amounts of territory in our lives and possess greater control over our Christian lives. Satan wants to possess a greater portion of our lives through his deceptive traps and snares that he places before us.

Ephesians 4:27 states, “Neither give place (territory or space) to the devil.”

Together, these verses teach that the Evil One tries to get an “advantage” (greater part or portion of our lives) when we “give place” or any marked portion or ground of territory to him. Giving place to the devil in our lives means to give him ground, territory, a foothold, or a beachhead to work. The same concept is mentioned in Romans 13:14 which reminds us to “make not provision for the flesh.” We make provision for the flesh when we do things that make it easy for ourselves to sin, when we give a higher priority to the physical than to the spiritual. We should not indulge the flesh even a little.

As someone has said,
“We should give no chances to the flesh to have its fling.”

God’s people must learn to not give up any territory in their hearts to the flesh or to the devil. The concept of giving ground to the enemy is very critical. The soul can be viewed as a checkerboard with areas of jurisdiction (ground). Ground can be viewed as legal jurisdiction. When all areas of the checkerboard (our soul) are under God’s control we experience victory. However, if we surrender any of these areas of the soul to Satan, he takes charge of them and begins to rob us of our victory in Christ by slowly eating away at our spiritual living.

When I give ground to the enemy, I'm really giving legal jurisdiction and permission for him to attack me in a greater way and control specific areas of my life. We give ground to the enemy by allowing wrong thoughts and sin to control or master our lives, such as the sin of unforgiveness (2 Cor. 2:7-10) or anger (Eph. 4:26-27). But there are many sins that we can open up our hearts to and which allows the enemy to get a foothold in our lives. However, it's not necessarily one moment of anger or one engagement with some sin that gives Satan a strong foothold upon our lives. Satan really gets a foothold when anger and others sins are stored up, nurtured, and allowed to turn into horrible things and repeated sins which control our lives (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

In other words, when we allow sin to control our lives we really are giving up areas that God is to control as our Master (Rom. 6:22; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; 1 Pet. 2:16; Eph. 6:6). God has bought us and we are His lock, stock and barrel. As our Master, God alone has the right to rule and control our lives. He has the right to call the shots.

When we give ground to Satan we are also opening ourselves up for Satan to attack us in a greater way. We create a starting point (beachhead or foothold) for the devil to work in a greater way in our lives. When we allow Satan to take ground in our lives we allow him to capture us in his trap (2 Tim. 2:26). Satan has many "snares" or traps (2 Tim. 2:26) that he uses to find an entry point our lives.

E. M. Bounds said this about the devil:

"He has access to the minds of men from which he ought forever to be barred. But he has so much of diabolical trickery that he clothes the meanest act with fairest guise, and conceals a world of infamy with beautiful rainbow colourings."

Of course, when all areas of the checkerboard (soul) are under God's control we experience victory. However, if we surrender any areas of our soul to Satan, he takes charge of them and begins to rob us of our victory in Christ, by slowly eating away at our spiritual living. In time he can establish a strong foothold in our lives (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

In order to take charge of our lives, we must take charge of the territory of our hearts. We must take back any territory that Satan has won and surrender our hearts and lives to God again. In time, any ground we surrender to Satan can become a stronghold in our lives that we must tear down.

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 states:

(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds) “Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God...”

A stronghold is a false idea or unscriptural belief system from which we make wrong decisions and practice wrong actions. The stronghold begins in the area of our minds and carries over into wrong choices and actions. These strongholds are “against the knowledge of God” meaning that Satan tries to alter our thinking or conception about God’s character and ways. He plants within our mind the satanic suggestions that God is not so good to us, God is not faithful, God does not care, God’s way is not the best way, God is lenient, God won’t care if I indulge a little, or God will overlook certain sins. We begin to think, “Does God really love me? Why would God allow this to happen to me? Does God really know what He is doing? I should have a right to question God and even be bitter against God.”

We must demolish these wrong patterns of thought that are against God and which become fleshly strongholds that seek to control our lives. In doing so we will reclaim the ground we have given to Satan. This is done through acknowledging the truth and changing our mind about our errant belief system and wrong behavior or actions (2 Tim. 2:25; Rev. 3:19; Ps 51:3-4; James 4:9).

Once you believe Satan’s lies they become truth to you. And if what you believe isn’t true, then how you live won’t be right. The strongholds of lies, which defy truth, God’s direct commands, and timeless Biblical principles, must be cast out of our minds (“Casting down imaginations”) by demolishing and imploding them. A renewal process must take place (Rom. 12:2 – “renewing of the mind”) whereby we replace wrong thinking with right thinking in the area of our mind (Phil. 4:8) and everyday living (Phil. 1:11; Col. 3:8-14; Eph. 4:25-32).

God’s people must tear down the strongholds of Satan’s deceptions and lies or those areas of false witness in their minds, the specific areas of defeat in their personal lives and reclaim surrendered ground that they have given to the enemy. God’s people must reclaim this lost territory through absolute surrender to God and His ways (Rom. 12:1-2) and then claim their victory over Satan (Rom. 8:37).

We must renounce the hidden things of darkness (1 Cor. 4:5) and begin to live differently which is a life of freedom and victory over the devil and sin. We must surrender our mind to Christ's rule (2 Cor. 10:5 – “bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ”) and also surrender our body (Rom. 6:13; 12:1 – “present your bodies a living sacrifice to God”) so we can regain the ground that we have lost. So through repentance (surrender) and replacement (Scripture memory) we can regain ground that we have surrendered to the Evil One. Take back the territory!

Several years ago, I recall reading a storyline about a young couple who had fulfilled their dream of purchasing a Victorian home in an exclusive neighborhood. Their plan was to remodel the large, older home and to rent the two apartments on the first floor to help cover the cost of the monthly mortgage. One of the tenants was a very quiet and unassuming man, and it looked to be the making of a perfect arrangement. However, over time, he runs the other renters out of the house by making loud noises all night and releasing a barrage of cockroaches into their apartment.

He gave the appearance of being a wonderful tenant, until he was asked to leave. At that point, the psychotic man becomes a frightening presence refusing to pay the rent, changing the locks on the doors, and harassing the young couple with scare tactics. It was all part of an elaborate scheme to use the tenant laws against the couple and to drive them into foreclosure proceedings so he could obtain the property cheaply himself. The young couple had given this man a place in their home, and he took advantage of them and tried to ruin their lives.

This true story reminds us of how Satan wants to get a greater portion of our lives when we give him a place in our homes and hearts. He wants to ruin us. To keep him from doing this, we must take back the stolen territory of our hearts through coming face to face with the truth, repenting of our sins, renouncing the hidden things of darkness in our lives, and claiming God's victory. Take back the territory and take charge of your life once again.

d. Walk in the Spirit

When we take charge of our lives, we will constantly seek to walk in the Spirit's power and presence. Instead of walking in the flesh, we must practice walking in the Spirit.

Galatians 5:16

“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”

Galatians 5:25

“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”

To walk in the Spirit means that we are to live our lives in dependence upon the Holy Spirit for victory. Step by step, moment by moment, we are to depend upon His power to grant us victory. Why do we need to walk in the Spirit? It’s because of our fleshly natures. The “lust of the flesh” is the self-life. It’s our life under the control of the sin nature. It’s when we allow our old nature inherited from Adam to control our lives. To counter walking in the flesh, we must learn the secret of walking in the Spirit.

Walking in the Spirit means that I must recognize the Holy Spirit’s presence in my life and depend upon His life and ministry to grant me victory, fruitful, and godly living. To “Walk by the Spirit” means to let your conduct be directed by the Spirit. It means to be under the constant, moment-by-moment direction, control, and guidance of the Spirit.

Our old nature is like a pig and raven, always looking for something unclean on which to feed. Our new nature is compared to a sheep and dove, yearning for that which is clean and holy. How do we keep from yielding to the pig and raven and turn to the sheep and dove? The answer is found by walking in the Spirit.

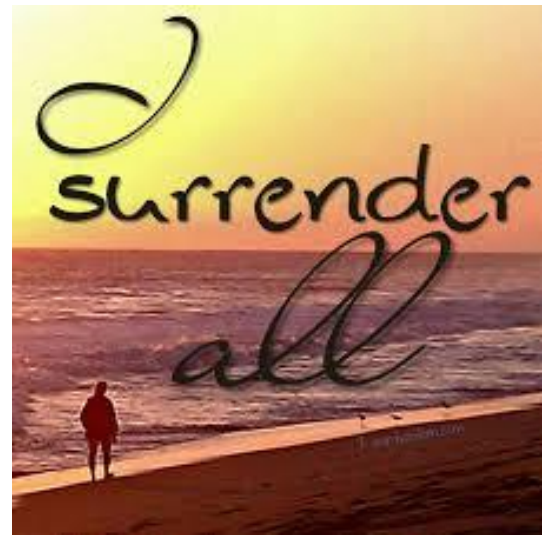
As you seek to take charge of your life, you will ultimately discover that this means that God is actually taking charge of your life once again! On your new journey, you must learn to remain flexible to God’s ways and plans for our life and pace yourself. You must remember that giant changes do not always occur overnight, no matter how hard you may work or pray. Give God time to work and be thankful for the little changes that are occurring in your life. You don’t win a war in one battle. There are many battles and victorious to be won. The important thing is that we are seeking to take control of our lives once again and not allowing Satan to control us. Rather, we are seeking to allow the Holy Spirit to take precedence and control over our lives.

The last words of Richard Baxter, the famous English Puritan, author of the celebrated work, "The Saints' Everlasting Rest," and the man "who preached as a dying man to dying men, and never sure to preach again," were these: "Lord, what thou wilt, where thou wilt, and when thou wilt."

Another important guideline we must follow, when we don't know what to do, when we don't know what the next step is for our life, is that we should surrender to God's will, even before we know what it is. In fact, many times God will not show us His will and purpose for our lives, until we surrender to Him and His plan for us, and we are ready to do it.

11. Surrender to God and His will.

When we don't know what to do, we should always remain surrendered to God's plan and purpose for our lives. God makes a way for us where there seems to be no way, when we surrender to God's present purpose and future plan for our lives, whatever that might be. Surrender frees us from going our own way and allows us to experience the liberty of God's way for our life.



When it comes to God's will, we must first of all remember that God has a sovereign and providential purpose coming to pass in connection with our lives. In other words, He allows certain events to come into our lives to bring about His greater purposes for us. Of course, sometimes we dig our own hole in life because of bad decisions. But God allows us to do this so in His own providential way, He can work in the situation, change our lives, and get all the glory.

Psalm 115:3 mentions God's overriding work of providence:

"But our God *is* in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased."

Psalm 135:6 adds:

“Whatsoever the LORD pleased, *that* did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.”

God’s providential purpose involves His interaction with our lives. God allows certain events to occur in our lives for His own purposes and reasons, but ultimately they are for our own spiritual good, even when they might seem to be harsh and difficult. The Bible teaches that God is working all things together for good since all the events of our lives are designed to bring about Christlikeness in our hearts and lives (Rom. 8:28). We must bow the knee to these providential workings of God. Instead of fighting against God’s ways, we must accept them and allow God to teach us the things that He wants to reveal to us through these providential acts.

“In the center of the circle
Of the will of God I stand:
There can come no second causes,
All must come from His dear hand.
All is well! For 'tis my Father
Who my life hath planned.
Shall I pass through waves of sorrow?
Then I know it will be best;
Though I cannot tell the reason,
I can trust, and so am blest.
God is Love, and God is faithful,
So in perfect Peace I rest.
Sometime, I know not when or how,
All things will be revealed;
And until then content am I
To sail with orders sealed.”

Next, there is the directional aspect of God’s will for our lives. What does God want me to do next in life? How can I make the right decision? How can I know what to do when I don’t what to do?

Romans 12:1-2 gives us a clear answer:

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind (PREPARATION for KNOWING GOD’S WILL), that ye may prove (The PROVING or discerning and knowing of God’s will) what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God”

The Bible verse clearly reveals that in order to know God’s will for your life, you must first surrender your body and life to God. In other words, you cannot know what to do unless you surrender your body and life to God. God cannot direct you if you are not yielded and consecrated to Him. God cannot guide you and show you His way, the next step in your life, when you are not spiritually ready and prepared to receive His guidance and direction.

“Is your all on the altar of sacrifice laid?
Your heart, does the Spirit control?
You can only be blest and have peace and sweet rest,
As you yield Him your body and soul.”

Remember that God’s general will of surrender and submission precedes knowing His specific will for our lives, which involves receiving guidance for important decisions and everyday living.

A surrendered believer will be willing to do God’s will even before he knows what it is.

In John 7:17 Jesus said:

“If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine ...”

Please note the order. We must first be willing to do God’s will if we are going to know what God wants to teach us or how He wants to direct our lives. This is an important principle to reflect upon. Unless we have a serious desire to actually obey God’s will, He will not reveal it to us.

“I thank you, Lord,
For the victory that growing brings.
In surrender of everything
Life is so worth while.
And I thank you, Lord,
That when everything's put in place,
Out in front I can see your face,
And it's there you belong.”

We must say to God, “I am willing Lord to be just exactly what You want me to do.” We must be serious about obeying God’s will for our lives in order to know it. We are not to seek God’s will like we would pick and choose food at a smorgasbord or cafeteria. We must approach God’s will as servants and followers who are listening for His orders (“Lord, what would you have me to do” – Acts 9:6). The blessing only comes when we are willing and ready to do God’s will. Isaiah 1:19, “If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land.”

Again, surrender to God’s will precedes the knowing God’s will. Sometimes we place our feelings above God’s will. We place our desires and goals above God’s will without fully realizing it. But our feelings and desires may not be aligned with God’s purpose for our lives. Are you willing to do God’s will for your life, whatever it might be? Maybe you are afraid to discover what God’s true purpose might be for you in some area of life. Perhaps you want to impress your will on God instead of allowing God to impress His will upon you. We must come to God and say, “Not my will, but thine be done.”

With the cross looming over His head, Jesus said in Luke 22:42:
“Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.”

This is real surrender! It’s when we place ourselves on God’s altar and say:

“I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord,
Over mountain or plain or sea.
I'll say what you want me to say, dear Lord
I'll be what you want me to be.”

Sudden changes in our plans may be hard to accept. But they may be forced upon us by some circumstance over which we may have no control. And we must remember that God is ultimately in His providence allowing the circumstances of our lives to change. Why should God permit our plans to be changed or to be set aside completely?

Someone has written:

"Thou God seest me' is a precious thought. He sees us and our path beset with danger, and He plans our ways and guides us accordingly. That is why he often permits reverses and failure to come our way. He changes our plans, for He sees the danger in them."

What a blessing that God does not always allow us to carry out our plans! Instead, He has a way of changing them to match up with His plans for us. Many times the Holy Spirit takes over in our prayers and prays according to God's will and purpose for our lives, so His purpose ultimately comes to pass in our lives (Romans 8:26-27).

Walter Knight told of an old Scottish woman who left home to cross the countryside selling thread, buttons, and shoestrings. When she came to an unmarked crossroad, she would toss a stick into the air and go in the direction the stick pointed when it landed. One day, however, she was seen tossing the stick up several times. "Why do you toss the stick more than once?" someone asked. "Because," replied the woman, "it keeps pointing to the left, and I want to take the road on the right." She then dutifully kept throwing the stick into the air until it pointed the way she wanted to go!

We must be careful about pointing our stick in the direction we want to go. God will make a way for us, but sometimes we make our own way and it's not God's way. We point the stick in one direction because we have not placed ourselves on God's altar, and yielded to His way for our life. And even when God begins pointing the stick in another direction we sometimes want our own way, instead of God's way.

George Muller gave some good advice on discovering God's will for our lives:

a) I seek at the beginning to get my heart into such a state that it has no will of its own in regard to a given matter. Nine-tenths of the trouble with people is just here. Nine-tenths of the difficulties are overcome when our hearts are ready to do the Lord's will, whatever it may be. When one is truly in this state, it is usually but a little way to the knowledge of what His will is.

b) Having done this, I do not leave the result to feeling or simple impression. If I do so, I make myself liable to great delusions.

c) I seek the will of the Spirit of God through, or in connection with, the Word of God. The Spirit and the Word must be combined. If I look to the Spirit alone without the Word, I lay myself open to great delusions also. If the Holy Ghost guides us at all, He will do it according to the Scriptures and never contrary to them.

d) Next I take into account providential circumstances. These often plainly indicate God's will in connection with His Word and Spirit.

e) I ask God in prayer to reveal His will to me aright.

f) Thus, through prayer to God, the study of the Word and reflection, I come to a deliberate judgement according to the best of my ability and knowledge, and if my mind is thus at peace, and continues so after two or three more petitions, I proceed accordingly.

g) In trivial matters, and in transactions involving most important issues, I have found this method always effective.

The real question is this. "Have we been fighting God's will for our lives or have we totally surrendered to it, no matter what it might be?" Friend, we must learn that we are only safe, happy, and right, when God chooses!

Someone said:

"The will of God which we sometimes think is so hard, is, if we only knew it, just the softest pillow to rest upon."

"Behind our lives the Weaver stands,
And works His wondrous will;
We leave it in His all-wise hands,
And trust His perfect skill."

Introduction: Do you remember what was called the famous "miracle mile" race that was run back in Vancouver in 1954? Roger Bannister and John Landy were competing in making the fastest time for a one mile run. Landy had led all the way, but coming off the final turn toward the finish line he looked over his shoulder to find out where Bannister was, only to be passed on the other side by Bannister and beaten to the finish line and tape!

Our next point in this study has to do with getting rid of your past. It involves not looking back in defeat, but looking into the future, as you seek to live out a new life that counts for God.

12. Leave your baggage behind.



What should we do when you don't know what to do? We need to stop looking back and leave the baggage of our past behind us. In the journey of finding God's way for our lives, we cannot be loaded down with the emotional baggage of the past. The more junk we get rid of from our past, the easier it will be to navigate through the future. Sometimes our past hurts do not get resolved as they should. People who may have hurt us do not ask for forgiveness. Our fears are not confronted.

We have unresolved conflicts from the past. As a result, we carry with our lives feelings and pattern of behavior that stem from the past and which impact our relationships and life in a negative way in the present. Our baggage of the past does not go away unless we deal with and learn to get passed the past. God's Word teaches us that we don't have to continue to carry the burdensome feelings of the past and patterns of behavior which have controlled our lives for many years.

The truth is this, God makes a way for us where there seems to be no way, when we refuse to live in the past tense and begin to live in the present tense. God will make a way for us, a fresh start and new way, by allowing us to get rid of the baggage of our past lives. Part of God's way for our lives is to live without the emotional scars and regrets of the past.

Hebrews 12:1

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses (Bible characters of Hebrews eleven, who give witness to us what it means to live by faith), 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."

The paints the picture that the Christian is running a race against the world, the flesh, and the devil. If we are not careful, we can become bogged down in our spiritual lives by the weights that stem from these archenemies. Yes, these weights might include heavy burdens and emotional scars of our past lives. But the Bible informs us that we can essentially "get passed the past" by laying aside the things that are weighing us down, or bogging down our spiritual lives in the present. There are times in the life of every Christian where we must make the pointed and very practical decision to set aside the weights which have become a heavy burden on our shoulders. This is similar to another command: "let us cleanse ourselves" (2 Cor. 7:1). We can lay these weights of the past aside when we keep looking unto Jesus (Hebrews 12:2), His faith and victory, which inspires us to lay aside anything that is hindering our spiritual progress.

It was Satchel Paige, the great baseball player who paved the way for blacks to play in the major leagues, who made famous the saying, "Don't look back, something

might be gaining on you!” Long before Satchel Paige ever gave his advice, the apostle Paul was telling Christian folks, in so many words, “Don’t look back!”

Philippians 3:13-14

“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing *I do* (the present), forgetting those things which are behind (the past), and reaching forth unto those things which are before (the future), I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

Paul is addressing what Christians must do with their past hurts, sins, failures, emotional scars and everything else that is associated with the past. He says that we must learn the secret of effectively putting it behind us so that it does not damage our spiritual lives and growth in Christ. Of course, when Paul says “forgetting those things which are behind,” he does not mean that we can perform “mental gymnastics” and never think about the past. What he is teaching is that we should not allow the events of our past lives to defeat our spiritual lives in the present. We should not allow our past sins, problems, deep wounds and hurts to keep us from living an abundant, effective, and spiritual life in the present.

Paul is saying don’t look back in a way that will keep us from going forward. Don’t look back in a way that makes us prisoners of our past, because looking back in the wrong way enslaves us or enslaves others to past mistakes and sins. Looking back in the wrong way does not allow the healing of old hurts and painful memories. In fact, even looking back at past accomplishments and successes can keep us from discovering what lies ahead, or what God has for our future lives, such as new spiritual growth and adventures, new doors to walk through, and finding God’s will and way for us. So the advice that’s given to us is this: “Don’t look back!”

Imagine how miserable the apostle Paul would have been if he had not put behind the sins and mistakes of his past. Think back on Paul’s earlier years. Before his conversion, Paul was named Saul, and he was the number one enemy of the church. He was responsible for the gruesome persecution and even the murder of people who professed faith in Christ. When Stephen, the great witness for Christ, was stoned to death, Luke tells us that “Saul was consenting to his death” (Acts 8:1).

In 1 Timothy 1:13, Paul admits what he once was in the past:

“Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief.”

In spite of Paul’s terrible past, he taught that there is no reason for us to remain enslaved to the mistakes and sins and shortcomings of our past. We don’t have to continually feel guilty and “second rate” because of something we did years ago or even yesterday. God in Christ has forgiven us, and all we do is accept His forgiveness and say “thank you.”

It’s as simple as this. We are not to look back at our sinful past and mistakes. But neither should we look back at the past mistakes and sins of other people. For instance, just as God has forgiven us we are to forgive one another.

Ephesians 4:32

“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”

David Seamands says:

“Many years ago I was driven to the conclusion that the two major causes of most emotional problems among ... Christians are these: the failure to understand, receive, and live out God’s unconditional grace and forgiveness; and the failure to give out that unconditional love, forgiveness, and grace to other people.”

At our best we are all sinners. We all make mistakes. We hurt one another. But God helps us forget what’s behind us and He can help us forget what lies behind our neighbors and friends and family.

The word to husbands and wives, to brothers and sisters in Christ, to friends and family is this: “Don’t look back.” Don’t look back on those words that were spoken in a moment of anger. Don’t look back on those actions that hurt us. Don’t look back on those mistakes that we all make.

Don’t look back! Forget what lies behind. Don’t look back on painful memories. We all have those moments in life, those experiences in life, that haunt us. We have

memories of those difficult times that have a tendency to be re-played over and over again in our minds. Our mind can be an internal camera that records our experiences, both good and bad. Paul is teaching us that leaving behind our bad memories is necessary to experience what lies ahead – God’s way for the future.

Charles Dickens’ pitiful character in “Great Expectations,” Miss Havisham, was a person who was never able to overcome her painful memories. Miss Havisham experienced the trauma of being jilted on her wedding day. Her fiancée left her waiting at the altar. On that day Miss Havisham’s life stopped. The clocks in her house stopped. Her wedding cake was decorated with cobwebs. And Miss Havisham never recovered because she couldn’t keep from looking back. She resigned herself to living in a past so painfully filled with memories that she couldn’t change.

No, we can’t always mentally turn off the re-runs of painful memories. But God helps us to not be overcome by them when Satan throws them before us as fiery darts (Eph. 6:16). Furthermore, God can bring healing to our painful memories. As we confess our own helplessness to the Lord, He works to free us from our miserable memories.

One Christian man shared this:

I once had a seminary class with a bright lady named Doris. A part of our class was sharing our life stories with one another and I was deeply moved by Doris’ story. Doris was born to a poor family in a little town in Georgia. During her childhood years she never knew her father. One day she discovered that a man she had been told was her uncle was really her father. Needless to say, Doris was crushed. For a long time, Doris suffered in silence with her pain. But eventually she has allowed the Lord to heal the painful memories of her past. In grace and with gracefulness, she is pressing forward!

The memory of a painful, unhappy childhood. The memory of a love that was lost. The memory of a traumatic happening in our lives. The memory of a tragedy that we’ve experienced. Of course, the memories may not be healed overnight, but we can find healing from them and the past when we accept our forgiveness and God’s life-transforming and life-strengthening grace to go on in life and press forward as

Paul says, “reaching forth unto those things which are before” (Phil. 3:13). Paul likely had many things in his mind such as more spiritual growth, greater Christlikeness, new spiritual adventures that God has for us, and all of His specific future plans and purposes related to our lives.

Yes, we can leave the things of the past behind us and go on! Hebrews 6:1 gives this important advice when it states in simple words: “let us go on.” This means we can get passed the past and have a fruitful and spiritually productive future!

Isaiah 43:16 -19 reveals a similar principle that Paul taught:

“Thus saith the LORD, which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters; Which bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power; they shall lie down together, they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched as tow. Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, *and* rivers in the desert.”

Yes, God always makes a way – “a way in the sea” (Isa. 14:16) and “a way in the wilderness” (Isa. 14:18). God, who in the first Exodus brought Israel out of Egypt and drowned the Egyptian army, would do an even greater thing. Therefore, in forgetting the past deliverance (v. 18), Israel should realize God would do a new work of deliverance in bringing them back from their captivity among the heathen. In this new “Exodus,” the return from the Exile, the Jews would be going through desolate desert land where God would provide water and streams in abundance (Isaiah 35:6–7; 41:18; 44:3–4). Here is the point, we cannot live in the past, not even our past victories. We must live life in the present-tense and realize the new victories and plans that God has for us right now. God has something new for us.

We can’t live in the past and still be fully alive. There is even the ever-present temptation for us to look back at our accomplishments without accepting new challenges that lie ahead.

It’s good for us to celebrate our successes and victories that God has given to us in the past. It’s right that we should pause and thank God for our blessings. But we

can't be content with where we've come from; it's where we're going that's important!

We should never rest upon our past achievements. We should never reach a point where we are only looking back. Our faith is to be an expectant faith, one that always points us to the future. As Christians we should never live and long for the "good old days, but for the new and exciting days yet to come. For instance, a church that looks back instead of ahead is a church that isn't going anywhere! As individuals, or as a church, God isn't most concerned with where we've been, or with what we used to do. God's concern is with what we're doing right now and what we're going to do tomorrow.

Paul paints the picture of a runner straining and pushing to finish a race. He says, "I press toward the mark (the goal of being more like Jesus Christ) for the prize (reward received at the Judgment Seat of Christ) of the high (upward or heavenly) calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14). Paul's goal is to become more like Christ in every thought and action. He forgets the mistakes, the sins, the memories, the past accomplishments, and focuses on the goal ahead. Even though he's in prison, in a predicament that would make most people look back to better days, Paul still looks ahead. He doesn't look back. He keeps on looking to what lies in the future.

What lies ahead for us personally? What lies ahead for our church? Are we willing and ready to press toward the goal of becoming the persons and the church God intends for us to be? We cannot live in the past tense. We must live in the present tense.

In the book of Genesis, we find the Biblical narrative or story that vividly illustrates the danger of looking back. God has just pronounced judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities were about to be destroyed. In the meantime, God sends some angelic messengers to Lot and his family. The message was this: "Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. the hills, lest you be consumed" (Genesis 19:15). We know what happened. Lot and his wife and two daughters leave behind their home as fire and brimstone rain down on Sodom and Gomorrah. Then the unexpected happens. The Bible says that Lot's wife looked back to the burning cities.

Genesis 19:26

“But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.”

Mrs. Lot was unable to let go of the people and things in her past. This is why she looked back. As a result, she was turned into a pillar of salt. The message for us is not that we'll become a container of table salt if we look back! What the Biblical narrative teaches us is that our journey ends when we look back. We won't find God's way and blessing in our lives. We will be shut off from His blessing when we look back upon our past life, our past worldly loves, our past sins, and past failures. When we look back our spiritual lives become just as dead and useless as a pillar of salt. Holding on to the baggage of the past will disable us for our journey with God. God can deliver you from your sins, mistakes, hurts, unforgiveness, bitterness, and dysfunctional patterns of the past.



What should you do when you don't know what to do? Begin to find your release from the spiritual bondage of the past. God cannot make a way for us, a healing path, and a new and exciting path for our future, if we hang on to our past.

Here is some practical advice for getting rid of the past.

- a. Agree or acknowledge that you have a painful past. Confess to God and yourself that you have issues that must be dealt with (1 John 1:9).
- b. Include others in your healing process. Open up your feelings to others about what happened so they can pray for you, comfort you, and encourage you. Finding help and guidance from others opens the door for the healing and support your need (Prov. 11:14; 12:15).

- c. Receive the love and forgiveness that comes from God (Ps. 103:11-12). He promises to forgive you from anything and everything you have ever done, no matter how bad you may feel it was. God is ready to give you another chance! Confessing your wrong (1 John 1:9) and receiving God's forgiveness is a vital step in leaving your baggage behind.
- d. Forgive others who have wounded you (Ephesians 4:32). Maybe you are a victim of a parents lack of love and acceptance. Perhaps you were abandoned by a friend or even a spouse. Maybe you were misled by some person and were specifically wronged in some way. Whatever it might be, you need to get the heavy-weight and spiritually debilitating sin of unforgiveness and bitterness off your back. Remember that your forgiveness of others does not deny someone has hurt you. Forgiveness is about resolving the past. It is clearing up your past grudges, anger, and retribution toward others.
- e. Examine your ways. The Bible says, "let a man examine himself" (1 Cor. 11:28) so he can determine where he is at in his life. You must do this. You must examine what kind of spiritual improvements you need to make at this point in your life. You may need to unlearn dysfunctional patterns. Behavior patterns from your past may be ruining your present life. Examine your life and ways and deal with the people and problems of your past by letting God heal you, change you, and make a better way for you in the future.
- f. See yourself as God sees you. God has made you into a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). He has forgiven you of the past and He loves you unconditionally (Romans 8:38-39). This means you are not a piece of moss floating down the creek. You are God's beloved child (John 1:12) and He has a wonderful future that He wants to reveal to you.
- g. Remember that time does not heal. Time is actually the context in which God uses His healing ingredients to heal us from our past. God by His grace and goodness makes all things beautiful in His time (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

“In His time, in His time,
He makes all thing beautiful in His time.
Lord, my life to you I bring,
May each song I have to sing,
Be to you a lovely thing, in your time.”

13. Embrace problems as God’s gifts.

What should we do when we don’t know what to do? We must view our problems that we are facing in our present lives as gifts from God. Sometimes we become spiritually paralyzed when we face giant problems in life. All the life is sucked out of us and we become



spiritually exhausted and ineffective for the Lord. You know, sometimes we need a reality check! We must come to grips with the reality that problems and crises are part of life. Some Christians hit a problem and they stop dead in their tracks. And this is where they stay – stumped, stuck, and stymied. All they want to do is get rid of the problem as soon as possible (ASAP). Instead of asking, “What can we learn from this experience? many Christians will ask, “Lord when will you take this problem away from me?”

The Bible reminds us that we should in one sense welcome our problems as gifts that come from God’s hand which enable us to become a more spiritually complete Christian. God makes a way for us where there seems to be no way, when we realize that God in His providence allows problems to come into our lives, to help us grow spiritually and become more Christlike in our character and conduct.

2 Corinthians 4:15

“For all things *are* for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.”

Did you catch this? Everything that happens to us, whether it's the good and bad, or the sweet and the bitter is designed for our spiritual profit ("for your sakes"). All the events of our lives are in God's grand scale permitted to come into our lives in order to have a spiritually positive impact upon us. This means that God has in His own providential way ordains problems, sufferings, and heartaches to be part of our lives and to fulfill His greater purposes in connection with our lives.

When Paul states that "all things are for your sakes" he was looking back to all of the suffering and perils he had personally passed through (2 Cor. 4:8-14). Paul is teaching us that our sufferings in this present life are for a reason for they are said to be for "your sakes." This may include Paul's sufferings but also the saint's sufferings as well and how their reception of grace through Paul's faithful Gospel witness would change their lives and help them deal with their own sufferings. God has something in mind when He allows suffering and problems to come into our lives. That something is ultimately spiritually growth, sanctification, and becoming more like Jesus Christ through His inner renewal process (2 Cor. 4:16). Life for Christians in this fallen world is a mixture of joy and sorrow, of blessing and suffering, of triumph and tragedy. But all the things we pass through should be viewed as God's gifts to make us more like Christ.

This verse parallels Romans 8:28 which states:

"And we know that all things (even suffering and hardships as revealed in Romans 8:18-23) work together for good (the good of Christlike character and conduct) to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose (Christlikeness as explained in Romans 8:29-30).

These verses remind us that God gives us the assurance that our sufferings in this life are not wasted. God uses our sufferings to produce the grace of sanctification and Christlikeness in our lives which will ultimately bring glory to His name. Trials are not working against us; they are working for us. We must never forget this as we face and pass through suffering and trial. "For all things *are* for your sakes, that the abundant grace (which saves and transforms people) might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God."

How can our suffering be viewed as a gift from God? How can suffering and problems actually be good for us? Paul gives a threefold answer in this verse. First, we learn to experience God's sufficiency. He gives us the abundant grace we need to maintain joy and strength when the going gets tough and rough. Paul is teaching that not only his suffering but the suffering the Corinthians endured would result in the manifestation of God's grace operating in their lives as they endure trials. God multiplies his grace when more and more people become its recipients. The thing to remember is that God's grace sustains us.

2 Corinthians 4:16 explains it like this:

"For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish (the mortal and corruptible body), yet the inward *man* (the inner self where God communicates to our spirit) is renewed day by day."

As Christians, we must live one day at a time! No Christian can live two days at a time. Although sometimes we try to do this! God provides grace for us "day by day." He gives us the strength that we need according to our daily requirements for the Bible promises "as thy days, so *shall* thy strength *be*" (Deut. 33:25). God gives us the strengthening and enabling grace that we need and when we need it.

Hebrews 4:16

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

As someone once said, "Where could I go but to the Lord?" As Christians, we are to keep relying on God's grace to sustain us and sanctify us. When we learn to live one day at a time, confident of God's care and provision over our lives, it takes a great deal of pressure off of our lives.

"Yard by yard, life is hard!
Inch by inch, life's a cinch!"

Second, we learn from 2 Corinthians 4:15 to give thanks to God as we pass through our suffering victoriously. Paul talks about the thanksgiving of many which

experience God's grace operating in their lives, which not only saves them but strengthens and sanctifies them.

Robert Gromacki states:

“Christians rejoice when through failures and hardships God brings beauty out of ashes and triumph out of tragedy.”

One way to summarize this passage goes like this: “More and more grace, more and more people, more and more praise!” In other words, as God's grace is working and multiplying through more and more people, the result is the increase thanksgiving. As God saves, sustains, and sanctifies His people, there is thanksgiving everywhere!

Third, we discover from 2 Corinthians 4:15 that God gets all the glory when we become more like Christ through suffering, when others see Christ at work in our lives, when they see our thanksgiving, and when some people become Christians because of our testimony. This is how God gets the glory. The Westminster Catechism states that the primary purpose and goal of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. God gets the glory when He sees us being transformed by His grace.

As we pass through suffering and difficulties, remember that suffering should be viewed as a gift from God to experience His grace in our lives and produce wonderful Christlike qualities and virtues in us. There comes a time when we must give up our protest about the various pains and problems associated with our lives and come to a place of acceptance. We accept that problems are part of life and that we don't have all the answers. We accept that some problems will remain mysteries until we see Jesus. Acceptance helps us to live in God's reality, adapt and change to the way things really are. And yes, acceptance breeds trust in God.

Here is some practical advice. It's normal to ask God to remove our troubles and problems. But we must stay open to God's purposes for our lives which means that we should also ask God to help us through our sufferings and problems if He chooses to not remove them immediately from our lives. Also, don't grit your teeth and merely tolerate your sufferings. Realize that God wants to grow us, sanctify us, and make us more like Jesus through all of our trials and sufferings. Many Christians

will tell you that getting through a problem was not nearly as important as what they learned about suffering and God's way for their life, the way of sanctification and spiritual growth which allowed them to become more fruitful and Christlike in their living.

What should you do when you don't know what to do? Accept changes in your life, even when they include hardship and suffering, even when you don't see any light at the end of the tunnel. Remember that God will make a way for you in the midst of your suffering, His divine enablement and Christlike transformation in our lives, so that you can go on in life (1 Cor. 13:10).

Change is one of the most difficult aspects of life that happens to all of us. Things do not stay the same because technology, relationships, jobs, prices, our health and just about everything else changes at one time or another. People die and things change. We lose a job and things change. Leadership changes. Our kids and grandkids get older and things change. Computer processing gets faster and faster and things change. The list could go on and on. It really does not matter what aspect of life you want to look at, change is part of it and we have to either accept it or resist it. Change basically means something has ended and there is a chance for a new beginning. Even is this means going to Heaven!

When the railroads were first introduced to the U.S., some folks feared that they'd be the downfall of the nation! Here's an excerpt from a letter to then President Jackson dated January 31, 1829: As you may know, Mr. President, 'railroad' carriages are pulled at the enormous speed of 15 miles per hour by 'engines' which, in addition to endangering life and limb of passengers, roar and snort their way through the countryside, setting fire to crops, scaring the livestock and frightening women and children. The Almighty certainly never intended that people should travel at such breakneck speed.

We don't like change but we must learn to accept it from the hand of God, even when we don't fully understand it. In accepting the changes of our lives, while receiving His grace, we can alleviate much emotional stress and spiritual collapse in our lives.

15. Experience God's continual renewal in your life.

What should we do when we don't know what to do? We must experience God's daily renewal in our lives and not be overcome with our trials and difficulties in life. When we come to a place where we are facing a fork in the road, when there are difficult times facing us, we must come back to God's daily renewal and replenishing that He wants to give to each one of us as His children.

We mentioned 2 Corinthians 4:16 in our last point: "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day."



This is a very important part of God's way for our life. The word "renewed" means to renovate, to cause to make new, to be changed into a new kind of life, to experience strength and vigor. The Bible teaches that we need to experience God's daily renewal and newness that He wants to bring into our hearts and lives, in our inner spirit, the place where God communicates to us, calms our spirit, and gives us the courage and spiritual toughness we need to go on in life.

Renewal sometimes means personal revival, times of refreshing that come upon our soul, which cause us to trust God more, serve Him more, get rid of our sins, and experience a new awareness of God's presence and fellowship.

Psalm 85:6

"Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?"

Psalm 138:7

"Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me."

God makes a way for us where there seems to be no way, when we experience His times of refreshing, renewal, and revival.

Psalm 23:3 gives this promise:

“He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.”

This is God's way for us. It's the way of His daily renewal and restoration of our soul. Without this, we lose our way and the way that God has for us. God's provision in Psalm 23 has to do specifically with the soul. The Psalm is depicting the spiritual blessings and provisions that God gives to the inner man in order to bring him to a place of rest, peace, inner contentment, joy, strength, stability, and satisfaction. God has been using these spiritual provisions to restore the souls of His saints for centuries! This means you can have your soul restored, refreshed, and revitalized on a daily basis through God's inner healing and reenergizing work.

Charles Spurgeon put it best:

“When the soul grows sorrowful he revives it; when it is sinful he sanctifies it; when it is weak he strengthens it.”

God knows how to refresh us and revive us again and again and again! He knows how to maintain our inner and emotional well-being as we pass through difficult times.



Isaiah 40:31 gives a wonderful promise:

“But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; *and* they shall walk, and not faint.”

Warren Wiersbe said:

“The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. As we wait on the Lord, He enables us not only to fly higher and run faster, but also to walk longer. Blessed are the plodders, for they eventually arrive at their destination!”

The word “renew” means “to exchange,” which gives a figure of taking off old clothes and putting on new. In other words, we exchange our weakness for God’s renewing power (2 Cor. 12:1–10). As we wait before Him, God enables us to soar above our trials when there is a crisis, as we experience God’s inner renewal and strength. He also keeps us running when the challenges of life are many and enables us to walk faithfully through the day-by-day demands of life. All these figures of speech, flying, running, and walking indicate that the believer can continue on, when they don’t know what to do, when they are perplexed and beaten down, as they experience God’s inner renewal and refreshing.

God has made a way for us and that way is His inner refreshing of the soul that revitalizes us and sustains us in the changing journey of life.

Jackie Robinson was the first African American to play baseball in the major leagues. Breaking baseball’s color barrier, he faced hostile crowds in every stadium. While playing one day in his home stadium of Ebbets Field in Brooklyn, he committed an error. The fans began to jeer him. He stood at second base, humiliated, while the crowd booed. Then, without saying a word, shortstop Pee Wee Reese went over and stood next to Jackie. He put his arm around him and faced the crowd. Suddenly the fans grew quiet. All was calm. Robinson later said that that arm around his shoulder saved his career.

God makes a way for His children where there seems to be no way, when He comes along and puts His arms around us, when we find His grace and mercy in the time of need (Heb. 4:16) and the daily refreshment and renewal to go on in life.

In 1992 the Summer Olympic Games were held in Barcelona, Spain. One of the runners in the 400-meter race was an English athlete named Derek Redmond. He had trained for years to compete in the Olympics. But while sprinting in a qualifying heat, he suddenly pulled a hamstring and crumpled to the track in pain.

Determined to go on, Derek struggled to his feet. He was hobbling toward the finish line when all of a sudden his father scaled the retaining wall and jumped onto the track. Before anyone could stop him, Jim Redmond reached his son. The young runner leaned on his father's shoulder as he staggered to complete the race. The

entire crowd stood and cheered the two men on. When they crossed the finish line, it was as if the runner, his father, and the spectators had done it together.

The writer of Hebrews encourages us to run the race of the Christian life, which includes great faith and perseverance in order to get to the finish line. How do we effectively run the race and cross the finish line? The book of Hebrews tells us by following the example of those who have gone before us (Hebrews 11), but most of all, when we remember to follow the example of Jesus.

What do you do when you don't know what to do? What do you do when life becomes very complicated and difficult, when you are passing through a heavy trial? What should we do when we sense that everything is caving in on us and the pressures are mounting? Here is another important guideline to follow.

16. Keep looking unto Jesus.



Hebrews 12:2

“Looking unto Jesus the author (originator) and finisher (completer) 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.”

This verse is teaching us that Christ's faith, obedience, and victory should inspire us to continue to walk by faith, possess victory, and remain obedient to the Father's will for our lives. Jesus possessed great faith in God's plan and purpose when He left Heaven to die on the cross and pay the penalty for our sins. He was the great victor when He rose from the dead and ascended into the Father's presence.

- a. The faith of Jesus inspires us to go on life.

Jesus is called the “author” or pioneer of our faith in the sense that He has provided us with the only perfect example of what the life of faith is like. It involves obedience to God when facing tough times. Christ's faith in obeying the Father's will which resulted in Him experiencing the cross and looking past the shame He would experience on the cross (“endured the cross, despising the shame”).

Jesus is also the “finisher” of faith. In others words, He set forth the best example of Someone who finished what He started. Jesus not only began the race but finished it triumphantly. For Him the race course stretched from heaven to Bethlehem, then on to Gethsemane and Calvary, then out of the tomb and back to heaven. At no time did He falter or turn back. He kept His eyes fixed on the coming glory which was His return to the Father!

b. The victory of Jesus inspires us to go on in life.

Christ’s victory is described in no uncertain terms when the Bible states that He “is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” This is the place of complete victory and authority. Christ’s victory should also inspire us to finish our race victoriously. It should cause us to realize that we too can possess victory within our Christian life right up to the end of our days on earth. Instead of being overcome with life, we can be an overcomer.

2 Corinthians 2:14 reminds us:

“Now thanks *be* unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ ...”

When we look at Christ’s obedience, faith, suffering and victory, we should be motivated to emulate Him and keep living by faith, obedience, and in victory!

c. The suffering of Jesus inspires us to go on in life.

Hebrews 12:3-4

“For consider him that endured such contradiction (hostility and opposition) of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood (resisted evil people to the point of bloodshed and death), striving against sin” (resisting sinful opponents).

How do we keep from spiritual fatigue and burnout? It’s by looking unto Jesus! His sufferings also inspire us to take our cup of suffering from the Father’s hand and willingly submit to the difficult times we might be passing through. Whenever we have a tendency to grow weary and discouraged, we should think of what Jesus

went through at the hands of sinners and His ultimate sufferings and death upon the cross. Our trials will seem small by comparison.

This brings up some important questions. Why does persecution, testings, trials, sickness, pain, sorrow, and trouble come into the life of the believer? Do they happen by chance? How should we react to them? The sufferings of Jesus teach us that all suffering is part of the Father's purpose for our lives. Jesus called His suffering the Father's "cup" that He had to endure and pass through (Matt. 26:39, 42). Jesus' sufferings teach that these things are part of God's educative process for His children. Although not all suffering comes directly from the hand of God, He does permit suffering (Acts 2:23), but then overrules our time of suffering for His glory, for our good, and for the blessing of others (Rom. 8:28). Nothing happens by chance to the Christian. Tragedies are blessings in disguise, and disappointments are His appointments.

"Looking to Jesus, my spirit is blest,
The world is in turmoil, in Him I have rest;
The sea of my life around me may roar,
When I look to Jesus, I hear it no more."

What do you do when you don't know what to do? You keep looking to Jesus ("I live by the faith of the Son of God" - Gal. 2:20). I revolve my life around His example, personal power, and fellowship. Jesus is the way when there seems to be no way! When you don't know what to do, keep following the example of the Lord Jesus who lived by faith, obedience, and was the great victor! His example of faith, obedience, suffering, and victory both inspire and motivate us to go on in life when there seems to be no way. Jesus is still the answer. When we follow His life, His examples of faith, obedience, suffering and victory, we will discover that Jesus will inspire us to keep on keeping on, following God's will for our life, and staying on the victory side of life.

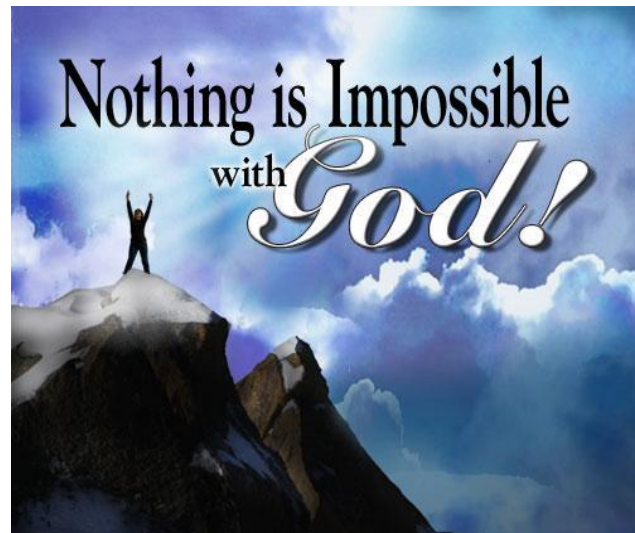
What should we do when we don't know what to do? When we seemingly have come to a dead end street in life? When life seems confusing and we are losing faith? One thing we should never forget to do and always do is to keep looking unto Jesus! God will make a way where there seems to be no way, when we fix your eyes

on Jesus and His example of faith, so that we might be inspired and motivated to also live by faith. Every Christian faces obstacles along life's pathway, and walking in God's will doesn't guarantee that our way will be easy. But no matter how difficult, we can trust God and go forward in faith as we keep looking unto Jesus!

“Jesus is still the answer
And though time and ages rolls.
Jesus is still the answer
He's the answer for your soul.
And though some may say
He doesn't fit with their philosophy,
I know Jesus is still the answer,
He's always been
And always will be!”

17. Remember that nothing is impossible with God.

I have a sign that hangs in my office. It says, “With God All Things Are Possible.” We all need to remember this in our Christian life. Sometimes over a period of time and without realizing it, we have forgotten how great our God is and the amazing things He can do through us, without us, and for us.



God makes a way for us where there seems to be no way, when we remember that He can do the impossible. Sometimes that seemingly impossible work of God involves changing us, changing others, changing our circumstances, taking us through our trials, or doing something that we thought could never happen. Our God is the God of the impossible.

Luke 1:37

“For with God nothing shall be impossible.”

Think of the circumstances that surrounded this statement by the angelic messenger. In the preceding verses we discover that Mary would bear a child and she as a virgin (Luke 1:31, 35). But also Elisabeth would conceive a son in her old age who was barren (Luke 1:36). So the messenger from God reminds us that God can do what is seemingly impossible. Do we believe this today? When things seem to be mounting against us, when life is very hard and difficult, can we still believe that our God can do great and mighty things which seem impossible and unrealistic? We most certainly can. Many times the problem is that our God is too small!

We don't really believe that He can intervene in certain situations and do certain things that seem incredible to us. When we think we are down and can't get up, God revitalizes us, empowering us again to keep moving forward in our Christian life. When we see a giant wall in front of us that we cannot climb over, it's then that God begins to work and shows us that He still is the God of the impossible!

You see, our faith in God's ability should override our doubts, fears, and downcast spirit. God knows how to make things happen when things have seemingly dried up. He knows how to bring together the events of our lives and do things which seem impossible. Why? It's because He is the God of the impossible!

Jeremiah 33:3

"Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."

Do we still believe in the true and living God who can do great and mighty things? We are talking about those things that we could never dream about or consider happening to us, our church, our country, and others.

Psalm 126:1-3 reminds us of the Lord's greatness:

"When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them. The LORD hath done great things for us; *whereof* we are glad."

When God blessed the Jewish people and began to bring them back from their time of captivity, the Jews could hardly believe it. It was like a dream! They could not believe what was happening to them. But they could see how great, big, and



wonderful God was for they declared: “The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.” Here is the point. If we stop believing in the God of the impossible, we will sputter in our faith, lose our zeal, and no longer possess excitement and a pilgrim spirit of adventure. But when we know that we serve a great God who can do great wonders, it’s then that our faith will increase and our days and life can once again become exciting and filled with gladness.

We must remember that our inability is always superseded by God’s ability. When we cannot accomplish something it doesn’t mean that God is incapable of accomplishing something. When our hands seem tied it doesn’t mean that God’s hands are tied. When man’s time frame has expired, it doesn’t mean that God’s time frame has expired.

Matthew 17:20 records:

“And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove (assuming that the move was in God’s purpose); and nothing shall be impossible unto you.”

Jesus promised His disciples or followers that if they would possess even a little faith, they could see God do great and wonderful things through their lives. Using the illustration of moving a mountain, Jesus promises that the disciples could move it, if it was absolutely within the scope of God’s plan and purpose. What kind of mountain is in front of you right now? How big of a mountain is it? We sometimes wonder what God can do in the situation that we are presently facing in our lives.

But we must believe that God is greater than our mountain, greater than our problem, greater than our trial, greater than people and circumstances.

“Got any rivers you think are uncrossable?
Got any mountains you can’t tunnel through?
God specializes in things thought impossible.
He does the things others cannot do!”

We must remember that God specializes in things thought impossible.

Matthew 19:26

“But Jesus beheld *them*, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.”

Jesus placed this impossible statement in the context of seeing people saved (Matt. 19:23-26). Jesus reminds His disciples that salvation is a work of God. What appears to be impossible with men is certainly possible with God when it comes to saving lost sinners, especially those who are trusting in their riches instead of the riches of eternal life.

We learn another lesson of application from Jesus’s words. We are reminded once again that God is the God of the impossible. He can do things we could never think or imagine and the greatest thing is to save people and give them a new way of life. Let us be careful that we do not fall into the pit of doubt where we limit God, His power, His might, and His miraculous touch. J. Hudson Taylor, pioneer missionary to China, once said: “There are three stages in any great work attempted for God: impossible, difficult, done.”

What do you do when you don’t know what to do? Keep trusting in the God of the impossible. It’s this God who can make a way for you!

“I read in the Bible the promise of God
That nothing for him is too hard;
Impossible things he has promised to do
If we faithfully trust in his word.

Nothing is impossible when you put your trust in God,
Nothing is impossible when you're trusting in his word;
Hearken to the voice of God to thee,
"Is there anything too hard to me?"
Then put your trust in God alone and rest upon his word,
For everything, O everything!
Yes everything is possible with God!"

18. Look for open doors of opportunity and service.



What should you do when you don't know what to do? Keep looking for open doors of opportunity and ways that you can serve God and others. God makes a way for us where there seems to be no way, when we continue to look for open doors of service, Gospel witness, and opportunities to reach out to others. In fact, God's way is for you to be actively serving Him.

Many times we close doors that God has clearly opened to us and try and open doors that God has not opened to us. Don't shut the door on God! Romans 12:11 speaks about open doors or opportunities for service when it states: "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord."

This verse reminds us of the importance of remaining active in our service for the Lord. It speaks of three important matters.

- a. Don't be lazy and do things halfheartedly ("not slothful in business")

It's important that you don't become a lazy Christian. When we become slothful (lazy) we are not going to be dedicated and committed to God's ministry, work, service, and living for Him. We might turn in to a half-baked or lukewarm Christian (Rev. 3:15-16) and not really be effectively serving and living for the Lord.

b. Determine to maintain your zeal ("fervent in spirit")

Serving Christ usually means satanic opposition and can result in times of discouragement. But Paul admonishes you and me to maintain our spiritual zeal when remembering that we are serving the Lord and not men! Apollos was a model of someone who maintained fervent diligence in his service. The Bible says in Acts 18:25 that he was "fervent in the spirit." This means he possessed zeal, an earnestness spirit, and excitement for the things of God. He possessed a spiritual glow about himself which demonstrated his excitement for the truth and things of God.

c. Desire to maintain you service to God.

The Bible says we should be "serving the Lord." Over time, we can slack off in our diligence in serving the Lord, especially if when we have been Christians for some time. We sometimes can actually backslide and lose our way. We need to beware of this. We need to guard our lives from spiritual laziness, lethargy, and a lack of zeal for God. We don't want to become a couch potato. God wants us to keep doing what we can with the time we have left on earth.

John Wesley once said:

"Do all the good you can. By all the means you can. In all the ways you can. In all the places you can. At all the times you can. To all the people you can. As long as you can."

It's always too soon to quit! We sometimes think that we cannot do anything. We are not talented enough or we are too old. We are washed up and washed out! But all of these are just excuses. We can all pray, give, encourage others, help lift the burdens of weary souls, and serve God in ways that may seem small, but which can

yield spiritual fruit and eternal dividends. God has gifted all of us in certain ways so that we can serve others.

1 Peter 4:10

“As every man hath received the gift (a gift), *even so* minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

Remember that discovering our spiritual gift will function as a signpost directing us into service. When we find out what God has equipped us to do, we should do it with all of our might.

In general, God has many doors of service and opportunity that He wants to open to us. But we must be looking for them.

1 John 3:18

“My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.”

1 Thessalonians 1:8

“For from you sounded out the word of the Lord (the message of the Gospel) not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.”

Matthew 10:42

“And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold *water* only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.”

There are opportunities to serve everywhere. There are many things we can do and which need to be done. What should we do when we don't know what to do? Instead of being bogged down in the weight of our own problems, remember to help lift others out of their problems. This will do our soul a lot of good!

In 1 Corinthians 16:9 Paul stated that God had opened a door of service for him. He called it “a great door and effectual is opened unto me” which means that God

would not only open the door of service for him but also energize him to do His service and work. In Revelation 3:8 Jesus said, “I have set before thee and open door” which was an opportunity to serve God and receive spiritual blessing. Are we ready and willing to walk through the doors of opportunity that God has given to us? Opportunity may be knocking but, if you don’t answer the door, how can you take advantage of it? You must take opportunities when they are presented to you. Sometimes it may seem like it’s not the right time, but it doesn’t matter. Opportunities happen when they happen in accord with God’s providential plan. Answer the door or your opportunity might walk on by and knock on someone else’s door.

Here is some good advice. When God bolts the door, don't try to get in through the window. On the other hand, keep looking for open doors of service. And we must remember something: “The will of God never will lead you where the grace of God cannot keep you.” So, keep witnessing. Keep serving. We must stay productive in our Christian life. God makes a way for us where there seems to be no way, when we continue to serve the Lord and others. God’s opens up many doors when we continue to possess a servant’s heart.

“Make me a servant, humble and meek,
Lord, let me lift up those who are weak,
And may the prayer of my heart always be:
Make me a servant today.”

When you don’t know what to do - do something for God!

19. Be still and know that He is God.

Psalm 46:10

“Be still, and know that I *am* God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.”

There is a specific part of this verse that should be instilled in our hearts as we seek to find God’s way for our life. God has summoned us to “Be still, and know that that I am God.” The words “be still” mean to relax.



In the olden days, we used to go to the doctor without setting up an appointment and just sit in the waiting room until we were called in to the office. When we would finally be called into the office, our doctor would evaluate the sickness and usually come to the conclusion that I needed a shot. Let me tell you, as a young boy, a shot was not good news! I recall waiting in that office many times over the years and seeing a sign that was hanging on the wall. It read, "RELAX." Well, it's not the easiest thing in the world to relax when you know that a shot is coming!

But in truth, God has called us to "be still" or relax in what He has allowed to come into our lives, where He is taking us, and what He wants to do with us in the future. We can relax in God's sovereign plan for our lives and know that He is at work. He will bring His plan to pass in our lives. How do we know this? It's because He is God ("I am God"). This means that He is in charge. He is in control and will bring His purpose to pass.

When we come to grips with this, that is the Almighty and unchangeable God, we will learn to relax in His purpose for our lives, whatever it might be, and see God work in our situation. He will bring His purpose to pass for our lives, His new direction and the next step He has for us. And through it all, God will be exalted and glorified.

What do you do when you don't know what to do? RELAX! Experience God's inner peace and calmness when you realize that God is greater than your situation, your trial, and the changes that you are facing in life. God is still on the throne and He will in continue to direct, redirect, and readjust your life to His present purpose. God makes a way for us where there seems to be no way, when we learn the secret of being still and letting Him work in our hearts, lives, and the different situations that we pass through. Relax!

"Be still, my soul: The Lord is on thy side;
With patience bear thy cross of grief or pain.
Leave to thy God to order and provide;
In ev'ry change he faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul: Thy best, thy heav'nly Friend
Thru thorny ways leads to a joyful end."

One man shared this story of his childhood. I have a fond memory of my grandfather who died when I was four or five. We loaded up with my four older brothers and mom and dad in our sixty-four brown Chevy Bel Air and headed to my grandparents' home. My mom announced to all of us that grandfather was weak and we should NOT be climbing on him.

We came in and the adults were sitting in the front room, and soon I was climbing into grandfather's lap. My mom looked right at me and said: "Bobby what did I tell you!" And my grandfather said: "Where else should he be."

Friend, we are reminded that God wants a relationship with us and that God is never too busy to be bothered. He wants us to sit down and be still, and allow Him to calm our hearts. His inner guiding voice should be heard today as we pass through challenging and changing times: "Be still, and know that I am God."

20. Love God with all of your heart.

When you don't know what to do – do this. Keep loving God with all of your heart. God makes a way for us when there seems to be no way, when we continue to express undying love for Him in the midst of our trials and tribulations of life. Our constant love and devotion to God can get us through anything that we face in life.



When loving God, He will become the focus of our affections and desires. Our love for Him and His ways for our life will keep us from being overcome with doubt, discouragement, and depression.

Deuteronomy 10:12

"And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God (reverencing Him), to walk in all his ways (obeying

Him), and to love him (loving Him), and to serve the LORD (serving Him) thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul.”

Loving God keeps us reverencing Him, maintaining our obedience, and actively serving the Lord in various ways. Love for God, instead of the world system that is against God (1 John 2:15-17) is the key that keeps our life moving in a spiritual direction. It also keeps us open to God’s guidance and direction for us.

Mark 12:30 says something similar:

“And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment.”

Jesus gives us a summary on how we are to love God.

a. Heart = our inner life (what we are)

Love begins on the inside and extends to the outside. We are to love God with our inward will, desires, affections. Remember that a life of legalism is trying to artificially adhere to something without truly loving God in the inner heart and life. Biblically based guidelines and boundaries are very important (2 Cor. 6:17) but we must be careful that we don’t find ourselves adhering to God’s commands and good standards, or even a doctrinal stance, while losing our love for the Lord.

Revelation 2:4 gives us this reminder:

“Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.”

Perhaps this is where you are at in your life. Maybe this is why you have lost you way and the wonder of it all. You have lost your first love (honeymoon love) for the Lord. The good news is that you can get back to God’s way for your life when you start loving Him again.

b. Soul = our outward conscious life (what we do)

The soul can refer to the inner life also but here it is contrasted to the inner and references the individual’s conscious outward life in the world. The soul is referring

to a person's human existence in the world. Jesus is teaching that what begins on the inside (heart) must be translated to the outside in our everyday actions and living. In short, we are to love God outwardly with our bodies – what we do with them and how we use them in our daily routine of life. Our bodies and everyday living should be dedicated to God's holy purposes (Rom. 12:1-2). Our inward love and loyalty to God is always seen in what we do for Him. Our outward life and actions speak volumes about our love for God.

c. Mind = our intellectual life (what we think)

Of course, this refers to how we think. We are to love God with our mind by thinking wholesome thoughts, worshipful thoughts, and thoughts that reflect His nature and character. This is the type of thinking that glorifies God and demonstrates our love for Him.

d. Strength = our physical life (what we give)

This refers to loving God with our might, strength and power. It involves giving our strength and abilities in serving the Lord and giving back to Him. Our efforts, drive, and determination to live for God demonstrate how much we really love Him.

“Give of your best to the Master;
Give of the strength of your youth;
Throw your soul's fresh, glowing ardor
Into the battle for truth.
Jesus has set the example,
Dauntless was He, young and brave;
Give Him your loyal devotion;
Give Him the best that you have.”

When you don't know what to do, when you don't know which way to turn or what the next step is in life, you need to keep loving God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength. This is God's way for you and in keeping your love for the Lord vibrant and real, you will be experiencing God's way for your life, even when you don't know where God wants to take you in your journey.

It was the day before Christmas, and a little lad in a gipsy caravan asked his father what they would have for Christmas dinner. The lad's mother was dead, and the father answered, "I do not know, my dear." The man's fiddle was hanging on the wall, and he knew that if he took his fiddle to the public house and played the money would soon be found for the Christmas dinner. This he had done in former days; but Cornelius Smith, the father of Gipsy Smith, had not played in saloons from the time he was converted. So he instantly put aside the temptation, fell on his knees, and began to pray. Said he to his children: "I do not know what we shall have for Christmas, but we will sing." The trusting father then began a Gospel song familiar in those days:

"In some way or other the Lord will provide:

It may not be my way,
It may not be thy way;
And yet, in His own way,
The Lord will provide."

Then came the chorus:

"Then we'll trust in the Lord,
And He will provide;
Yes, we'll trust in the Lord,
And He will provide."

A knock was heard at the door of the van while the family were still singing. There stood the Cambridge town missionary, Mr. Sykes. Said he: "It is I, Brother Smith. God is good, is he not? I have come to tell you how the Lord will provide. In a shop in this town there are three legs of mutton, and also groceries, waiting for you and your brothers." A wheel borrow was needed to bring home the supplies, and the three brothers (all of whom had become evangelists) never learned who furnished these things for them. But God had provided their Christmas dinners!

Yes, God will make a way where there seems to be no way. In the toughest of situations, this seems to be God's specialty. We should be thankful to God today for His way in the wilderness! God has it all figured out. So we don't have to worry. He's working on our behalf even when we can't see it all. He has a plan and purpose in whatever we walk through. He can cut a clear pathway through anything. God will make a way!

In seemingly hopeless situations where we can't see any way out, God's power has the opportunity to shine the greatest. It's during these times when we come to the end of ourselves, where we know we can't depend on our own abilities, on anything we have, or anyone we know, that God comes through for us and makes a way.

We all have been in situations where we have wondered if there is a way out of our problem. Abraham found himself in such a predicament when he took Isaac, his only son up to the mountain to sacrifice him before God. Yet, just in the nick of time God provided a solution.

The Bible records Genesis 22:9-14:

“And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here *am* I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only *son* from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind *him* a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh (God will provide – God will make a way): as it is said *to* this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.”



It was not Abraham's son that God wanted but Abraham's heart and devotion. As we yield to God, we discover that God always provides a way for us. God has His own rams that He uses to provide us with a way out and through life's difficulties. He is still Jehovah Jireh (our provider). No matter what predicament, problem or personal difficulty you are facing the Lord has a way when there seems to be absolutely no solution in sight. God always provides a solution to any problem we are facing.

In this study we have seen 20 solutions that we can plug in to our problems and difficulties so that we can find God's way for our life.

God will make a way! God's way can be summarized as follows:

- A victorious WAY as God grants us victory through our trials (1 Cor. 10:13),
- A renewing WAY as God grants us revival and another chance in life (Ps. 85:6; 138:7; Isa. 40:31; Ps. 23:3; 2 Cor. 5:17)
- A supplying WAY as God meets what He views to be our present needs in life (Phil. 4:19; Matt. 6:33),
- A guiding WAY as He directs us in the next step for our life (Ex. 33:13; Ps. 32:8; 86:11),
- A different WAY as He changes our way, redirects our life, and aligns it to His way (Isa. 55:8-9).

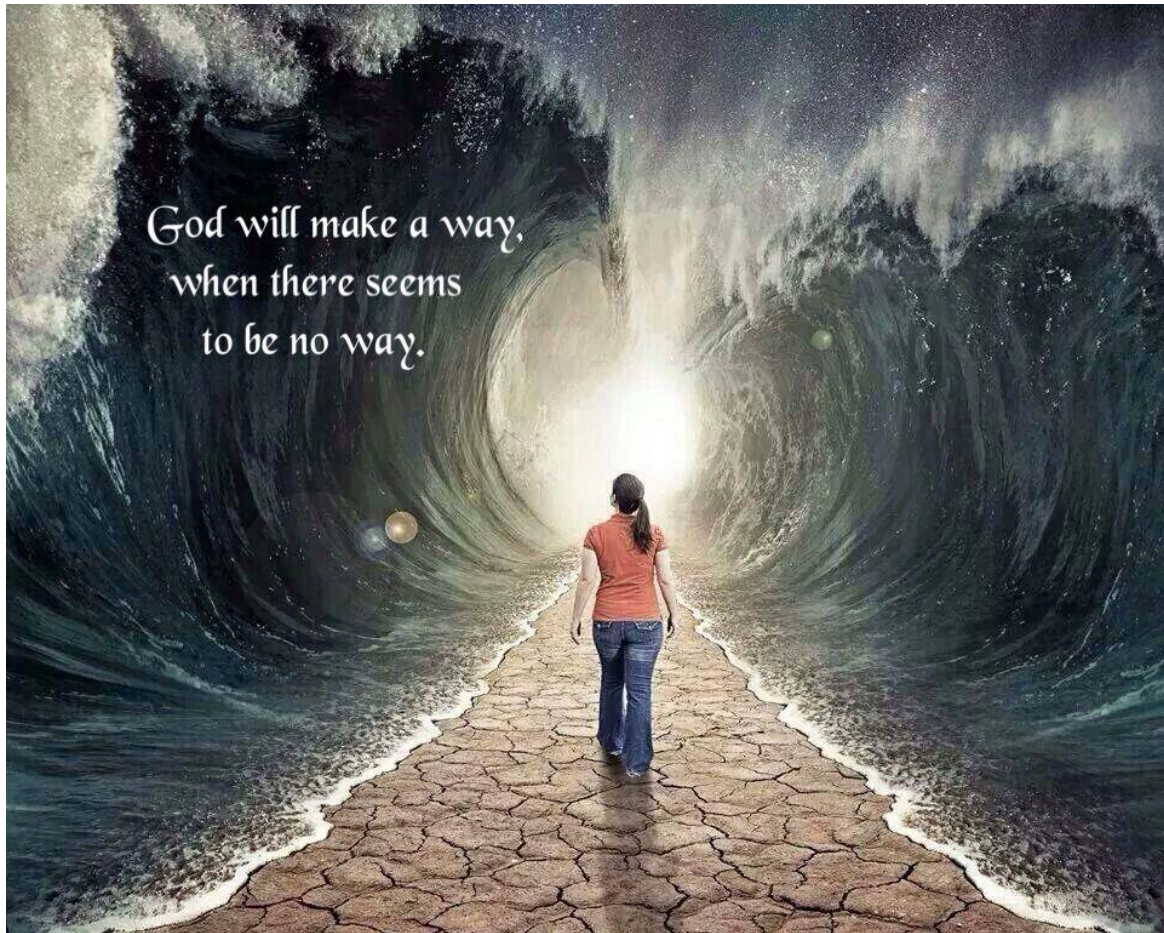
Are we ready to accept His way? Are we fully yielded to it? We can be sure that God will always make a way for us! God is making a way for you. Remember again that God's way for you is a journey and not a race. Change happens many times in small increments. Give God time to work and be thankful for the little changes that you see.

God's people were given a way through the raging sea. You will remember that God parted the waters and left them pass through the sea. He had made a way for them and He will do the same for you today.

Exodus 14:21-22 records the historical record:

"And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go *back* by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry *land*, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry *ground*: and the waters *were* a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left."

God may not part the Red Sea for you but He has a way for you to pass through your troubles and live victoriously and fruitfully. He knows how to make a way for you, open up paths (Prov. 3:5-6), and lead you in the right way.



God will make a way,
when there seems
to be no way.

“God will make a way
Where there seems to be no way.
He works in ways we cannot see
He will make a way for me.

He will be my guide
Hold me closely to His side.
With love and strength for each new day,
He will make a way,
He will make a way.

Oh, God will make a way
Where there seems to be no way.
He works in ways we cannot see,
He will make a way for me.

He will be my guide
Hold me closely to His side.
With love and strength for each new day,
He will make a way.
He will make a way.

By a roadway in the wilderness
He'll lead me.
Rivers in the desert will I see,
Heaven and earth will fade,
But His Word will still remain
And He will do something new today.”