



*Majesty.* Josh Felix. As seen through the Chinese Arch, Northern Utah, 2016

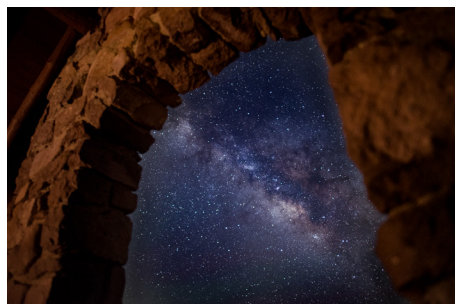
# city lights

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**This issue of *City Lights* is the 7th online edition since its inception in 1994 as *The Fellowship***

**January 2020 Theme:**  
*The Encouragement of God's Word*

**Cover Photo**



*Majesty.* Josh Felix, Perry City, UT

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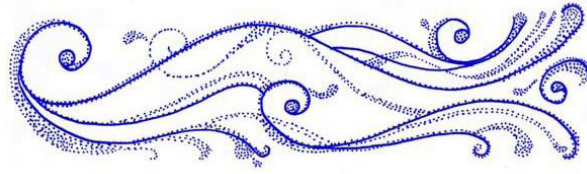
**Contents**

- 3. *Cascading Voices: D. L. Moody and Beyond*
- 4. *In Preparation.* . . . . . Gateway Seminary
- 6. *So Many Books* . . . . . Georgia Herod
- 8. *Listen Up* . . . . . Dorothy Catlin
- 11. *Three Keys to Guard.* . . . . . Victoria Riollano
- 13. *Make Me a Cake* . . . . . Elisabeth Elliot
- 17. *The Greatest of These is Love.* . . . . Karen Doman
- 19. *Remembering Whose You Are* . . . . . Max Lucado
- 20. *Who You Are In Christ.* . . Andrew Farley Ministries
- 21. *New Light My Commission* . . . . . Diane Kulkarni
- 22. *Patient Trust.* . . . . . Teilhard de Chardin
- 23. *Beauty From Ashes.* . . . . . Georgia Herod
- 24. *8 Life-giving ways.* . . . . . Deborah Haddix
- 26. *Indelible Ink.* . . . . . Tess Hanly
- 27. *Out of a Hopeless Mess.* . . . . . Laura Stephens
- 29. *A Life-Giving Practice.* . . . . . Nicole Unice
- 30. *God's Gift: Salvation by Grace Through Faith*

**City Lights**, the bi-annual online devotional journal of Main Street Church in Brigham City, Utah, is dedicated to the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:14-16 who called us to let our lights “*shine before men in such a way that they may see and glorify our Father who is in heaven.*”

Our words and creative expressions, besides glorifying God, should also encourage our readers. Therefore, all contributions must reveal our Christ-like love to all men, be biblically based, and where possible, focused on a stated theme for each issue.

*City Lights* ministers within the Statement of Faith and is an extension of the Core Values of Main Street Church (<http://www.mscbc.org/statfaith.htm>)  
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## **Cascading Voices: D. L. Moody**

It was July 1, 1885 when Edward Kimble felt the tugging of the Spirit to share his faith with a young shoe salesman he knew. At first Kimble vacillated, unsure if he should talk to the man. But he finally mustered his courage and went into the shoe store. There Kimble found the salesman in the back room stocking shoes, and he began to share his faith with him. As a result, the young shoe salesman prayed and received Jesus Christ that day. That shoe salesman's name was Dwight L. Moody, and he became the greatest evangelist of his generation.

But the story doesn't end there. Several years later a pastor and well-known author by the name of Frederick B. Meyer heard Moody preach. Meyer was so deeply stirred by Moody's preaching that he himself embarked on a far-reaching evangelistic ministry. Once when Meyer was preaching, a college student named Wilbur Chapman accepted Christ as a result of his presentation of the gospel. Chapman later employed a baseball player to help him prepare to conduct an evangelistic crusade. That ballplayer, who later became a powerful evangelist himself, was Billy Sunday.

In 1924 a group of businessmen invited Billy Sunday to hold an evangelistic campaign in Charlotte, North Carolina, which resulted in many people coming to Christ. Out of that revival meeting a group of men formed a men's prayer group to pray for the world. They prayed for Charlotte to have another great revival. God sent another evangelist named Mordecai Hamm. Hamm went to Charlotte in 1934 to hold a crusade. Ham's crusade went well, even though it did not have many converts. On one of the last nights under the big tent one tall, lanky young man walked up the aisle to receive Christ. That man's name was Billy Graham.

Talk about a chain of events! And it all started with an ordinary Christian named Edward Kimble, who reached D.L. Moody, who reached Wilbur Chapman, who reached Billy Sunday, who reached Mordecai Ham, who reached Billy Graham. Look at what God has done over these many years because of the faithfulness of one person.

### ***Moody's Testimony of His Death***

"Someday you will read in the papers that D. L. Moody of East Northfield is dead. Don't you believe a word of it! At that moment I shall be more alive than I am now; I shall have gone up higher, that is all, out of this old clay tenement into a house that is immortal – a body that death cannot touch, that sin cannot taint; a body fashioned like unto His glorious body. I was born of the flesh in 1837. I was born of the Spirit in 1856. That which is born of the flesh may die. That which is born of the Spirit will live forever."

Occasionally there emerges a man of whom it may be said, "After God made him, He broke the mold." If anyone ever appeared to be less qualified and the most unlikely to be a great evangelist and preacher, it was Dwight L. Moody. He only completed the 6th grade in school, and then quit. He was very unseemly in appearance (he was short and heavy, weighing over 300 lbs.), a very common place man without attractive looks or charisma; he was very unpolished in grammar as words would rush from his beard in fast, short sentences; and his pronunciation was poor. Charles Spurgeon said, after hearing Moody preach, "He is the only man I ever heard who said, 'Mesopotamia' in ONE syllable." His sermons lasted only about 1/2 hour and were very simple in expressing God's love for the sinner, and God used this man's desire to see people saved to win many people to the Lord. Of Moody, one is compelled to confess: "He was an evangelist sent from God, for no man could have done the ministry he accomplished, except God was with him."

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“The Word of God is like a lion. You don’t have to defend a lion. All you have to do is let the lion loose, and the lion will defend itself.” – Charles Spurgeon

## IN PREPARATION

*Gateway Seminary—Ontario, California*  
*Reprinted with permission 2019. [www.gs.edu](http://www.gs.edu)*

As the Muslim cleric burned the Christian’s books, he considered whether he should kill the man, too. No, he decided, there was a better punishment for the man’s crime of heresy. He would disprove his story about Jesus dying for his sins. And so the cleric pocketed the Christian’s Bible.

“I read this Bible for five years,” Bilal Bhat said. “I could only read it in the nighttime by candlelight, but I was only reading it because I had heard that the Bible had been corrupted. I wanted to see what was wrong with this book. But two and a half years into the Bible, the Bible found corruption in me.”

Bhat, the former cleric who is now pursuing a diploma in theology at Gateway Seminary, only knew Jesus as a prophet. “When [the Christian] shared that Jesus died for our sins, I argued ‘First of all, I don’t believe Jesus died for my sins, because the Koran does not teach that. Second, Jesus was not crucified. And third, I asked him ‘what sins are you talking about?’”

Bhat says he was a teenager who thought he would go to heaven because of what he had done in his life. From the age of 3, he learned the Koran from his father, who was a high priest. At the age of 5, he began going to the mosque five times each day with his father. By the age of 7, he had memorized most of the Koran and was teaching others. When Bhat was 14, his father passed away, and the people in his town chose Bhat as the replacement to be a priest and a teacher of the Koran.

He was teaching thousands of people what he knew about the book, so he asked “where did I sin? What kind of sins am I committing every day that I need Jesus?” But as he read through the Bible one more time, Bhat said he came to the verse in Romans chapter 3, where it is written that there is no one righteous, not even one. The revelation was a problem for Bhat.

“I didn’t want to believe any of it, because of the influence I had in society,” he explained. “I didn’t want to lose that, and I didn’t want to be killed. I had

my own friends who had become terrorists, and I had a very close connection to these people. But I knew that if I accepted Jesus, the next day would be my last day on earth.”

As he read the Bible, he counted the cost of accepting Jesus and decided it was too much to accept the truth God was speaking to him through the scriptures. Then he met a Christian believer who had a Muslim background. “He challenged me,” Bhat said. “I spent six months with this guy, and he cleared away a lot of misconceptions. He answered my questions about Jesus being the Son of God. He showed me two Koran verses that I had memorized before. The first verse said ‘Allah is asking you to confess your sins and the sins of your people.’ So the verse in the Koran was acknowledging that I could sin.

The second verse said to tell all the Muslims that he [Mohammed] did not know where he would go in eternity, and he did not know where anyone else would go, either. I told the guy that I thought his copy of the Koran was corrupted, and I needed to see another Koran. I looked at three other Korans, and they all had the same verses. I left him the next day, but now I had doubts. So I became a seeker. I wanted to seek something bigger. I wanted to see what else was out there. I wanted to compare Jesus and Mohammed.”

Bhat says he is a Christian today because he studied the life of Jesus. He went home and carried out his usual routine. But one day he was praying and had an overwhelming thought: “Why are you cheating these people who are your followers? Why are you cheating God?” He had begun to doubt his Muslim faith.

“If Mohammed did not know where he was going in eternity, how could he save me on the day of judgment?” he asked. “So I took those questions to my high priests, to my mentors. The only response I got from them was that I was a sinner and that I was being betrayed by Satan. I was looking for answers. I was looking for comfort. I had this debate with God for three months. I didn’t go to the mosque, I didn’t read the Bible, I didn’t read the Koran or anything. People thought I should go to the hospital, because I was acting different.”

Bhat took the same Bible he had been reading and flipped through the pages. He stopped at Ephesians 2: 8-10, where he read that he was not saved *by* good works, he was saved *for* good works. Then God showed him the verses in John 10:27-30 that changed his life: “*My sheep listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life and they shall never perish. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.*”

On March 23, 2007, Bhat found himself on His knees, asking Jesus to be the savior of his life. “When I did that, I was put on a hit list. The message was ‘if you see him, kill him.’ I had to leave my family and my state. I moved to New Delhi and started working for Campus Crusade for Christ. I began to reach Muslims for Jesus. I have seen hundreds of Muslims come to know Jesus in India. My friends became believers, my mother three years ago became a Christian.”

Bhat says he saw about 500 Muslims come to faith. During that time, he met the woman who would become his wife — an American who is also a pastor’s daughter. Today the couple are both students at Gateway so they can take the gospel wherever God leads them. “We want to be on fire for Jesus. We want to take this fire and burn it for the world. We want to plant churches and spread the Good News anywhere God leads us.”

Those who sow in tears  
shall reap with shouts of joy!  
He who goes out weeping,  
bearing the seed for sowing,  
shall come home with shouts of joy,  
bringing his sheaves with him.

Psalm 126:5-6 ESV

The cost of training the Bhat's to go wherever God calls them far exceeds the tuition they pay. Consider a gift to Gateway’s Scholarship Fund to help prepare Christian workers to go and proclaim the Gospel to every corner of the Earth.

For more information, contact Gateway at [www.gs.edu](http://www.gs.edu)



You are invited to read, to ponder, to expand your mind and your spirit. Each forthcoming edition of City Lights will include a book review. Welcome to “So Many Books.”

In 2010, Google Books calculated that 129,864,880 different books have been published in various languages in human history. In English alone, the Library of Congress stores 18 million books, adding over 200,000 titles per year. Now, if you determined to read a book a week for the next 50 years, you’d read about 2600 books! “So many books . . . so little time!”

How will I choose which books to read? What books will shape my spirituality and encourage me in my walk with God—and even cause me to think anew about the role of books in my spiritual formation? In this edition, I’m suggesting a memoir. Many Christians who have made significant contributions in church life and ministry will quickly affirm the profound impact of books on their spiritual development.

## SO MANY BOOKS. . .HERE’S ONE

*A book review and personal reflection by Georgia Herod, Staff Writer in Liberty, MO*

### *The Pastor: A Memoir, by Eugene Peterson (Harper One: 2011)*

A friend passed this book along to me because she was sure I’d enjoy it. She knows me well. As a pastor’s wife for nearly 35 years, I’ve been immersed in the life and ministry of a pastor who has planted churches, as well as led in growing them in both numbers and spiritual maturity. I was eager to read Peterson’s memoir because of my having known about other books he’d written and having read and used *The Message*, his translation of the Greek and Hebrew texts into everyday American English. I was not disappointed in any way.

With integrity, honesty, vulnerability, and transparency, Peterson shares his life and philosophy of ministry as he gives his answer to the question, “What does it mean to be a pastor?” His life is an “open book” as he shares his journey as a Christian and as a pastor.

Peterson is a marvelous storyteller who immediately draws in the hearts and minds of his readers from the very first chapter. Beautifully written, filled with anecdotes from his life and his ministry, this memoir will help any reader (either the uninitiated or the dyed-in-the-wool lifelong church goer) gain a rich understanding of what it means to be a pastor, one who shepherds a congregation, large or small, one who desires to live the Christ life among his people.

#### **My personal takeaway after reading this book:**

*“Embracing what God does for me is the best thing I can do for Him” (Rom. 12:1-2, MSG).*

One day I said to my husband that I wanted to live whatever days I had left in this season--intentionally and purposefully, to the glory of God. Reading Peterson’s memoir helped me set my heart and mind on that desire.

Watching Eugene Peterson’s philosophy of ministry, along with his identity as pastor, develop was an encouragement because I made connections with our own lives and ministry. Because I have read and reread *Soul Keeping* by John Ortberg and am drawn to Dallas Willard’s challenge: “You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life,” I resonated deeply with Peterson’s hunger for his role as pastor to be different, for his life to be different. For his life to be intentional. After being gone for 27 nights in a row to meetings, as his daughter told him, he knew he had to make changes or resign. He shared his heart with church leadership and they asked, “What do you want to do?”

Peterson listed five/six desires. I have adapted them to reflect my own desires for the rest of my life.

1. I want to be a woman who prays. I want to be reflective and responsive and relaxed in the presence of God so that I can be reflective and responsive and relaxed in the presence of others—especially those close to me. Oh, how this discipline needs attention.
2. I want to be a woman who reads and studies—who is able to see God all around, knowing I’m not God; who is able to make connections between Truth and culture.
3. I want to be a woman who has time to be with women (especially) in leisurely, unhurried conversations so that I can understand and be a fellow pilgrim in their spiritual journey—their doubts and difficulties, their desires and delights.
4. I want to have time to drop everything and read or write or walk or give—or wonder or wander.
5. I want to be a woman of worship, solitude, silence, stillness, a woman of undivided heart, with a long obedience in the same direction; a woman who takes her “everyday, ordinary life—sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life--and place it before God as an offering” (Romans 12:1-2 MSG).



## For the Love of God’s Word

*This excerpt about the life of missionary to India, Amy Carmichael*

*Reprinted by permission: <https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/for-the-love-of-gods-word>*

“After taking a terrible fall in 1931, Carmichael was mostly bedridden for the remainder of her life. She had already written several books—such as *Things as They Are* (1903), a description of Indian mission work—but now she turned to a full-time writing ministry until her death in India at the age of 83.

She would ask herself five simple questions when writing each of her 35 books:

- Is it true?
- Is it helpful?
- Is it kind?
- Is it necessary?
- Does it have the ‘seed of Eternity’ in it?

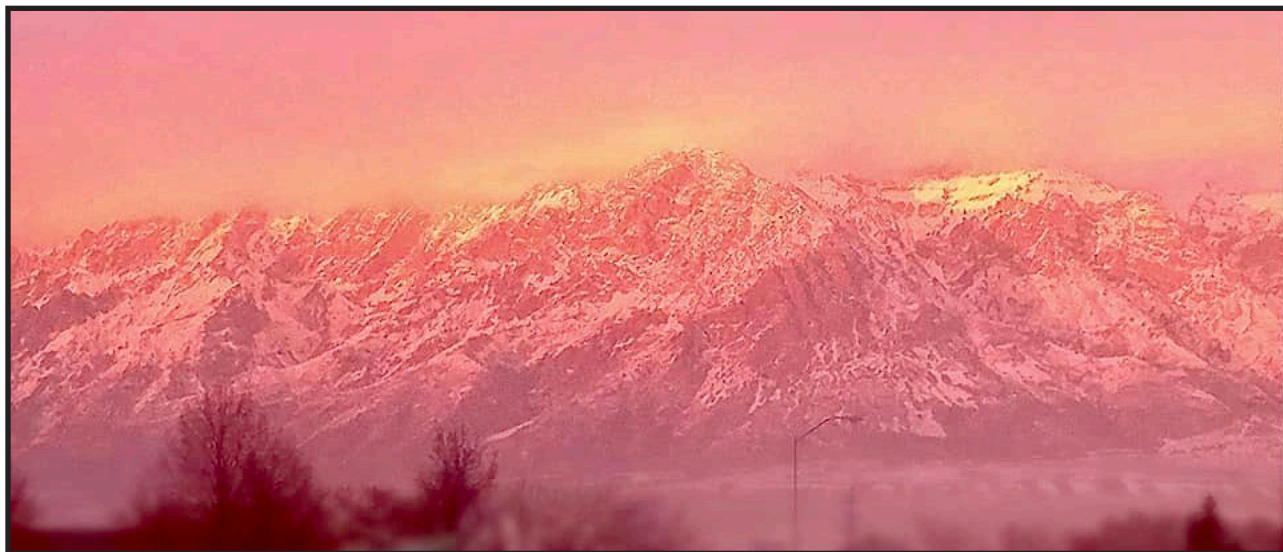
Clear, singular questions for a woman who adhered to a clear, singular faith.”

# Listen Up

By Dorothy Catlin—Main Street Church

Isaiah 50:4 says,

*“The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples, That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word. He awakens Me morning by morning; He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple.”*



*Winter Sunset on the Wasatch Range. 2019 by Penny Steig, Brigham City, UT*

I first began meditating on these words of Isaiah a couple of years ago. After a while it dawned on me that this statement makes a direct connection between how well we listen to our Master and our ability to communicate His message. Isaiah’s words set me wondering, how do I “*listen as a disciple?*” And with what “*tongue*” does a disciple speak, anyway? I love words, and though I’ve always been quicker to speak than to listen, I’m beginning to think there might be hope for change.

Our ears are meant to be an entry-point not just to our intellectual understanding, but to our heart. A disciple is a learner—one who follows a master in order to become like him, to speak his language, to have His heart, and to carry on his work. Like any other language, one learns the “*tongue of a disciple*” through listening well to the Master. Born of long hours in His company, this tongue can only be spoken fluently by one who has internalized the Master’s heart, not just His vocabulary.

Jesus often said, “*The one who has ears to hear, let him hear.*” The Hebrew word *sh’ma*, to hear, has a much richer meaning than simply to register sound.

It’s more like “Listen up! Let these words penetrate to the core and produce an appropriate response.” Isaiah says our Master awakens our ears morning by morning, speaking afresh for every new day, always communicating His heart. He is tender toward us, offering Himself as the remedy for worn-out wearied souls. Jesus said: “*Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, and you will find rest for your souls.*” Our God gives soul-rest, and He gives it morning by morning to those with wakened ears.

A whole generation of Israelites awoke each morning in the wilderness expecting to find their portion of freshly-given manna because God had told them He would give it. His purpose was not simply to sustain their bodies, but to train their hearts in humility, obedience, and trust as they learned to heed His word, follow Him as His people, and make His glory known.

Isn’t that what Isaiah was talking about? Freshly every day our Master sustains us through His Living Word, nourishing our souls and growing in us His



heart. It is only out of the richness of resting in Him that we are enabled to nourish and refresh others. Unless we are listening and receiving rest from the Lord of Rest, we have nothing to say to the “weary ones” we are called to love and serve. My Master will teach me to speak His language as I listen intently for His heart.

Maybe that all seems elementary, or maybe I’m just a slow learner. I’d been contemplating the idea of listening as a disciple for several months when I received the opportunity to serve at an international retreat for women who serve the Lord in foreign countries. They would come for refreshment and rest, ragged around the edges from years of difficult ministry in faraway places. I went because I’d listened when someone who knows me well and whom I deeply respect said “This is right up your alley—you should go!” I’ve served in various women’s ministries for more years than I can count, but being especially fond of retreat ministry, I investigated and applied. And then I fell in love.

Our volunteer training began from the moment we arrived. The women who lead this retreat ministry are learned listeners. They greeted each one of us by name, welcoming us with joy into the fellowship of servanthood. I had expected to serve—that’s why I went. But I did not expect to be so well cared for, so nourished in worship and the Word, so “soul-rested” before the real work even began. Our God gives soul-rest in the most unexpected places, if we’re listening.

I first encountered Karin during those training days, when I received a list the women assigned to my small group. Included with each name was a bit of background information and a few prayer requests. I read about the pressures in her life and ministry as she was in transition from one Asian country to another, how she would need to learn a new language, a new culture, and begin a new kind of work. Through a series of discouraging events, she had just lost support from a sending church. I began to pray for her, but not in a very personal way.

Two days later the retreat Attendees began to arrive. My first assignment was to serve as a greeter, trained to greet these women in the same way as I had been greeted a few days earlier. There were several of us taking turns, so I was a bit surprised I was next in line

when Karin came through the door. Though I’d never seen her picture, I knew it had to be her. Stressed and sweaty from a labored drive up the mountain in a borrowed, malfunctioning van, she exuded both frustration and relief at having finally arrived. After introducing her to the registration process, I quickly texted a friend at home (also named Karen) whose grandparents had been missionaries in the country Karin was about to enter. I asked her to pray, knowing she’d be delighted to do so.

But nothing had prepared me for the surprise that came shortly after, when we gathered in our small groups for the first time. I live in a small town in the top of Utah. As we introduced ourselves around the table, Karin looked at me strangely and said “My father lives there.” A little later, I learned that her father’s step-family is actually related to a close friend of my husband’s. Here I was, serving at an event in another state attended by women from all over the world, and the Lord had suddenly revealed a very near connection with this woman! “Is the world really that small?” I wondered.

A few weeks after the retreat, Karin came to stay with my husband and me for a week or so. She wanted to visit with her father before leaving for Asia, but could not stay in his home. Her previous plan to rest and pray at another ministry had been fruitless—it had not proven to be a restful environment, and Karin was in deep need of soul rest. Her support for this change of field wasn’t all in place, and she simply had to wait and rest in the Lord for provision to go forward.

That week we spent many hours in conversation. I love nothing more than opening the Bible in the company of women, feeding our souls together on the Living Word, and encouraging one another to listen as learners—ones who actively bring into their experience the realities of the Word of God. As the week unfolded, Karin rested. She met my friend who had prayed for her. She spoke at our mutual friend’s church, and a few days later she spoke to our church body. About a month after that, our church became a new “sending church” for Karin in place of the one she had lost. We are a small church in a small town, with a peculiar ministry to a peculiar people, but the Lord had been subtly growing an interest in the larger world among our congregation. Karin became the catalyst that ignited a new thing. Her photo and

newsletters now grace our new wall map, in company with others we support across the world.

I'd never expected such a personal impact from my simple obedience to volunteer at that retreat—an obedience born of listening to my friend's encouragement. I'd thought it would probably be a one-time thing, then I'd go back to our ministry in Utah, deeply enriched, but done there. I couldn't have been more wrong. Our gracious King had been at work on so many levels and in so many ways—He'd been setting this up for years. But He had been waiting patiently for me to begin *“listening as a disciple,”* with ears that would hear not just His words, but His heart.

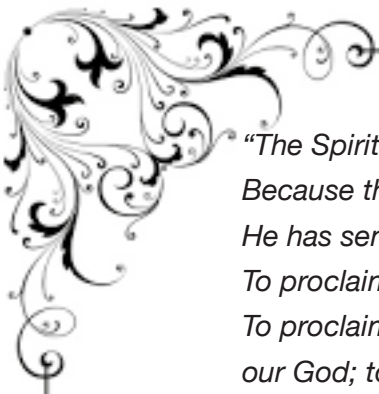
Our Master longs to minister life and soul-rest through us to a weary, burdened world—and that includes His weary, burdened servants. What an incredible thing it is to be entrusted with extending the very ministry of Jesus, the Gospel of Rest, to those who serve Him in far-flung and foreign places. When I was ready to hear Him properly, I had been called to participate with Jesus in caring for these sent-ones whose lives are so very different from mine, and I had been profoundly blessed on the way.

Then it occurred to me that although the circumstances and specifics of their lives might be different, their fundamental need for the Gospel of Rest is exactly the same as mine. Reading on in Isaiah we come to his description of the ministry of Messiah, the *“Sent One”*—a ministry He is still carrying on through us.

We usually think of this as a message for the unsaved, and it is. But it is also for all believers. In Christ, are we not all “sent-ones” in one way or another? We who have received His Holy Spirit are sent into our world to bring good news, the Gospel of Rest in Christ, to all who are weary, broken-hearted or captive. He continues to give Himself to us as we walk in Him. In exchange for our mourning, ashes and weakness, He pours out within us His life and gladness and praise, and we rest in Him, for His glory, no matter who we are or where we serve.

My story with Karin holds one more surprise. Part of her current assignment in Asia is to organize a “Spiritual Life Conference”—a time of soul-rest—for those who are serving there through her same sending agency. She is modeling it very much after what she experienced at the retreat where we met. It will take place in another Asian country. . .and she has invited me and my husband serve. We have been entrusted to bring a message of encouragement through teaching and worship to these dearly-loved “sent ones.” I never expected that!

I'm listening much better these days. Isaiah 50:4 has become engraved in my heart, *“so that I might know how to sustain the weary ones with a word.”* I want to speak with the tongue of one who has been deeply instructed by the King, according to His heart, no matter what path He opens before me. Who knows where it will lead?



*“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,  
Because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted;  
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,  
To proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners;  
To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of  
our God; to comfort all who mourn,  
To grant those who mourn in Zion,  
Giving them a garland instead of ashes,  
The oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
The mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting.”*

Isaiah 61:1-3

## 5 scriptures for making decisions

1. Luke 5:16  
Tune out distractions
2. Proverbs 19:20  
Seek godly advice
3. James 4:1  
Narrow down your choices
4. James 1:22  
Do something
5. Psalm 28:7  
Gives thanks for answers

LisaNotes.com

## Three Keys to Guard Your Heart

By Victoria Riollano—Washington, D.C.

<https://www.victoryspeaks.org/>

As a Christian of 15 years, I've often heard this phrase. Guard your heart.

Truthfully, I put it in my Christian jargon pile. I let it sit between “This is my season” and “Jesus take the wheel.” It was simply what people say. However, over the last few weeks this phrase has been at the forefront of my mind.

As I had experienced recent disappointments and heart breaks, I found myself yearning to understand how can I guard my heart. That's when I discovered this verse tucked in Proverbs: “*Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.*” Proverbs 4:23

Not only did I need to guard my heart, but it was a HUGE deal to do so. In fact, my entire life depended on it. My first thought was, “Why aren't churches across America screaming this from the pulpit?” My second thought, “Lord teach me everything I need to know about this, my life is at stake....literally.” Fortunately, the verses that follow specifically outlines the three ways to guard your heart.

### 1. Protect Your Speech

“*Keep your mouth free of perversity; keep corrupt talk far from your lips.*” Proverbs 4:24

The first step the Bible gives to guard your heart is to watch your mouth. We need to ask ourselves, what is coming out of our mouth?

- Do I use my words to uplift or tear down?
- Do I gossip or protect those who aren't present?
- Do I speak the Word of God over my life or speak fear, worry, and complaints instead?

The Bible says that the power of life and death are in the tongue. In other words, what we say will refresh or curse the very atmosphere of our lives. Your mouth can cause you to lose friends due to gossip, lie to impress others, and be rude to one who needed to be loved. In the same way, your words can lift up a person in a tough time, pray for those in need, and praise God. Truthfully, its up to us how we choose to use our tongue. I believe this is why James 1:19 implores us to be slowwwwww to speak.

The best way to protect your speech is to practice the pause. When we do this, we can learn very quickly how to know if God is leading us to speak or be quiet. He will send wisdom and discernment over our words, if we choose to listen.

## 2. Protect Your Eyes

*“Look straight ahead, and fix your eyes on what lies before you.” Proverbs 4:25*

In other words, don't look to the right or left. Stay focused. Keep your eyes on what's next for your life. Often times, we forget to keep our eyes on what lies in front of us. We find ourselves looking at others and comparing our journey to their's. Bitterness, frustration and irritation typically result as we start to even question the Lord and His will.

I have been a victim of keeping my eyes on others versus what the Lord was sending me to do. I spent years aggravated by their actions or inactions. My life became wrapped up in what lay before "them," never keeping myself aware of what God wanted to do in my life.

Though this verse has a slightly different meaning, its important to also consider the practical application of guarding our eyes. Now is a great time to ask ourselves, what are we watching? What are we allowing to enter our sights? Do we spend our time watching horror movies that evoke fear? Reality shows full of profanity? Googling our every symptom? Watching a screen all day? In other words, what has our attention the most and what can we do to start to shift what we allow in our visual space? These questions will help us to protect our heart and mind daily.

## 3. Protect Your Path

*“Watch the path of your feet and all your ways will be established.” Proverbs 4:26*

Each step on our path is important. Its critical that we are wise about how we move forward and our choices. In this verse, the word "way" can be substituted for the words, walk, road, direction or journey. The This verse reminds us that when we are careful about our actions, our life's journey will be come together! When we allow the Lord to lead the way, He will keep our steps ordered.

*“Guide my steps by your word, so I will not be overcome by evil.” Psalm 119:133*

I believe with these three important steps in mind, we can truly guard our heart. Here's the thing, we all guard our heart with something. Perhaps with fear, anxiety, or walls, we keep ourselves "safe." Today, God is asking us to guard our hearts by allowing His Word to infiltrate our speech, be a guide for our eyes, and to direct our steps.

When we do this, our lives will start to fall in place with His perfect will for our lives. Our victory in this life over circumstance may be found in our choice to be intentional about our hearts. Our choice to completely surrender our ways to him and to keep our heart on Him will be what shifts us and keeps us protected from the enemy and His schemes. Remember, above ALL else...GUARD YOUR HEART. Your very life depends on it!

**Victoria Riollano** is an author, blogger, and speaker. As a mother of six, military spouse, Psychology professor and minister's wife, Victoria has learned the art of balancing family and accomplishing God's ultimate purpose for her life. Recently, Victoria released her book, *The Victory Walk: A 21 Day Devotional on Living A Victorious Life*. Her ultimate desire is to empower women to live a life of victory, hope, and love. She believes that with Christ we can live a life that is ALWAYS winning. You can learn more about her ministry at <https://www.victoryspeaks.org> and [www.facebook.com/victoryspeaks](https://www.facebook.com/victoryspeaks). She also has a podcast called Victory Talk with Victoria (available on iTunes, Spotify, Castbox and Google Podcasts).



*“The fear of the Lord' means that God's frown is your greatest dread and His smile is your greatest delight.”*

–Pastor Colin Smith



*“With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I beg you ... as an act of intelligent worship, to give him your bodies, as a living sacrifice, consecrated to him and acceptable by him” (Rom.12:1, PHILLIPS).*

## Make Me a Cake

*By Elisabeth Elliot*

From her book, *The Path of Loneliness*, first published in 1988 and reprinted in 2001. Reprinted by permission in 2019 by her daughter, Valerie Elliot Shepard.

When Maria von Trapp was a young woman she loved the mountains of her native Austria. She thrilled to think that God had given her those mountains as a gift to enjoy. “If God has given me all of this,” she said, “what can I give Him?”

Thinking over what she had to give she saw how paltry it all was. She knew that she must give everything, which to her meant giving her life in a most literal way—going into a convent, becoming a nun, and never coming out. As many disciples discover, the will of God turns out to be quite different from their expectations. Maria went into the convent, but was soon sent out again to become governess to a widower’s children. Thence began the story of *The Sound of Music*, familiar to thousands.

To give God everything must mean that I give Him not only my body as a living sacrifice but everything else as well: all that I am, all that I have, all that I do, and all that I suffer. That covers a lot of territory, but the particular ground we are discussing is one form of suffering: loneliness. I have said that it can be seen as a gift—something received and accepted. A gift may also be something offered.

Maria von Trapp began by offering to God the gift of herself. We must begin there too. We do not thereby “enrich” the Lord for, as the old prayer says, *“All things come of Thee, O Lord, and of Thine own have we given Thee.”* We have nothing but what was His in the first place.

*“With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I beg you ... as an act of intelligent worship, to give him your bodies, as a living sacrifice, consecrated to him and acceptable by him” (Rom.12:1, PHILLIPS).*

Here is the place to start. In His wisdom and lovingkindness He gave each of us a particular body, of His design and construction, prepared for us, bearing His image, yet distinct from all others. We cannot offer it unless we first “receive,” that is, accept it—with its beauties, its imperfections, its limitations, its potentialities. This body and nobody else’s is my offering. It is not, however, mere blood, bone, and tissue. It is the dwelling of the “self”—spirit, mind, heart, will, emotions, temperament. It must be offered wholeheartedly, in simplicity, with no quibbles about its fitness. It is holy as the vessels of the tabernacle (pots, shovels, firepans, snuffers, and all the rest, commonplace as they might be) were holy—because they were offered (consecrated and set apart) for that service. All offerings made to God matter to Him because of the single, unique offering of Christ for us. We unite ourselves with Him in this—we are actually “crucified with” Christ. Then this body, which is the dwelling of myself,

becomes the dwelling of God Himself—a temple of the Holy Spirit. It is not my own. It is acceptable to God because I am one with Christ and my offering is taken up into His offering.

The love of God in accepting such an offering is like the love of a father whose little child gives him a present bought with money the father gave him. It is a very tender, sympathetic love. It recognizes that the child's loving gift comes out of his utter poverty. The father, who has already given everything, "*My dear son, you have been with me all the time and everything I have is yours*" [Luke 15:3 1, PHILLIPS], gives something more in order that his child may have something to give.

Having presented our bodies, is there anything else we may give? The answer is yes, there is everything else—everything God has given us. When the people of God present their gifts to Him in church—music, prayers, money, bread, and wine—they present only what has been given by His gracious bounty. And again they present themselves under these tokens, for only the gift made by self-giving love can be offered. Here we enter into the great mystery of the Bread and Wine. Christ has gone before us, giving Himself. This is My body; this is My blood. We love because He first loved us. We offer ourselves because He first offered Himself, each saying to the other, My life for yours. The great mystery of the Bread and Wine is Christ offering Himself in love to us and for us—"My life for yours."

It is important to understand very clearly that we have nothing at all to add to the complete sacrifice of Christ which is our very salvation. His offering was perfect. It lacked nothing. Nor is there any need for the old order of sacrifices (the blood of lambs and bulls and all the rest), for Christ establishes "*a new order of obedience to the will of God, and in that will we have been made holy by the single unique offering of the body of Jesus Christ. . . . By virtue of that one offering he has perfected for all time every one whom he makes holy*" (Heb. 10:9-10, 14-15, PHILLIPS).

And so He allows us to come. And so He receives our offerings, given by virtue of something He gave us when He made us: freedom of choice, that we might freely choose to love Him and to give ourselves to Him. No wonder Paul said, "*What do you possess that was not given you?*" (1 Cor. 4:7, NEB). Having given my all, I may specifically offer my time, my work, my prayers, my possessions, my praise, and—yes—my sufferings. It is in this mysterious sense that I see loneliness as a gift: It is not only something to be accepted, but something to be offered, as Matheson gave not only the life he owed, but the unsatisfied desire of his heart.

Is it not legitimate, then, to think of loneliness as material for sacrifice? What I lay on the altar of consecration is nothing more and nothing less than what I have at this moment, whatever I find in my life now of work and prayer, joys and sufferings. Some people see singleness as a liability, a handicap, a deprivation, even a curse. Others see it as a huge asset, a license to be a "swinger," an opportunity to do what feels good. I see it as a gift. To make that gift an offering may be the most costly thing one can do, for it means the laying down of a cherished dream of what one wanted to be, and the acceptance of what one did not want to be. How changed are my ambitions, the apostle Paul may have thought, for he wrote, "*Now I long to know Christ*" (Phil. 3:10, PHILLIPS).

During the months of my second husband's terminal illness I sometimes felt I could not bear one more day of seeing him suffer, or one more visit to the doctor who would tell us terrible things that must be done next---things like removing the lower jaw because of the lip cancer, or castration because of the prostate cancer. Everything in me said NO NO NO NO. Add's suffering became mine. The wee hours were filled with nightmarish images of things far worse than death, and I was afraid. What to do?

The answer came to me.

"Offer it up."

My eyes had been opened to this possibility through the reading of Evelyn Underhill's classic, *The Mystery of Sacrifice*. I had never before been taught the deep truth of making all of life an oblation, but this little book had come into my hands just three months before we discovered my husband's illness. I do not know what I would have done without it. Offer up what? I felt like the destitute widow of Zarephath, about to use the last of the flour

and oil which stood between her son's and her own starvation, when along came Elijah and told her to bake him a cake first. Because it was the word of the Lord, she obeyed. The effects of that obedience went far beyond her imagination. *"There was food for him and for her and her family for a long time. The jar of flour did not give out nor did the flask of oil fail, as the word of the Lord foretold through Elijah"* (1 Kings 17:15-16, NEB).

It was only a vaguely remembered fragment of a poem by Amy Carmichael that brought to mind the analogy between suffering and the poverty of the widow of Zarephath. I give it here in full:

## Nothing in the House

Thy servant, Lord, hath nothing in the house,  
Not even one small pot of common oil;  
For he who never cometh but to spoil  
Hath raided my poor house again, again,  
That ruthless strong man armed, whom men call Pain.

I thought that I had courage in the house,  
And patience to be quiet and endure,  
And sometimes happy songs; now I am sure  
Thy servant truly hath not anything,  
And see, my song-bird hath a broken wing.

....

My servant, I have come into the house---  
I who know Pain's extremity so well  
That there can never be the need to tell  
His power to make the flesh and spirit quail:  
Have I not felt the scourge, the thorn, the nail?

And I, his Conqueror, am in the house,  
Let not your heart be troubled: do not fear:  
Why shouldst thou, child of Mine, if I am here?  
My touch will heal thy song-bird's broken wing,  
And he shall have a braver song to sing.<sup>2</sup>

I had nothing in the house. Nothing except this pain. Pain—an offering? What could the Lord possibly make of that? *"Make me a cake."* In other words, Elijah said: There is one thing you can do. Even from your poverty, you can give me something. It may not seem like much, but it is the very thing I need. If you will give it to me I can do something I could not do without it. *"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise"* (Ps. 51:17, KJV).

So, as best I could, I offered it up. That was fifteen years ago. It has taken me a long time to assimilate this great lesson. I have not yet mastered it. But my understanding of sacrifice has been transformed. It has also transformed my life. The emphasis now is not on loss, privation, or a price to be paid. I see it as an act of intelligent worship, and as a gift God has given me to give back to Him in order that He may make something of it.

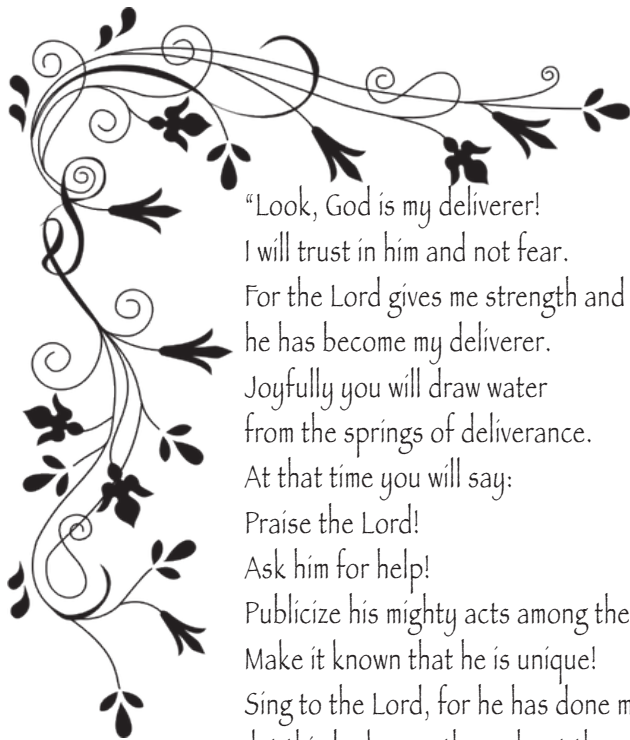
When Add died in September of 1973 the Lord in His mercy helped me to see a little more clearly in my second widowhood what I had only dimly described in the first: a gift, a call, and a vocation, not merely a condition to be endured. Paul's words came alive: *"Each one must order his life according to the gift the Lord has granted him"* (1 Cor. 7:17, NEB).

So it was the Lord who had put into my hands this gift of widowhood. Is this the little “cake” You need from me, Lord? Then I’ll bake it for You, Lord. Please have it.

And what next? *“I will offer ... the sacrifice of thanksgiving”* (Ps. 116:17, NKJV). It is wonderfully comforting to be absolutely sure that we do the will of God. Here is one matter about which there can be no doubt: *“Be thankful, whatever the circumstances may be. For this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus”* (1 Thess. 5:18, PHILLIPS). [113-120]



**Elisabeth Elliot** was one of the most influential Christian women of our time. For a half century, her best selling books, timeless teachings and courageous faith have influenced believers and seekers of Jesus Christ throughout the world. She used her experiences as a daughter, wife, mother, widow, and missionary to bring the message of Christ to countless women and men around the world.



“Look, God is my deliverer!  
I will trust in him and not fear.  
For the Lord gives me strength and protects me;  
he has become my deliverer.  
Joyfully you will draw water  
from the springs of deliverance.  
At that time you will say:  
Praise the Lord!  
Ask him for help!  
Publicize his mighty acts among the nations!  
Make it known that he is unique!  
Sing to the Lord, for he has done magnificent things,  
let this be known throughout the earth!”

Isaiah 12:2-5 NET



*Profusion.* 2019 by Suresh Kulkarni—Multnomah Falls, OR.



# The Greatest of These is LOVE

By Karen Doman, Main Street Church

I have considered myself a Christian my whole life. I attended Christian churches with my mother until I was 20 years old. Because my father was in the military, I attended many different churches as we moved around the country. I don't remember ever hearing about "born again Christians," or that the Holy Spirit could be part of my life, bringing me joy and helping to guide me while dwelling within me.

I believed that Jesus is the Son of God and that He died on the cross to give us eternal life because Jesus said, *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."* John 3:16 I thought because I considered myself a Christian, this already applied to me.

I became a Registered Respiratory Therapist at age 22. I had been a nurse's aide before attending college and found I enjoyed helping people recover from illness or being more comfortable at the end of life. I always cared about people and wanted to help anyone in any way I could. This was not a religious calling but my attitude about life and people.

During college I felt too busy to attend church, read the Bible, or pray regularly. When I fell in love, my future husband, who had been raised LDS, was not active. While he believed in his faith, unfortunate encounters with some people in his church resulted in his lack of participation. We discussed our belief differences and agreed to set religion aside.

My husband had many health problems throughout his life, including Multiple Sclerosis. He spent a great deal of time in hospitals and rehab centers. While he was recovering from two different heart surgeries, I was often in the hospital chapel, which brought me comfort; but still, due to our agreement, I stayed away from church.

After he died at age 71, I had to deal with being alone and my own health issues. I became very depressed. Encouraged by a friend, I started to read the Bible and to pray occasionally. However, after two and half years, as Christmas grew near, I went deeper and deeper

into depression. My health had deteriorated, I was very heavy, and was dealing with non-insulin diabetes. At that point I knew my binge eating was a mental and a potential physical problem made much worse by depression. If I wanted to live, I had to get my life under control. So I called Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and asked if they helped people with eating issues. They told me about Overeaters Anonymous (AO) and I began attending on January 24, 2019. Like AA, OA asked that we communicate with a higher power for strength. The higher power can be anything greater than ourselves. I chose God.

After a few weeks of praying to God, I felt a strong need to go to church and decided God was directing me. My friend attended Main Street Church in Brigham City, so I joined her on February 3rd, and a few weeks later began attending Bible study. On April 2nd, while doing my Bible study homework, I read I Corinthians 13 and stopped at verse 13. *"So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."*

This meant more to me than it ever had in the past. I then knew God is Love. It was what I had believed all along, and I began to cry tears of joy. Everything I had heard and read was pointing this out to me and now I understood. God was real and He was giving me unconditional love. Where had I heard that before? John's words in 1 John 4:7. *"Let us continue to Love one another, for Love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is Love."*

I thought and prayed about it that evening, and the next morning while getting ready for Bible study. As I was driving to Brigham City from my home in Ogden, somehow the world seemed brighter. The flowers were more vibrant, the sky was more blue, and the mountains were higher. I loved everything I saw. I passed a pasture where a new foal had been born. With tears in my eyes I thought, "God, You made that baby and brought him into this world."

Then everything I saw made me think about how God had made it all. I remembered the theory of evolution and knew it was wrong. I said, "God, I have no doubt You made all of this, the earth and heavens. You are the Creator! You are wondrous."

Suddenly, a great warmth seemed to pour into my heart, mind and body. I felt an indescribable joy. I asked myself and God if I had been born again into Him and Christ. Was this You through the Holy Spirit, adopting me into Your family? Paul's words encouraged me. "God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us." Romans 5:5

When I got to church I was still tearful with joy. I asked to speak privately with our class leader. I told her what had happened because I literally wanted someone to tell me I wasn't crazy. She told me that many people have experienced events similar to mine, bringing them great happiness as they became closer to God. I also learned some people have it happen over a longer period of time. Isaiah 43:1 is truth: "I have called you by name and you are Mine."

I began to wonder why I was chosen? What was special about me? What had I done to deserve this? Then I thought of two passages:

- Ephesians 2: 8-9, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."

- Ephesians 1: 5-6, "He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved."

To my surprise, I suddenly had an unquenchable thirst to learn the Word of God. Like other believers, the Holy Spirit was leading me in the direction God has in mind for me. Since it was close to Easter, I started studying Jesus. I knew His basic story but there was so much more to learn!

AND YOU SHALL KNOW THE  
**TRUTH**  
AND THE  
SHALL MAKE YOU FREE!  
JOHN 8:32

Paul said this learning is lifelong. "And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue His work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns." Philipians 1:6

At this point I have no idea what my calling or gifts might be. I am still learning all I can. Many days I spend hours reading about God. It often takes repeated readings and asking questions to understand the teachings. Although I knew some stories from the Bible, I certainly didn't know the messages God was teaching. Discovering is a wonderful experience.

At first I worried about losing this wonderful gift. What if I did something wrong that caused me to lose my salvation? This fear is quite common, I heard. Since then, I have found many places in the Bible assuring me that I will not lose my salvation. God through the Holy Spirit will always be with me. He promises, "I will be with you always, even until the end of the world." Matthew 28:20. And in Hebrews 13:5, "Never will I leave you: Never will I forsake you."

Friends have observed that I am much happier now. I won't deny that I still get lonely and depressed at times. However, the great difference now is that I have the Bible to read and God Himself with whom I can talk. He is so amazing. I love Him and He loves me.

## **Remember Whose You Are**

*Glory Days: Trusting the God Who Fights for You*

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What's the secret to survival in enemy territory? Remember what God has done! Record His accomplishments in your memoirs. Don't forget a single blessing. Create a trophy room in your heart. Each time you experience a victory, place a memory on the shelf. Before you face a challenge, take a quick tour of God's accomplishments.

John 1:12 says, "Yet to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God."

Live out your inheritance! You are loved, redeemed and filled with the Holy Spirit. You have the power of God in you to fight any battle you face.

The secret of survival in enemy territory? Remember what God has done. And remember whose you are! John 1:12—make it a verse to memorize this week.



# Who You Are in Christ

## **You are forgiven!**

- You have been forgiven and cleansed once for all. (Hebrews .9:28;10:2)
- By one sacrifice, you have been made perfect forever. (Hebrews10:14)
- You have been made holy through Jesus's sacrifice once for all. (Hebrews10:10)
- Your debt has been canceled. (Colossians 2:13-14)
- You have been reconciled to God. (Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 1:22)
- You have fellowship with God. (1 Corinthians.1:9; 1John 1:3)
- You have peace with God. (Romans 5:1)
- Your forgiven state inspires you to forgive others. (Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13)

## **You are free!**

- You are dead to the law. (Romans 7:4,6; Galatians 2:19)
- You are not under the law. (Romans 6:14; Galatians 5:18)
- You are not supervised by the law. (Galatians 3:25)
- The requirements of the law have been fully met in you. (Romans 8:3-4)
- Christ is the end of the law for you. (Romans 10:4)
- You are completely accepted. (Romans 15:7)
- You serve in God's new way, led by His Spirit. (Romans 7:6; Galatians 5:18)

## **You are new!**

- Your old self is dead, buried, and gone. (Romans 6:6-7; Galatians 2:20)
- You are dead to sin and alive to God. (Romans 6:11)
- You are a new creation re-created in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:10)
- The struggle is against the flesh and sin, not against yourself. (Romans 7:17, 20; Eph. 6:12)
- You are more than a conqueror through Jesus Christ. (Romans 8:37)
- You are just like Jesus at your spiritual core. (1 John 4:17)
- You are the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21)
- You are a saint, a holy one. (Ephesians1:1; Colossians1:2)
- You have a new, obedient heart. (Romans 6:17)
- You are born of God. (1John 5:18)

## **You are united to Christ!**

- Having eternal life means having Christ's life. (John 17:3; 1John 5:12)
- Christ literally and actually lives in you. (2 Corinthians13:5; Galatians 2:20)
- It is all of Him and all of you in union together. (Romans 6:5;1Corinthians 6:17)
- God is at work in you, carrying His work to completion. (Philippians1:6; 2:13)
- You are seated with Christ in heaven. (Ephesians 2:6; Philippians 3:20)
- You are hidden with Christ in God. (Colossians 3:3)

## **You are complete!**

- You are complete in Christ and have all of Him. (Colossians 2:10)
- You have everything you need for life and godliness. (2 Peter 1:3)
- You are blessed with every spiritual blessing. (Ephesians 1:3)
- You are fully equipped. (Hebrews 13:21; 2 Corinthians 3:6)
- You are never alone. (Hebrews 13:5)

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Jesus plus nothing. 100% natural. No additives.

“Faith is strengthened not by learning something new; faith is strengthened by coming back to what we have heard and known.” –Colin Smith, “Collective Weariness”

The Sower. Image from an 1860 pulpit Bible



## New Light on My Commission

By Diane Kulkarni—Main Street Church in Brigham City, Utah

This past summer I embarked on an eventful pilgrimage of discovering the truth about Jesus and my relationship with Him, expressed in the unity of His identity and mine. Several women and I explored this topic in a Bible study called *Christ in You: Alive and Free* by Pete Briscoe. It's not that God hasn't tried to teach me all these years, but somehow I was too eager to skip through the epistles' doctrinal teachings to get to the application part. I always loved lists of things to do. Odd, isn't it? For a very long time, I took it for granted that being a Christian meant I already knew the foundational truths.

Now I see that I have only scratched the surface of who God is and what He has done in my heart: “*If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation.*” This word “new” in Greek is *kainós*, meaning “fresh, new, unused, novel – properly, new in quality (innovation), fresh in development or opportunity—because ‘not found exactly like this before.’” The truth is, the old me was not renovated but made entirely new, suitable for God's Holy Spirit's dwelling place and the living out of His purposes. The same Greek word is used to describe the New Heavens and the New Earth. Consider *that* for a moment!

As John Newton wrote describing his own salvation, I know for sure that Jesus “saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now am found. Was blind but now I see.” This change from wretch to saint was only possible through the Holy Spirit's regeneration. It is profound mystery; all human beings are born dead in sin and have no capacity whatsoever to seek after God. So how does a spiritual corpse get born again?

God does it all as Paul describes in Ephesians 2:1-10 (bolded emphases mine in the context):

1. ***“But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus”*** (5-6).
2. The faith it takes to say “yes” to Jesus is 100 percent God’s provision, initiated and completed by Him; ***“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast”*** (8.9).
3. And finally, the lives we are called to lead have been prepared long before we were born. ***“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them”*** (10).

I know God’s understanding and wisdom are far beyond human comprehension, so I *choose to believe* what I can’t figure out and walk in the truths He is revealing to me. They are in all caps and a thousand stories high at least. For instance, in II Corinthians 5:17-21, I discover anew that not only am I God’s unique creation, His *poiéma* (His finely-crafted poem), I am also His ambassador sent with a commission from Him to take His message and ministry of reconciliation into the world, beginning right where I am. Because Jesus became sin for me, and for us, God has incredibly made all believers His righteousness. Speaking of not *feeling* any of this but knowing the truth of it! However, by contemplating my precious commission as one of His ambassadors, I am taking baby steps in just how God is calling me to speak to people with the message: *“Be reconciled to God.”*

Consuelo Perea, of Brigham City, was one who also completed *Alive and Free*. She said, “The study made me look at GOD outside the box. But inside He made me look at who He is in me. The way He see me. Much loved, forgiven, set free to live. Change has been hard, but He did His work in me. All I did was ask. GOD is enough which makes me enough. Praise His Holy name. Trying to be more like JESUS.”



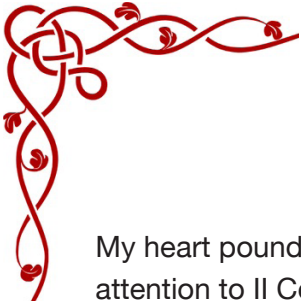
## Patient Trust

*A Prayer of Teilhard de Chardin*

Above all, trust in the slow work of God.  
We are quite naturally impatient in everything  
to reach the end without delay.  
We should like to skip the intermediate stages.  
We are impatient of being on the way to  
something  
unknown, something new.  
And yet it is the law of all progress  
that it is made by passing through  
some stages of instability—  
and that it may take a very long time.  
And so I think it is with you;  
your ideas mature gradually—let them grow,  
let them shape themselves, without undue haste.

Don’t try to force them on,  
as though you could be today what time  
(that is to say, grace and circumstances  
acting on your own good will)  
will make of you tomorrow.  
Only God could say what this new spirit  
gradually forming within you will be.  
Give Our Lord the benefit of believing  
that his hand is leading you,  
and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself  
in suspense and incomplete.

—Excerpted from *Hearts on Fire* by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J. (1881-1955). Used with permission 2019, Loyola Press.



# Beauty for Ashes

By Georgia Herod—Liberty, MO

My heart pounded throughout the sermon this morning. As soon as the pastor directed our attention to II Corinthians 12:7-10, I traveled back in time and space to 1968 when my husband was killed in Vietnam.

I had accepted Christ as a 12-year-old, but there had been no growth. In fact, I didn't know what that even meant. I was a nominal Christian. I knew very little about the Bible, how to read it or study it, much less apply it to my life.

When my life was shattered by my husband's death, I was a devastated 24-year-old widow—who didn't know how to go on. I experienced darkness, depression, and despair. But in the middle of that morass and slough of despond, I cried out to God: "I don't want to live this way. Do something."

I was weak--I was alone. I knew God was my only hope.

How blessed I was to be directed to a church that emphasized discipleship and Bible study. There I was exposed to powerful Bible teaching--and there I encountered II Corinthians 12:7-10. The Holy Spirit comforted and encouraged my heart with God's words through Paul: "*My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.*" I memorized and meditated on this passage, and in doing so, I began to experience God's grace, His sufficiency, His power.

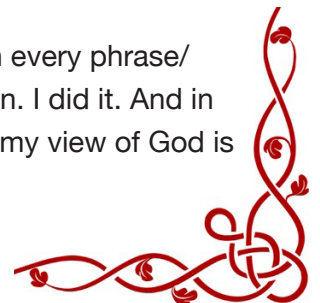
The depression lifted. Energy and enthusiasm for life returned. God led me to strong believers and brought godly women alongside me as mentors. When grief would move to steal my joy, God's grace drew me to Jesus. When I was weak, I became strong—just as God's Word declared.

I often share with others how God revealed Himself in my weakness. Recently a friend who had walked beside me during that time made the comment that God had used that loss to grow me up and prepare me for His purposes.

I would not say that I am glad I walked through the Valley, but how grateful I am for how God used it not only to encourage me, but to change the trajectory of my relationship with Him, and to transform me into the image of Jesus Christ.

Indeed, He has given me "*beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, a garment of praise for a spirit of heaviness, that I might be a tree of righteousness, a planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified*" (Isaiah 61:3).

A few years later, someone challenged me to read through Isaiah and write down every phrase/word, etc. about God. Then reread it and write down everything it says about man. I did it. And in the years since, Isaiah has been my "go-to" book for whatever I need—because my view of God is enlarged every time.



# 8 LIFE-GIVING WAYS TO CARE FOR YOUR SOUL

By Deborah Haddix—Ohio

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Each of us has a living soul. What's more, this soul is eternal and forms the very foundation of who we are. Operating as our command center, it is our "personhood." Our soul is the most important part of us. Yet, because it is invisible, we tend to overlook its existence and its health. Left alone, it shrivels.

Each of us, individually, is responsible for the care of our own soul. Cognizant that it is the very nature of our soul to need, we must become intentional about meeting its needs. Although the needs of our soul are many, meeting its needs does not have to be an overwhelming, burdensome task.

The care of our soul does require our time and attention, but all of our soul's needs are met in God. *"My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God."* (Psalm 84:2)

Consider these eight refreshing ways to care for your soul:

## 1. Schedule a Time of Solitude

*"Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.'"* (Mark 6:31) Have you ever noticed how many times it is recorded that Jesus *"went away to a quiet place?"* His need for solitude was so great that He even left the crowds and the work behind in order to observe it.

Solitude is the practice of intentionally unplugging, and it allows us to experience God as He restores our soul. Stepping away for lengthy periods of time serves to rid us of the deterioration of soul that results from

constant interaction. In this place of quiet communion, we rediscover our soul. Additionally, we experience the presence of God and understand once again that He will not compete for our attention.

In his book, *An Unhurried Life*, Alan Fadling refers to this discipline as "Extended Personal Communion" with God. He chose this term because he says it sounds warmer and more inviting to him than the word 'solitude.' Perhaps a renaming will be helpful to you as well.

## 2. Sit in Silence

*"The LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him."* (Habakkuk 2:20) In our culture, silence is a rare thing. However, in the Word of God, it is essential. To observe a time of silence, we must abstain from sound in order to make space for deeper engagement with God. Silence is the practice of drawing away to a quiet place and not speaking in order to quiet the mind and attend to God's presence.

## 3. Abide in Prayer

*"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."* (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18) Simply defined, prayer is conversing with God. In thinking of it as a conversation, however, we need to take care not to assume that we must fill the time with words. Praying is not so much the mustering up of words and energy, as it is a time of joining in with God and His activity. As you learn to abide in prayer, consider breathing breath prayers throughout the day, praying Scripture, journaling your prayers, or praying in color.

## 4. Practice God's Presence

*"I keep my eyes always on the LORD. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken."* (Psalm 16:8) Practicing the presence of God is about paying attention, and paying attention is difficult in our culture



*The Treasures of the Snow.* 2017 Hyrum State Park, Utah by Tess Hanly



of busyness and noise. Many of us, in fact, have allowed ourselves to get caught up in a way of life that does not set us up to pay attention to the presence of God. We must recognize this and intentionally set about to become “noticers”—abandoning ourselves to the presence of God and His working in our lives. We must learn to live with an ongoing awareness of the living, active, Holy God who has chosen to spend His days with us.

#### Ideas for Practicing His Presence:

- Meditate on Scripture.
- Memorize Scripture.
- Preach the gospel to yourself.
- Sing songs of praise.
- Set reminder alarms on your phone.
- Post sticky notes around your home.
- Acknowledge His presence by speaking out loud to Him.
- Identify a trigger that when seen or heard will serve to remind you of His love.

#### 5. Institute “Grace Breaks”

“Grace Breaks” are brief times set aside for the purpose of reviewing things that God speaks to you during your morning quiet time together. They provide a much-needed respite for your soul. How often do we begin our day in sweet communion with our heavenly Father, even to the point of being overcome by something He has revealed to us, only to have it evaporate into the morning fog? Off to care for the things of the day—so much to do, places to be, people demanding our time and energy—and that precious time is never given another thought.

**We need time. Time to recall. Time to remember.**

#### 6. Express Gratitude

*“Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.”* (Psalm 100:4) Gratitude is one of the needs of the soul. Adopting the grateful attitude of Jesus helps the soul thrive. For the believer in Christ, thanksgiving should be a perpetual and ongoing expression, as natural as breathing.

#### Ideas for Expressing Gratitude:

- Count gifts—any number (3, 6, 10...) per day.
- Keep a journal by your bed. Record things for which you are thankful before going to sleep each night.
- Frame a pretty sheet of paper behind glass. Using a dry erase marker, begin each day by recording something you are thankful for.
- Photograph things you are grateful for.
- Send thank-you notes.
- Write a thank-you letter to God.

#### 7. Slow Down

*“He says, ‘Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.’”* (Psalm 46:10) Jesus is our example, and He knew the power of a rested soul. Our soul was not designed to run on empty, and sadly, it does not come with a gauge. We must learn to provide our soul with the rest it requires so that it doesn’t become fatigued. Spend time with a friend, go for a walk, take a nap, set an alarm and pull away from your activity for just five minutes, slow your thoughts, pause as you read Scripture. Pay attention, savor, reflect. Learn the art of lingering.

#### 8. Journal

Journaling is an invaluable tool for caring for the soul. The process of journaling creates space, focuses our attention, and builds relationship. It invites us to be quiet and still. Journaling provides rest and helps us be with God.

#### Ideas for Journaling:

- Record your prayers.
- Journal your thoughts, reflections, and questions as you study Scripture.
- Express your gratitude in a journal.
- Take a journal along when observing times of solitude or silence.
- Write love letters to God.

This list is not, by any means, exhaustive. It is merely a sampling. Use it as a starting point or allow it to spur your own ideas. It doesn’t matter. What matters is spending time with God. Our soul yearns for Him. It was made to walk with Him.

**Deborah Haddix** is the author of several books, including *Soul Nourishment*. She also serves as co-director of Resources and Education for Christian Grandparenting Network’s Prayer Ministry, is a faculty member of the National Association of Christian Journaling, and a contributing writer for Crosswalk.com. Deborah writes, blogs, speaks, and coaches on topics of interest to today’s busy woman, soul care, and biblical grandparenting.



Read the blog and find resources at [deborahhaddix.com](http://deborahhaddix.com).



*Into the Valley: Tess Hanly, 2019*

## Indelible Ink

*By Tess Hanly—Main Street Church*

When I drift or wander  
And get lost upon the seas  
It is His love written in His letters  
That calms my heart and anchors me.

When I am walking through the valley  
And death seems to chase me to my end  
He gently leads me with lovingkindness  
To eternally dwell with Him

In the darkness overwhelming  
His rod and staff, they comfort me  
For He leads guides and restores  
His goodness and mercy follow me

His Good News is steadfastly saving  
The ones who know they have lost their way  
Not one of them will be lost or missing  
In this love is where I'll stay

When I least expect it,  
In the course of ordinary life  
His Spirit lifts me like a feather  
Whispers to me, His delight

Like a breeze that softly moves things  
He reveals to me anew  
What is written in His letters  
One day will all come true.

*“To bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor.”*

Isaiah 61:3 NIV

## Beautiful Creation Out of a Hopeless Mess

*Laura Stephens—Main Street Church in Brigham City, UT*

Seven years ago, my life may have seemed nearly perfect to the casual observer. We'd been married for ten years, we owned a home, and we had a beautiful son. Sometimes we attended church together, and I made excuses for him when he didn't. I taught Sunday School. I smiled and kept up the appearance of a happy family. I gave no indication that anything was wrong.

However, inside that seemingly normal home and marriage were very ugly, broken things. The marriage was in trouble and the atmosphere was toxic. No matter what I did, how perfect I tried to be, or how welcome I made our home, nothing made a difference.

Marriage and motherhood were two things I'd always believed I was called to. My husband reinforced to me on a daily basis that I was a miserable failure at both. I was deeply depressed. I resolved to try harder, pray harder. My sweet mother-in-law paid for our attendance at a weekend marriage conference. I bought marriage books and pored over them. Still nothing helped. So I spent every possible second away from home, either taking our son with me; or making sure he was with his grandmother. I withdrew and avoided. It was the only way I knew to cope with the inevitable hostility. I emotionally left the marriage many years before I physically left.

Easter Sunday 2012, my son had an accident at a church fellowship that resulted in a broken arm. His dad and I both ran to him. Rather than being united in caring for our son, my husband screamed at me to “GET BACK!” three times, in front of all of our friends. From that moment, I resolved to leave the marriage. I quietly plotted and planned my escape through that summer. I told my parents what had been happening, which I'd not shared with them before. They offered to take me and my son in.

One Thursday morning at the end of August, he left early for work. I got ready, took our son to school, and then friends arrived to help me move my personal belongings. We were done quickly. I left a letter for him. A half-page explained why I'd left—he knew, after all. Then eight detailed pages followed with instructions about household things I was leaving behind that he needed to know.

The days that followed were incredibly peaceful and happy. I knew that God led me out of that situation; but somehow I thought that it was His will for me to attempt to reconcile. For two and a half years, we did counseling. It was an emotional roller coaster for me trying to be good enough, while he rejected me over and over again. In the end, my husband chose another to pursue.

I was oddly thankful for his new relationship. Finally, I felt that I had biblical grounds to proceed with a divorce. (If you are going through something similar, please know that emotional/verbal abuse is biblical grounds).

In those years, God brought me to a place of complete and utter dependence on Him. I gave up my home and most of what I'd owned in order to be divorced quickly. Life seemed like a hopeless mess, an utter disaster. I was approaching 40, a single mom, without any prospects, home, savings, or a degree, in the middle of paying off a



bankruptcy, living with my parents. I cried out to God, asking how this situation could EVER be better.

Seven years later, God has been so faithful to redeem those lost years! HE has provided every need.

- HE has taken care of me.
- HE has taken care of my child.
- HE has loved me through the unlovable.
- HE has sustained my job, promoted me.
- HE has seen me through school.
- HE has provided a home.
- HE has made me able.
- HE has defended me.
- HE is jealous for me.
- HE has been my husband. The Creator of the universe is sweetly husbanding me! I am not rejected, unloved or unwanted.



Recently, I was working on a rustic, patchwork desktop for a friend. During the process of working on it, if people had walked in to see the mess, they would have sworn that the designer was absolutely nuts. “This does not look good... What good could come of this? Surely, nothing.”

I laughed to myself because my seven-years-ago life looked a lot like the first picture with all the various colors of stains open, spills, dirty rags, and disorganized—a hopeless mess.



Seven years ago, I was questioning the Creator

about why He allowed my situation. Why had I waited so long for a husband? Why had He then brought me someone who treated me horribly? Why wasn't I blessed with a great marriage? Why didn't my husband love me enough not to choose another woman? Why were my finances in shambles? What even *IS* this mess?

Even through my defiance, questioning, and protests, He took each piece of my life as I surrendered it to Him. He worked on each part; then placed them in the order that pleased Him. Maybe the Designer allows the mess in order to bring about something uniquely beautiful to accomplish His purpose.



**Laura Stephens** attends Main Street Church where she serves as Coffee Coordinator and as a committee member of Bind Us Together Women's Ministries. She has one son, Grayson, and lives in Ogden. She is employed with Boeing on Hill Air Force Base as a project management specialist. She holds a bachelor's degree and MBA from Colorado Technical University, and is currently earning a Master's in Communications and Leadership through Gonzaga University. Photo: All Things ShelleyRachelle Photography, Garland.

# A Life-Giving Practice

By Nicole Unice

Reprinted with permission, 2019—based on *Help, My Bible is Alive* by Nicole Unice

Growing up, church consisted of the following smattering of memories: counting the beams in the sanctuary ceiling during particularly boring sermons; earning candy by memorizing verses, and the interminable wait of me and my impatient and hungry siblings while my parents "fellowshipped" for what felt like 14 years after each service. At face value, my memories of church—and specifically the Bible—didn't feel important or relevant to my life as a child, nor as an adult. I believe that time was meaningful in God's economy, but maybe in some unexpected ways.

Fast-forward thirty years, and I'm more surprised than anyone that I've devoted my life to helping people discover the power and relevancy of God's Word. Religious platitudes and churches that cater to satisfying our insatiable customer service appetite will never satisfy our soul's need for truth, power, comfort and direction. But God's Word, found in the Bible, can.

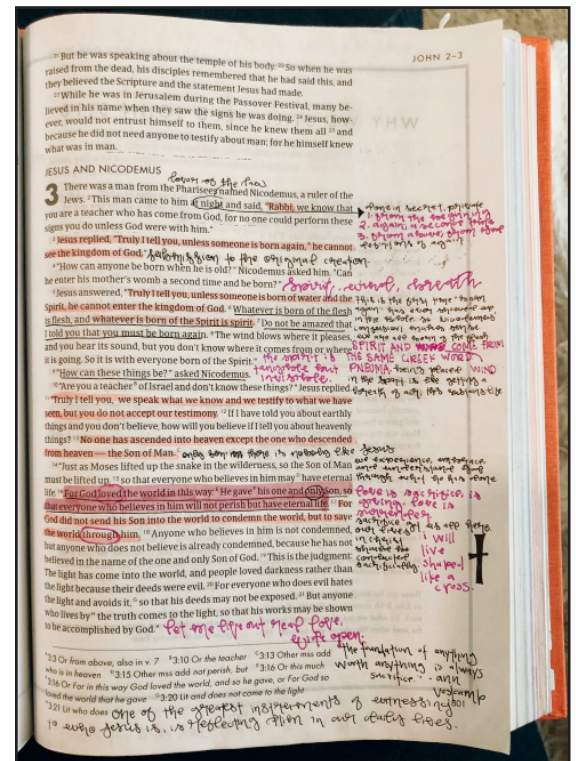
Recent studies show that although more than 95% of Americans own a Bible, fewer than 30% read it even weekly. There's been a disconnect between our church pews and our individual experience of God in his Word. And this is a tragedy, because of all the Bible offers to be for our lives:

**The Bible offers direction.** We live in a world that screams with competing priorities - be this, buy this, believe this! The Bible is a timeless anchor that gives us the ability to understand God, understand ourselves, and discover the relationship he desires to have with each one of us.

**The Bible offers life interpretation.** As human beings, we experience life in and through stories. No one can recite the manual to their garbage disposal, but almost everyone can recall a story they've seen or read that's been meaningful in their life. We are wired to experience life in story, and the Bible is the greatest story ever told. Locating our own struggles, dreams and experiences within the framework of the story of the Bible gives us a vivid framework to interpret our lives.

**The Bible offers connection.** The Bible is our Creator's chosen instrument for speaking to his people in our day. 2 Timothy 3:16 says all scripture is God-breathed. The whole thing has meaning and relevance to our life. The verse goes on to give this powerful list of things the Word does in our life (teaching, correction, training)—and it gives us the connection we need in verse 17—that the Bible is designed to make us thoroughly equipped for every good work in our life. Not partially equipped, not somewhat equipped, not equipped if we are working in a church—but every single one of us, no matter our age, stage or position in life. We will be completely equipped for life through the Word.

These are powerful promises, but I fear that many of us either do not believe them, haven't been taught them, or have tried and given up on experiencing God's Word in this way. And I think it's time to change that.



2019. Madeleine Felix

Once upon a time, I needed to be bribed by candy treats to memorize Bible verses that were often disconnected from the story of the Bible. I'm so grateful that my study of the Bible has moved from a "have to" to a sweet, life-giving practice. What about for you? It's never too late to find the direction, life interpretation, and connection that God offers in his Word!



**Nicole Unice** is a pastor, author and speaker who helps people connect to God and to each other more deeply with honesty and grace. Her latest book, "Help, My Bible is Alive" is a 30 day journey designed to help readers experience God through the His Word. "A Life-Giving Practice" blog was first published on [www.elisamorgan.com](http://www.elisamorgan.com). You can find out more about Nicole at <http://nicoleunice.com> and the book's landing page at [mybibleisalive.com](http://mybibleisalive.com). You can find out more about Nicole at <http://nicoleunice.com>

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## God's Gift: Salvation by Grace Through Faith

***"And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him."***

—Hebrews 11:6 NASB

"Christian faith is confidence in Jesus Christ. It is confidence in his ability to bring you through every circumstance of life. . . .He is Lord over the darkest temptations and the strongest devils."

—Colin Smith, "What is the Christian Faith?"

***"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."***

—Romans 10:17 NASB

***"Before you trust, you have to listen. But unless Christ's Word is preached, there's nothing to listen to."*** —Romans 10:17 Msg

***"Faith is acting like something is so even when it is not so in order that it might be so simply because God said so."***

—Tony Evans, "Walking in Faith."

"Faith is the abandoning of all hope of finding meaning to life within ourselves and our efforts and resting totally in God and His love for us." —Malcolm Smith, *Let God Love You*

***"Faith is the assurance that the thing which God has said in His Word is true, and that God will act according to what He has said in His Word. This assurance, this reliance on God's Word, this confidence is FAITH."***

—George Mueller, "Real Faith."

"Faith + hope = trust. That's the equation for life. Faith can be simply defined as bringing everything to Jesus, being honest about our hopes, and trusting in Him for all things. Period." —Pete Briscoe, *Dance Lessons*

"Faith is simply the bringing of our minds into accord with the truth. It is adjusting our expectations to the promises of God in complete assurance that the God of the whole earth cannot lie."

—A. W. Tozer, *The Alliance Tozer Devotional*

"Faith is the sight of the inward eye. . . cleaving to Christ, twining round Him with all the tendrils of our heart, as the vine does round its support."

—Alexander MacLaren, expositor

***"Faith is living everyday (every moment) as if God has already done what He promised to do!"***

—Shane Philip, *The Crossing*

***"There's nothing like the written Word of God for showing you the way to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another—showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God's way. Through the Word we are put together and shaped up for the tasks God has for us."*** —II Timothy 3:15-17 Msg



“SHOW ME YOUR WAYS, O LORD; TEACH  
ME YOUR PATHS. GUIDE ME IN YOUR TRUTH  
AND FAITHFULNESS AND TEACH ME, FOR YOU  
ARE THE GOD OF MY SALVATION; FOR YOU  
[YOU ONLY AND ALTOGETHER] DO I WAIT  
[EXPECTANTLY] ALL THE DAY LONG.”

—Psalm 25:4-5 AMPC