

The Addictions Kit **For Substance Abuse**

Biblical Help for Addictions



God's Help For The Tough Problems
Spiritual Warfare Prayer
Scriptures To Defeat The Addiction
Testimonies
60 Devotionals

by Ed Wrather

*Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Sweetwater, Oklahoma and
former Oklahoma Sr. Probation and Parole Officer.*

edwrather@theburningbush.org
www.theburningbush.org

Entire Contents of the *Addictions Kit* Copyright © 1993 - 2005. Ed Wrather.
All rights reserved. Material may be used on
a non-profit basis with source noted.

Scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®.
Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society.
Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

Letter of Introduction - Page 1

God's Help for the Tough Problems - Page 2

Instructions for Use of the Kit - Page 6

< Material for Tape Begins >

Praise and Prayer - Page 7

Scriptures - Page 10

Scriptures Specific for Addiction - Page 12

< End of Material for Tape >

Hints for Escape - Page 13

Testimonies - Page 14

Devotionals - Page 19

Dear Friend,

This material was originally contained in a series of emails which I sent to those requesting help. This material provides a theological background, and the practical Biblical steps to defeat your addiction. You will need to prepare a cassette tape which you will listen to frequently (Although the material will be helpful even without listening to a tape. You can use the material to enrich your prayer life and as a guide to Scripture memorization and meditation.). The words to use will be included in Part 1 and Part 2 for the tape. Much of the material I am sending you is posted at the Burning Bush website in The Journey to Fruitfulness and Part II Help for the Journey www.theburningbush.org/10.html

You must be continually vigilant. Others praying for you will help. But the Word of God is what will really make the difference. If you are not consistent in your daily quiet time you must be. Commit yourself that having that quiet time is the first thing you will do every day. If you are not in the Word of God every day you will continually fall back into this addiction. You can receive a daily Bible reading by email from www.freebibleemail.com.

If you are not a member of the Burning Bush Restoration and Recovery Group you might want to join it. If you join the group you will have access to many devotionals that are directed toward those with addictions. You might want to take a look at it you can always unsubscribe later. You may join by sending a blank email to tbrr-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. You will need to reply to a confirmation email to complete the subscription process. Then you may access the archive by going to: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/tbrr/messages>

You may also receive the Burning Bush Devotionals which are sent by email four to five times per week by sending a blank email to: burningbushdevo-subscribe@welovegod.org

If you slip remember a righteous man (or woman) may fall seven times but he (or she) will get up again. Seven is symbolic in the Bible for perfection or infinity meaning that you may fall and rise again many more times than seven. Every time you get back up it is a slap in the devil's face. Continue on. Return again, and again, and again, until you are walking with God through this problem and fall no more. God does have the power to defeat this problem in your life. Believe it!

Praying for you,

Ed Wrather
P. O. Box 210
Sweetwater, OK 73666
wrather@dobsonteleco.com
edwrather@theburningbush.org

GOD'S HELP FOR THE TOUGH PROBLEMS

Overcoming Addictions Through God's Power and Resources

(by Ed Wrather, Pastor of First Baptist Church, Sweetwater, OK)

Drug abuse, alcohol abuse, and sexual addictions, (and anger) these problems have been classed too many times as being beyond the power of God. Does God have the answer for really serious problems such as these? I believe the answer is a resounding, YES!

For many years I served as an adult probation and parole officer for the State of Oklahoma. My caseload reached numbers of over 100 for the majority of my time of service. Clients on probation, parole, pre-parole, and house arrest were supervised. Clients serving sentences for murder, robbery, rape, other sexual offenses, drug offenses, and a whole range of minor offenses were supervised. In addition, pre-sentence investigations and recommendations were made to the courts.

For approximately 90% of my clients (May have actually been a higher percentage.) there was a common denominator, they had a drug or alcohol problem. This substance abuse problem contributed to most of their offenses. From the use of traditional treatment methods, I know personally of few long-term successes in solving those substance abuse problems. They are, however, the best thing available to many and are a good starting point for serious addictions. Also, in the short-term, traditional treatment programs are effective for many who have the desire to change and can be a starting point for the use of God's resources.

In November of 1990 I responded to God's call and entered the ministry. One of the factors involved in answering that call was the frustration experienced in using man's methods to help people solve their problems and seeing mostly failure. Sure, for many clients intensive supervision provided a temporary respite to their problems. However, when supervision was reduce or ended, most returned to their old life style. Through my service as a parole officer and my failure to induce change, I have come to believe God has the only real solutions for addictions on a long-term basis.

In addition to observing sin at work in the lives of my clients, and others; I have over the years experienced my own problems with sin. Problems such as: greed, lust, selfishness, dishonesty, anger, pride, and others. Can God solve these problems? The answer is, YES! This is not to say that we can ever be perfect, for only our Savior, Jesus Christ, is perfect. But for all practical purposes in our day to day lives these problems can be controlled. Self-control is one of the fruits of the Spirit which are listed in the bible. **"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23 NIV)**. God has given me and countless others the fruit of self-control and since it comes from God, it is really God-control. You can have God-control too.

How does a person go about receiving relief from their problems of substance abuse, sexual addiction and other problems? These problems and all sin problems are like a terrible cancer which destroys and consumes. The result of sin is death (**Romans 6:23a**) and whether we agree substance abuse is a sin the result is the same. The result of all these problems is the destruction of all that is good in a person. Call it sin, or whatever you like, the result is the same, the result of these problems is self-destruction, the very opposite of what God wants to give to us. In the bay at Naples, Italy lives a variety of snail which the jellyfish there love to eat. Little do the jellyfish know

that when they eat the snails, the snails do not die but instead begin little by little to eat the jellyfish from inside out. Eventually the jellyfish dies and the snail lives on. Of course the best way to avoid the results of sin is to avoid eating one of those snails like alcohol, or drug addiction.

Solving problems of sin can be as simple as going to our Heavenly Father, confessing our sins and seeking forgiveness through Jesus Christ. For some, God has immediately taken away their problems, but we know that for most people it's not that easy. Personally, I know of very, very few people that have had their problems with addictions taken completely away upon forgiveness of their sins. Receiving Christ as our Savior is, however, the starting point for us all. If we want God's help we must be sure we belong to him. Come to Jesus in repentance, ask Him to come into your heart and life. Ask Jesus to be Lord of your life and to solve the problems of sin in your life. Right now you can do that by praying a prayer such as the one following. Remember it is not so much the words that you say but whether or not you mean it in your heart.

"Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you died on the cross for my sins and rose again on the third day. Please forgive me for the sins, the bad things I have done, I want to change. Please help me to change, be my Lord and my Master and my Savior. In your name Lord Jesus I ask You to come into my heart and save me. Amen."

The Bible says, **"But as many as received Him (Jesus), to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name"** (John 1:12 KJV). God has the power to enable you to live a Godly life. Putting your trust in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior is the starting point.

The Apostle Paul talks about baby Christians and mature Christians. The Christian life can be viewed as a journey from immaturity to maturity. This process of maturing as a Christian can be speeded up if you are willing to take advantage of the resources which God has provided. The Bible says, **"And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus"** (Philippians 4:10 NIV). God has provided the resources and they are available to us, we must make use of them. Some of those resources are prayer, the Bible, the church, and the most of all the Holy Spirit.

We can view sin as a problem, like a physical disease which needs treatment. For many diseases the whole body must be treated before relief is found. For sin the whole person must be treated at the same time. The effects of sin cannot be removed and handed over to the preacher or someone else to deal with. Sin has an effect upon the total person, every part. For relief a person must immerse themselves completely in the resources of God. God's resources of prayer, the Bible, and the Church, can be viewed as a Heavenly microwave which zaps sin. In order for the sin to be treated, we must get inside of that Heavenly microwave and turn up the power.

Now, let us look more closely at how God's resources can help you in a very practical way. Consider first, prayer. The Bible says, **"Do not be anxious about any thing, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus"** (Philippians 4:6-7 NIV). The Bible also says, **"This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears**

us, whatever we ask, we know that we have what we asked of Him" (1 John 5:14-15 NIV).

Prayer will activate God's resources in your life. Personally my prayer life only began to grow when I made a commitment to pray every day.

How much time in prayer should you spend on a daily basis? The more serious the problem the more time in prayer that will be needed. For someone that has never prayed, fifteen minutes can seem like it goes on forever. But when we see God's hand working in our lives in response to our prayers, we can easily begin to stretch the time we spend with our Lord, from 15 minutes, to 30 minutes to an hour or even more. Because that time with God becomes something we treasure more than anything else in life. It's almost like developing a new addiction, and addiction to God.

However you do it, the important thing is to get started, begin talking to God. Do it in the way that is most comfortable for you. During my regular prayer time, I spend some time sitting, some time kneeling and some time walking. Take advantage of the times during the day when you are not using your mind for other things, to pray. You can pray while driving, or doing household chores, or while standing in line, don't waste those opportunities to spend time with your Lord. One final thing about prayer. Ask others to pray for you, the more prayer support you have the better. It's not a substitute for your own prayers but the prayers of others do make a difference. And, of course, you should pray for others too. You can be assured that I pray for all those that read this message, God's Help For The Tough Problems.

Now for the Bible, another of God's fantastic resources. The Bible is the sword of the Holy Spirit. **"And take...the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" (Ephesians 6:17 KJV).** Daily Bible reading is an absolute necessity for the defeat of sin in our lives. But even more of a necessity is the memorization of verses of scripture. The Psalmist asks the question. **"How may a young man keep his way pure (Psalm 119:9a NIV)?"** He answers his own question by saying, **"By living according to your word (Psalm 119:9b NIV)."** And how does the Psalmist live according to God's Word? The Psalmist then says, **"I have hidden your word in my heart so that I might not sin against you (Psalm 119:11 NIV)."** We must do the same.

Several years ago I found myself going backwards instead of forward in my Christian journey toward maturity. I found myself sinking deeper into sin, even though this was not what I wanted. A verse in the book of James seemed to come out of the recesses of my mind and speak to me. The Bible says, **"Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you (James 4:8 NIV)."** The question for me at that time was, how could I draw near to God? I was praying every day, I was reading the Bible, and I was attending church. What more could I do?

The Psalmist's answer began to loom in my own heart as to what was needed. I needed to hide God's Word in my heart, I needed to memorize God's Word. Now, my memory has never been that great, but desperate people do desperate things. I became determined to memorize verses of Scripture, whatever it took, if this would help, I wanted to find out. I purchased a Scripture memorization program and began memorizing two verses of Scripture a week.

My problems didn't immediately disappear, but I kept memorizing Scripture. For me, this was my last stop, if this didn't work I didn't know of anything else to try. If this didn't get me back on track and moving toward maturity, nothing would. Immediately I did sense that there was power in God's Word.

With each new verse that was memorized it was as if a brick out of the wall separating me from fellowship with my Lord had been removed. Brick by brick that wall came down and God did draw near as I sought to draw near to Him. It took several months before it seemed I was again headed in the right direction.

I eventually memorized 200 verses of Scripture and through His Word, God has brought me to where I am now. I will never out grow the need for God's Word. Each day I repeat out loud 60 or so verses, usually in the morning. I do this while showering (Some people sing in the shower, I repeat memory verses.) and getting dressed. Sometimes I repeat these verses while walking or while driving. And whenever I feel temptations, have anxiety, or experience anger, or depression, I immediately pray and run God's Word through my mind. His Word always soothes my soul. God's Word can do the same for you. There is no problem too tough for this resource of God and everyone can memorize. It just depends on whether you are really serious about breaking free of the bondage of sin. I know that I was very, very serious.

Next, we come to the resource of the Church. God has used the church powerfully in my life. Through the church God has held my family and my marriage together when nothing else seemed to be working. In the church is where I heard about God's amazing resources. The Bible says, "**And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is but so much the more as you see the day approaching**" (Hebrews 10:24-25 KJV). It is God's will for us to be in church, faithfully serving and worshipping Him there. In the church we are lifted up and encouraged, we are "**provoked unto love and good works.**" In the church we see a focusing of God's power. Jesus says, "**For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them**" (Matthew 18:20 KJV)." This focus of God's power cannot be found by simply watching TV on Sunday morning by yourself. Many times my family would go to church on Sunday morning with frowns on their faces. When we left the church building to go home, replacing those frowns would be a radiance, a glow of joy on our faces. The Church is where you can find people who will love you, help you, lift you up and pray for you. No matter what terrible dark sins you may have committed, in the church you will find people who will forgive you and care about you. Thank God for the Church!

The plan which I have given here is not an easy plan. It will not happen automatically. In this life we have to make some tough choices. Do we want to continue down the road of self-destruction? I have seen hundreds of people who have chosen to do exactly that, they have chosen to destroy their own lives and the lives of those around them. You don't have to follow them, you have a choice. My prayer for all those who struggle with sin, is that you would not only get into that Heavenly microwave of God's resources, but turn the power up on high. I've seen nothing else that truly works. It has worked for me, I have seen it work for many others, and I am convinced that God has the power to change and transform the lives of every person sincerely committed to using God's resources.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE OF THE KIT

The cassette tape (This material will be helpful to you even if you cannot prepare a cassette tape.) will be a tool that you can use to fight against three enemies: the world; the flesh; and the devil. For the tape to be effective you must believe that God's Word is true and that it is powerful.

Play the tape as frequently as your problem arises but at least once a day for several weeks. I think that you will find that it is a very powerful tool. Most likely after just a few times the enemy will flee and leave you alone.

I would encourage you to pick out a few of the verses used and begin to memorize them. Pick out the verses that seem to be the most convicting, the most directed to your problem. You need to memorize God's Word because there will be times when you will be unable to play a tape but you can always run God's Word through your mind, even in a crowd.

There are three portions to the tape:

1. Praise. Praise is one of the most powerful weapons that we have. So, even when you may not feel like praising God that is most likely the time you need to praise Him. Praise makes the enemy run and draws God closer.
2. Prayer. Prayer in the Name of Jesus is an absolute necessity. Don't let a day go by without asking for God's protection for you and your family. Whenever I stop asking for God's protection everything starts falling apart. Whenever I begin praying everything comes together. In the model prayer that we know as the Lord's Prayer our Lord says that we should pray, "**Give us this day....**" We are fools if we do not ask for His help with each day of our lives.
3. Scripture. Jesus when He was being tempted by the devil in the wilderness responded every time with Scripture to the devil's temptations. Jesus would say, "**It is written....**" Jesus says that "**Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4 KJV).**" We need a daily intake of the Word of God. We need to read it, study it, meditate upon it, and memorize it. The more we have the better it will be for us. Scripture is the ultimate health food for the child of God.

PRAISE AND PRAYER TO MAKE THE ENEMY FLEE

I praise You, Jesus, You are my Life, my Love.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Name above all names.
I praise You, Jesus, You are Emmanuel, God with us.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the King of kings.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the King of creation.
I praise You, Jesus, You are King of the universe.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Lord of lords.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Almighty.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Christ.
I praise You, Jesus, You are Christ, the King.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Lamb of God.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Lion of Judah.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Bright Morning Star.
I praise You, Jesus, You are my Champion and Shield.
I praise You, Jesus, You are my Strength and my Song.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Way for my life.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the only Truth.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Real Life.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Wonderful Counselor.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Prince of Peace.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Light of the World.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Living Word.
I praise You, Jesus, You are my Redeemer.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Messiah.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Anointed One.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Holy One of Israel.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Good Shepherd.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Sheepgate.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Lord of Hosts.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Rock of all ages.
I praise You, Jesus, You are my Hiding Place.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Savior of the World.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Strong Tower.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Mountain Refuge.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Bread of Life.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Font of all holiness.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Living Water.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the True Vine.
I praise You, Jesus, You are my Spouse, my Maker.
I praise You, Jesus, You are my Fortress.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Deliverer.
I praise You, Jesus, You are my Victory.
I praise You, Jesus, You are my Salvation.
I praise You, Jesus, You are my Wisdom.

I praise You, Jesus, You are my Righteousness..
I praise You, Jesus, You are my Justification.
I praise You, Jesus, You are my Sanctification.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Door.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the great I AM.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the great High Priest.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Cornerstone.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Sure Foundation.
I praise You, Jesus, You are my Joy.
I praise You, Jesus, You are my Portion and my Cup.
I praise You, Jesus, You are my Healing and my Wholeness.
I praise You, Jesus, You are my Covenant.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Promise of the Father.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Everlasting One.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Most High God.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Lamb that was slain.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Just Judge.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Balm of Gilead.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Mighty Warrior.
I praise You, Jesus, You are my Defense.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Bridegroom.
I praise You, Jesus, You are my Patience.
I praise You, Jesus, You are the Solid Reality.
I praise You, Jesus, You are my Provider.
I praise you, Jesus, You are the Resurrection and the Life.
I praise you, Jesus, You are the Alpha and the Omega.
I praise you, Jesus, You are the Beginning and the End.
I praise you, Jesus, You are worthy of all praise!

SPIRITUAL WARFARE PRAYER

Dear Lord Jesus, please forgive me for the sins that I have committed, the terrible things that I have said and done and thought and haven't done and said and thought. Please forgive me of my sins and cleanse me of all unrighteousness and wash me, make me whiter than snow.

Heavenly Father, please fulfill your will, your plan, your purpose, your call in my life. May your perfect will be done in my life and the life of my family as it is in Heaven.

Loving Father, please protect me and my family, protect this place where I am and through out the day protect me and my family wherever we are.

Please protect us and put hedges of your angels around us and protect us. In the Name of Jesus bind and cast the demons away from me and my family. Cast them out of every area of our lives. Out of our minds, bodies, emotions, memories, out of everywhere that we are and everywhere that we go. Cast them to the pits of hell in the Name of Jesus and keep them from coming back.

Please shield us from the devil and his demons and their fiery darts and from every kind of darts. Please protect us from evil and keep us from evil and hold us in the right hand of Your Righteousness in the very center of Your will.

Please Heavenly Father protect us too as You protected the Psalmist as He talks about in Psalm 91 please protect us in those ways also and in every other way that you can.

(You might also want to pray the prayer of Jabez for yourself and your family here: **"Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain."** - I Chronicles 4:10)

Dear Heavenly Father speak to my heart through your holy Word. Embed your precious Word in my heart and life. Change me, transform me into your image. Help me to hear your Voice. For it is in Jesus' precious and holy name that I ask. Amen.

SCRIPTURES

These Scriptures are used with every addiction/problem. If you prefer only KJV or another version to the one I have used then please insert your version. I have mixed KJV and NIV primarily because some versions speak more directly to my heart than do others. Do what is most comfortable and valuable for you. (Note: Do not say the verse reference when recording on the tape. Do say the verse reference to begin and end the verse if you are memorizing the verse.)

But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called.... - 1 Timothy 6:11-12 NIV.

Above all else guard your heart for it is the well spring of life. - Proverbs 4:21 NIV.

How may a young man keep his way pure? By living according to Your Word. I have hidden Your Word in my heart that I might not sin against you. - Psalm 119:9, 11 NIV.

Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. - Joshua 1:8 NIV.

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, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. - 2 Timothy 3:16-17 KJV.

For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thought and intents of the heart. - Hebrews 4:12 KJV.

Read from your Bible, Ephesians 6:10-18.

You, dear children, are from God and have over come them because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. - 1 John 4:4 NIV.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self- control. - Galatians 5:22 NIV.

Submit yourselves, therefore, to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Come near to God and He will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts you double minded. - James 4:7-8 NIV.

Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace. - Romans 8:5-6 NIV.

Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm, Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. - 1 Corinthians 15:58 NIV.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present you bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. - Romans 12:1 KJV.

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - His good, pleasant and perfect will. - Romans 12:2 NIV.

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And, God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way so that you can stand under it. - 1 Corinthians 10:13 NIV.

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. - 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NIV.

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. - Matthew 6:33 NIV.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things. - Philippians 4:8 NIV.

The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks. - Luke 6:45 NIV.

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. - John 14:21 KJV.

The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. - Matthew 6:22 NIV.

Avoid every kind of evil. - 1 Thessalonians 5:22 NIV.

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world - the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does comes not from the Father but from the world. - 1 John 2:15 -16 NIV.

SCRIPTURES SPECIFIC TO ALCOHOL/DRUG ABUSE

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? 17If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple. - 1 Corinthians 3:16 -17 NIV.

Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise. - Proverbs 20:1 NIV.

Whoever loves pleasure will be become poor; whoever loves wine and oil will never be rich. - Proverbs 21:17 NIV.

Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat, for drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags. - Proverbs 23:20-21 NIV.

Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints? Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes? Those who linger over wine who go to sample bowls of mixed wine. Do not gaze at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly! In the end it bites like a snake and poisons like a viper. Your eyes will see strange sights and your mind imagine confusing things. You will be like one sleeping on the high seas, lying on top of the rigging. "They hit me," you will say, "but I'm not hurt! They beat me, but I don't feel it! When will I wake up so I can find another drink?" - Proverbs 23:29-35 NIV.

Woe to those who rise early in the morning to run after their drinks, who stay up late at night till they are inflamed with wine. - Isaiah 5:11 NIV.

Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine and champions at mixing drinks.... - Isaiah 5:22 NIV.

Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbors.... - Habakkuk 2:15 NIV.

Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. - Luke 21:34 NIV.

Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. - Romans 13:13 NIV.

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. - 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 NIV.

Be very careful, then, how you live - not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the

Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. - Ephesians 5:15-18 NIV.

For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. - 1 Thessalonians 5:7-8 NIV.

HINTS FOR FINDING THE WAY OF ESCAPE (Substance Abuse)

Of course, you should do what you know to do and that is avoid the places and people where you will be exposed to temptation.

AA/NA is a good resource if you are in a good group that sticks by the rules. AA/NA is based on biblical principles and working the steps will move anyone along to being more closely conformed to the Lord Jesus. If your group is not working try another one until you find the one that works for you. However, don't let AA or NA be a substitute for church.

Overcomers Outreach is a bridge between AA/NA and the church. OO works the steps as well but recognizes up front that the Higher Power is Jesus Christ. It is a good organization for Christians to support and it is nationwide. If you are interested and can't find a group contact me and I will try to locate one. Or, you can obtain the materials and start your own group. A good way to do that is to involve your pastor, use the church facilities and have your pastor refer people to the group that are in need of help. Even if you don't have a large group it can be a great source of fellowship, support and prayer. OO is also open to many others that have problems in addition to alcohol and drug abuse. Find out more at <http://www.overcomersoutreach.org>

Testimonies

AN ENCOURAGING TESTIMONY

Dear Ed,

I will give you some information about my life that you can pass on to anyone you like. I was raised in a Baptist Church close to where I attend now. I was raised in Charles County, Maryland and have never left. I was baptized when I was 10 years old, after a revival, with about 15 other children (my older brother was one of them - 11 months older). Maybe it was the excitement, maybe it was because everyone else was doing it, maybe it was because my brother did it and I had to be "one up" on him. At the time, I'm not sure that I realized what it meant fully.

As time passed, my parents separated, my father would not pay child support for four children, and my mother had to work 2 - 3 jobs to make ends meet. Therefore, we (the four children) were left home alone a lot - late at night on weekends because my mother was a bartender.

I suppose to find love in the wrong places is what led me to the drugs. I went along for three years hanging out with the "crowd" before I actually did anything. At 16, my brother was the one who actually got me "turned on" to marijuana. And from there I was onto anything that anyone had to get high. I stopped going to church (mainly because I had to sleep off whatever high I was on the night before) and I didn't search for God (although I know He was there the whole time.) I wound up in an abusive relationship when I was 17 and stayed in this relationship until 19 (almost even married him). He beat me almost every other weekend, and I hit back. Finally, through much prayer on my mother's and grandparent's part, and I'm sure a lot of other people, I broke up with him. This was a great relief to those who love me. But it was still not the end. I met and married another man who was also into the drug scene. He didn't hit me so everyone thought he was great.

I lived with him for a year before we got married. Even before we married, I knew it was wrong because I had feelings for someone else, but the wedding plans were already in the process and I didn't want to disappoint anyone. Shortly after we were married, we decided to have a child and I became pregnant. I smoked marijuana during my pregnancy, and luckily my first daughter was a healthy child. She did have a low birth weight, though, and colicky too. Because of drugs, we had to sell the trailer we lived in and move in with his parents for about a year. I knew being married to him was wrong and left him (went to stay at my mother's for a couple of days). Then I found out that I was expecting another child and went back. This time, I did not smoke anything and had another healthy girl, higher in weight. When our second child was only one month old, I was freebasing cocaine and freaked out. I kept checking the girls, thinking they were going to stop breathing, looking outside for the cops, etc. It was the longest night in my life! I prayed to God that night that if He helped me get through the night I would never touch any drugs again. And HE did! And I Did!

I left my husband when our second daughter was only 5 months old because he wouldn't stop doing drugs and we were in serious debt. Also, because I wouldn't do them with him anymore, he was going out/sleeping with another woman. I finally divorced him - he gave me a really hard time about getting the divorce. I talked to my Pastor at the time, struggling with the "Till Death do us part" thing, but knew in the end it was best. I did not date anyone until I met my present husband (after I had been separated from my first husband 1 1/2 years).

We dated for two years and married. He was not into the drug thing, only smoked cigarettes. I have been married to him now 10 years. During that time, I have constantly gone to church and looked to the Lord for guidance. It's wonderful how loving and forgiving the Lord can be when you've spit in his face for so long. My husband came to know the Lord in September of 1994, was baptized, and is an active member of our church. We now have 4 daughters altogether. Our youngest is five and she knows nothing but going to church on Sunday mornings and evenings, and Wednesday nights. She even prays on Wednesday nights at prayer meetings! My oldest daughter is now 15, and thinks that people who do that kind of thing to themselves are stupid, and searching for something. I have always been honest about my past experience with my two oldest daughters, hoping that it will help them decide not to do those things. So far, it has worked.

It's a joy to see what the Lord can do with someone who thought they weren't worth much. I am now our Sunday School Director (4 years now), our VBS Director (this year will make 9), and the church Secretary. And I totally enjoy my life. Looking for love in all the wrong places got me nowhere. Looking for love in the Lord gave me so much more!

I hope this helps!

In Christian Love,

Shari

TESTIMONIES FROM THE BURNING BUSH NEWSLETTER

STOP, LOOK, LISTEN

by Paul Folsom

I am in prison, serving life without parole in a state penitentiary. In here I have a lot of time to think back over my life, and in doing so, I can recognize all of the many changes I have undergone. Every stage of my life has been marked by extremes: From a destitute hitch-hiker sleeping under a bridge, to owning my own business, then back down to a lonely convict in a cold prison cell. Yes, my life has run the gamut of human futility, only to come face to face with the wretched soul I had become!

In an effort to fill the emptiness, I tried all manner of sin, drugs, alcohol, sexual immorality, only to

experience deeper emptiness and increasing degeneracy. The mental and physical deterioration was gradual but nonetheless devastating. I began to feel there was no reason for living. Yet, I failed to realize that I was slowly and methodically killing myself by my uncontrollable addictions to drugs, alcohol and sex. I was also unaware of the self-inflicted wounds that were festering and oozing a bitterness that was consuming my heart, mind, and soul.

Then on a terrible and tragic night in December 1992, with my own hands I assaulted my wife and 15 year old step daughter. To this day I am not sure why or how it happened, but on that night in a drug demented state of mind I assaulted two women whom I loved and was to protect as a husband and father. If you are one of those who believes drugs do not cause harm, I can tell you first hand; they will and do! A simple drink may seem harmless, "and everyone does it." I thought that once! It is not so much the effects of the one beer, but rather the pattern it sets in your life, which finally places you in the crushing grip of addiction and leads you down the road to certain destruction! Fortunately for me, a miracle was wrought that broke the bonds of addiction, restored my life, filled the emptiness in my heart and transformed this once wretched soul into a useful human being. A miracle only possible through Jesus Christ.

Friends, if there has been any purpose in my sin-filled life of misery, it must surely be to show others the wonderful healing transformation God will perform if we will only call upon Him. If you, too, have felt as I have, or if you are at this time struggling with addiction, alcohol, peer pressure, or plain loneliness, be assured there is One who can pluck you from the mire of self-indulgence, the grime of sinful lust, and the blackness of an empty heart and wash you white as snow. Your only hope, as was mine, is in the saving grace of Jesus. He and He alone can bring to your life this miracle of redemption and give you the peace you seek for your troubled soul! Trust Him! (If you have a testimony you would like to share please email Ed Wrather at wrather@logixonline.net or edwrather@theburningbush.org. Your testimonies are needed for the Burning Bush Newsletter and to be posted at the Burning Bush website.)

RIDING SATAN'S MERRY-GO-ROUND OF SIN

A Testimony by Paula J. Anderson

And they cried out to the Lord in their troubles and he delivered them from their distress. - Psalm 107:6.

Heal me O Lord and I shall be healed, save me and I will be saved, for you are the one I praise. - Jeremiah 17:14

I was brought up in the church, I loved school and was an honor student. A happy child hood I had. I went astray at the young age of 14 years old. I got pregnant so I decided to get married. I was 15 years old when my first son was born. I would eventually have four more children out of wedlock, three girls and one more boy. I didn't understand and couldn't cope with the responsibilities of taking care of a husband or a child. I strayed even further away from my family responsibilities and God.

At 16, I was introduced to heroin by a neighbor, an ex-marine. I liked the calm, peaceful feelings it gave me. I became immediately addicted and started "shooting up" every day. I left my husband and

child to begin a life-style of drugs, prostitution, and shoplifting.

For the next 25 years of my life, I never really lived, but only existed day to day in this human shell. I would do almost anything for my next fix, whenever that pain and want in my body took control. I jumped from one drug to the next, whatever was easily available and affordable. Always looking for that numbing warm feeling that gave me that artificial peace.

In a one year period I overdosed and was comatose nine times! I was sent to the State Hospital and was diagnosed as suicidal and certified an addict. I've had many serious operations and a finger removed due to my intravenous drug use. My heart is now damaged from drug abuse. "I've lost everything dear to me."

I tried many drug treatment programs without success. I went on Methadone Maintenance for many years, another addiction, but it was cheap, legal and it kept me out of jail.

I sit in prison today, 42 years old, and at the end of my five year sentence, a new woman in Christ. My Lord and Savior has pulled me out of the pit and off of Satan's carousel of Hell. I have found a new program for my survival: "THE JESUS PROGRAM". Through him I have that warmth, love and a peace no drug or man could ever compare too!!

Praise the Lord, I was lost but now I'm found, my faith in him will heal me!

Love in Christ,

P. J. Anderson

JESUS CHRIST IS THE SAME YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND FOREVER

A Testimony by Carlos A. Madrid

The Bible says in **Psalm 113:7-8**, that "**He (God) raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; That he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people.**" You who are chained up in drugs, in crime, and all the curses of this world, I want to talk to you about who delivered me from all these curses. I was lost for many years in drugs, crimes, and all the curses of this world; but now, I don't need any more drugs because I have Christ in my heart.

At the age of 11 years I was lost, an alcoholic, and a drug addict. My mother was 26 years of age and lived in prostitution day and night. I remember when I was 12 years old I was left alone on the street in the Guatemalan Republic because my mother went to jail. She stabbed a man in a bar, and he lost his eye. Together with another woman my mother was sentenced to five years in prison without parole. Now I have the Lord Jesus in my heart and the sin has disappeared from my life, and the Holy light of Jesus shines. Today in 1996 I praise and glorify Christ because He has brought peace to my life in abundance. My mother who was lost in prostitution, she now too glorifies Jesus, the Son of God. I want to tell you that no matter where you are, no matter what sin you may have committed, if you cry out to Jesus with all your heart, He will listen to you and will take you away

from drugs, away from crime, and the slavery of sin.

Beloved friends, young man, young woman, you that have read these lines, if you haven't made your decision for Christ, this moment, I invite you to come to His feet. God wants to save you and move you to the Kingdom of His Son Jesus Christ. He wants to liberate you from the slavery of sin and give you life and life in abundance. Jesus says, **"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me (Revelation 3:20)."**

(Carlos is from the Republic of El Salvador and in 1996 when this testimony was written he was in a federal prison in Canada.)

THE WAY THAT SEEMED RIGHT

A Testimony by Art Carrera

The Bible says, **"There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death (Proverbs 14:12)."** On the day of my arrest, August 27, 1991, I was running full speed ahead on that way of death. In fact, up until that day my whole life was caught up in the way that ends in death. Gangs, drugs, women and the fast lane of the streets of Los Angeles were the way which seemed right to me. But God in His infinite mercy and grace sent the LAPD's "Crash" Unit (Community Resources Against Street Hoodlums) to arrest me and take me out of the fast lane.

Looking back, I actually do believe that it was God's grace that sent the "Crash" Unit to arrest me. Because as reality hit me in the face with a prison sentence, God was able to get my attention. I began to see events of my life pass before me. As those scenes passed through my mind I realized the futility and emptiness of the road that I had been traveling.

The apostle Paul wrote, **"But God demonstrated His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us (Romans 5:8)."** Where no prison, institution or self-help program could break or change me, God's love brought me to my knees in a jail cell and He gave me newness of life. I NOW HAVE A SONG IN MY HEART AND A NEW DIRECTION IN LIFE!!! I have written this testimony to share the truth of the gospel, that Jesus Christ died so that we might live. **"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:23)."**

My prayer is that all who read this testimony will receive eternal life in the name of Jesus Christ. **"Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12)."** Amen.

Devotionals

60 Devotionals for Recovery and Restoration by Ed Wrather

DAY 1

Put Off The Old

...if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. - Ephesians 4:21-24.

Harry Truman while president of the United States in 1948 made a shocking discovery of the condition of the White House. When the honor guard marched him to a state dinner the crystal chandelier in his study swayed. When the butler walked in with breakfast Truman could feel the whole floor wobble. He called for engineers to examine the structure. The chief engineer reported the ceiling in the state dining room was only staying up from force of habit. Truman made a tough decision. He had the entire inside of the White House gutted. It was all torn out and rebuilt with only the shell remaining. When it was rebuilt it was with a steel framework which makes it as strong as any modern building.

There are many of us who wonder about the history that must have been lost in such a drastic reconstruction. Many were attached to the well worn floors with the smells of decades of momentous occasions. In much the same way we grow attached to our old lives, our old sins, our old circumstances, and habits. So when we are born again (**John 3:3**), becoming a new creature in Christ with old things passing away and all things becoming new (**II Corinthians 5:17**) it is a drastic change! Our old lives have been gutted and a complete reconstruction has taken place.

We still have choices after becoming a new creature in Christ. Truman as President of the United States could have chosen not to live in the White House after the reconstruction was completed. He could have lived in a tent on the grounds but that would have been foolish. It would be foolish for us as well to live as we used to live when we don't have to any more. Paul in **verse 22** says to put off all that old stuff and to begin to live as the new person that we are. In **verses 25 through 32** he gives very specific ways of putting off the old and putting on the new. Paul finishes by saying in **verse 32**, **"And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you."**

Have you been living in a tent? Why not get out of there and try out the new place!?

DAY 2

Trapped?

Is anything too hard for the Lord? - Genesis 18:14a.

Nicholas White had a long, long weekend. He was trapped at work from Friday afternoon to Sunday afternoon. Nicholas went out for a little cigarette break and the elevator stalled after a fraction of a second voltage drop. No one noticed Nicholas was gone. Probably thought he had left for home a little early. No one noticed until Sunday afternoon when he was spotted on a security camera. It's not like he didn't try to gain some attention. He screamed, he banged on the walls, he pushed every button, and he tried to climb through the ceiling of the elevator. After his release he said he was relieved and a little shaky. He refused medical attention and said he just wanted to go home.

Have you ever been trapped? Not in an elevator but by life? Many people feel as though they are trapped by life. It may be financial, or it may be their health, or it may be their marriage, or their job, or family, or an addiction, or so many things that seem to get in the way of the enjoyment of life. 40 hours seems like a slight inconvenience compared to the lives which some are living year after year. We may very well feel like Nicholas. We bang on the walls of heaven, we scream, we push every button we can find, we try to climb out but no one seems to notice; not even God.

What can we do? How do we escape? Somehow our focus must go beyond our situation. We must look beyond our temporary circumstances of this world to the eternal circumstances of the Kingdom of God. Abraham and Sarah were trapped in their old bodies of 100 and 90 years of age. But God said they would have the promised child. Sarah laughed at the possibility. We would have laughed too. The spiritual reality, however, was that there was nothing too hard for the Lord. We must put our focus on and our trust in Jesus (**Hebrews 12:3**). We must deposit our fears, worries, cares, anxieties, situations, circumstances all upon God (**1 Peter 5:7**). When we do that we will find through the power of God we have been translated from our prison of circumstances into the freedom of eternal life.

DAY 3

Power Beads

In You, O Lord, I put my trust.... - Psalm 71:1 NKJV.

I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of Your righteousness, of Yours only. - Psalm 71:16 NKJV.

It seems we are always searching for an easier way. We know the way to physical strength and energy is a commitment to exercise and proper diet (The Bible seems to indicate that attention to the Word of God and holy living is necessary for sustained physical health - **Proverbs 3:1-8**). We know

the way to spiritual strength and energy also involves commitment. To have spiritual strength and energy we must commit ourselves to time in the Word, prayer, and holy living. But intake alone is not enough we must also have an outflow of the spiritual strength and energy through service or we will grow stagnate.

This search for an easier way may be the fascination with the latest fashion craze of power beads. It would be nice to slap something on our wrists and have energy to burn. Put the right bead on and we will think clearer and feel like we are 20 when we are 60. Anyway that seems to be the hype surrounding the power beads. It is a New Age craze based on "feng shui" the ancient art of Eastern Spirituality which says if you place things in certain places on your body you will have well being and energy. The latest craze was touched off after Zoe Metro, a New York designer, noticed the Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama wearing beaded bracelets. The psychosomatic factor seems to be in full swing as people believe the beads are affecting them and therefore they are.

It may be that it really comes down to what we want to put our faith in. We can put our faith in beads or we can put our faith in God. What is going to be our anchor in life? What is going to be the guiding factor in our life? From where will our strength come? Beads? Or, God? Which one do we trust with the spiritual well being of our lives? I think the answer should be obvious to us just as it was to the Psalmist many centuries ago.

DAY 4

Little Known Dangers

But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy. - 2 Chronicles 36:16.

In December 1998 Kevin Mackle a 19-year-old student in Quebec tried to shake loose a soft drink. Instead of receiving a soft drink Kevin was crushed to death when the 920-pound machine tipped over on to him. Who would have thought that a coke machine would be dangerous! But since 1978, 35 people have died in the United States alone from vending machines, which have tipped over.

The people of Judah must have been just as incredulous about the danger involved in ignoring God. Judgment did come upon them in a devastating way when they were carried into captivity. Who would have thought that God was that serious about it. But He was and He still is serious about it.

Do you despise God's Words? Do you mock or misuse the messengers of God? Why would anyone want to do that? We despise God's Words when we know what He wants us to do but we do something else with our lives. We mock God's messengers when we hear the Word of God preached and fail to respond as God has spoken to our hearts. Little known dangers but spiritually just as dangerous as a falling coke machine.

Judah waited so long that they ran out of time and God's judgment came upon them. Why risk another day outside of God's will? Determine in your heart that you will no longer despise God by

the way you live your life. **“Behold, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2).”**

DAY 5

Meant It

Then Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart....” - Acts 8:37a.

Last Saturday I went to a youth event and heard Todd Roberts speak. He told about how he was “saved” at the age of eight and baptized. But then he described how in his early teens he began drinking, using inhalants and using illegal drugs. By the time he was 14 he had been to Falls Creek, a summer youth camp, three times. There was a youth minister who kept asking who finally convinced Todd to go to the camp one more time.

At the camp Todd went to a class on alcohol and drugs in the mornings. He said everyone was laughing most of the week at the speaker who was a burned out hippie with long gray hair. They kept on laughing until the last day. That day the old hippie began describing all the drugs he had tried. He said none of them worked to give him peace. He then said he had even tried Jesus but He didn’t work. Todd said there was a long pause as everyone began to think surely he didn’t really say that. But then the old hippie said, *“He didn’t work until I meant it.”*

Todd Roberts knew exactly what the man was saying because that was where he was at. He hadn’t really meant it when he was eight years old. He hadn’t really meant it when he had rededicated his life or the times he had acted like he was going to change before. That night Todd Roberts, “meant it,” for real and God took all the garbage out of his life and began to use him to reach others.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is life changing, life transforming, life empowering but only if you “mean it.” Just saying some words will not change you. Getting wet through baptism will not change you. Joining a church will not change you. Changing your outward appearance or the way you talk may deceive some but the only way for the Gospel to really make a difference in your life is to “mean it” in your heart. Have you ever really “meant it?”

DAY 6

What Would It Take?

Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened? Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? - Mark 8:17-18.

What would it take for God to get your attention? What would it take for you to give your life totally to God putting Him first? You have to think that God had something to do with what happened to Ethem Sahin of Nevsehir, Turkey. He was drinking coffee and playing dominoes at a coffeehouse

when a cow fell through the roof. The cow apparently was grazing and wandered onto the roof of the coffeehouse, which is built on the side of a hill. The cow landed on top of Ethem knocking him unconscious and sending him to the hospital. The cow was uninjured but hopefully is watching more closely where it grazes.

Would a cow landing on top of you be enough for you to be totally sold out to God? What if someone came back from the dead? The rich man in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man wanted his brothers to be warned of the terrible fate that awaited them. The rich man pleaded that Lazarus be sent back from the dead to witness to his five brothers. But Abraham said, **“If they hear not Moses and the prophets (the Word of God), neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead (Luke 16:31).”**

Every time you resist the will of God for your life your heart becomes more hardened. Eventually it is no longer possible for a person to turn to God because they have resisted the will of God for so long. Whenever God speaks to your heart, respond! Don't wait for a cow to fall on top of you. Don't wait for someone to come back from the dead. Because you have the Word of God. Read it! Obey it!

DAY 7

Stir It Up

Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you.... - 2 Timothy 1:6.

Another translation renders **2 Timothy 1:6** as, **“Fan into flame the gift of God which is in you.”** I am reminded of the fire on the altar of burnt offering. In **Leviticus 6**, God instructed five times that the fire on the altar of burnt offering was never to go out. It was a continuous process to keep the fire burning. The tendency of fire is to go out as the fuel necessary for burning is used up. God provides the fire, but we have to keep it burning.

If you were to take a look at your life was there a time when you were more on fire for God than you are now? Looking at my own life I know that in the past I have been more on fire for God than I am at this point. God always is faithful to provide the empowerment necessary for serving and living the Christian life. However, we are not always faithful to keep the flames stirred up. We are not always faithful to use fully the gifts that God has bestowed upon us.

Charles Finney said that personal revival for the Christian is a *“new beginning of obedience to God.”* He says, *“Just as in the case of a converted sinner, the first step is a deep repentance, a breaking down of heart, a getting down in the dust before God, with deep humility and a forsaking of sin.”* Do you have a desire for obedience to God? Do you have a desire to have the fire blazing as it once was? Then, there is still a spark of God's fire. A few small embers are enough to spark a tremendous fire. Stir it up! Let us fan that spark into a roaring fire of personal revival.

DAY 8

Be Vigilant

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. - 1 Peter 5:8-9.

There has been a new Christian scandal, which has surfaced in the United States. The president of conservative Hillsdale College in Michigan has resigned. He resigned after his daughter-in-law confessed a 19 year long affair. She has since committed suicide. It is shocking and at the same time so very sad for this family and for this college. This scandal is only the most recent of a continuing saga of well-known Christians to have their immoralities publicly exposed.

Billy Graham has done some research, which reportedly shows at least 90 percent of Christians in the US are living defeated spiritual lives. The scandal at Hillsdale is shocking but does it really surprise us? It should serve as a warning of our own human weakness and fallibility. 90 percent living defeated spiritual lives? Most likely this includes some of us and if so how long before we crash and burn as well?

We must be constantly vigilant of our own spiritual condition. We must be constantly alert against the advances of the world into our lives. We must make a stand. We must put on the full armor of God (**Ephesians 6:11**). We must take full advantage of all the resources of God (Jesus - **Philippians 4:19**). We must not neglect the Word, prayer, and the church. To do so is to invite spiritual disaster. To say that we are not susceptible is spiritual pride. Maybe that is why just prior to **1 Peter 5:8** we are told in **verses 5 through 7**, **“God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”**

DAY 9

Change Your Life

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think (imagine), according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. - Ephesians 3:20-21.

In prison Rev. Dr. Hristo Kulichev of Bulgaria says he had no right to read the Bible. His watch and pen were confiscated along with every tiny bit of paper. The only thing they could not take away from him was prayer. He says, *“In prison I realized how cunningly Satan works in our lives when we have freedom, keeping us busy with all kinds of things that give us less time to pray.”* (From “What I learned in prison about prayer” - Light, The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, 901 Commerce, #550, Nashville, TN 37203-3696)

How true Dr. Kulichev’s observation is! Prayer does not just happen. There must be a conscious effort on the individual’s part to pray. Usually, in order to pray something else must be given up to

make time for prayer. For us to have a “Sweet Hour of Prayer,” as the hymn describes prayer, what would we have to give up? What would be necessary in our lives for us to have an hour of prayer? What priorities would need to be rearranged?

I read a story in Reader’s Digest (I think the year was around 1984.) written by a woman who began to pray for an hour a day. She had to begin her day an hour earlier to spend the hour in prayer. Her testimony was that it had completely changed her life and the life of her family for the better.

What would it take for you to make a radical decision and commitment to spend an hour a day in prayer? Prison? Some terrible calamity? Dr. Kulichev says, *“In prison I realized that we have the mightiest weapon given to us by God. Prayer.”*

Want to change your life? Want to improve your life? Want help for your family? Need to overcome a problem, or addiction? If you will begin to pray regularly, over a sustained period of time you will find God will do, “...**exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think (imagine), according to the power that works in us.**”

DAY 10

Change of Course

Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” - Acts 9:1-4.

One day at a neighboring church there was a lady who had some car problems. Her car caught on fire as she was traveling down the highway. She made it to the church parking lot and some people called the fire department. The fire department was able to save the back tires and the gas tank but everything else was burned. She seemed to have no reason to be in the area and you have to wonder if God was involved with a car suddenly catching fire just in time to make it to a church parking lot. Could be that she was on her way to somewhere she shouldn’t have been? It may be that God stopped her. He’s been known to do that before.

Saul, soon to be known as Paul, had a similar experience. Saul was on his way to cause some major damage to the earlier church. Being blinded by the Lord changed his mind and the course of life. From Saul the persecutor to Paul the apostle/missionary. Quite a change! If you need a change of course in your life what would it take to bring it about? Blindness? A car fire? Illness? Would God do such a thing? I know that he has done things like that in the apostle Paul’s life. He has done things like that in my life.

Really, I don’t know whether the lady yesterday was off course with her life or not. Could have just been a coincidence. But why wait for God, or a coincidence, to change the course of your life? If

you are off course with your life, and know it why not change course now?

DAY 11

Two Natures

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. - Romans 8:5-6.

Stuart Briscoe tells a story about the cuckoo bird. Now the European cuckoo bird is much larger than the cuckoo birds in the United States. The mother European cuckoo bird has forgotten how to build a nest. It flies around until it sees another nest with eggs in it and no mother bird around. The cuckoo quickly lands, lays an egg there, and flies away.

The mother thrush, whose nest has been invaded, comes back and gets to work hatching the eggs. It apparently does not bother her that there is an extra egg in the nest. What happens? Four little thrushes hatch, but one large cuckoo hatches. The cuckoo is two or three times the size of the thrushes. When Mother Thrush brings to the nest one large, juicy worm, she finds four tiny thrush mouths, and one huge cuckoo mouth.

Guess, which bird, gets the worm? A full-sized thrush ends up feeding a baby cuckoo that is three times as big as it is. Over time, the bigger cuckoo gets bigger and bigger, and the smaller thrushes get smaller and smaller. Stuart says that when he was a kid he could always find a baby cuckoo's nest. You just walked along a hedgerow until you found dead little thrushes, which the cuckoo throws out one at a time.

Spiritually we are similar to the thrushes and the cuckoo. We have two natures in one nest (i.e.: in one body). James says in **James 5:19**, "**Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth....**" I would submit to you that the primary cause of wanderers from the truth is the feeding of the sinful nature and not the spiritual nature. If we would grow spiritually then the spiritual nature must be fed. At the same time we must stop feeding the sinful nature. The sinful nature is just like the baby cuckoo. If we keep on feeding it the sinful nature will destroy us.

Which nature have you been feeding?

DAY 12

Put On Jesus

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts. - Romans 13:14.

When I was in the sixth grade I had been doing fine back in the back of the classroom. All of that

came to an end one day when Mr. McCall looked back at me and wanted me to answer a question he had written on the blackboard. It wasn't that I didn't know the answer. It was just that I couldn't see the words he had written. I was suddenly transported to the front row for the rest of the year and soon I had those dreaded things called, glasses. The law of nearsightedness had disrupted my life and learning experience.

Thank God, another law overcame the law of nearsightedness in my life. The law of corrective lenses overcame it. You would think that I would have more freedom to live life without being hindered by glasses. After all you have to keep them clean, wear them, and it is very hard to swim in them unless you wear goggles. Actually, I am truly free to live my physical life only if I wear those glasses. When I am wearing my glasses I am free to drive, to read, to see faces clearly and so many other things that would not be possible without them.

In our spiritual lives we are overcome and held captive by sin. But just as glasses are able to overcome nearsightedness so can sin be overcome. To overcome sin we must put on the Lord Jesus Christ. When we do that we are still slaves. Instead of being slaves to sin we have become slaves of righteousness. Jesus says, "**My yoke is easy and My burden is light (Matthew 11:30).**" The yoke of Jesus cancels out and overcomes the sin in our lives. By taking on the yoke of Jesus we can be free to live life to its utmost.

Each day we have a choice. We can choose to put on the Lord Jesus Christ or we can make provision for sin. We can choose life, or we can choose death (**Romans 8:5-6**).

DAY 13

Leaning?

Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. - 1 Corinthians 3:12-13.

Most of us have heard of the bonfire tragedy at Texas A&M University. We wonder how such a thing could happen and some have suggested poor supervision along with a lack of construction according to proven designs used in the past as the cause. Now there is new information that has been brought forward suggesting the entire structure was leaning. Doug Keegan, a senior applied mathematics major, superimposed a grid over the photos of the stack and discovered what he believes was a slack in the support cables on one side of the stack. There also appears to be a slight bow in the center pole. One student involved in the construction said that shortly before the collapse the stack did appear to be slightly leaning. The dean of Baylor University's engineering and computer sciences school believes the uneven distribution of weight may explain the collapse. He also stated that the method and materials used in building the stack made it "a very complicated structure."

Only a slight leaning of the stack appears to have resulted in its collapse. What is true of bonfire stacks is also true of the human life. We are instructed to build carefully upon the foundation (1

Corinthians 3:11) our Lord has laid. **“But let each one take heed how he builds on it (1 Corinthians 3:10b).”** If we do not use the proper materials and construction techniques our human lives will come tumbling down just as surely as did the A&M bonfire stack.

With what should we build our lives? The apostle Paul recommends **“So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified (Acts 20:32).”** Solomon says **“Through wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established (Proverbs 24:3).”** From where does wisdom and understanding come? The Psalmist tells us **“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever (Psalm 111:10).”**

If your life was a building and the Lord was a building inspector would you pass the inspection? Or would He find some shoddy construction, which has resulted in a life that is leaning?

DAY 14

Time For God

So Moses went into the midst of the cloud and went up into the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights. - Exodus 24:18.

Do you know what two people did for 34 hours, 11 minutes, and 37 seconds during a weekend? It is commonly known as a kiss but in their case there must be another name for maintaining lip contact for such a long time. Rotterdam's Baja Beach Club organized the event in an attempt to break the world record. 13 couples competed with the goal of maintaining lip contact while standing and to do so longer than the rest. The first couple dropped out at the two-hour mark. The winning couple, Neli van der Hoeven and Wanderley Costa e Silva received 6,900 dollars (equivalent of) in prize money. The club spokeswoman Pitra van der Laar said of the contestants, *“During the first few hours, they kissed out of love, but during the last few you could tell they were in it to win.”*

Isn't it interesting how we usually find time to do the things we want to do? Not only do we find the time but we also find the energy to do those things. One of the things many of us have a desire to do but seem unable to accomplish is the spending of more time with our Lord. We have a desire to have the quiet time, to pray and to study His Word more but we don't seem to be able to fit it into our schedule. There are so many things we have to do. We have to work; there are the family responsibilities, church responsibilities, and community responsibilities. By the time we finish with everything else we have little energy for a quiet time unless it includes sleep.

How was it that Moses was able to spend forty days and forty nights on the top of Mount Sinai? How was Jesus able to spend forty days and nights fasting in the wilderness? Moses and Jesus were supernaturally empowered by God. God provides supernatural energy for seeking Him and serving Him. Reorganize your priorities. Wake up thirty minutes earlier and spend that time with God. God will then provide the energy you need for everything else during the day. It is a matter of

faith. Do you believe God has the power? If so do you believe He can and will do it in your life?

DAY 15

Time For Action

And the Lord said to Moses, “Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward. But lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it. And the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.” - Exodus 14:15-16.

Pharaoh had allowed the Israelites to leave after the final plague of death upon the first born sons of Egypt. But then Pharaoh had a change of heart and decided he would reclaim his slaves. He has them trapped between his chariots and the Red Sea. Soon he will either have them as his slaves or will destroy them all. For Moses and the Israelites it is a time of urgency and Moses knows their deliverance lies in the strong arm of the Lord. Moses has been trained by God and given the instrument needed to bring about their deliverance. God in effect says to Moses, *“Don’t waste time talking to me when you know what to do. Use the rod I have given you.”* Some situations are so urgent that we must pray as we go. In some situations we do not have time for a week of fasting and praying. Instead we must depend upon the instruction in righteousness that we have been given and the leadership of the Holy Spirit as we move forward in action.

John Eliot (1604-1609) is called the “Apostle to the native Americans.” His translation of the Bible into Algonquin was the first Bible printed in the United States. He visited Native American tribes throughout New England. He preached, taught, and baptized. John Eliot once said, *“We must not sit still and look for miracles; up and be doing, and the Lord will be with thee. Prayer and pains, through faith in Christ Jesus will do anything.”*

Dwight L. Moody was another man of action. Once when he was discussing an idea for outreach with a church leader he asked the man, *“What do you think?”* *“We’ve been aimin’ to do it for two years,”* the church leader replied. *“Well now,”* says Moody, *“don’t you think it’s time to fire?”*

Has God been speaking to you about something He wants you to do? Maybe it is time to do something!

DAY 16

Deception

And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.” - Matthew 24:4-5.

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.

Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.” - 2 Corinthians 11:13-15.

Moral deception is becoming more and more common. Instead of adultery we have an “*affair*.” Instead of homosexuals we have the “*alternative lifestyle*.” Drug addicts are “*substance abusers*.” Drunks are “*intoxicated*.” Pornographers are “*movie producers*.” Trash has become “*art*.”

To more fully understand the nature of deception here are some synonyms for deception and their definitions:

Fraud - Always implies guilt and often criminality in act or practice.

Double-dealing - Suggests treachery or at least action contrary to a professed attitude.

Subterfuge - Suggests the adoption of a stratagem or the telling of a lie in order to escape guilt or to gain an end.

Trickery - Implies ingenious acts intended to dupe or cheat.

1 Peter 5:8 tells us to “**Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.**” We must be vigilant and aware that the devil uses fraud, double-dealing, subterfuge, and trickery to capture and devour his prey.

What should we do? “**Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen and settle you (1 Peter 5:9-10).**”

DAY 17

Your Story

In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. - 1 John 4:9-11.

On CBS morning news there is a feature that I have watched a few times about how everyone has a story. A dart is thrown at a map of the United States and then when the news crew arrives at the geographical spot they randomly pick a name from the phone book for their story. However, most of those interviewed do not seem to think anyone would be interested in their story. But it is interesting how the stories of the lives of these people picked at random are often so very moving. Each one could be made into a movie which would be just as dramatic as most of the ones on the screens today. As I have looked at those around me I know it is true, every one of us has a story. There is

an importance, and significance about the lives we live.

You may think that no one cares about your story or about what you are going through. But you are wrong! God cares! Not only does He care; He knows exactly what you are going through. Your story is important to Him. Your life matters to Him. He knows your thoughts and your feelings. He knows the number of hairs on your head. He feels the beat of your heart. He cries when you cry. He rejoices when you rejoice. He hurts when you hurt. Through Jesus Christ, God is not only watching your story but He is involved. He's part of the story line as he walks with you through the scenes of each day of your life.

The next time you are hurting, the next time you think no one cares, the next time someone stabs you in the back, the next time.... Remember that God cared so much that He allowed His only Son to suffer and die so that you might be a part of His family. Your story is important to God. You are important to God. Your life is greatly treasured by God. He loves you. God, the Creator of the Universe, loves you!

DAY 18

A Bad Hair Day

For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was in me. - 1 Corinthians 15:9-10.

Ever have a bad hair day? Some people are more prone than others are. I can't just jump out of bed in the mornings and take off because if I did people would be laughing at my hair. It has just enough curl and the right texture to make it always unruly in the mornings. Now I know the reason I try to have my hair looking presentable before I leave the house. According to a study conducted by Marianne LaFrance a Yale Psychology professor a person's self-esteem is reduced on those bad hair days. It was found on those days that people felt less smart, less capable, more embarrassed and less sociable. Surprisingly it was found that men felt even less smart, and less capable than women on bad hair days.

It seems silly that our hair can affect our lives in such a powerful way. Just because our hair is out of place doesn't mean we are really less intelligent or less capable than before. It is silly too when we do the same thing with other things in our lives. The apostle Paul could have been beating himself up the remainder of his life because he persecuted the church prior to his salvation. Because of that Paul said he was the least of the apostles. Paul could have just wallowed in a gigantic pity party for the remainder of his years. But Paul said to himself, "**by the grace of God I am what I am.**"

Don't let what has happened in the past prevent you from being what God would have you to be now. Yes, you may have had problems with an addiction, or even done some terrible thing but nothing is beyond the reach of the grace and mercy of God through Jesus Christ. You are what you are and God loves you so much that His Son went to the cross for you. We have to go beyond

the pity parties and the bad hair days. We are what we are and God loves us. Paul understood and that is why he was able to labor through the grace of God “**more abundantly than they all** (the other apostles).” God would have you and I to do the same.

DAY 19

Final Thoughts

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. - 2 Timothy 4:6-7.

What if you were in an elevator at the Empire State Building and the elevator cable snapped? What would your final thoughts be? Shamika Peterson and Joe Masoraca had that terrifying experience Monday afternoon. Shamika said, “*We were on our way down when all of a sudden the elevator dropped, like a bungee jump.*” “*I was terrified.*” “*I thought I was going to die.*” The elevator dropped 40 stories but Joe and Shamika were saved by an emergency breaking system, which stopped it at the fourth floor.

The apostle Paul’s death did not come suddenly. When he wrote the letter we know as **2 Timothy** he was facing execution as a follower of Jesus Christ. Paul was imprisoned and living in difficult circumstances. Since his encounter with the risen Lord on the road to Damascus he had lived each day for the Lord and his life since that encounter had been poured out for Christ. If Paul had suddenly faced death in a plunging elevator perhaps his thoughts would have been shorter as expressed in **Philippians 1:21**, “**For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.**”

If you were to face death today what would your final thoughts be? Would you be thinking that you have fought the good fight, finished the race, and kept the faith? If not today could be the day of a new beginning. Paul had such a day on the road to Damascus (**Acts 9**) when everything changed. Instead of persecuting the church Paul became a preacher, missionary, church planter, and writer of a large portion of the Bible through the leadership of the Holy Spirit. If Paul can change, you and I can change. Whatever time we have left of this life let us live it for Christ.

DAY 20

Calling Evil Good

Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! - Isaiah 5:20.

We have been trying to remove saturated fats from our diets because we have been told they are harmful. We have replaced them in part with trans fatty acids. Now we are being told that trans fatty acids may be even more harmful than the saturated fats. According to a 1994 study by Dr. Joseph Judd trans fatty acids increase low-density lipoprotein (LDL) also known as the “bad” cholesterol.

They also seem to lower the high-density lipoprotein (HDL), which is the “good” cholesterol. If that wasn’t enough trans fatty acids negatively affect a hereditary risk factor for heart disease and may be a risk factor in tumorigenesis. Not only that but large numbers of popular products on the market do not even list the amount of trans fatty acids contained in their products.

With foods we definitely have seen the bad called good and the good called bad. In life we see the world saying that all manner of things are good and those things come in attractive packages. But the truth about sex outside of marriage, abortion, consumption of illegal substances, abuse of alcohol, divorce, lying, cheating, stealing, deceiving, etc (Just plug in your own pet sin.) is that these things destroy life. Trans fatty acids were said to be healthy but now we know we were deceived. Sin destroys life as well. Trans fatty acids have sneaked into our lives and at first there did not appear to be any ill effects. But now we know the effects appear over the years and result in higher rates of heart disease. Sin does the same. Sin slowly sneaks into our lives and gradually over the years takes away life.

Romans 6:23 is still true: **“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”** We can have sin and death or we can have Jesus and life but we can’t have them both. We must decide whether we want to really live or settle for the lies of the world. God calls upon us to make a decision. Here are a couple of verses for you to consider: **Joshua 24:15** and **James 4:8**.

DAY 21

Climbing Mountains

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. - 1 Corinthians 15:58.

I’ve only climbed some very small mountains that some would consider hills. However, even looking at a small mountain prior to climbing it we can see in our minds the problems, hazards, expenditure of energy that will be necessary. Usually we overestimate how difficult the climbing will actually be. Dennis Proffitt a psychologist at the University of Virginia has actually performed a study which concluded that most people when standing at the bottom of a hill will believe the impending climb looks a lot worse than it really is.

Proffitt in his study determined that people would consistently overestimate the slope of shallow hills. The people involved in the study would judge five-degree slopes to be about 20 degrees. According to Proffitt there appears to be a mental protection mechanism at work here. The mental mechanism causes the eye to overestimate the task at hand, which helps prevent you from overexerting yourself.

In modern life the mountains we face are all too often not in the physical realm. However, they can be just as difficult to climb. It seems easy to become discouraged in life. We can look at our work or problems facing us and feel overwhelmed. It may only be a five-degree climb but it looks completely vertical from where we stand. We face one problem after another and they take a toll on our mental,

emotional, physical, and spiritual stamina. As a result we may come to a standstill as far as doing anything for the Lord.

The apostle Paul would tell us to be steadfast, immovable always abounding in the work of the Lord. Yes, you may be facing another problem but most likely it is not as bad as you think. Your mind is telling you it can't be done but Paul would say that you can do all things through Christ (**Philippians 4:13**).

DAY 22

The Right Weapon

Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul. - 1 Peter 2:11.

The largest grocery chain in the United States, Kroger, has covered up Cosmopolitan magazine at its checkout stands. The cover up came about because of the lurid headlines, which have received even more complaints than the lurid photos on the covers. The new magazine racks that were installed covers up everything but the magazine's name. We can only wonder why it took so long. There seems to be a number of other publications sold at the checkout counter, which could use some covering up as well. If our Internet filters were used on grocery stores we would have a hard time finding one to enter.

Cosmopolitan and other checkout stand publications appeal to our fleshly lusts. Cosmopolitan has the highest newsstand sales of any publication with half of those two million sales coming at checkout counters. It is a war. It is a war against our souls! But it is not just publications at checkout stands it is everywhere. The world and the devil are doing a fantastic job of appealing to the fleshly lusts and they have a lot of help.

How can we defend ourselves against this onslaught of evil? Obviously we cannot always avert our eyes in time and unless we completely isolate ourselves we will be confronted at times with worldliness. Peter gives us the key to our defense in **1 Peter 4:1-3**, "**Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles - when we walked in lewdness, lusts....**" We must arm ourselves with the mind of Christ. Saturate our lives with Him.

It is a war and if you are not armed you will be destroyed. Arm yourself by saturating your life with the things of God. Read His Word, study His Word, memorize His Word, meditate on His Word, and talk with Him, walk with Him and His mind will become your mind. When you are armed the world will have lost its appeal and the devil will flee from you. Are you armed?

DAY 23

Spiritual Fitness

It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” - Matthew 4:4.

We read the words and we hear the words but do we really listen? Sixteen times in the New Testament Jesus challenges us to use our ears to listen. If we are really listening then we will apply the words to our lives. In the case of **Matthew 4:4** it would mean the intake of God’s Word just as frequently as we have our meals. I think we can agree we should read/study/mediate on the Scriptures at least once a day. But do we do it?

Why would we want to give up our time and spend it in the Scriptures? If we do not eat physical food what happens? We grow weak physically. If we do not have our spiritual food we will grow weak spiritually. When we grow weak physically we become susceptible to all kinds of physical ailments/diseases. When we grow weak spiritually we become susceptible to the attacks of the devil, the allurements of the world, and the lust of the flesh.

Having a quiet time where we spend time reading the Bible and praying is much like physical exercise. The time spent in physical exercise is returned to us in the need for less sleep and better quality of life. In much the same way God provides the energy we need to seek Him. Time spent in prayer and reading the Bible is not time lost. Instead it seems to generate its own time with more energy and better quality of life.

We are now living in the 21st Century. This century brings with it moral pressures which will destroy those who are not spiritually fit. The only way to be spiritually fit is to have a daily quiet time which includes Bible reading/study/meditation and prayer.

DAY 24

Sin Destroys

So the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.” - Genesis 4:8.

In San Francisco one Saturday a man with a meat cleaver ran down a busy street hitting and slashing those in his way. Two women were hospitalized with head and neck injuries. A police officer also suffered injuries when he attempted to subdue the man who has a history of mental illness. The story reminded me of when I was a parole officer. One of my clients had a new found friend and had moved in with him. I tried to warn my client that his new friend had mental problems and I took extraordinary measures to protect my client from his friend. My client’s new friend had once been arrested after neighbors called reporting he was chasing his unclothed pregnant girlfriend down the street in the middle of the night with a butcher knife. My client didn’t really understand why he had to find some place else to live until a few weeks later. A few weeks later my client’s new friend broke into a home and robbed a family at knifepoint.

Sin is like a crazy man with a meat cleaver who wants to destroy you. God told Cain, **“sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you....”** Sin is not reasonable. The only reason sin has is the unreasonable. Sin tears down and destroys our lives in every possible way. It destroys those around us just as Cain killed his own brother. One of the reasons we do not prosper (Not just financial prosperity.) is sin. Sin robs us of blessings and starves our souls. The Bible makes this clear. Here are two verses, which speak of this:

“Your iniquities have turned these things away, And your sins have withheld good from you.” - Jeremiah 5:25.

“Thus says God: ‘Why do you transgress the commandments of the Lord, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the Lord, He also has forsaken you.’” - 2 Chronicles 24:20.

A temptation that leads to sin is usually very appealing and alluring. The true nature of a temptation is usually not obvious. So, the next time you are tempted remember your temptation is worse than a crazy man with a meat cleaver and he is trying to destroy you and your family.

DAY 25

Our Moral Compass

This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander.... - 1 Timothy 1:18-20a.

To her credit, Darva Conger, the bride of *“Who Wants to Marry a Multi-Millionaire”* came to her senses. She is not wearing her wedding ring, she’s back home with her mother, and she plans no communication with her husband, Rick Rockwell. Darva says she is a Christian and never expected to actually marry anyone. According to Darva the marriage was in name only and will be annulled. Once the event had proceeded to the point of Rick picking her as his bride Darva says she felt trapped and unable to stop the marriage from occurring. She has advice for others and says “look before you leap.”

Darva has found her conscience and it almost seems that the people of the United States have found a conscience. At least there seems to be broad condemnation for Rick, Darva, producers of the show, and Fox network. So, how does that work? It is okay to live together without being married. It is okay to engage in an alternative lifestyle such as homosexuality. It appears it is okay to use drugs, drink, and to do most anything you want according to the American conscience. Except now we know that in America we draw the line at marrying so-called multi-millionaires that we have never met before.

For our faith not to become shipwrecked our conscience requires continual maintenance. It requires

that we abstain from doing those things that we know to be wrong. Every time we intentionally do something that we know to be wrong we weaken our conscience's ability to provide us with the moral direction we need. We will need the Word of God just as Timothy did so that we too can fight a "**good warfare**" against those who seek to weaken our consciences. To keep from having a shipwrecked faith do as the apostle Paul says he did in **Acts 24:16**; "**I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.**" Paul always tried to keep his conscience up to date, always clear, and that way he could stay on course and avoid those shipwrecks. Is your moral compass pointing in the right direction or are you headed for the rocks?

DAY 26

Escape

Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up. - James 4:7-10.

In Australia an eight year old girl barely escaped from the jaws of an eight foot crocodile after her little brother distracted it. Paul, who is five years old, grabbed the beast's tail which gave Martina the time to get her feet out of its' mouth. Their father then killed the croc with an ax. The family had been hunting for turtles in a creek in Australia's Northern Territory when the reptile suddenly attacked.

There is a spiritual beast who is just as dangerous which loves to tear down, destroy, hurt, kill, and steal everything that is good in our lives (**John 10:10a**). What do you do when the beast has you in its' jaws and is carrying you off? What do you do when it seems you are going under for the last time? What do you do when everything seems to be going wrong and nothing seems to work? Martina's little brother had the right idea. Most likely it is time for a distraction. Something is needed to take the beast's mind off of you.

James says that we should submit ourselves to God. As humbly and best that we know how we should come before God in the Name of Jesus asking for His help. What happens is **Hebrews 2:18** which says "**For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.**" The word aid has been translated as help, succor, or a more literal translation is "**run to the cry.**" Now that will get that old beast's attention when the Lord comes running to help!

Then James says we are to resist the devil. How did Jesus resist the devil in **Matthew 4**? He resisted the devil with the Word of God. We need to saturate our lives with the Word of God. We need to read it, memorize it, recite it, meditate on it, listen to it and then we need to use it to defeat the enemy. It will then become the sword of the Spirit (**Ephesians 6:17**). James says what will happen is that the devil will flee from us. Give that old devil a distraction and you too can escape from the jaws of the beast!

DAY 27

This Is It!

But God draws the mighty away with His power; He rises up, but no man is sure of life. - Job 24:22.

Bruce Willis who contemplated his life and his mortality in an interview with USA Weekend apparently agrees with the observations of Job. He says "I've lost a couple of friends in freak accidents." "It makes you realize how fragile life is, how quickly it can be taken away." Surprisingly he says, "I think about my death at least once a day. I say to myself, 'Am I living my life? Am I enjoying my life today?' Because this is not a rehearsal. This is it."

How true! Each day is important and we have no guarantee of tomorrow. The apostle Paul seems to have lived his life with this awareness of the urgency of life as well. Paul says, "...**forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:13b-14).**" It is indeed a high calling to be a child of God (John 1:12).

The writer of the book of Hebrews also understood this urgency and great calling of God as he wrote, "**Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:1-2).**"

This is it!

DAY 28

Discipline

Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." - Luke 9:23.

When I was in junior high I was having trouble with spelling tests. We were to spell and then write out the definition for twenty words. It all changed when I decided to study and memorize the spelling and definition of the words. Instead of a barely passing grade I began receiving perfect scores on the spelling tests. But there was a price to pay. It was a matter of discipline. I had to discipline myself to spend the time necessary to study and learn the material.

In most areas of life we know that in order to excel we must be disciplined. Certainly an athlete must be disciplined to attain Olympic form and quality. An artist must practice his art as must a musician. Most, however, seem to resist the idea of discipline for the Christian in mastering the Christian

disciplines. Jesus in **Luke 9:23** is clearly stating the need for discipline to live the Christian life. He says it will not be easy when He says to take up our cross and to deny ourselves. He makes it clear we are to be disciplined when he says to do this **“daily.”**

It takes discipline to read the Word of God regularly, to pray frequently, and to attend church faithfully. Of course, these things alone do not make up for a life wholly given to God. But they are necessary before a life can be wholly given to God. Margueritte Bro, a great prayer warrior, once said, *“In almost any skill allied to science, or plain old living, it is every day that counts. Prayer grows in meaning as we grow in practice. The very regularity of our period of devotion works for us... inducing the mood and quality of devotion.”*

DAY 29

Sinful Thoughts

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.” - Matthew 5:27-29.

Gov. Jesse Ventura apparently has a different version of the Bible than I do or maybe it is the interpreting that he does differently. In a second interview for Playboy magazine he was asked *“have you ever lusted in your heart?”* Ventura’s answer: *“Hey you can look all you want.” “If a gorgeous woman walks by, as a man you always look. And wonder. Sure. There’s nothing wrong with that.”*

Most likely Gov. Ventura has never read the passage in Matthew chapter five. I was working in the oilfield a few years after becoming a Christian when I was confronted with this issue. A man working on my crew made it clear to me for the first time that sin can be committed not just by our actions or words but by our thoughts. The grasping of this concept and knowledge resulted in a struggle within me. It may be that lust is not a problem for you. However, lust is not the only sinful thought we can have. We can have greedy, envious, hateful, unforgiving (etc.) thoughts as well.

How can we possibly overcome our thought life? We cannot but our Lord can. In **II Corinthians 10:3-5** we are told: **“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare (Eph. 6:10-18) are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.”**

DAY 30

Pull It Out

Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart will utter perverse things. Yes, you will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, or like one who lies at the top of the mast, saying: "They have struck me, but I was not hurt; they have beaten me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake, that I may seek another drink?" - Proverbs 23:31-35.

A woman in Darby, Pennsylvania was shopping for groceries when someone running by slapped her on the back of the neck. At least that's what Darlene Jones thought. She finished her grocery shopping and bought a newspaper before walking the half-mile back to her home. After Darlene returned home her daughter noticed something sticking out of Darlene's neck. It was the handle of a kitchen knife. When the daughter jerked out the knife Darlene began to bleed and they rushed her to the hospital. Saturday she was listed in fair condition. The incident was described as a "random, vicious attack."

Amazing that someone could have a knife in their neck for so long and not know!? Darlene would have eventually died from her wound if her daughter had not noticed the knife. Darby Police Chief Robert Smythe said "five or six people walked right past her without even noticing." How many people have been struck with an addiction and don't even know it? How many people have started drinking, or doing drugs, or looking at pornography and don't realize they have a wound that could destroy them? Most people can walk by them and would not notice their mortal wound.

In **Proverbs 23:29** we are asked: "**Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause?**" The writer of Proverbs is talking about drinkers but it seems to apply to all those with addictions. If you have an addiction you will have woe, sorrow, contentions, and complaints. Now's the time to pull the knife out and get help before it is too late.

DAY 31

Do Not Feed The Monkeys

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. - Ephesians 5:8-13. (Also read Ephesians 5:1-7.)

Nikko, Japan is the home of the famous statues of the monkeys that see-no-evil, hear-no-evil, and speak-no-evil. Nikko also has a large population of living monkeys of the wild macaque variety. Troops of these simians are causing some major problems for those living in Nikko. The monkeys while scavenging for food occasionally bite people and continually damage property. Officials blame tourists who feed the monkeys, which makes the situation worse and worse. There are more and

more incidents of monkeys grabbing bags, which they think, may contain food. The people of Nikko would like for all of the tourists to please stop feeding the monkeys!

God makes it clear in Paul's letter to the Ephesians that He would like for us to stop feeding our monkeys too. In **Ephesians 5:3-5** we are told of some of those monkeys which we are to avoid. Paul says we are to **"have no fellowship"** with them. In other words don't feed them! Cut off the relationship with **"the unfruitful works of darkness."** In **Romans 13:14** we are told to **"make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts."** We shouldn't even think about how to gratify those desires. The more we feed the monkeys, the more we have fellowship with them, the more we make provision for them the worse they become.

To rid ourselves of the monkeys we must cut them off. We must stop feeding the monkeys, stop fellowshiping with them, and stop providing for them. We must kick them out. But it is not enough just to do that. We must replace them with something better. We are to **"walk as children of light finding out what is acceptable to the Lord."** We are to **"be imitators of God as dear children (Ephesians 5:1)."** We are to **"walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us... (Ephesians 5:2)."**

Have you been feeding the monkeys? Stop it!!

DAY 32

All That Glitters

For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica. - 2 Timothy 4:10.

In Lima, Peru at their famous gold museum (Museo de Oro) apparently all that glitters is not gold. Many of the ceremonial daggers, jewelry, ornaments, and other artifacts have been found to be only replicas. It is estimated as many as 85% are copies and only 15% are the real thing. The 20,000 artifacts held by Museo de Oro have been displayed across the world. The museum may now face fines and other sanctions as a result of their actions.

The world presents itself as glittering gold but the truth is that the world's riches are much like the gold of the Museo de Oro. Adam and Eve found out the fruit of the forbidden tree was not as sweet as they had thought when living the rest of their lives with the consequences. The Children of Israel continually lusted after the world and judgment fell upon them in horrible ways. The prodigal son wanted what the world had to offer but found himself ready to eat the slop of the hogs as a result.

The world presents itself as glittering gold but we know the truth is that the glitter is false. We have a choice. We can drink of the spit of this world or of the River of Life from our Lord. We can eat of the hog slop of the world or we can eat of the Bread of Life. Have you **"loved this present world"**? Have you believed a lie? Give up the fool's gold of the world and grab hold of the real thing. Seek God with all your heart (**Psalm 119:9-16**). Resist the devil and draw near to God (**James 4:7-8**). Listen to wisdom (**Proverbs 8:1-11**).

DAY 33

Passing The Buck

For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight. - Psalm 51:3-4.

At a bookstore recently I was browsing through some books and noticed the author's acknowledgements, which was somewhat unusual. He said he wrote the book alone and no one had helped him. However, he stated if mistakes were made he wanted to keep with the long-standing American tradition of passing the buck. He then listed many people who apparently had helped and encouraged him in writing the book. Then he says any errors are completely the fault of these people and not his fault.

It does appear to be a part of the American culture to always try to pass the buck. If someone loses their temper they may say something like, *"I'm sorry I did that but it's because I'm under so much pressure"...or "it's because I've been so tired"...or "they were getting on my nerves."* We are always looking for a way to avoid responsibility and pass the buck on to something or someone else. King David gives us an example of how we ought to respond when we sin. When King David was confronted with his sins of adultery and murder he did accept responsibility. He did not try to pass the buck on to someone else. It stopped with him. He did it and he confessed he was wrong.

If we want a new start? If we want to begin anew? If we want to start over? The place to start is with accepting responsibility for our sins and confessing them to our Lord. In **Proverbs 28:13** we are told, **"He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy."**

DAY 34

Take Out The Trash

The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts. - Romans 13:12-14.

On Thursdays I take care of one of my important duties in the home, which is to take out the trash. Growing up on a farm that was one of my duties (chores) - to take out and burn the trash. I caught the side of the chicken house on fire once but was able to put it out with a garden hose before there was too much damage. Surprisingly enough my parents continued to entrust me with that chore. Living now in an isolated rural community the trash truck comes by once a week on Thursday and if you forget well it's another week. But this is much better than it was a few years ago when you had to burn all of your trash and if you had a burn ban you were in trouble.

What happens if I forget to take out the trash? The trash piles up and eventually even when bagged in heavy plastic bags it begins to smell. The longer I wait to take it out the more space the trash requires and the more the smell is magnified. It works the same way spiritually. Those who are working the **“works of darkness”** have a trash problem. The longer they are making **“provision for the flesh”** the more the spiritual trash piles up. The more the spiritual trash piles up the more the spiritual stink can be smelled. It just becomes worse and worse.

What is the solution? It is really a simple one. We just need to take out the trash. **“Cast off the works of darkness”** and put on the **“armor of light.”** Cast off the revelry, drunkenness, lewdness, lust, strife, envy, and other works of the flesh and **“put on the Lord Jesus Christ.”**

DAY 35

The Secret of Psalm 116

We've heard the testimonies again and again of those who survived and those who lost loved ones in the attack of September 11. I am still brought to tears when they share how their normal lives were attacked and destroyed in such a short period of time. I marvel at how these people who should be the ones being ministered to and helped are instead the ones ministering to everyone else. Their faith has been on public display and my heart sings when I hear them speak. What is their secret? How can they do this? How can they keep going on?

It may be that they have learned the secret of **Psalm 116**. The Psalmist knows what it is like to grieve because in **verse 3** he says **“The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow.”** We find the first secret of the Psalm in the next verse where the Psalmist says (**v. 4**) **“Then I called upon the name of the Lord: ‘O lord, I implore You, deliver my soul!’”** The secret? Tell God your problems because He hears you.

Secret number 2 is found in the next two verses (**vs. 5 & 6**) **“Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yes, our God is merciful. The Lord preserves the simple; I was brought low, and He saved me.”** The secret? God is the One to go to for help, to pour out our troubles to Him, because He has the power to help you.

Secret number 3 we see in **verses seven and eight** **“Return to your rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you. For You have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.”** The secret? We must remember what is true about God, no matter what may happen. With all of the turmoil this may be a good time to go outside and remind ourselves of the order, purpose, and beauty of creation that still exists. Go outside on a clear night and you will notice that the stars are still in their places. Open up God's Word and you will see that His Words are still true. Even if the stars come crashing down the Word of God is still true and we can stand upon it.

Secret number 4 the Psalmist closes this Psalm with praise and thanksgiving **“I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord.”** **“Praise the Lord!”** The

secret is obvious in that we too should praise our God because we have been graciously delivered. We who know the Lord have been delivered eternally through Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Psalmist in **verse 9** says **“I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.”** We are still in the land of the living and there is a reason for our being here. We have work to do and as we do so let us remember the secret of **Psalm 116**.

DAY 36

Welcome to the 21st Century!

For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivered us from the wrath to come.
- 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10.

Welcome to the 21st Century! So far it has been a very rude welcome with disasters and tragedies around every corner. Is there any hope left? Will life in the 21st Century be just one tragedy, disaster, and problem after another? Do we have any hope? As Christians we have hope. For the Child of God there will always be hope.

Hope is a defining characteristic of the Christian. We have hope of a better life after this life ends. The non-Christian has none or at best some wishful thinking about life after death. Chairman Mao once said, *“It is blackest before it becomes totally black.”* You can compare this to a common Christian saying that it is *“darkest just before the dawn.”* The difference is hope. The turning from the things of this world and the placing of our trust in the hands of the living God.

In **1 Thessalonians 1:3** Paul says about the Thessalonian Christians that he remembered their **“patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ...”** It is a common trait among Christians. The **“patience of hope,”** to dare to continue to hope in Jesus even in the face of tragedy. A **“patience of hope”** that continues on even when it is the blackest and everything, and everyone is saying you should give up. When the world says *“throw in the towel,”* *“let go of the rope,”* the Christian continues to hope.

No matter what may happen there is hope. Why do we continue to hope? Because we know there is a God, there is a Savior, and He lives within our hearts. Our Jesus is coming again! Let us continue to hope as did the Thessalonians and be ready for His return!

DAY 37

Quenching the Thirst

“And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him

who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.” - Revelation 22:17.

To quench our thirst we drink water. We know what that is like. But what if you are on a lifeboat in the middle of the ocean and there is no water but seawater? If you were to drink of the seawater what would happen? Your thirst would not be quenched and your thirst would only be magnified. Most likely you would die because of the salt in the seawater which would act to dehydrate your body. So, even though the seawater is tempting to a man dying from lack of water it would be foolish and dangerous for him to drink of it.

The Bible when it speaks of thirst is speaking of a spiritual thirst. We could think of it as a lust that we have for something or a desire that we have for something. There are many things that our flesh desires and the world claims it can satisfy those desires with a variety of things. We seek to satisfy our lust, desires, thirst through sexual immorality, through alcohol or drugs, or through the amassing of money and power. Those things in our lives act in the same way that seawater does for someone dying of thirst. They only make us thirstier and drain us of more life.

God designed each of us for Him. There is a place in each of our lives that only God can fill. That is what we are really thirsting after. We are thirsting after God. We try to fill this place in our lives with all of those other things but they only make things worse. God is the only One who can satisfy our thirst, who can give us life. Come to Him and drink of the **“water of life freely.”**

DAY 38

Spiritual Schizophrenia

Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double minded. - James 4:6-7.

In Garland, Texas Sherman Jackson was on his way to church with his seven-year-old daughter when a robber confronted him. Sherman had stopped for gas when a man walked up and asked for help. His car needed a jump-start and Sherman agreed to help him. However, it was not long before the man had his gun out demanding all the money Sherman had. The man was not satisfied with the money in Sherman's money clip and became very agitated demanding more money. Sherman began to pray and witness to the robber. He gave the robber a Bible. The man gave back the money clip and the last Sherman saw of him he had a gun in one hand and a Bible in the other.

What a picture of the double minded! A man with a gun in one hand and a Bible in the other. An agent with a drug task force shared with me that he could not understand when they made raids why they would find dangerous drugs and at the same time open Bibles and other religious materials. There is an epidemic of the double minded. To be double minded is to attempt to follow two opposite and antagonistic courses of action at the same time. It is spiritual schizophrenia. The theologian, J. I. Packer, describes the condition in this way: *“People who live compartmentalized [schizophrenic] lives worship God and go to church and do their “religious” bit on Sundays; then they switch that off and pursue their professions, weekday work, weekend hobbies, and all their*

relationships as though these were matters entirely separate from their Christian commitment. They don't even try to see their lives as a whole in terms of God and his Word. Instead they slip into their religious compartment on Sundays and their secular compartment of the other days of the week and allow no communication between the two."

How can the double-minded change? James tells us **"Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double minded."** To wash your hands deals with our physical outward actions. We must act right but in order to act right there must be a change of heart. Our hearts must be purified through our relationship with Jesus Christ. As the apostle Paul says in **Romans 13:14** we must **"put on the Lord Jesus Christ"** or clothe ourselves with Jesus. It must be a constant relationship, a constant contact with the One, the only One that has the power to enable us for holy living. We cannot live the Christian life in our own power. We need help and Jesus is the only One who can help. **"For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted (Hebrews 2:18)."**

DAY 39

In Your Right Mind

Then they came to Jesus, and saw the one who had been demon-possessed and had the legion, sitting and clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. - Mark 5:15.

In Quetta, Pakistan Ghulam Raza likes to smoke scorpions when they are in season. He takes the scorpion stingers and dries them in the sun and then grinds them into a powder. He then smokes this powder. Ghulam claims that when he smokes scorpion that heroin is *"nothing to me."* Ghulam and his friends find the scorpions in the Quetta cemetery. Sometimes when they are hunting scorpions high on heroin or scorpion powder they may fall into one of the open graves. Ghulam was a mechanical engineer but years ago became an addict through the use of painkillers during recovery after being shot 18 times.

One thing is obvious about Ghulam Raza and the obvious is that he is not in his **"right mind."** If Ghulam were in his **"right mind"** he would not be hunting scorpions in the Quetta cemetery. Most likely he would instead be employed as a mechanical engineer contributing to society. If he was in his **"right mind"** his home would not be a cemetery but a nice house in which he would live with his family. If Ghulam were in his **"right mind"** his thoughts would not be of how many scorpions he could catch but instead he would have thoughts perhaps of his family, his work, and of God.

Are you in your **right mind**? What are your goals, ambitions, dreams, and thoughts about? Your mind may not be in the sad condition of Ghulam Raza but is your mind where it should be? The Gadara Demoniak knows that the only way to have a **right mind** is to have Jesus in your life. There is still One today who can give even Ghulam Raza a **right mind** and that One is Jesus. What about you? Allow Jesus to renew a **right mind** in you (**Romans 12:2**).

DAY 40

Too Good To Be True

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. - John 1:12-13.

The email I received from an attorney in Lagos, Nigeria appeared to be very official and personal. It was a "Notification of Bequest". Wonderful news! The notification stated in part: *"On behalf of my late client late Pastor Polycarp Ekeocha, I write to notify you that my late client - Pastor Polycarp Ekeocha made you a beneficiary to the bequest sum of Four Hundred and Seventy Thousand US Dollars (US\$470,000) in the last codicil to his last will and testament... According to him, he is giving you this because of your involvement in Christian activities and in making better the world's situation... You are therefore required by this notification to confirm your ownership to this legacy by forwarding photocopy of any of the following proofs of identities... Best Regards, David Attah (Head of Chamber)."*

Since I had received some previously suspicious emails from Nigeria I used a search engine to check out David Attah and Pastor Ekeocha. David Attah does appear to be an attorney but I found several instances of the exact same email having been sent to other Christians and Christian organizations. According to the information I found - once they are in contact with you fees are required for processing and for various things bleeding as much money as they can from those involved. Internet scam is the third largest industry in Nigeria! It was another example of something that was simply too good to be true.

Sadly, many carry over the situation of the world to the spiritual realm and are unable to believe that we have a God so good that His own Son would die (**John 3:16**) for our sins. It is hard for us to comprehend that the Creator of the Universe desires to adopt us in to His royal family and make us joint-heirs (**Romans 8:17**) with Christ. We don't deserve it. But it is true! God loves us (sinful mankind - **Romans 3:23**) and has provided a way (Jesus - **John 14:6**) for us to be reconciled to the Holy, Righteous God. What must we do to become a part of the royal family and have our sins washed away? We must receive/accept the gift of Jesus Christ. Turn from our love of the world and turn to God. We can never deserve, never fully comprehend Him (Jesus) but by faith we receive Him (Jesus) and are born (**John 3:3**) into the Kingdom of God.

God has bequeathed to you the glorious riches of Jesus Christ (**Philippians 4:19**). There is no cost or hidden fees, it is a gift (**Ephesians 2:8-10**). *Claim your inheritance today! Receive Him!*

DAY 41

Lost Treasure

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. - Matthew 13:44.

In Australia a man has lost his treasure. A middle-aged Irishman believes he threw out the winning lottery ticket (worth A\$1.5 million or in American dollars \$700,000) in an empty grocery sack. The city council of Kalgoorlie-Boulder has given the man special permission to search through the garbage at the city dump. It was reported that the man had spent four days searching but was not sure if he was continuing to search at this point. Sue Virgin a city spokesperson said *"Can you imagine all the refuse at the tip (the garbage dump) after Christmas? It must have been disgusting."*

How disappointing it must have been for this man in Australia to lose his winning ticket, his treasure. To find it he was willing to go to great lengths even digging in disgusting garbage for days. If you have lost your treasure you will do all that you can to find it. Jesus speaks of a man who hides his treasure after finding it and gives all he can to buy the field and in doing so will own the treasure. The treasure is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Some of us have lost our treasure. We were once on fire for God but now we have gotten bogged down in the cares of the world. Many are bogged down in sin. Addictions have covered over the treasure of the Kingdom of Heaven in many of our lives. Some of our lives look like garbage dumps in the spiritual realm. We know it is true but what do we do? We need to dig through all of the stuff that has covered up the true treasure. Whatever it takes we should give it all to have the treasure of the Kingdom of Heaven restored in our lives. If someone will dig through a garbage dump for days for a lottery ticket surely we will dig for the spiritual treasure that has been lost in our lives.

How do we find our treasure? It will be necessary to throw out and dispose of some of the trash that has built up over the years. Cast off the sin that so easily besets us (**Hebrews 12:1**). Dig into the riches of God's Word (**Matthew 4:4**). Ask God for his help (**Matthew 7:7-8**). Maintain contact with others who are treasure seekers as you can help each other (**Hebrews 10:24-25**). Shield your life from the trash that constantly tries to flow into our lives from the world, the flesh, and the devil (**Proverbs 4:21; Luke 6:45**).

Let's start digging!!

DAY 42

Which Master?

No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him. - Luke 13-14.

Geri Halliwell a former Spice Girl donated some of her old clothes to a charity in Singapore. In response to a question about why she made the donation she said, *"What's the point of keeping things? You should never let your possessions possess you."* I understand what Halliwell is saying because I have felt in the past that some of my possessions have possessed me and have prevented me from serving my Lord in the way that I knew I should.

During a period of time when I was unemployed because of a downturn in the oil and gas industry we were burdened with a large house payment at a high interest rate. I no longer possessed the house it possessed me! We prayed for months that we would be able to sell the house. I finally prayed and asked God to sell the house as a Christmas present for my wife. God did sell it and we moved out December 26, 1983. We moved into a much smaller apartment but it was wonderful to free of the house that had held us back from pursuing God's plan in our lives.

It is not just houses that can possess a person's life and hold you in bondage. Almost any material thing can wreak havoc in your life. Too large of a car payment, or too much indebtedness to credit cards, and countless other things can prevent you from being obedient to your Lord or at least from taking the very best course of action as you walk through life.

What Jesus said is very true and we must choose which master we want to serve. Which master are you really serving? God or material things?

DAY 43

Take It Back!

Be glad then, you children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God; for He has given you the former rain faithfully, and He will cause the rain to come down for you - the former rain and the latter rain in the first month. The threshing floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil. So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the crawling locust, the consuming locust, and the chewing locust. - Joel 2:23-25.

Carolyn Risher says, *"We are taking everything back that the devil ever stole from us."* Last year in Inglis, Florida the mayor of Inglis, Carolyn Risher issued a proclamation banning satan from the town. She declared the small city (pop. 1,400) to be a satan-free zone and embedded copies of the proclamation in posts at four entrances to the city. The mayor said she was concerned about the kids dressing "Goth," DUI drivers and child molesters.

Once you have banned the devil from your life what do you do then? Take it back! Take back what the devil has stolen from you. Take back what the locusts have eaten up.

When we are involved in sin the devil eats up our time and lives just like devouring locusts eat up crops. Time and resources that could have been used to bring glory to God are redirected to bring pain and shame to our own lives and families. Years may go by while the demons romp and play destroying all that they can that is good in your life. When we finally turn back to God and He kicks the devil and sin out of our lives we may be tempted to think that it is too late to live the way we should. We may think that it is too late to do anything productive with our lives to bring glory to God.

When the prophet Joel spoke those words so long ago God's people had experienced firsthand the devouring locusts. God's promise to them and I believe to us as well is that God can restore the years to us that have been wasted. How can He do that? He will do it through quality of life and blessing. As we take back what the devil has stolen by living our lives to bring glory to the Lord the

years will be restored. Joy and blessing will pour from the Lord to our lives and from our lives to the lives of countless others.

Take it back!!

DAY 44

Let Go

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also take the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. - 1 Corinthians 10:13.

Bryan Allison, who is 24 years old, was watching a video of a 1989 National Hockey League playoff game and became angry once again that his team had lost. In his fit of anger he picked up his television and tossed it off the second-floor balcony of his home. But Bryan forgot one thing, he forgot to let go of the television soon enough and fell 20 feet to the ground along with his TV!! Bryan was briefly hospitalized in Buffalo, New York and everything is probably fine now except for his pride.

James gives the progression of temptation to sin to death. He says, **“But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death (James 1:14-15).”** When we dwell on an evil tempting thought long enough it eventually will draw us into action and that action is sin. The result of sin is death (**Romans 6:23**). **Romans 13:14** tells us not to make provision for sin which means in part not to think about how you can gratify your sinful desires. If you plan how you can sin and provide for that sin eventually you will come to a point of action when you will sin.

The writer of Proverbs says, **“Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not travel on it; turn away from it and pass on (Proverbs 4:14-15).”** Temptation often seems to come upon us suddenly and at times can seem overwhelming but it will not be more than we can bear. We do not have to enter the path of wickedness and we do not have to travel down it. We can turn away and pass on by it. Temptation is like Bryan’s television, if you hold on too long it will pull you down with it. So what must you do? You must let go. You let go by finding the way of escape that God has provided for you.

DAY 45

Weeds of the Heart

A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. - Luke 6:45.

The Fire Department in Denver, Colorado received a strange emergency call from the nearby city of Montbello. The woman who called claimed to be trapped in her home by tumbleweeds that had filled up her yard jamming against the house. Not only did they fill up her yard they had risen to a height of 16 feet. A spokesman for the Fire Department said there were “*thousands*” in the woman’s yard.

We have to wonder at what point did the woman in Montbello decide to call for help. Most likely the tumbleweeds piled up over a period of several hours or even days. She apparently waited until the situation was completely out of control. But the important thing to note is that she did finally ask for help.

When the weeds of bad thoughts, evil thoughts, impure thoughts are piling up in our heart at what point do we ask for help? At what point do we decide that instead of constantly imputing thoughts that are damaging we instead store up thoughts that are good? Do we wait until they have piled up to such a point that we are trapped? Do we wait until out of our mouths are coming hateful evil relationship damaging words? Do we wait until we are unable to make a good decision because our hearts are so polluted with evil?

We must be aggressive in controlling those weeds of evil thoughts or they will quickly overrun and ruin our lives. In **Proverbs 4:23** we are told to “**keep**” our hearts or “**guard**” our hearts. We must filter or bring into subjection every thought, everything that enters our lives. The Bible tells us how to do that in **2 Corinthians 10:4-5**, “**For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strong holds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.**” In the Name of Jesus we must take captive, take control of every thought, everything that enters our lives. If those thoughts are evil we must take them captive in the Name of Jesus protecting out hearts from those evil weeds.

Not only must we guard our hearts and avoid the pollution of our lives from evil we should at the same time fill our lives with good. The Bible tells us how to do that in **Philippians 4:8-9**, “**Finally brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.**”

We must not wait until we are trapped and even destroyed by the weeds of the world. Guard your heart, take captive the evil in the Name of Jesus, and fill your heart with all the good things of God.

DAY 46

Ladies Night

Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise. - Proverbs 20:1.

Wine makes you mean, beer makes you quarrelsome - a staggering drunk is not much fun. - Proverbs 20:1 (The Message).

Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart will utter perverse things. - Proverbs 23:31-33.

In Honolulu, the Blue Tropix Restaurant and Nightclub used to have a “*Ladies Night.*” On “*Ladies Night*” women would be admitted without cost to the nightclub while men had to pay a cover charge. However, Blue Tropix is finding it a little more expensive to provide a “*Ladies Night*” than it did just a few weeks ago. The nightclub advertised their “*Ladies Night*” on the radio and someone on the Honolulu Liquor Commission heard one of the radio spots. As a result, the Honolulu Liquor Commission investigated and found that there was gender discrimination. Blue Tropix has been fined 500 dollars for their discrimination.

While I was a parole officer, I had several women clients who had an alcohol addiction. One young woman I remember in particular because she shared how on Ladies Night at several bars she could drink as much as she wanted for free. Ladies Night made it much more difficult for her to resist this addiction. I for one would like to see Ladies Nights prohibited by using any legal avenue possible including gender discrimination if necessary. **Proverbs 11:22 says, “As a ring of gold in a swine's snout, so is a lovely woman who lacks discretion.”** When a woman is in the grips of alcohol, she will see the fulfillment of **Proverbs 11:22** because alcohol dulls the senses and removes “**discretion**” bringing about the sickening sight that verse in Proverbs describes.

Substance abuse in any form exacts a terrible price from those in its grip. The question is not whether a person should or should not continue on with such an addiction. The question for most is “*How can I escape?*” Sadly, too many decide there is no escape and simply continue on in their downward slide into destruction. *But there is an escape!!* You can escape from substance abuse whether it is an alcohol addiction or some other substance. Jesus is the only answer, the only way of escape. You must turn to Him and immerse yourself in His resources as we are told in **Philippians 4:19, “And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”** The Message translates the verse in this way, “**You can be sure that God will take care of everything you need, his generosity exceeding even yours in the glory that pours from Jesus.**”

God does have the power to overcome whatever addiction you may have. Will you turn to Him and allow Him to provide for this need that you have in your life? He is standing at the door and knocking and wants to come in (**Revelation 3:20**). *Will you open the door?*

DAY 47

Pursued

But 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 diligently seek Him. By faith Noah, being

divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. - Hebrews 11:6-7.

When I was 18 years old, I was out with some friends and made a decision to do something that, I've regretted much of my life. The Lord has forgiven me and I have forgiven myself but it was still a bad decision and a bad thing to do. God knew that too and He tried to stop me.

After leaving my friends, I decided to drive to another town. While traveling on the interstate between the towns there was a heavy rain and I was at the tail end of a line of cars maybe a mile long going 75 to 80 mph. Halfway to my destination a highway patrol car zoomed past and when he reached the head of the line of speeding cars he turned on his lights and succeeded in pulling two cars over to the side of the road. This was a determined man because he must have jumped out of his patrol car with his slicker suit on a flashlight and began trying to flag all the cars down so he could give them a ticket too. All of us in the remaining cars including mine just moved to the outside lane and continued on. But God had tried very hard to change my course. Looking back now, I can see that it was a warning and an attempt by God to save me from myself. I'm not sure what the change in course would have brought about but I know it would have been better.

Noah was "**divinely warned**" and he heeded the warning resulting in salvation from the flood for himself and his family. Noah for decades was the one God used to try to change the course of mankind. Mankind laughed at Noah and at his attempt to warn them. If only they had listened this world might be a much better place. At least it would have been a different place than it is now.

So often, when we are on the wrong course, the wrong path, headed in the wrong direction, God sends warnings into our lives. God is like a highway patrol officer speeding by us and then trying to flag us down before we destroy ourselves - warning us of the canyon we are speeding toward.

Has it ever happened to you? You knew what you were going to do or where you were headed was wrong? Not only that but God sent warnings into your life and you refused to listen? Maybe you are in that very situation right now? If you are, I would encourage you to listen, and take the time to consider the consequences. God's great love is speeding after you, pursuing you, trying to catch you, trying to get your attention. Stop, before it is too late.

DAY 48

Tumbleweeds

For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height-- to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. - Ephesians 3:14-19.

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. - Colossians 2:6-7.

For this devotional to work you must have a basic knowledge of tumbleweeds. In the dictionary, tumbleweed is defined as *“Any of various densely branched annual plants, such as amaranth and Russian thistle, that break off from the roots at the end of the growing season and are rolled about by the wind.”* DesertUSA.com says about tumbleweeds, *“Virtually everyone recognizes mature the Russian thistle, which looks like the skeleton of a normal shrub. Plants may be as small as a soccer ball or as large as a Volkswagen beetle.”*

If you have ever run into one of those tumbleweeds the size of a Volkswagen, you will know that this can be serious. One morning I drove to Amarillo, Texas on I-40 about 120 miles from my home to visit a woman having surgery. Every mile or so another tumbleweed would roll, spin, or bounce across my path. Sometimes cars or trucks would strike the weeds and once I was unable to miss a spinning weed that came into the path of my car.

What makes a tumbleweed a tumbleweed is that it has been detached from its roots. As a result, the weed has nothing to hold it in place, nothing to keep it from aimlessly rolling, and bouncing at the mercy of the wind. It is a picture of a person without Christ or of a Christian that has failed to grow in Christ and put down roots.

We can look at the lives of many people and see that their lives resemble the path of a tumbleweed. Sadly, these people are pushed this way and that by life. They spin and tumble never having anything to keep them in place or give them stability. They have no roots or their roots are very shallow. Psalm 1 describes such a person, **“The ungodly are...like the chaff which the wind drives away.”**

The child of God is to be **“rooted and grounded in love”**, and we are to be **“rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith”**. Psalm 1 tells us of such a person, **“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.”**

Which kind of person are you? Which kind do you want to be? Are you **“like the chaff which the wind drives away?”** Or, are you **“like a tree planted”** by the river of living waters with your roots growing deeper and deeper?

DAY 49

A Telephone Pole In The Kitchen

Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man

who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall. - Matthew 7:24-27.

Piotr Kardys had a problem when he built his house - a telephone pole where he wanted his kitchen. No problem to Piotr, he just built his house around the telephone pole. However, now he wants the pole removed which he says was placed on his property without permission in 2001. It now appears that the telephone company (TPSA) will have to somehow remove the pole. A Spokeswoman for the company said the company would appeal a court ruling ordering the pole removed saying, "*We have to have a binding decision -- we could do it on our own, but you have to realize this is a big investment.*"

You have to wonder about someone that would intentionally build their house around a telephone pole! You have to wonder even more about the structural damage that may be caused if the pole is actually removed from Piotr's kitchen.

We can laugh about someone building a house with a telephone pole in the kitchen. We can even laugh about someone building a house on sand. However, when we begin to compare the living of our lives to the building of a house it may not be quite as hilarious.

Jesus says that we will build the house of our life on a solid foundation if we live as He says to live in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus touches upon a broad range of subjects beginning with the Beatitudes and continuing with His teachings on the Ten Commandments, anger, adultery, divorce, oaths, enemies, giving, prayer, fasting, proper perspective on material things, judging others, the golden rule, the strait gate, false prophets, and much more. The Two Foundations of rock and sand summarize all of the teaching.

If we want to build a house (life) with a telephone in the kitchen that may someday have to be removed destroying the house (life) than ignore the Sermon on the Mount at your peril. If, however, we want to build a life that will withstand the worst the world can throw at us than we should seek to follow as closely as possible the teachings of Jesus.

So what do you do if you've built a life with a telephone pole in the kitchen? Begin now to follow the Lord Jesus and you will find that the telephone pole will begin to shrink.

DAY 50

It's Tempting

So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it." - Genesis 4:6-7.

Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. - James 1:12-15.

When I was growing up, I was warned on very cold days not to stick my tongue to the water pump handle. Apparently, that was tried by some and found to cause their tongue to be frozen to the handle. Their stories about the ordeal were enough to convince me never to try it. Recently there has been a story about a nine-year-old boy in Virginia who touched his tongue to a metal pole while waiting for a school bus. His tongue froze to the pole. The police were called and the boy's father obtained some warm water, which he poured on his son's tongue and the pole. The boy was freed - probably with a memory he will never forget. When the boy was asked by the police officer (while his tongue was still stuck) if he was going to do such a stupid thing again he said, "Uh-uh".

When I asked Jeanie if she had ever done anything like that, she said she had stuck her tongue to an ice tray. I'd never thought of doing that either. One poll I saw about whether a person had given in to a similar temptation reported that 25% had done so. Total participants in the poll were over 20,000.

The painful truth of life is that we all face temptations that are much more tempting and much more damaging than sticking our tongue to a pole, if we give in to them. God tells Cain, **"...sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."** I believe God tells us the same thing. Temptation, which leads to sin, is constantly at our door beckoning to us. Giving in to those temptations lead to painful consequences. We cannot say we are without warning. James tells us, *"But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death."* The result of Cain's failure to rule over sin was the murder of his brother and a spiraling down of Cain's life after that event. **"For the wages of sin is death... (Romans 6:23a)."**

Why should you not give into temptation? Because it leads to sin which brings about death. Giving in to temptation brings about death to God's perfect will for your life. Giving in to temptation at best delays God's plan for your life and at worst prevents it from ever being fulfilled. Giving in to temptation not only hurts you it also hurts your family and your friends. Cain killed his brother (and all of the descendants of Abel - Cain, by killing one person was a mass murderer killing generations of people.), bringing heartache to his parents, ruining his own life, and it took his own descendants down a difficult path. Your sin does not just affect you. Your sin is not just about you.

"...sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."

DAY 51

Refocus Your Life Through The Word Of God

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. - John 1:1-4.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. - John 1:14.

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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. - 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

George Mueller is remembered for many things including his care of orphans. He began caring for orphans when he moved in 1832 to pastor a church at Bristol, England. It was there at Bristol that two young children became the responsibility of the church. Mueller had very little money - only two shillings at the time he began to care for the children. During the next sixty years, God moved in a mighty way to provide for that ministry. Over seven million dollars were sent by God to help meet their needs. Mueller also began 117 schools, which provided educations for more than 120,000 children many of whom were orphans. The church he pastored had 2,000 members at the time of his death. Charles H. Spurgeon said of George Mueller, *"Of flowers of speech he has none, and we hardly think he cares for them; but of the bread of Heaven he has abundance."*

From where did George Mueller's empowerment come? It certainly was in part from his voracious reading of the Word of God. Mueller was a student of the ministry of George Whitefield who was a great evangelist during the 1700s. Mueller adopted a habit of Whitefield's, which was the reading of the Bible while on his knees in an attitude of prayer and meditation. Mueller through his lifetime had documented in his journal reading through the Bible some 200 times. I think we can see the source of George Mueller's empowerment.

Reading God's Word will help you to refocus upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Word become flesh. Jesus quotes Scripture in **Matthew 4:4**, to resist the temptation of the devil, when He says, **"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."** We cannot live the Christian life without a daily nurturing, filling, that comes only from the Word of God.

I recently spoke with a pastor friend who sadly shared about one of his sons for whom nothing seems to work out. Everything his son tries always ends in some degree of failure. His son knows what the problem is in that he knows he is not on the right track with his life and that he is not in God's will. Joshua tells us how we can get on the right track with our lives and it is through the Word of God. Joshua says, **"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success (Joshua 1:8)."**

You cannot expect to read the Bible for a few moments one night and expect your life to instantly change. You can expect that through a commitment to reading through the Bible in a year (about 3

chapters a day) that you will begin to see positive changes for the better in your life. As you follow through with that commitment to God in all areas of your life, you will see over the course of months and years dramatic changes for the better occurring, which will lead to the successful living of a good life for the glory of God.

Now's a good time to dust off that Bible, open it up to **Genesis** chapter one and begin to read. I can promise you that you will never regret the time you spend in the Word. Let us refocus our lives on Jesus through the Word of God.

DAY 52

Refocus Your Life Through Prayer

Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know. - Jeremiah 33:3.

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. - Ephesians 3:20-21.

Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. - Hebrews 4:16.

In August 1998 Michael Giovanetti (39 years old) was heading for home. Michael is married with a son and twin girls. He had been unemployed since April and was searching for work as an avionics technician. He lost control of his car on some gravel trying to get onto a turnpike. He shot across the highway, over a guard rail and his car flew into the air and finally landed 100 feet down a steep hill strewn with boulders. The accident tore the front off Giovanetti's car, which came to rest on its crushed roof. The passenger side of the car was buried in dirt and rocks. He regained consciousness upside down, his face mashed against the broken windshield. He unlatched his seat belt and fell against the steering wheel.

Michael was injured with a head wound and broken ribs but knew help was only 100 feet away from him. However, he was stuck in the twisted wreckage at the bottom of the steep hill. He had to endure four days with humid high temperatures before he was able to crawl out of the wreck and drag himself up the hill. Michael says that he PRAYED MIGHTILY when he first woke up after the wreck and gave thanks whenever a cool breeze blew through his car. Michael shared, *"Everybody tells me I'm really lucky. I felt somebody else was helping me - like it was a team. Someone had a reason to let me go. I was in a bad way. Someone had to pull me out of there. I don't remember it hurting. I remember it was very hot. It was very difficult uprighting myself."*

Michael spent his first day yelling and banging a piece of metal from the wreck against the body of the car. Nobody noticed. He spent the second day in a failed effort to wiggle out of the mangled wreck. On the third day, he dragged himself halfway out of the wreckage, where he rigged a rubber

mat to direct rainwater into plastic water bottles. By the morning of the fourth day, Giovanetti realized no one would come for him. Weakened, he dragged himself backward, crablike, up the steep hillside, gripping rocks in his fists to protect his hands from broken glass.

When he finally made it, Giovanetti was too weak to even pull himself over the guard rail. He lay on the side of the road waving unsuccessfully at passing cars and trucks until finally some people did pull over to help. Michael said about the ordeal, *"It seemed mostly like a long, bad day. I didn't know it was four days until I got to the top. I just kept trying to get out. I wanted to see my kids."*

Usually we do our best praying when we are in desperate situations. However, what if we didn't wait until it was a desperate situation? What if we prayed every day as if our lives depended upon those prayers? What if we prayed for our protection, the protection of our families, and others every day? What if we prayed for God's will to be done in our lives every day? What if we prayed for God to deliver us from evil and temptation every day? What if we committed ourselves to pray for 30 minutes to an hour or more every day for a year? What would happen if we were to do that? Jeremiah tells us in **Jeremiah 33:3**. The apostle Paul tells us in **Ephesians 3:20-21**. The fact is that prayer works, there is a God and He answers prayer if we will simply pray. Will you make that commitment? Refocus your life through prayer.

DAY 53

Refocus Your Life Through Church

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. - Hebrews 10:24-25.

For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them. - Matthew 18:20.

I love the testimony of a woman whose name is Shari that I have posted on my website. Shari was living with someone and using drugs when she was 17 years old. She left this man after a couple of years and started living with another man that she married after a year. She was still using drugs and she left her husband when her daughter was five months old and eventually divorced him. Three and a half years later, she married again but this time there was something different in her life. That something different was church.

Here is what Shari says in her own words, *"I have been married to him now 10 years. During that time, I have constantly gone to church and looked to the Lord for guidance. It's wonderful how loving and forgiving the Lord can be when you've spit in his face for so long."*

"My husband came to know the Lord in September of 1994, was baptized, and is an active member of our church. We now have 4 daughters altogether. Our youngest is five and she knows nothing but going to church on Sunday mornings and evenings, and Wednesday nights. She even prays on Wednesday nights at prayer meetings! My oldest daughter is now 15, and thinks that people who do that kind of thing (drugs, living with someone outside of marriage) to themselves are stupid, and

searching for something. I have always been honest about my past experience with my two oldest daughters, hoping that it will help them decide not to do those things. So far, it has worked."

"It's a joy to see what the Lord can do with someone who thought they weren't worth much. I am now our Sunday School Director (4 years now), our VBS Director (this year will make 9), and the church Secretary. And I totally enjoy my life."

You can grow as a Christian without going to church but that growth will be really slow and it will be painful. For several years after I was saved I did not attend church regularly just on a sporadic basis. I only began to really grow as a Christian when I made a commitment to be in church for every service including Sunday School, Discipleship Training, and Wednesday night.

Sometimes during those early years of church attendance the preaching wasn't the best in fact it was simply bad. However, the Word of God was preached by the man of God and God used it in my life. Much of the time during those early years of church attendance the worship service was not even bad it was worse than that. But you see, church is not about just the preaching or the worship service. Church is a God thing. Church is God's idea and it was created and ordained by Him. Even if Billy Graham or Charles Stanley is not preaching in your church you can still grow and will grow if you are faithful in attendance. Even if the worship style is not the style you prefer whether traditional or contemporary or a blend, you can and will grow if you are faithful in attendance. Why? Because God is in the midst of the church (**Matthew 18:20**) when those who make up the church assembles together. Also because those who are the church stir up each other unto love and good works.

You will never really grow as a child of God until you commit yourself to regular faithful church attendance. Not a partial commitment to part of the church program but a full commitment. Refocus your life - commit yourself today to faithful and regular church attendance.

DAY 54

Arise

If you love Me, keep My commandments. - John 14:15.

He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him. - John 14:21.

If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. - John 14:23.

I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me. But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do. Arise, let us go from here. - John 14:30-31.

The 14th chapter of the Gospel of John is a much beloved portion of Scripture that is frequently read

at funerals and for comfort. However, the words can be very uncomfoting for those who are not living in obedience to their Lord. A theme perhaps not often mentioned in **John 14** is that of obedience. Jesus hammers away with **“keep my commandments”, “He who has my commandments and keeps them”, “keep My word”**.

At least one of these statements about obedience is directed at Judas, and that is very appropriate considering his betrayal of Jesus, which occurs in the near future. It may be that the repeating of the need to keep the Lord’s commandments was not just directed at Judas. Perhaps others of His disciples had failed in one way or another. How could this be? It could very easily be possible since the disciples were all human and therefore capable of sin.

Jesus, of course, would know if any of the disciples had sinned because He is God and sees clearly the condition of the heart. In **1 Samuel 16:7** we are told, **“But the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.’”** Jesus would have been looking at the heart of each of His disciples and they all knew that. You can picture Jesus teaching them and confronting them with their sin in John 14.

Perhaps there are a few moments of silence between His teaching and confronting and the final phrase of the chapter. As each disciple realizes the piercing gaze of their Lord into the depths of their heart, you know that all of them except for Judas would have repented. Not a word would have needed to have been said. When the Lord knew that each had made their decision to turn from sin and turn to what the Lord wanted in their lives then the final phrase of the chapter was said. That phrase is, **“Arise, let us go from here.”**

Just as Jesus could look upon the hearts of His disciples, He can and does look upon our hearts. Whatever sin or sins you may have committed if you repent - you turn from sin and turn to what God wants in your life He will forgive you of your sins and cleanse you from all unrighteousness putting those sins as far as the east is from the west and will remember them no more. Then, I believe He says to our hearts **“Arise, let us go from here.”**

We cannot go back and change what we have done or not done or said or not said in the past. We can, however, receive His forgiveness and cleansing and then rise up to walk with Him from this point on. **“Arise, let us go from here.”**

DAY 55

Your Cup of Life

Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest’s servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant’s name was Malchus. So Jesus said to Peter, “Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?” - John 13:10-11.

The ear-cutting incident occurred when they came to arrest Jesus through the betrayal of Judas.

With the actions of Peter and the words of Jesus, we can see the difference of how the world views things and how God views things. What was the “**cup**” for Jesus? The “**cup**” for Jesus was to come to this world walking as a human being for some 30 years and finally to suffer and die on a Roman cross even though He was innocent of any wrongdoing.

To some extent, we have no control over our own personal “**cup**” of life. Jesus, however, chose to give up the glories of Heaven coming to earth to become our Savior. We had no personal control or choice as to whether or not to be born or when to be born into this life. We had no personal control or choice as to whom our natural parents would be. We do have some control over what career or profession we will pursue but even with this, there are some limiting factors. We are limited in some career and professions by our intelligence and by our financial capability to obtain the education needed.

Some people like my son, Nick, are born with Downs Syndrome or other physical or mental handicaps. Some people during their lifetime develop physical or mental handicaps. That is their “**cup**” of life. What is your “**cup**” of life? Have you accepted your “**cup**” of life as did Jesus?

There is an old word often used in connection to the call of God on a person’s life - especially preachers. That word is “*surrender*.” The dictionary defines “*surrender*” as “*To relinquish possession or control of to another because of demand or compulsion*” or “*To give up in favor of another*.” It is not just preachers that need to surrender to their “**cup**” of life.

A failure to “*surrender*” to the “**cup**” of life God has given to us can result in many problems. Those problems coming from a lack of surrender can result in stress, anxiety, depression, and other mental ailments, and the physical problems that come with them. In addition, this is the underlying cause of the addictions that many people have developed. With nearly every addiction there is an underlying problem but even deeper there may be this lack of “*surrender*.” Therefore, the first place to begin in overcoming an addiction is to surrender to the “**cup**” of life that you have been given.

Have you surrendered to your “**cup**” of life? If not now is the time to do so. Surrender to all that God has for you and then you will have peace and experience a closer walk with your Lord than you have ever had before.

DAY 56

Stuck in a Rut

Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Then many warned him to be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. Then they called the blind man, saying to him, "Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you." And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus. So Jesus answered and said to him, "What do you want

Me to do for you?" The blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, that I may receive my sight." Then Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road. - Mark 10:46-52.

In order to refocus our lives and put first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (**Matthew 6:33**) it is very likely that we will have to do something before we can do that. What is it that we have to do? We have to get out of the rut we've been living in.

While I was driving a school bus after a heavy rain, taking kids home on the red clay roads where I grew up I slid off into a ditch. You might think that would have stopped me - well, the bus was leaning a little (okay, quite a bit!) but the surprising thing was I could still move forward, I just couldn't get out of that ditch. Finally, after I had driven about a half a mile I reached a point where I was able to get the bus out of the ditch and back up on the road. I could have just stayed in the ditch but I kept trying the whole way to turn the bus until it did eventually happen. What a relief!

I recently talked to one of the guys (student then) who was on the bus when we were stuck in the ditch. Guess what? He still remembered it. Thinking about - it would probably be kind of hard to forget!

Life has a tendency to get us into a rut (or a ditch) and we think that this is the way it will always be and there is nothing we can do to change it. Because it does not appear that we can get out we don't even try to get out. We just give up and think that this is the way it was meant to be. Certainly, Bartimaeus should have felt that way about his blindness. How could something like being blind ever be changed? It was unheard of!

Bartimaeus did exactly what was needed to get out of his rut of blindness. He sought the One who had the power to do something about His situation. Only God could change him, could heal him, and Bartimaeus knew it. Bartimaeus reached out even when those around him were telling him that it was hopeless, that it was impossible, that he should not even try. Bartimaeus cried out for Jesus to help him anyway and his entire life was changed forever.

It may be that you are in the same old rut you have been in for most of your life. You do not want to be there but you've stopped trying to get out because it appears impossible. But have you ever really spent the time in prayer to know whether your rut is the will of God? Have you ever fasted and prayed for a week or so asking God what His will is and if it is His will to get you out of your rut? Isn't it time to do so? Remember **Matthew 7:7-8** is still in the Bible and if we do not ask we will not receive. If we do not seek, we will never find and if we don't knock, the door will never open.

Get out of the rut! Ask for help from the One who can do something about it.

DAY 57

You Can Do The Impossible

Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into

Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them. - Acts 16:6-10.

You may have seen the incredible play on the news - a three-point winning shot of 90-feet. The basket was made by Jordan Snipes playing for Guilford College against Randolph-Macon. There was only 0.6 seconds left in the overtime game when Snipes rebounded Randolph-Macon's missed free throw. Snipes spun around throwing the ball the entire length of the court and the ball went through the net for the winning score. Guilford College won the game as a result 91-89.

I wonder if Jordan Snipes had any thought that he would actually make the three-point winning basket? He does have some qualifications for the long ball in that he is a former football quarterback. He had hit five of the six three-pointers he had tried prior to the game winner. In a fraction of a second Snipes responded to the challenge of the moment trying the impossible. The impossible became the possible only because Jordan Snipes tried to do it.

The apostle Paul was used to doing what others would never attempt. He tried to take the gospel everywhere that was possible. He was prevented by the Holy Spirit from taking the gospel into Bithynia. But then the apostle saw a vision of a man from Macedonia pleading with him to **"Come over to Macedonia and help us."** Paul's response was to immediately try to go to Macedonia.

When does the impossible become possible? Only when someone actually tries to do the impossible. The impossible seems to be a word that sets up barriers, which are not always real. Pearl S. Buck once said that, *"All things are possible until they are proved impossible. And even the impossible may only be so, as of now."* Werner von Braun once said, *"I have learned to use the word impossible with the greatest caution."* Arthur C. Clarke once said, *"When a distinguished but elderly scientist states that something is possible, he is almost certainly right. When he states that something is impossible, he is very probably wrong."*

What is impossible for you? Is it impossible for you to witness to someone? Is it impossible for you to teach a Sunday School class? Is it impossible for you to preach? Is it impossible for you to write? Is it impossible for you to pray in public? Is it impossible for you to read God's Word daily? Is it impossible for you to attend church regularly? Is it impossible for you to spend an hour a day in prayer? Is it impossible for you to stop drinking? Is it impossible for you to stop using illegal substances? Is it impossible for you to stop looking at pornography? Is it impossible for you to live like you know you ought to live? Is it impossible for you to invite someone to church? Is it impossible for you to _____ (You can fill in the blank)? It may be that it is only impossible because you refuse to try. Everything that you refuse to do, try, or begin is impossible to you.

Jordan Snipes would never have won the game if he had not tried the impossible. What about you?

DAY 58

Easter is Coming!

But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death. - Philippians 3:7-10.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. - Romans 5:8.

Where do we find hope when tragedy suddenly comes upon us? Do we blame God...or do we turn to God? When bad things happen to good people is God responsible? This has been a week of sudden tragedy coming upon unsuspecting and innocent people. There were several people killed and more injured as a man on trial for rape made his escape in Atlanta. In Wisconsin, seven people were killed at a church service and others injured with the shooter then killing himself.

In the midst of tragedy, trials, and the difficulties that sometimes come upon us in this life there is a Christian holiday that gives hope. Easter is about the hope that we have in Jesus Christ. Easter is about God's great love for us human beings. Easter is about the difference between Hell and Heaven. Easter is about the greatest friend that we will ever have and the worst enemy that we could possibly have.

Jesus came that we might have life and have it more abundantly (**John 10:10b**). Our enemy has come to steal, kill, and destroy (**John 10:10a**). All of creation was corrupted when Adam and Eve succumbed to the temptation of the enemy in the Garden of Eden. Since that time, bad and good things have happened on Planet Earth to all people. Just as God sends rain upon all people, the corruption of creation has resulted in bad things being possible for everyone that lives upon this planet.

When bad things happen in our lives we should always remember that Jesus came that we might have the abundant life. We should remember that Jesus suffered and died on the cross so that we might have eternal life. We should remember that God through Jesus has experienced the very worst that life can do to anyone. Why was Jesus allowed to suffer such a cruel death on the cross? Because if anyone will seriously consider what Jesus went through for them they can have no doubt about God's love for them (**Romans 5:8**).

When bad things happen to us we need to remember that it is not the end of the story if we are a child of God. Just as the death of the Jesus on the cross was not the end of the story. No, God had the last word about that terrible thing that happened on the cross. God turned that terrible thing into the most wonderful thing that has ever happened when Jesus defeated death by rising from the dead. When that bad thing happens to you remember that Easter is coming, some bright shining day you will know the rest of the story. Some day in eternity you will see how God took that terrible thing

that happened to you and then brought the most beautiful and wonderful things out of the bad things that happened (**Romans 8:28**).

While here on this earth we will as with the apostle Paul have the fellowship of the sufferings of Jesus (**Philippians 3:7-10**) but *praise God! Easter is coming!*

DAY 59

Determined Steadfastness

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. - Psalm 51:10.

Surely he will never be shaken; the righteous will be in everlasting remembrance. He will not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD. His heart is established.... - Psalm 112:6-8a.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. - 1 Corinthians 15:58.

A woman in Florida encountered some problems on her way to work. She had a little accident. While she was driving down the highway connecting the Gulf Coast and Fort Lauderdale known as "Alligator Alley" her car somehow went airborne. Maybe she dodged something and swerved, or

another car hit hers - it is not clear what happened. The result, however, was that her car did clip another car and ran off the highway into the canal which is next to the roadway. One witness to the incident said, "It was like the Dukes of Hazard."

The woman was shaken up but managed to escape from her sinking car with her purse, which contained her immigration papers and made it to the bank of the canal. She not only escaped from her car but also from two alligators that a witness to the accident saw in the canal. After paramedics checked her for injuries, someone took her home. Instead of taking the day off, she got a ride to the restaurant where she works as a waitress. In spite of the ride in an airborne car, swim in the canal, and narrow escape from alligators - *she still made it to work on time!*

The dictionary defines the word "determined" as "decided or resolved." The dictionary defines the word "steadfast" as "firmly loyal or constant; unswerving." So, "determined steadfastness" would be someone who is constantly resolved about something. We can easily see that the woman who had the car accident in Florida had determined steadfastness about going to work. She was "constantly resolved" to go to work and probably to arrive on time as well.

Is there anything that you have determined steadfastness about? Is there anything so important in your life that a car accident, a swim in a canal and alligators would not keep you away from or from doing? Is there anything that would make you turn away from God? Is there anything that would

make you stop serving God? Is there anything that would make you stop doing what you know God wants you to do? Do we have the determined steadfastness of that Florida woman when it comes to our relationship with our Lord?

I hope that you can say with the apostle Paul that you are “**steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.**” But if you are unable to - the Bible gives us direction as to how we can develop that determined steadfastness. We need to pray as the Psalmist prayed in **Psalm 51**, “**Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.**”

DAY 60

Spiritual Superglue

The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. - Matthew 6:22.

But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. - Matthew 5:28.

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world. - 1 John 2:15-16.

An 81-year-old Buddhist monk in Thailand made a big mistake. He intended to put some eye drops in his eyes but instead of picking up the eye drops, he picked up a tube of superglue. Doctor's have used a solvent to dissolve the glue in the monk's eye. A spokesman for Angthong Hospital said, "*His eye is not damaged, the right eye can see clearly after the operation and the doctors said the left eye also is not damaged.*"

I am thankful that I keep the superglue in a separate area and cabinet from my eye drops! If I kept them together, I would probably be capable of gluing my eyes just like the monk.

The eyes that Jesus is speaking of in the Gospel of Matthew are our spiritual eyes. In **Ephesians 1:18** the apostle Paul speaks of the “**eyes of our understanding.**” However, it is sometimes translated as the “**eyes of our heart.**” In **2 Peter 2:14** the apostle Peter makes this even more clear by saying, “**having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children.**”

Although we would never think of putting superglue in our eyes there is something else that is just as dangerous to the “**eyes of our heart.**” That spiritual superglue is lust. People do not just lust after the physical body of a woman or a man. There can be a lust for material things. There can be a lust for power, or fame, or even for the respect of others.

When we succumb, give in to lust, it is just as damaging spiritually as superglue is to our physical

eyes. Lust blinds us spiritually. The “**lamp**” is turned off for the “**eyes of our heart**” when lust enters into our hearts. The spiritual superglue of lust affects every area of our spiritual life and there is nothing that will do more spiritual damage.

Lust can severely damage your spiritual life just as quickly as squirting some superglue into your eyes will severely damage them. Take good care of those eyes and remember Jesus says, “**If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.**”

Entire Contents of the *Addictions Kit* Copyright © 1993 - 2005. Ed Wrather.

P. O. Box 210, Sweetwater, OK 73666

www.theburningbush.org

wrather@dobsonteleco.com or edwrather@theburningbush.org