

SPIRITUAL INSIGHT FOR YOUR LIFE

# FAITH *for life*

*“The **life** which I now live...I live by the **faith** of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Galatians 2:20*

Complimentary Copy

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Does Your Life  
*please* God?

by pastor tony scheving

*“And lo a voice (came) from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” - Matthew 3:17*



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**W**hat are you living for? Currently, some people are striving to get an education or a degree. Some people live for their job or career. Others are striving to find a relationship with someone of the opposite sex. Some people live to have fun or travel, while others live to make money or pad their portfolio. And then there are those who would tell you they are simply trying to be 'happy in life'. So what are you living for? Are you trying to live a life that pleases God your Creator, and does your life truly please Him? Jesus spoke of this thought when He said, *“The Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please Him”* (John 8:29). That was the very thing Jesus lived to accomplish. None of the other things mattered much.

Your life is a gift from God. The Bible says, *“For in Him we live, and move, and have our being”* (Acts 17:28). While your life is a gift from God... how you live your life is your gift back to God. The Bible says in Revelation 4:11 *“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created.”* We are here on planet earth to be a blessing to God and please Him. If God were to rate your life from 1 to 10 in this area, how would you score? Is God

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**FAITH** *for life*

## Does Your Life Please God?

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currently pleased with the way you're living the one life He's given you? In reality, does your life please God?

### The Displeasing Actions

There are some obvious things that displease God our Creator, such as false religion. Certainly God didn't start all of the hundreds of religions found in the world. Christ even bears witness to this (Matt 15:13). The devil has been busy! It was the false religious crowd who killed the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul the apostle made mention of those who; *"Both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God"* (I Thess 2:15). There has been a lot of bloodshed down through the centuries in the name of religion by those who thought they were doing God a service (John 16:2).

Another thing that would displease God is ungodly living. The Bible speaks of those who are *"Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God"* (2 Timothy 3:4). It also mentions those that will be condemned because they *"believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness"* (2 Thessalonians 2:12).

A certain tribe in Africa elects a new king every seven years and then it proceeds to kill its old king. For seven years the new king of the tribe enjoys this high honor and is provided with every luxury known to savage life. During these years his authority is absolute. He has all the wine, women, and song he desires. For seven years he rules with honor and possessions, but at the end he dies. Every member of the tribe is aware of this. It is a custom of long standing, and there is never a lack of applicants for the post. For seven years of luxury and power men are willing to sacrifice the remainder of their life just like scores of people around the world who are willing to be bankrupt through eternity if they may only live in sinful pleasure while here.

Proverbs 21:17 says, *"He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man."* Someone said that 'living for pleasure is the least pleasurable thing you can do'. People are slowly dying of boredom and lovelessness. The Bible says *"But she that liveth in*

*pleasure is dead while she liveth"* (I Tim 5:6). Hedonism is king in our culture. We live in a sex saturated society. What does God think of our morals with so much sex outside of marriage between a man and a woman? The vast majority of the portrayal of sex on TV is illicit. The Bible speaks of those who are aware of the judgment of God and yet *"have pleasure in them that do them"* (Romans 1:32). What does God think of those who take His name in vain, get drunk, indulge in dirty jokes or watch raunchy movies? Does our entertainment please God?

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***Your life is a gift from God. The Bible says, "For in Him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). While your life is a gift from God... how you live your life is your gift back to God.***

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In 1942, London was being bombed nightly by the Germans during WWII. For years prior to the Blitz, the English had been straying from God. About that same time the following article appeared in a British newspaper and was widely published. It read; "For years we have been a pleasure-loving people, dishonoring the Lord's day and going to the beach instead. Now our seashore is barred from our use. We have preferred driving anywhere but to church and now there is a shortage of fuel. We have ignored the ringing of the church bells calling us to worship and now the bells only ring to warn us of an incoming invasion. We have left our churches half empty when they should have been filled and now they are in ruins from the bombings. The money we would not give to the Lord's work is now taken from us in taxes to fund the war. The service we refused to give God is now demanded for our country's defense. Lives we refused to submit to God are now threatened by another evil authority. Nights

we would not spend in prayer are now spent in anxious air raids."

The only thing we learn from history is that we never learn from history. When times get hard there will be many who will say... "What were we thinking?" What will it take to humble us? The Bible says, *"Now therefore make confession unto the LORD God of your fathers, and do His pleasure"* (Ezra 10:11).

### The Delightful Attitude

Is your life pleasing God? Are you doing the one thing you were put on planet earth to do? Pleasing God means so much more than having the approval of man. Paul the apostle said, *"For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ"* (Galatians 1:10). Again, on a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your life as far as 'pleasing God'?

We've looked at the 'Displeasing Actions' but what is the 'Delightful Attitude'? What kinds of things please our Heavenly Father? First of all...obedience! 1 John 3:22 says, *"Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight."* Are we obedient to the Word of God and what it says?

We also please God by spending time with him in prayer. The man Enoch did this in the Bible and it says, *"he had this testimony, that he pleased God"* (Hebrews 11:5). We also please God by surrendering our will to what God wants. Jesus said in John 6:38 *"For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me."*

We also please God by embracing straight and honest Bible teaching (not watered down). 1 Thessalonians 2:4 says, *"But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God."* Churches need to be honest when it comes to the issues of life. The truth may hurt at times, but it will never harm. God is also pleased by unselfish living. Hebrews 13:16 says, *"But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."* This would mean sacrificing our pleasures for others. It's

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**Faith for Life**

## Does Your Life Please God?

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called 'dying to self' in the Bible. Someone well said, "The only path to true pleasure is in pleasing God."

## The Determining Approval

Jesus taught us that we need a 'spiritual re-birth' sometime during our life (John 3:3). This is not a casual acquaintance, but a lifetime relationship of surrender to a wonderful God who loves us. When that takes place, we receive a desire in our hearts to please our Heavenly Father. The Bible says, "*The works of the LORD are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein*" (Psalms 111:2). There is a natural desire in the heart of a child to please his parents. When we are born into God's family at the moment of salvation, there is a special 'grace' that God places in the heart of a man or woman to live a life pleasing to Him. Philippians 2:13 says, "*For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.*"

## The Defining Act

The ultimate act of pleasing God took place 2000 years ago atop a lonely hill on the north side of Jerusalem. The Son of God suffered and died for the sins of mankind as a divine yet human offering. This voluntary sacrifice was pleasing to the Heavenly Father (Isaiah 53:10-12). Today many people think they get to heaven by their religious works. The Bible makes it clear that a person cannot be saved by their baptism, church membership, confirmation or good deeds (Ephesians 2:8-9, Titus 3:5). In Hebrews 10:6, the Bible states that "*In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin (God) had had no pleasure.*"

Salvation is a free gift that is to be received through repentance from sin, and faith in the payment of Jesus on the cross of Calvary. Any other attempt to get to heaven is displeasing to God. The Bible says, "*But without faith it is impossible to please him (God)*" (Hebrews 11:6). Have you had a time in your life when you were spiritually reborn?

Remember that God gave you your life as a gift. How you live your life is your gift back to God. We are here on planet earth to have a wonderful relationship with our Creator. We are alive at this time in history to please Him. Everything in the universe is designed to bring Him the glory due His name. It's not about us! Psalms 103:21

says, "*Bless ye the LORD, all ye...that do His pleasure.*" Maybe it's time to change the purpose for your life and make the goal 'to please God'. ■

*To learn more about making Jesus your personal Savior, please read pages 6-7, or go online to [7StepsToGod.org](http://7StepsToGod.org).*

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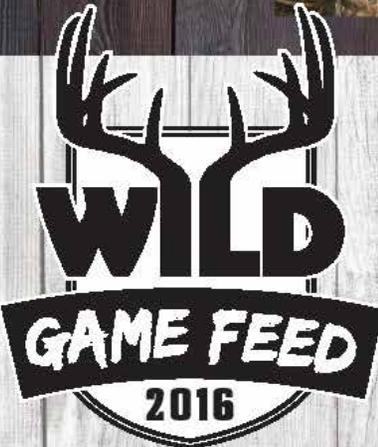
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# How Bitterness Behaves

## 6 Characteristics of Bitterness

By Kurt Skelly



Bitterness destroys lives, families, and churches. Left unattended, she inevitably spreads. On her playing field, nobody wins. Recognize her early. Deal with her seriously. She is dangerous. Extremely dangerous.

Consider a few of her characteristics:

### She Internalizes

Like a seed, she germinates underground, small and unseen. Quickly her roots grow, and by the time she sprouts to the public eye, she has established an extensive root system in the ground below.

Bitterness pushes the rewind button a million times. Over and over the hurtful scene is replayed in the mental cinema. In some ways, it's almost as if the memory

is granite and bitterness has etched her words there permanently.

So haunting is her story, it often greets a person in his waking moments and whispers to him as he falls asleep. And with annoying regularity she interrupts throughout the day. Every day.

Just behind the smiling face she lurks. Her poison soaks the minds of some of the most unlikely people. She finds the innermost crevices of the heart and lodges there.

### She Personalizes

Bitterness rarely focuses upon situations or circumstances. Nope. She is completely absorbed with people. One doesn't have to spend too long with a bitter person before he knows exactly who the object of his bitterness is. You'll soon hear about 'what he said' or 'how she hurt me'.

And it doesn't matter if that hated person is well-liked and respected by others. The sole criterion for his spot at the crosshairs of bitterness is the perception of how he has treated me.

### She Criticizes

*"Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh."* Bitterness inevitably seeps out of the mouth. No matter how carefully her host endeavors to chain her, she'll find her way out.

Somehow every conversation provides fertile ground for one new critical weed to push through the surface. Often the listener wonders within, "Where did that come from?"

For the embittered person, each new conversation and every new relationship is an opportunity to poison new minds with the same old story.

### She Emphasizes

Bitterness emphasizes herself. Her hurt. Her narrative. Bitterness is the ultimate

narcissist. She sees everything and everyone through her distorted lens.

Perhaps the most insidious outcome of bitterness is this self-absorption. The embittered one cannot see the needs of others and the ways by which he can encourage, help, pray, and serve.

### She Rationalizes

Bitterness will not see herself as sinful. She is simply reacting normally and she justifies it in her own mind.

By contrast, forgiveness refuses to use the past as evidence against the offender. Bitterness however retries the case and renders a guilty verdict a thousand times.

For some, bitterness is their comfort food, their little stash of chocolate to make them feel better. And constantly she excuses her behavior with her own little conversation: "I deserve this. I know it's not good for me, but I need it. It might not make things better, but it makes me feel better. That's all that matters right now." So says the 'bitter-aholic'.

### She Demoralizes

Bitter people die a slow death. Such is the nature of the poison. Hurt begets hurt. And the expressions of bitterness inevitably isolate them from would-be encouragers or people who could help with the situation.

Bitterness pleads loudly for her survival. And while forgiveness, humility and godliness offer better, life-giving arguments, they are too often unheard amid the clamorous and self-justifying protests of bitterness.

Search your own heart. Ask for God's help. Be brutally honest in the mirror. Act quickly. When it comes to bitterness, time is not your friend. ■



by Cary Schmidt

# KNOWING WHERE YOU'RE GOING

You are more than just a body. You are an eternity bound soul living inside of a body. Understanding that fact leaves you with one nagging question: Where does the rest of me go, the living part, when my body dies? Do I just “hang around” planet Earth haunting people? Do I get reincarnated into another life form? Do I go to purgatory and try to continue earning my way to Heaven?

Everybody has an opinion, but opinions aren't the kind of thing on which you stake your eternal destination. We must turn to the Bible for answers to these questions and see what God actually says.

Yes, the Bible does say that the real you will live on somewhere after your body dies. Hebrews 9:27 says, *“It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.”* Simply stated, everybody dies once and then we stand before God to determine our final eternal destiny.

I want you to simply consider this question. Would you like to know where you are headed after you die?

If there was a way to know for sure where you would spend eternity, wouldn't you want to know?

This is the trouble with the religions that teach you have to ‘do’ what is on their ‘list’. They leave you wondering rather than knowing. They trap you in a system of insecurity. They leave you thinking, “Have I done enough?” “Have I done the right stuff?” “Have I done it right?” Ultimately you're left wondering, “Where am I really headed?”

Recently I was speaking about these things with a lady in our community. She was a good lady with a respectable lifestyle, a happy home, and a religious past. Yet, when I asked her if she was sure she was headed to Heaven, her best answer was “I hope so!”

Then she got a puzzled look on her face and simply said, “Can you know that for sure?”

Friend, the good news is we don't have to speculate about this question. In fact, God doesn't want you to speculate or fear your eternity. He does indeed desire for you to know for sure where you are headed! He has gone to great lengths to give you the opportunity to know for sure that your eternal destiny is settled.

I want to show you a verse you've probably never seen. Most religious systems tend to avoid this one.

It's found in 1 John 5:13, *“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life.”* Did you catch that? God says, “You may know that you have eternal life!”

Think about that for a moment. Let it sink in. Reason it out for a moment. God wants you to know (that's for sure) where you're going. He doesn't want you to wonder, fear, doubt, or regret. He wants you to know. That's a pretty important verse! Now think about this question. Do you know where you are going? You may hope. You may be thinking optimistically. You may think you have a good idea of where you are going, but do you KNOW?

The word *KNOW* implies full confidence and understanding. It removes doubt, hesitation, or question. It rests on fact rather

than wrestling with doubt. It trusts truth rather than being frustrated in fear.

What are the implications of “knowing where you're going”? How would this knowledge change your life?

Well, first of all, it would completely remove the fear of death! This is perhaps the greatest single fear in all the world, and this knowledge could completely remove all doubts. No fear! Just as God says in 2 Timothy 1:7, *“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”* God's plans for you do not include fear, but rather a sound mind and a spirit of power and love.

Secondly, it would give your entire life a different perspective. You would be living towards something ...preparing for something bigger than life ...looking forward to something beyond death. In short, you would have hope!

Friend, you are going somewhere! And God doesn't want you to wonder where. He wants you to settle this matter. He wants you to rest in what you KNOW. He wants you to be sure of what will happen to you after you die. He wants you to KNOW that you have eternal life.

Maybe you never saw that verse. Maybe no one ever told you that there's a way to be freed from the fear and doubt that plague so many people when it comes to the subject of death. I hope this is such good news that you will continue searching for the truth. ■

# How to Find God and Really Know Him

## God's Plan of Salvation

There are three things that you can know for sure...

**1) That you are going to Heaven.** *"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life"* (I John 5:13).

**2) That your life will be changed when you get saved.** *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new"* (II Corinthians 5:17).

**3) You will never lose your salvation.** *"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."* (John 10:28).

It all revolves around Jesus Christ!

Who is Jesus Christ? John 1:1 says, *"In the beginning was the Word (Jesus), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."* John 1:3 continues, *"All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."* Jesus was God in flesh or God the Son who created everything.

He came to earth to save us. *"For the Son of man is come to*

*seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10). The first step in going to heaven is to realize we need to be saved from our sin.

How do we get to heaven?... *"Jesus answered and said unto him, verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"* (John 3:3).

There is a difference between a physical birth and a spiritual birth. *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit"* (John 3:6).

Why do we need a spiritual birth? Man was originally created a three part being in God's image—a trinity. *"And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness: so God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them"* (Genesis 1:26). Man is made up of body, soul, and spirit.

God placed Adam and Eve in the garden. *"And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"* (Genesis 2:16-17). Man ate of the fruit and though he didn't die that day physically, he died spiritually!

When Adam and Eve had children they were now born spiritually dead as well (no longer in God's 3-part image). Genesis 5:3 says *"And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth."* That is why we must be re-born spiritually.

That is also why we have a sin nature. You don't have to teach a toddler to be selfish, lie, steal things, sass back, fight with

siblings, etc... it is also our nature as we grow up.

Most people fail to see themselves as serious sinners. They feel they are a "good person." They are comparing themselves to others, instead of God's standard; the 10 Commandments. Let's see how you rate compared to the 10 Commandments.

#1 Thou shalt have no other gods before me (Exodus 20:3). No one can claim they have never put anything ahead of God (money, career, own self centered goals, pleasure, sports, entertainment, sin, vice, a relationship with another, etc).

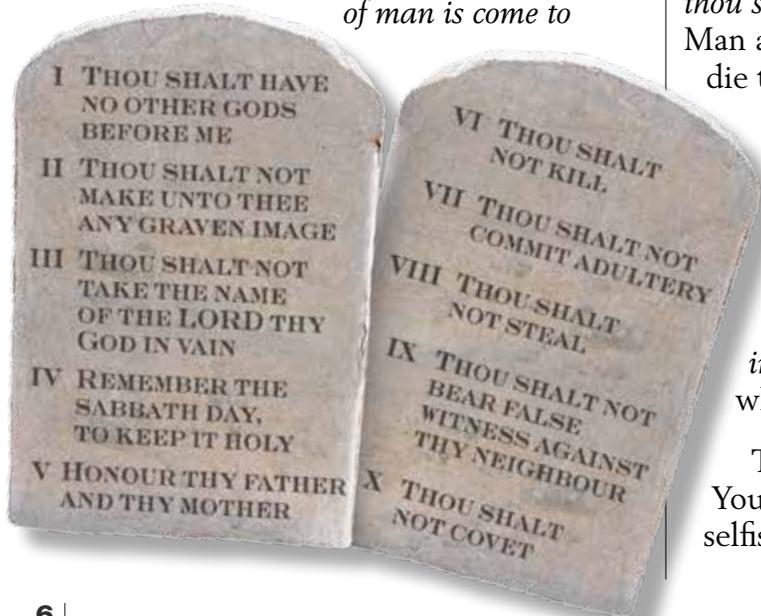
#2 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image (of God) (Exodus 20:4). Many have been guilty of inventing a God of their own imagination and liking... a God who 'suits them.' People want a "God that overlooks sin and takes everyone to heaven." They have improvised and dreamed up a God of their own image.

#3 Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain (Exodus 20:7). Re-read that carefully. God is keeping record of every time you've used His name as a curse word and you will answer for it one day.

#4 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy (Exodus 20:8). Have you always honored the Lord's Day or been faithful in church attendance? (Heb 10:25).

#5 Honour thy father and thy mother (Exodus 20:12). Have you ever disrespected or disobeyed your parents. Have you ever argued with them or dishonored them?

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## How to Find God

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#6 Thou shalt not kill (Exodus 20:13). Although most people have never committed murder, they are guilty of “murder of the heart.” Jesus clarifies this commandment in Matthew 5:21-2; Whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother... shall be in danger of hell fire. Have you ever been mad or bitter at someone?

#7 Thou shalt not commit adultery (Exodus 20:14). While many have never committed adultery, Jesus said; Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart (Matt 5:27-8). Have you ever lusted after the opposite sex? This is adultery of the heart according to Jesus.

#8 Thou shalt not steal (Exodus 20:15). Who could claim they’ve never taken anything that doesn’t belong to them? ... something small or even the boss’s time?

#9 Thou shalt not bear false witness (Exodus 20:16). No one could honestly claim they have never told a lie!

#10 Thou shalt not covet (Exodus 20:17). Have you ever desired anything you didn’t have or didn’t need? Have you ever been discontented, jealous or ungrateful? This is covetousness.

Most people are guilty of breaking all 10 commandments! Many places in the Bible reveal that liars, adulterers, thieves, the covetous, etc will spend eternity in hell! (Rev 21:8, I Cor 6:9-10, Gal 5:19-21). How could you ever expect to get to heaven by “living a good life?”

Romans 3:10 *As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:*

Romans 3:23 *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*

Sin has a penalty... Romans 6:23 *“For the wages of sin is death”* (hell).

We cannot possibly get to heaven by keeping the law (10 Commandments).

The 10 Commandments were given by God to show us how impossible it is to

be saved by doing good works. *“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith”* (Galatians 3:24). The law (10 Commandments) shows us that we are condemned and need a Savior.

You will never get to heaven by doing good works. Titus 3:5 says, *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.”* *“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Romans 5:1).

Yet getting to heaven is not automatic just because Jesus died for your sins! Salvation is a gift that must be received. *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God”* (Ephesians 2:8). That means that baptism has nothing to do with being saved. Romans 6:23 explains, *“The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

How does a person know when they are ready to be born again? They know they are ready when they mean business with God, and are willing to repent of sin. Acts 3:19 says, *“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.”* II Peter 3:9 says the Lord is *“not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”* Jesus said, *“except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish”* (Luke 13:5). That means being willing to also turn from false religion or false teaching—anything contrary to the Word of God, the Bible.

To repent means to change your mind about your sin, and make Christ the Lord

of your life. Are you willing to turn from your sin and turn to God? Do you believe that Jesus paid the full price on the cross for your sins?

Though God hates sin, He loves you and sent Jesus to die for your sins. *“But God commendeth (proved) his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8).

*“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16).

If God is dealing with you about your need of forgiveness, and you would like to be saved (born again), the final step is to ask God for the gift through a simple prayer. *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”* (Romans 10:13). Notice the promise of this verse from a God who cannot lie. Titus 1:2 says, *“God...cannot lie”*. Do you believe that God will save you simply because He said He would? Christ will save you if you are willing to make him the Lord of your life.

If you know that you are ready, you can pray and ask God to save you in your own words such as: “Dear Heavenly Father, I know that I am a condemned sinner unable to save myself, but I am willing to turn from my sins and make Jesus my Lord and master. I now trust in His sacrifice on the cross to pay for my sins. Please forgive me and save me. Amen.” ■

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# Facing Adversity In Your Life

## Three Things to Remember When Facing Trials

by Dr. Kevin Folger



When we deal with adversity, we have a tendency to think that we are an isolated case; however, everyone faces difficulty at various times in life. We aren't the only ones dealing with trouble. Our problems may seem overwhelming, but the truth is, with God's help, we can face our problems and go on!

As I travel through the pages of Scripture, I see story after story of men and women who faced trouble in their lives, but God used those troubles to mold them and accomplish His purpose.

I think about a man by the name of Joseph. Joseph knew more than his share of adversity. His would be an extremely sad story unless we knew that there was a God in Heaven that was using the struggles to do a work. Joseph had to understand this truth at some point in his life, for he told his brothers: *"But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive"* (Genesis 50:20).

God used the adversity of not being able to have children in Hannah's life. Her inability caused her to plead with God. If

He would allow her to conceive and have a son, she told Him that she would give him back to Him. God responded and gave her a son, Samuel, who was mightily used of God to accomplish His purpose. Samuel's life and ministry arose out of his mother's adversity.

I don't know if you are facing adversity or affliction today. If you aren't, that is good; there is a good chance however that eventually you will be dealing with one. When adversity comes, how do we deal with it?

### *Understand that God has a purpose in our trials.*

We need to be extremely careful that we don't waste something that God has designed for our lives. God has a purpose for everything that touches those who love God and trust Him. Romans 8:28 speaks of this truth when it says, *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose."* Notice it doesn't say that everything is good that touches us. It does say, however, that everything that touches the true Christian can work together for good. We must be content to believe that it is true, even if we can't see it.

### *Understand that God will give the grace and strength to true believers to deal with the matter.*

No matter what it is, no matter how difficult, we must believe what God has promised. The Bible says; *"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but*

*will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."* 1 Corinthians 10:13.

God will give grace to help in the time of need as we face temptations and trials. This silent and invisible grace and strength is amazing!

### *Understand the way to deal with a trial is to turn to God and seek Him.*

Psalm thirteen is a brief Psalm, just six verses. It speaks of the Psalmist David going through a trial. He begins the first three verses distraught. He is struggling to figure out where God is. Those verses speak of his intense struggle and how difficult it was. By the time we get to the final three verses, something changed in the life of the Psalmist. It's not clear if the circumstances changed, but for sure, David's attitude changed.

He ends the Psalm singing praises to God. The Bible plainly states that God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble is the person that realizes that his problems are too big and runs to the Lord with those problems. God will give grace and special attention to that man. The problem may go on for a while, but with God's added grace and strength, a believer can deal with the problem.

You will face trouble and adversity in your life, but there is a God in Heaven that has a purpose for it all! Maybe you need to trust His Son Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and God is using a struggle in your life for that purpose. The day will come when the fog will lift, and you will understand what God was doing in your life. ■

## A Fresh Perspective on Your Hardship

By Andrew Murray

Here are four thoughts on enduring a trial...

"First, God brought me here. It is by His will I am in this difficult position: in that fact I will rest."

"Next, He will keep me here in His love, and give

me grace to behave as His child."

"Then, He will make the trial a blessing, teaching me the lessons He intends me to learn, and working in me the grace He means to bestow."

"Last, in His good time He can bring me out again—how and when He knows."

"So therefore I am here...

- 1) By God's appointment;
- 2) In His keeping;
- 3) Under His training;
- 4) On His time-table."

# Why You Can Have A **Good** Day

*The Day Ahead Is As Bright As the Promises of God*

by Dr. Paul Chappell

Every morning brings fresh opportunities—and fresh challenges. Sometimes the challenges seem to outweigh the opportunities. Sometimes it's difficult to see the opportunities embedded in the challenges. Sometimes—with or without challenges or opportunities—it's just a rough day. Thankfully, every morning also brings the faithful promises of God—each one just as fresh today as when God first gave it.

When we forget God's promises, we flounder through our day relying on human strength and faulty perception. But when we remember and believe them, we find provision for our needs and strength for our labor. Notice just twelve of these promises for our needs and work:

- God's presence: *"I will never leave thee"* (Hebrews 13:5).
- God's protection: *"I am thy shield"* (Genesis 15:1).
- God's power: *"I will strengthen thee"* (Isaiah 41:10).
- God's leading: *"And when He putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them"* (John 10:4).
- God's provision: *"I will help thee"* (Isaiah 41:10).
- God's purposes: *"I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil"* (Jeremiah 29:11).
- God's rest: *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"* (Matthew 11:28).
- God's cleansing: *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9).
- God's goodness: *"No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly"* (Psalm 84:11).
- God's faithfulness: *"The LORD will not forsake His people for His great name's sake"* (1 Samuel 12:22).
- God's guidance: *"The meek will he guide"* (Psalm 25:9).
- God's wise plan: *"All things work together for good to them that love God"* (Romans 8:28).

*God's presence, protection, leading, rest, guidance...and more! Sounds like a good day to me!*

## 5 Ideas To Make the Most of Your Time

We Must Redeem the Time by Dr. Kevin Folger

I don't know if your life is like mine, but I find that time is moving at breakneck speed. I hardly get a new week started when it seems like the week is over and I am looking at a new week. They say that time moves quicker the older you get. I don't know why that is, but it certainly seems true.

Psalm 90 instructs us to number our days and apply our hearts to wisdom. Below are some ideas to help make the most of your time:

1. Make God an essential part of your time. Begin your day with Him reading the Bible and praying. Make sure that He is the

focus of your time throughout the week. Do not view church attendance as optional! It is not a waste of time, but rather a way to capitalize on your time.

2. Plan your week as much as possible. At the beginning of every week, try to write down the things that you need to accomplish and when you are going to do them.

3. Prioritize your time with your

family. If you have young children in your home, remember that they will be grown and gone from your home soon. You have this moment to make a difference in their lives. If your children are grown, make sure that you and your spouse make time to be with each other. Eat meals together as a family. Talk at the table and encourage one another.

4. Turn off the television and read a good, helpful book. When was the last time you read to expand your mind and grow intellectually and spiritually? Encourage your children in this matter of reading.

It will help them more than they know.

5. Finally, assess your week. How was it spent? How did you manage your time? When you fail, determine that the following week will be better. ■



# What Is God Waiting For?

By Dan Aceituna

When one considers all the heartache, misery, and injustice continuously taking place around us, it's a wonder that God doesn't just end the whole thing, wipe the slate



clean, and start all over again. In fact, many throughout the centuries have used this very argument to try to explain away God's existence. However, the fact is, there is a God and as He looks upon the sin prevalent in the world today, His natural inclination is to pour out His wrath upon us. Yet, He holds back because the Bible says that God: *"is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9)

God, through His longsuffering, has chosen to temporarily hold back His wrath in order to give you and me time to repent. But sooner or later, this "period of grace" will end as the world-wide social trends we see today progress to a point where they become the last straw that breaks the camel's back.

God's inevitable judgment should not come as a surprise. His wrath has already been poured out once upon the whole world during the days of Noah. At that time, the human race had progressed to a state very similar to where we are rapidly heading toward. And as we continue down this path, it is only a matter of time until God will have no choice but to pour out His wrath again. Therefore, we must take heed and consider the days of Noah as a

warning of what lies ahead.

Jesus Christ, describing His second coming and the coming of God's judgment upon this Earth said: *"But as the days of Noe [Noah] were, so shall also*

*the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be"* (Matthew 24:37-39).

In Noah's day, the sinful behavior that brought down God's wrath was displayed by the entire population (except Noah and his family). And of the many characteristics describing their sinful condition at that time, one in particular stands out as you read Christ's warning—***they had no fear of God!*** Friend, go back and read Matthew 24:37-39 again. Do you notice how casual they were right before the flood? For the decades that it took Noah to build that ark, he was out there every day warning them, telling them to **repent**, and yet Jesus said they **"knew not until the flood came, and took them all away."** They simply did not fear God!

First of all...

They did not fear God's hatred of sin. In describing the days of Noah, the Bible says: *"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually"* (Genesis 6:5). Genesis

6:12 adds, *"And God looked upon **the earth**, and, behold, it **was corrupt**; for all flesh had **corrupted** his way upon the earth."*

The days of Noah were dangerous, hard to bear, troublesome, harsh, fierce, and even savage. All these descriptions can be summed up into one word - **perilous**. This is the word the Bible uses to describe the days we live in: *"This know also, that in the last days **perilous** times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof:"* II Timothy 3:1-5

Nineteen sinful behaviors are used to describe the conditions during the last days. Read the following list and see if these sound familiar.

- 1) *"Lovers of their own selves"* - selfish; self-centered; unconcerned about others.
- 2) *"Covetous"* - desires material things; greedy; driven to possess more things.
- 3) *"Boasters"* - swaggerers; blow their own horns; talk about themselves.
- 4) *"Proud"* - considering themselves above others; haughty; refuse to admit when wrong
- 5) *"Blasphemers"* - slanderous; swearing; reviling; foul-mouthed; dirty jokes.
- 6) *"Disobedient to parents"* - disrespectful toward elders; headstrong; hard to control.
- 7) *"Unthankful"* - ungrateful; take things for granted; think the "world owes me."
- 8) *"Unholy"* - no interest or desire to keep separated from sin.
- 9) *"Without natural affection"* - showing more affection toward materialistic things, animals, etc. than toward people.
- 10) *"Trucebreakers"* - will promise anything but will not honor commitments, breaks promises.

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**Faith for Life**

## What Is God Waiting For?

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- 11) *"False accusers"* - slanders; destroys the character of others.
- 12) *"Incontinent"* - no self-control; no self-discipline; no self-restraint.
- 13) *"Fierce"* - savage; cruel; heartless; wild; impetuous.
- 14) *"Despisers of those that are good"* - those who mock or have contempt for godly people.
- 15) *"Traitors"* - no convictions; changes sides for personal advantage or gain.
- 16) *"Heady"* - reckless; headstrong; stubborn.
- 17) *"Highminded"* - full of self; proud; puffed up; worship intellect.
- 18) *"Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God"* - sensual; pleasure seeking; self-gratification is their god; not willing

to submit to God; please themselves rather than God.

- 19) *"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof"* - being religious on weekends, but living like the devil the rest of the week; having an outward religious display but experiencing no real life-changing power from God. The Bible teaches no one to be religious, but to have a personal relationship with God.

Today we see these 19 behaviors throughout society. And the worst part is they are carried out without any regard to God's fearful, ever-watching eyes. Many, if not most, today do not fear God's hatred of sin, and the fact is, they're playing with fire... literally! Jesus said: *"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him [GOD] which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell"* (Matthew 10:28)

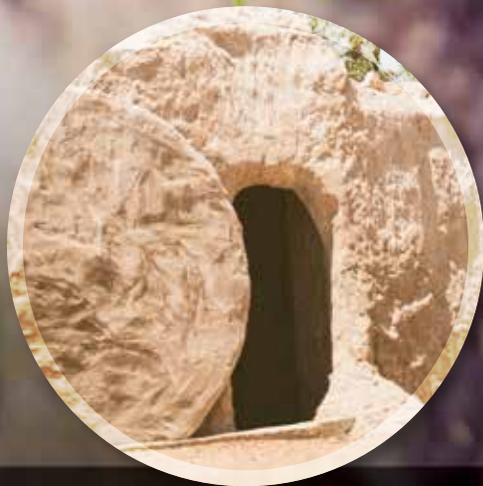
Describing the judgment that will come upon mankind when God's longsuffering

finally runs out, Jesus warned: *"The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity [sin] and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."* (Matthew 13:41)

No doubt Noah saw many in his day blatantly sin in God's face. So many in fact that God had to end it all. It's amazing that these activities continued during the construction of the ark when God's warning had already taken place. Obviously they had no fear of God's warning. In spite of the decades Noah spent warning those around him (another example of God's longsuffering), no one else came on board with him and his family! Some, perhaps, thought he was crazy for claiming that a flood was on its way. The Bible predicts a similar attitude will be present during the last days: *"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after*

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# EASTER SUNDAY



**Sunday | March 27, 2016 | 10:30am**

*Make plans to be a part of our services  
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# YOU DON'T HAVE TO FEAR DEATH

The following conversation took place following a Sunday morning church service where the preacher spoke of death...

Preacher, I don't appreciate your scare tactics!

Excuse me, ma'am, but what was it about my sermon that scared you?

You talked about death too much. You were obviously trying to scare the people who were listening.

Would you have preferred that I didn't mention death at all?

No, but did you have to mention it so many times?

The Bible does. It's mentioned over 380 times. Jesus Christ Himself had a lot to say about it.

That may be true, but you should address more the problems we have in life. People have enough to worry about without having to worry about death.

Actually, people should think more about death than they do about life.

What?! Why do you say that?

Because any way you look at it, they will spend more time dead than alive. It's an obvious reality and the Bible clearly bears this out:

*"Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."* (James 4:14)

No one knows exactly how long they will live, but compared to eternity it will only last a moment. That's why it's important to consider where our souls will spend eternity.

(The woman was now quiet, the preacher's point had been made but her reaction was to walk away.)

Wait! Please don't go. Have you considered where you will spend eternity?

No, sir, I can't say I have. You see, I've always avoided the thought of dying. I've always been frightened by it.

Everyone is! It's a very common reaction to fear death. Part of it is due to the unknown and part of it is because of guilt.

Guilt?

Yes, the guilt that comes from having to face God with our sin. The Bible says: *"Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."* (Romans 3:19)

We are all under God's law and accountable to it and whether we admit it or not, we have all violated it. Who hasn't violated the first commandment by placing things ahead of God like money, a job, a relationship or things? Many have taken God's name in vain or ignored His Sabbath. They had disobeyed their parents and also lied, stolen, and cheated in rebellion to His commandments. Jesus even said that to lust is to commit adultery and to hate is to commit murder.

You mean everyone has broken some of the Ten Commandments?

Not just some, we have broken them all!

*"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one*

*point, he is guilty of all."* (James 2:10) *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"* (Romans 3:23)

Our sins have offended a just and holy God and we can't hide our guilty state from Him.

Like the psalmist said: *"O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee."* (Psalm 69:5)

It is no wonder people fear death since it opens the door to God's wrath and judgment: *"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."* (Hebrews 9:27).

Preacher, you've put your finger on why I'm so afraid of dying.

Well, God's word has some good news for your fearful, guilty state—the Gospel—the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Through His death Christ has conquered the fear of death for us.

How?

By dying in our place. He took our judgment upon Himself. He sacrificed Himself on our behalf and the result was to: *"deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."* (Hebrews 2:15)

This means that we no longer have to spend the rest of our lives fearing death if we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.

But why would Christ die for my sins?

That's God's grace in action. Even though we don't deserve it, God offers forgiveness because of His love. *"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."* (Romans 5:8-9)

God hates sin but He loves us and doesn't want us to die lost and end up in Hell. So Christ suffered God's wrath on our behalf and in doing so the Bible says: *"Herein is our love*



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## You Don't Have to Fear Death

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*made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.*" (I John 4:17) When we trust Christ as Savior we no longer have to fear judgment at death. We can have boldness and assurance on that day because our Savior took our judgment upon Himself.

Why does it say "As he is, so are we in this world"?

Because when we trust Christ as Savior we become a child of God (John 1:12) just like Him. We become adopted. "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." (Romans 8:15)

You see, as children of God there is no more fear of condemnation. We can approach God without fear of judgment. Therefore, there is no more fear of death. In fact, death means that we will finally go home to be with our Heavenly Father!

How does one accept Christ as Savior?

By admitting you're a lost hell-bound sinner and repent, turn from sin toward God, and place your trust in Christ as Savior.

Preacher, thank you. This is a wonderful truth to know.

Good, now you see why it's so important to preach about death. Remember, the real problem is not that life is too short, but that death is too long. Therefore, you are not truly ready to live until you are ready to die.

This dear lady wanted to know more about God's plan of salvation so the preacher showed her the following from God's Word.

First the Bad News:

1. We must realize that we are lost, sinners that are spiritually dead.

"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10)

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3)

2. As spiritually dead, lost sinners, God's judgment and wrath are upon us.

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." (Hebrews 9:27)

"For which things' sake [sin] the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience [sinners]." (Colossians 3:6)

3. Our good works cannot stop this judgment and wrath. God demands death as payment for sin.

"(We are saved) *not of works, lest any man should boast.*" (Ephesians 2:9)

"As it is written, *There is none righteous, no, not one.*" (Romans 3:10)

"The soul that sinneth, it shall die." (Ezekiel 18:4)

"For the wages of sin is death." (Romans 6:23)

Now for the Good News:

4. God is willing to accept someone else's death in our place.

That someone is Jesus Christ.

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." (I Timothy 2:5-6)

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

5. Jesus has bought salvation for us and now God can offer it as a gift by grace.

"Ye are bought with a price." (I Corinthians 7:23)

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of

*yourself: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.*" (Ephesians 2:8-9)

How does someone accept this gift? Through repentance and faith.

REPENTANCE: means to change your mind. It is an attitude of not wanting to sin against God.

FAITH: means to simply take God at His word, i.e., believe the verses you have just read.

"Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts 20:21)

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Romans 10:13)

6. Upon being saved and born again spiritually, we become converted to a new creature in Christ.

"And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3)

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (II Corinthians 5:17). ■

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## What Is God Waiting For?

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*their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?" (2 Peter 3:3-4)*

Many today ridicule the idea that Jesus is coming back and that the world will end in God's judgment. They have no fear of God, and some are even proud of it! In Noah's day they didn't fear God nor take heed to His warning. But judgment came anyway: *"Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished" (2 Peter 3:6).*

Many scientists agree that the world was flooded by water 4500 years ago (the time of Noah). Native Armenians have reported many sightings of the ark atop Mt. Ararat over the centuries. In 1955 French mountain climber Fernard Navarra sighted a "black wooden barge (ship)" entombed within an icy glacier. After climbing down a 35-foot crevasse within the ice, he came upon the huge object that he estimated to be at least 50 tons of timber. He brought back a piece of the rock hard wood (there are no trees within 150 miles of Mt. Ararat) and had it tested using Carbon-14 dating.

Incidentally, Navarra did not reveal where the wood came from, yet the reports returned indicating the timber was possibly 4500 years old (the time of the flood)!

How frustrating it must have been for Noah to have his warnings "fall on deaf ears". With their lack of fearing God, those around him simply refused to listen to him. Perhaps they even thought his message was too negative or offensive. In any case, they refused to repent, change their rebellious ways, submit to God, and live their lives according to His ways.

Friend, today God is giving us a warning. His Word clearly describes the coming judgment. Like in Noah's day, He's giving us time to repent. But time is running out.

It ran out for them, it will run out again for others, and then it will be too late! Jesus Christ warned: *"Strive to enter in at the strait [narrow] gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer*

*and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are" (Luke 13:24-25)*

The door of opportunity is still open. Thanks to God's mercy and longsuffering it hasn't closed yet! And until it does, God "commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). He's holding out His hand and saying: *"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18)*

But friend, be warned, God will not be as reasonable once that door closes, because once it does, He will say: *"Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded... I will mock when your fear cometh... when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer ... For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD" (Proverbs 1:24-29).*

History is repeating itself as mankind collectively fears God less and less, and blatantly sins against Him. It's only a matter of time until once again the cup of God's wrath will fill to its brim and destruction will come upon all mankind (Rev. 16:1). But there is still hope! God is still as merciful and gracious as ever, once again giving man time to **repent** and **trust** the "Ark of Salvation"—Jesus Christ.

Are you on board? *"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).*

*"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). The Bible says, "For God hath not appointed us [true believers] to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:9). ■*

## Talent Must Be Undergirded by Character

by Troy Dorrell

Some of today's great college athletes never fulfill their potential. Though exceptionally talented, they fail to succeed in both sports and life. This is because their talent took them to a place where their character could not sustain them. Think about that principle for a moment; talent is not enough.

Undergirding all we do is our character; and if it is deficient, in time it will be exposed and we will come tumbling down. Every year we hear about athletic stars who get themselves into trouble and lose a scholarship or millions of dollars in the Pros because of poor character. Their talent took them to a place where their character could not sustain them. The same is true of politicians who climb the ladder

politically due to intelligence and charisma, but they lack moral character.

Many have lost much when placed in positions of leadership or responsibility and then because of undeveloped character they fall into sin or fail to do right. The place they held could not be sustained because they lacked what was most important—character.

Be careful not to let your talents, abilities, intelligence, or even relationships take you where your character cannot sustain you. The friendships we have, the talents God gives, and the abilities we develop are all wonderful gifts, but all must be supported by character. Character matters!

# One Key To An *Irresistible* Marriage



## *Love To Delight Your Spouse*

by **Cary Schmidt**

A young couple once emailed me and asked an insightful question about their relationship. Several years into their marriage, they began to discover how “opposite” they really were in many areas. And that realization scared them. They asked if this discovery should worry them, or if all couples experience this.

It occurred to me that most couples face this sort of realization, so perhaps sharing a perspective might encourage others. Here’s what I wrote in response to the question:

“The key question is ‘are you good friends?’ Do you enjoy spending time together? Do you like to go out to eat, talk, walk, and just hang out together? As for specific interests, my wife Dana and I share a few but not many really—but WE LOVE to hang out together, and we LOVE to do what the other person LOVES to do. We have learned to enjoy making the other person happy.”

Honestly, that’s a critical component to a wonderful marriage—loving to please the other person.

Whether you realize it or not, God gave you the keys to your spouse’s heart. He gave you the ability to truly please your spouse. Staying in love is all about discovering the joy of preferring your spouse—finding joy in your wife’s or your husband’s joy. It’s not about having your own way. It’s about enjoying the delight that you create in giving your spouse his

or her way. The Bible says, “*Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another;*”—Romans 12:10, and it adds, “*By love serve one another.*”—Galatians 5:13

How often do we miss the JOY of giving in, because we can’t stand the idea of giving in—we would call it “losing”. We fall for the bait that “not getting our way” means we lost something. Wrong! That is the self-centered thought process that kills a lot of marriages. While we are focused on fighting for our own way, we are missing the great delight of making the other person happy. In my experience, when our marriage is strained, it’s usually because I’ve lost perspective on this and grown selfish.

Other than Jesus, my greatest teacher in this area is Dana. She is exceptional at this. She humbles me—and convicts me. She’s one of the happiest people I know, but her joy is derived from making her family happy—both me, and our kids. The joy she radiates is a product of her desire to serve and please others.

Bottom line, every marriage goes through ups and downs—seasons of strength and struggle. In the midst of the daily chaos of raising kids, managing life, and serving God; it is critical that you nurture your relationship with time together. And during that time, pursue understanding. Seek to discover “what delights this person?” Ask your spouse, “What are some things that I could do that would REALLY please you?”

You’ll probably be surprised at how very simple and accessible your spouse’s list will be. (It will most likely be made up of simple things that you could easily do from a heart of love, with little or no real cost. But the benefits will be overwhelming to your home!) Deep love is usually made up of simple delights done from a selfless heart. Once you discover it... do it.

Of course, all of this is made possible when Christ is the center of your marriage and His Holy Spirit is growing you into His likeness. It is only by His power and His Spirit that one would even desire to love selflessly.

As you yield to God, you will find a new level of love in serving one another. You will discover a spouse who will quickly find your love irresistible, and you will probably find a spouse who responds in like kind. Selfless love always compels a similar response.

One key to a great marriage? Decide to enjoy serving and pleasing your spouse. Get a kick out of putting a smile on his or her face.

Now, think of one thing you could do today that would really please your spouse, and plan to do it. (And if you need help thinking of ideas, just ask your spouse...)

Remember, you hold the keys to your spouse’s heart—so use the key! By God’s grace, you have the power to make your spouse fall in love with you over and over and over again. Go build an irresistible marriage by love, serving one another.



***By God’s grace,  
you have the  
power to  
make your  
spouse fall  
in love  
with you  
over and  
over and  
over again.***

## What Christians Can Learn from

# PIRANHAS

*Do You Build Up Others or Tear Them Down?*

by Cary Schmidt

When your journey on earth is complete and your time comes to a close, what will you leave behind in regards to your relationships? Will you have spent more time building up or tearing down? Edifying or demonizing? Encouraging or discouraging?

The Bible warns us in Galatians 5:15, *“But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.”* God’s Word warns us repeatedly against devouring each other, because it’s easy to fall into this trap. We often mask our slander as “concern” or “standing for what’s right” when in reality, we simply have a critical spirit.

In reality...is our pride, insecurity, envy, jealousy, and arrogance more abundant than our love, encouragement, and happiness for others? When we stand before God, will all the fingers we pointed at others be pointed



back at us, exposing hypocrisy, self-righteousness, arrogance and blindness? To say it simply, will our time on earth have been dominated by devouring or by developing others?

This thought brought to mind the ways of a piranha—a regular fish that rabidly devours. The more I understand piranhas, the more I DON’T want to be one. What can we learn from a regular fish that is bent on destruction? Let’s take a look...

### TRUE FACTS ABOUT PIRANHAS

1. Piranhas are just regular little fish that happen to have sharp teeth.

*“There is a generation, whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour”* (Proverbs 30:14)

*“There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health.”* (Proverbs 12:18)

*“Death and life are in the power of the tongue...”* (Proverbs 18:21)

2. Piranhas school together, not to cooperate for strength, but in fear and insecurity.

*“For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal?”* (I Cor. 3:3)

3. They attack more violently when food is scarce and water levels are low.

*“For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.”* (Philippians 2:21)

4. Piranhas often attack prey they perceive to be physically larger.

*“Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.”* (Galatians 5:26)

5. They cannibalize other piranhas that are caught or hooked.

*“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”* (Galatians 6:1)

6. Piranhas attack their weak and often wound each other for dominance.

*“Now we exhort you brethren... comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.”* (I Thess. 5:14)

Summary: It is wise advice to not swim with piranhas. It’s even wiser not to become one. It’s wise to recognize we’re all just little fish in a very large ocean of souls and needy hearts. It’s really silly to devour each other when in reality we need each other. In an increasingly darker world, people cannot afford to devour each other. When others choose to bite and devour like a piranhas, choose to swim away rather than be drawn into the conflict. ■

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