

Learn how to find God in the
midst of disappointment

part of the



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Overcoming Discouragement



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Index of abbreviations

All scripture references are from the King James Version, unless otherwise noted.

AMP Amplified Bible • NIV New International Version • NAS New American Standard

NKJ New King James Version • NCV New Century Version • TM The Message • TLB The Living Bible

NRS New Revised Standard Version • PHPS Phillips N.T. in Modern English

• GWT God's Word Translation • TEV Today's English Version • NEB New English Bible

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Welcome

to *Overcoming* Discouragement

'Though discouragement is not from God, it is something that He can use for our good'

For people who belong to God, discouragement is not just probable, it's inevitable. John Stott called it 'the occupational hazard of the Christian.' There are many different kinds of discouragement, and every reader will identify with some (or maybe all) of them. Discouragement comes in the form of criticism or harsh words from people we trust; dashed hopes and dreams, or the failure of our plans; or the disappointment of unmet expectations of other people or ourselves. Sometimes just the relentless challenges of daily life are enough to leave us feeling discouraged and defeated.

Discouragement is not sin – but it may be caused by sin, and our response to it can become sinful. We can easily get lost in self-pity, become resentful of God or others, or simply fall into apathy and mentally 'check out'. In extreme cases, discouragement can even lead to depression or suicidal thoughts.

Though discouragement is not itself from God, it is something that He can use for our good. He can use it as a tool to make us more like Christ. Oswald Chambers wrote confidently, 'If you are going through a time of discouragement, there is a big personal enlargement ahead.'

Clearly there is a choice we must make when it comes to dealing with discouragement. A poor choice could leave us in despair and desolate. But a good choice could be a doorway to destiny.

So it's time to deal with the giant of discouragement. Let's learn together how to fight, and how to overcome.

The *Overcoming* Series is designed to help people like you find God's help in dealing with the challenges that face us all.

Contained in these little booklets are big truths from God's Word, guidance on how to pray, and practical suggestions for change. Turn over to begin reading a selection of articles and testimonies written by people who understand what you're going through and long to help you overcome.

Then, starting on page 16, there are 28 readings from Bob Gass, author of *The Word For Today*, to help you practice new thought patterns and habits day by day for a month. As the Bible says, 'He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world' (1 John 4:4). With the help of our great God, you can overcome any challenge you face.



Discover the other titles in the *Overcoming* Series on page 35

Discouragement -

Where do I start?

Discouragement never feels like a gift, but God can use it for our good.

'No sin is worse than the sin of self-pity, because it obliterates God and puts self-interest upon the throne' Oswald Chambers

Discouragement, whatever its source, can be a dangerous thing. It can cause us to say and do unwise things. Worse, it can cut us off from God.

Oswald Chambers writes, 'If we give way to self-pity and indulge in the luxury of misery, we banish God's riches from our own lives and hinder others from entering into His provision. No sin is worse than the sin of self-pity, because it obliterates God and puts self-interest upon the throne.'

A major source of discouragement is a feeling of being let down by other people. Much harder to handle is when you feel like you've been let down by God Himself. But if that's the way you're feeling today, then be encouraged – you're in good company!

John the Baptist must have been feeling pretty discouraged in Matthew 11:2-3. He had great hopes that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah. He had even baptised Jesus, and watched as the Spirit of God fell upon Him. It's fair to say he had got his hopes up about Jesus. And yet, here was John, stuck in prison, with no sign of reprieve (he never got it), confused about why He had not yet overthrown Herod's rule and was allowing him to suffer like this. No wonder he sent messengers with a rather pointed question to Jesus: 'Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect another?'

Author John Koessler believes that John's question signals nothing less than disappointment in Jesus: 'It was the sort of disappointment Jonah felt when he saw that the

people of Nineveh were to be spared (Jonah 4:1-2). It was the disappointment of the prophet Habakkuk, who cried "Why do you make me look at injustice why do you tolerate wrong?" (Hab. 1:3) ... Failed expectation lies at the heart of every disappointment. We expect one thing and get something else instead.'

John the Baptist wasn't the only person to be disappointed with Jesus. Sometimes we are too. And like John, we don't always get an answer why.

'In the face of great disappointment, we usually ask for an explanation,' writes Koessler. 'This is because we naïvely think that an explanation will make us feel better. Has it ever occurred to us that it might do the opposite? Instead, Jesus offered something far superior. Instead of an explanation, Jesus offers himself. When it comes to disappointment, *there is no other remedy.*'

Discouragement never feels like a gift, but God can use it for our good. It peels away the things we rely on, the lesser gods in our lives, and awakens us to the presence of God. It reveals us in our abject weakness and reminds us our need of His strength.

'My God! Now I am deeply discouraged, but I will remember you...' Psalm 42:6 NLT

(Sources: Oswald Chambers, My Utmost For His Highest; John Koessler, The Surprising Grace of Disappointment)

Step by step

Your guide to overcoming discouragement with God's help

Battling discouragement in our lives requires an active approach. Here are five sound principles, backed by Scripture, that will help.

1. Cultivate a healthy body, mind and soul

‘Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well’ - 3 John 1:2 NIV *‘Anima sana in corpore sano’ (Latin for ‘a sound mind in a sound body’)* Discouragement rarely starts from within, but the state of our inner life can determine whether we brush it off or invite it in. If we’re constantly tired or

emotionally weary, we are much more vulnerable to attack. We need to take care of our bodies and our minds. This means making sure we eat well during the day and get enough sleep at night; take weekly days of Sabbath rest and recreation; and enjoy occasional holidays with family or friends.

TRY...



Make sure you take a regular day of rest. If possible, turn off your phone and don't check your email or Facebook. Do things which bring renewal to your body, mind and soul.

2. Encourage yourself in the Lord

‘David was greatly distressed, for the men spoke of stoning him because the souls of them all were bitterly grieved, each man for his sons and daughters. But David encouraged and strengthened himself in the Lord his God’ - 1 Samuel 30:6 AMP *‘When we see you, we find strength to face the day’ – ‘Praise Is Rising’ by Brenton Brown and Paul Baloche (Integrity’s Hosanna! Music / Thankyou Music)* In his lowest moments, including this one, where he and his troops faced a devastating loss at Ziklag, David

learned that what he needed most was to take his eyes off his problems and fix them on God. We must learn this reflexive action, too. At times, it take enormous faith to lift our eyes from feelings of discouragement and choose to look at the greatness of God instead. But when we do, we always find new strength. J. Francis Peak wrote, ‘The major cause of discouragement is a temporary loss of perspective. Restore proper perspective, and you take new heart.’

TRY...



Do a short Bible study on Psalms 3 to 7, written by David during times of crisis. How did the ‘man after God’s own heart’ encourage himself in the Lord?

3. Get around encouraging people

‘Therefore encourage one another and build each other up’ - 1 Thessalonians 5:11 NIV *Alone I cannot serve the Lord effectively, and He will spare no pains to teach me this. He will bring things to an end, allowing doors to close and leaving me ineffectively knocking my head against a wall until I realise that I need the help of the Body as well as of the Lord’ – Watchman Nee*

Dis-courage-ment robs us of courage – but the good news is that God is eager to give it back to us! And the main way He does that is through His people. The worst thing we can do when feeling discouraged is to run away from the people who love us and who have the power to speak words of encouragement and new strength over us. Instead we should surround ourselves with them.

Be an encourager. Your word of encouragement today could make all the difference for someone you know.



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4. Be ready for a rapid response

‘Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong’ - 1 Corinthians 16:12-14 NIV
‘Never submit to the tyrannous idea that you cannot look after your mind; you can’ Oswald Chambers
Our mind is a battleground between truth and lies, encouragement and discouragement. We need to keep a close watch on it and decide what we’re going to receive and what we’re going to reject on a moment-by-moment

basis. We need to be ready to act fast to deal with minor discouragements to stop them taking root. The Bible uses picture language to help us here: it talks of ‘taking every thought captive’ (2 Corinthians 10:5). Imagine having a rapid response unit on standby, watching over your mind. As a thought enters, you arrest it, interrogate it and ask it, ‘What are you doing here? Are you here to encourage or discourage my spirit?’

TRY...



Get into the good habit of ‘taking captive’ discouraging thoughts as they occur to you. Ask every thought: ‘Do you belong in the mind of a child of God?’ If not, dispose of it!

5. Keep going!

‘Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus ... Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart’ - Hebrews 12:1-3 NIV
‘In spite of everything I shall rise again: I will take up my pencil, which I have forsaken in my great discouragement, and I will go on with my drawing’ Vincent van Gogh
Perseverance is the art of keeping going, even in the face of discouragement and disappointment. What is the secret of those who have persevered through the worst this world has to offer?

The apostle Paul underwent trials and hardships most of us will never see, yet stayed faithful to the end. In one of his letters to the early church, he talks about having ‘treasure in jars of clay’, an ‘all-surpassing power ... from God and not from us.’ It means that ‘We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed’ (2 Cor. 4:7–9). As K.P. Yohannan writes in this booklet, ‘The secret of our survival is fixing our eyes on Jesus and making Him alone our focus.’
(Sources: Oswald Chambers, *The Moral Foundation of Life*; K.A. Miller, *Secrets of Staying Power*)

TRY...



Read K.P. Yohannan’s article ‘What Keeps Us Going?’ on pages 10-11.

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WHAT KEEPS US GOING?

Through discouragement, we need to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, says KP Yohannan

I am always intrigued when I watch the start of the marathon during the Summer Olympics. All the runners appear to be in top physical shape, excited to represent their countries and determined to win the gold medal.

However, it's a whole different story when I watch them 15 or 20 miles later. They look exhausted from the hot sun that beats down on them or miserable because of rain that makes their trail slippery. Some have trouble breathing when the race takes them over a mountain, and others struggle to keep up with the fast pace.

Although everyone, no matter how long it takes them to cross the finish line, is celebrated with cheers and applause, some runners will never get there. Somewhere along the route they drop out of the race due to exhaustion, injury or discouragement.

In the marathon race and in our Christian life, persevering until the end is what it's all about, not just starting well.

What am I talking about? Not giving up in our walk with Jesus and enduring in the

call He gave us to win this lost world and build His kingdom. Both have to do with our inner life and with our commitment to serve Him.

*'WE WILL ENCOUNTER
ADVERSITIES THAT HAVE
THE POTENTIAL TO CAUSE
US TO QUIT THE RACE'*

Like the marathon runners, we, too, will encounter adversities along the way that have the potential to cause us to quit the race.

I have served the Lord full-time for the past 40 years. From my own life and experience I can tell you this: The godliest Christian leaders I have met, the most challenging sermons I have heard and the best books I have read on evangelism and discipleship have not been enough to help me survive in the race!

Only one thing has kept me in the ministry and following Christ—and that is learning and practicing what the apostle Paul wrote in Hebrews 12:1-2: 'Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.'

The secret of our survival is fixing our eyes on Jesus and making Him alone our focus. Then our walk with God and our commitment to serve Him will no longer depend on whether or not people treat us right or circumstances are in our favour. We will no longer rely on our emotions to support us or on our successes to keep us going. Jesus alone will become our goal and motivation—our prize—and we will live for Him, run our race for Him and cross the finish line for Him.

My dear friend, unless you learn to fix your eyes on Jesus alone, you will have no stability in your walk with God or in your service to Him.

Jesus Himself said, 'Follow Me.' Therefore, meditate on Him, consider Him and think about Him so that you

may not grow weary in your heart. The answer to enduring until the end is not self-effort or a rational attempt to figure out the answers, but to stop and look into His eyes.

If we do this, we will experience what this song says: 'When I look into Your holiness / When I gaze into Your loveliness / When all things that surround become shadows in the light of You / . . . I worship You.*' After all his struggles, Job found the answer he was searching for when he fell on his face and worshiped the Lord.

Today, let us decide to fix our eyes on Jesus throughout the race set before us.

K.P. Yohannan is Founder and President of Gospel For Asia, working to reach the unreached in South Asia. His booklet *Stay Encouraged* is available from www.gfa.org.uk, where you can also request a free copy of his worldwide bestseller *Revolution in World Missions*.

**When I Look Into Your Holiness, Wayne and Cathy Perrin, © 1981 Integrity's Hosanna! Music*

ON DISAPPOINTMENT

Ems Hancock on how to deal
with being let down

*'HOPE IN
THE RIGHT
THINGS DOES
NOT
DISAPPOINT'*



Recently an old friend called me and we talked about a great disappointment we both shared. His parting and comforting words were: 'We are not called to trust people, we are called to love them.' That phrase rang round my head for the next few days. I dwelt on it, prayed about it and tested it alongside my experience. It felt liberating, hopeful and true.

People have let me down. Sometimes painfully. I'm sure you have been let down, too. It is good to acknowledge that before God... and to forgive them. And to keep doing so.

But it doesn't take us long before we realise that we are also to blame for other people's disappointments. Perhaps we are not the wife, boss, friend, son, colleague or godparent someone hoped we would be either? Perhaps we have not fulfilled our potential, or we've even deliberately hurt someone. Maybe we are the ones who need forgiveness?

The truth is, we disappoint others and ourselves, too. I have been a victim of my own strange brand of optimism many times; the kind that imagines (in High Definition detail) how something incredible will happen, and then doesn't. Perhaps you do that too? I am a recovering perfectionist. Sometimes I try so hard at something I almost break myself!

But I am such an intrinsically hopeful person that no amount of self-defeat seems to have wilted that particular flower in me. It is because I am in dwelt by the Holy Spirit whose character is always to trust and to be hopeful. Romans 5:5 (NIV) says, 'And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us.'

HOPE IN THE RIGHT THINGS DOES NOT DISAPPOINT.

When we come to know Jesus we are born into a living hope that cannot die, be

supplanted or wither. 1 Peter 1:3–5 (NIV) says, 'Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power...'

HOPE IS OUR INHERITANCE. IT IS OUR DESTINY. IT IS OUR CALLING.

I once met a lady who seemed to have a theology of disappointment. Her whole demeanour shouted her life experience of hurt, that God hadn't answered her prayers and that people had not fulfilled her expectations. She was hard to be around. Everything became a negative. Her glass wasn't just half empty, it was cracked! As I prayed with her I asked God to make her a hope-bringer, not a life-sapper. I reminded her and myself that we are made in the image of God.

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN IN TERMS OF DISAPPOINTMENT?

It strikes me that it could in fact be impossible to disappoint God. One dictionary defines disappointment as 'a feeling of sadness or displeasure caused by the non-fulfillment of one's hopes or expectations.' That does not apply to God. God knows what we are going to do at any given time. He cannot be 'disappointed' in that sense because there is never any element of misplaced hope.

I realised this today for the very first time: you cannot disappoint God and He will never disappoint you!

Ems Hancock is a mother, speaker and author. Her most recent book, *Good Grief: Living Through Loss*, deals with the issue of disappointment. It is available via Amazon and good Christian bookshops.



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More help with Discouragement

Advice and Guidance

Overcoming discouragement is something best done together with a friend or pastor who you can trust. You may also find contacting these organisations helpful.

Organisations and websites who may help with specific areas of temptation

ACC, Association of Christian Counsellors

ACC represent Christians who provide counselling and pastoral care.

Tel: 0845 124 9569

Web: www.acc-uk.org

Ellel Ministries

Non-denominational Christian mission organisation providing retreats, courses, conferences and resources on healing and wholeness.

Tel. 01524 751651

Web: www.ellelministries.org

More Scriptures to study and meditate on

Joshua 1:1–9

Psalm 121:1–8

Colossians 3:23–24

Hebrews 13:6

Further reading

Oswald Chambers, My Utmost For His Highest (Discovery House)

John Koessler, The Surprising Grace of Disappointment (Moody Publishers)

Kevin A. Miller, Secrets of Staying Power (W Publishing Group)

Your 28 Days of Change

God's spirit is in you and...

'He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world'

It takes time to change long-standing thought patterns, habits and behaviour. We need to keep coming before God in our brokenness and asking for His help.

The rest of this Overcoming booklet is designed to help bring you before God for the next 28 days – to learn from His wisdom in His Word and to access His healing power through prayer.

Make a decision to set aside the time each day to read and respond in prayer. Don't worry if you miss a day or two, just pick up wherever you left off.

Keep a notebook and pen nearby to jot down anything that occurs to you while you read, or quotes that inspire you to think differently. Trust that God will speak to you personally about your healing over the coming weeks.

Remember, Jesus is on your side, willing you to succeed. Right now, He is praying to the Father on your behalf.

God's Spirit is in you, and 'He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world' (1 John 4:4).



The daily readings are written by Bob and Debby Gass, authors of *The UCB Word For Today*, and originally appeared there first. Over a million people around the world read Bob and Debby's warm, encouraging words each day.

You can receive a quarterly copy of *The UCB Word For Today* free of charge – see the back page for more details.

DAY 1 The 'I-Only' syndrome 'I, I only, am left' 1 Kings 19:10 AMP

DEPRESSION CONVINCED ELIJAH that nobody else was as badly off as him. He felt 'terminally unique.' We all go through it. Behind your neighbour's smile, or the nameplate on your boss's door, there are struggles they can't talk about. So they live in quiet despair.

Dr Martin Luther King Jr said, 'We may have arrived on different ships, but we're all in the same boat now.' Paul wrote, 'No test or temptation... is beyond the course of what others have had to face. All you need to remember is that God will never let you down; He'll never let you be pushed past your limit; He'll always be there to help you come through it' (1 Corinthians 10:13 TM).

Before every crown there's a cross. Bunyan wrote *Pilgrim's Progress* in prison. Florence Nightingale, too ill to move from bed, reorganised the hospitals of England. Pasteur, semi-paralysed by a stroke, was tireless in his attack on disease. Francis Parkman couldn't work for more than five minutes at a time. His eyesight was so bad that he could only scrawl gigantic words on a manuscript. Yet he wrote 20 magnificent volumes of history.

You're not alone! Listen: 'Nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable – absolutely nothing can get between us and God's love' (Romans 8:38-39 TM). What more could you ask for?

Prayer Point

Lord, I thank You for what You enable me to do each day. I find rest in the knowledge that Your love extends to me and that Your heart's desire is to see me flourish. Help me understand that there might be a higher principle at work in my life, which in time will bring to bear a wonderful result, for which I will give thanks. Amen.

DAY 2 When it's not what you expected 'Every detail in our lives... is worked into something good' Romans 8:28 TM

DID YOU HEAR ABOUT the little boy who complained to his grandmother that things were bad? He was in trouble at school, his dad forgot his pocket-money, and his best friend went fishing without him. His grandmother, who was baking a cake at the time, listened patiently, and then asked him if he'd like a snack. 'Sure,' he replied. So she said, 'Here, have some cooking oil.' 'No way!' he said. 'Well, how about a couple of raw eggs?' 'Gross!' he exclaimed. 'What about some baking powder?' she asked. 'Grandma, those are all yucky!' he said. 'Yes,' she replied. 'On their own, all of them seem pretty bad, but when you put them together, they make a great cake!'

Sometimes you ask God for one thing and He gives you another, because, while you think you know what you want, He knows what you really need. The truth is God knows more about what you need than you do.

Listen: 'He knows us far better than we know ourselves... That's why we can be so sure that every detail in our lives... is worked into something good' (Romans 8:26-28 TM). Did you hear that? Everything that comes your way will have His fingerprints on it, and be designed for your good!

DO YOU NEED PRAYER?

Call UCB Prayerline on 0845 456 7729 (UK) or 1890 940 300 (ROI) or visit ucb.co.uk

DAY 3 Receiving God's love

'Absolutely nothing can get between us and God's love'
Romans 8:39 TM

EVER LOOK AT your shortcomings and doubt God's love for you? Or wonder how He could still care for you, given the things you do? Listen: 'Do you think anyone is going to be able to drive a wedge between us and Christ's love for us? There is no way! Not trouble, not hard times, not hatred, not hunger, not homelessness, not bullying threats, not backstabbing, not even the worst sins listed in Scripture' (Romans 8:35 TM).

No matter how unworthy you may feel today, you cannot shut off, stop, or in any way diminish the flow of God's love towards you. Nothing can change the way He feels about you. Nothing can alter the fact that He's going to continue to love

you no matter what you do or say. Never lose sight of that, because God's love will: a) heal your emotions b) cause your self-esteem to grow and c) put a foundation of worth and dignity under you. It's what allows you to respect yourself! It'll also motivate you to discipline yourself. You see, when you truly value something, you want to protect it, and develop it. God's love actually gives you the capacity to love yourself, and then love others. When you can do that, the circle is complete.

Think: you're not just chosen by God, you're eternally, passionately, tenderly, and unconditionally, loved by Him. There's no greater blessing and no greater assurance than that!

Prayer Point

Lord, I recognise that sometimes I find it hard to realise that You love me no matter what; Your Love for me has no boundaries. Keep me close to Your heart, Lord, that I might be a fountain of encouragement, and help me ignore unfounded criticism when it does come my way. Amen.

DAY 4 Keep praising

'Then he touched her, and instantly she could stand straight. How she praised God!' **Luke 13:13 NLT**

AS LONG AS she needed their help, the people around this woman had no problem with her. But when Jesus set her free and she started praising Him, they couldn't handle it. Actually, they wanted to throw her out of their church!

How would you have acted if you'd been chronically ill for 18 years, and suddenly Jesus made you whole? People fall over themselves about getting a prize on a TV show. They scream and hug total strangers when their team wins, and the world says it's OK. But show a little emotion because of what God's done for you, and they'll call you a fanatic. No problem; it's easier to cool down a fanatic than heat up a corpse!

So, what are you going to do? Do what she did! She carried on, and let Jesus deal with her critics.

While she was glorifying Him, He was dealing with them. That's how it works. While you're praising God, He's fighting for you. While you're exalting His name, His angels are coming into your hospital room, or surrounding your loved one who's in danger, or going before you to open doors.

If people are upset because you praise the Lord, that's their problem! There'll always be a critic. There may even be one in your house, criticising you for praising Him in the shower; or at work, mocking you for just giving thanks before you eat lunch. Pay them no attention. Just keep praising God, regardless of the background noise!

DAY 5 Can you pass the rejection test?

'He came to His own people, but they didn't want Him'
John 1:11 TM

WOULD YOU SPEND your last night on earth with someone if you knew they were going to betray you the next day? Jesus did. He is faithful, even when we are not. There is no greater opportunity to grow in love than when you've been mistreated. Look at Jesus on the cross: He asked His Father to forgive those who ripped the flesh from His back and drove the nails into His hands.

How you handle rejection reveals whether or not you've truly died to self; for it's impossible to hurt a dead man! On the other hand, being rejected without being offended is one of the greatest demonstrations of spiritual maturity. It's being Christ-like!

In the Old Testament a priest was disqualified from ministry if he had 'scabs' [an unhealed

wound] (Leviticus 21:20 NLT). Why? Because it made him 'touchy.' He couldn't allow you to get close to him, in case you brushed up against his sore spot. It showed up in the things he said and kept him from functioning the way God wanted him to. Ever been around a 'scabby' preacher? He preaches out of his own unhealed areas, and expounds from the depths of his own struggles. But God has a solution. Listen: "'But I will restore you to health and heal your wounds,'" declares the Lord' (Jeremiah 30:17 NIV). God wants to heal you, so that through you, He can reach out and make others whole. Won't you let Him?

Prayer Point

Thank you, Lord, that even if people have said or done things that I cannot stop or excuse, Your love is sure, Your grace is sufficient and Your mercy absolute. Help me let go of the things that discourage me, and embrace the perspective of Heaven; to love everyone.

DAY 6 Look for God's hand in it!

'The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvellous in our eyes'
Matthew 21:42 NIV

SOMETIMES THE REJECTION of others turns out to be 'the Lord's doing.' After Joseph had been betrayed by his brothers and slandered by Potiphar's wife, he said, 'You planned evil against me but God used those same plans for my good' (Genesis 50:20 TM).

How often has something happened in your life that you later realised was necessary? If you hadn't sustained this, or walked through that, you wouldn't be ready for the blessings you're enjoying right now. It's when you see the hand of God in it that you begin to understand that what the enemy meant for your destruction, God used for your development.

To be more than a conqueror means to stand up and say, 'Here's how I see it. It took all I've been through to make me who I am today and to teach me what I know. I choose to be better, not bitter. I trust the faithfulness of God more than ever. If faith doesn't move the mountain, it will give me strength to endure until tomorrow. And if it's not gone by tomorrow, I'll still believe that God is able, and trust Him until He acts.' Rejoice! Your steps (and your stops) are being arranged by God. They're also being observed by Him. When you get through this, you'll realise that 'the worst thing that could have happened' is, in reality, 'the Lord's doing,' and it'll become marvellous in your eyes.

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DAY 7 Stay in the game! 'Bring... the books, especially the parchments' 2 Timothy 4:13 AMP

SITTING ON DEATH ROW, with only days left to live and no hope of a reprieve, Paul writes to Timothy and says: a) 'Bring my books.' He wants to keep taking in! b) 'And bring my writing paper.' He wants to keep giving out! What an attitude! He doesn't ask for an attorney, because real purpose needs no defence. Time will tell the world what you did. And he doesn't ask for better accommodation, for he's 'learned to be content' (Philippians 4:11 NIV).

First, he sends for a book, because he knows that as long as you're alive you must continue to grow, otherwise you're just taking up space. Reading allows you to transcend any situation and explore new worlds. Knowledge keeps your mind sharp and your soul free. Peter says, 'Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord...' (2 Peter 3:18).

Prayer Point

Lord, I pray today that the words that come out of my mouth match the miracle of your Name. That when circumstance says no, I would enter into faith and agree with You a resounding Yes. I pray that I would move away from being negative and become a person that always sees the opportunity in life. Amen.

DAY 8 By God's help – you can! 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me' Philippians 4:13 NKJ

THE GREAT HOUDINI claimed he could be locked in any jail cell in the country and set himself free within minutes. And he made good on his claim in just about every city he visited; except one. That day, something went wrong. He entered the cell in his street clothes. As the heavy metal doors clanged shut behind him, he took from his belt a concealed piece of strong but flexible metal, and went to work on the lock. But soon he realised he wasn't getting anywhere. For 30 minutes he worked without success. Then an hour passed. This was much longer than it usually took, and he began to 'stress out.' But still he couldn't pick the lock.

Finally, after labouring for two hours and feeling a total failure, he leaned against the door, and to

Next, Paul sends for writing paper, because he wants to keep making a difference. He ignores his circumstances, grabs his pen and continues to be productive. No tears. No gut-wrenching displays of self-pity. 'I've still got something else to say, and I want to say it! I'm not done yet!' The art of living is to keep giving to the end!

Even on the cross, with nails piercing His hands and His feet, Jesus continued to minister; and He is our example! So Paul, the old Father of Truth, teaches us the most important lesson of all: never get out of the game, for even in the last few seconds, a goal is still possible.

his amazement it swung open. It had never been locked in the first place! How many times does something look impossible simply because you think it is? Then you focus your faith on it, strike the word 'can't' from your vocabulary, and suddenly, with God's help, the impossible becomes 'do-able!'

When God called Gideon, he replied, 'I don't have the right connections.' When He called Moses, he replied, 'I'm not a gifted speaker.' When He called Jeremiah, he replied, 'I'm too young.' To each, God said, 'I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with My righteous right hand' (Isaiah 41:10 NIV). Today He's saying the same thing to you!

DAY 9 Rejoice in who you are

'I praise You for I am fearfully and wonderfully made'
Psalm 139:14 NIV

STOP DESPISING the things that make you unique. You were born at just the right time, in just the right place, with just the right gifts, to fulfil a plan that nobody but you can fulfil. Open your Bible and see what God thinks of you. After all, His opinion is the only one that really matters.

Listen to David the Psalmist: 'You saw me before I was born and scheduled each day of my life before I began to breathe. Every day was recorded in your Book! How precious it is, Lord, to realise that You are thinking about me constantly' (Psalm 139:16-17 TLB).

If you want to work on your self-image, here's a prayer to help you today: 'Lord, it's taken me a long time to figure out that I'm different by divine design; that You've made me with abilities, traits, and a

genetic combination that nobody else has. Nobody in all the ages of time has ever been me; and nobody ever will be.

'Deliver me, Father, from feeling weird; from wishing I were someone else. Deliver me from envy and jealousy toward others.

'Help me to discover the unique person You created me to be; to enjoy the little things that make me so special, so "one-of-a-kind." Help me to realise that I can give the world something that no one else can give.

'Thank you, Lord, for the awesome creative work You've done and continue to do in making me who I am. Amen.'

Prayer Point

Your Word speaks of destiny, hope and favour. I pray today, that I might live in the fullness of your promises for me and thank You, Lord, for your enduring Love for me from even before I was born. Help me acknowledge today that I can do no great thing in my own strength and give me the grace to live out my faith in humility and with love, in Jesus' Name.

DAY 10 What are you going to do when the cock crows?

'Peter remembered... and he went outside and wept bitterly'
Matthew 26:75 NIV

LISTEN: THE COCK CROWED, and Peter remembered his words to Jesus, 'Even if I have to die with You, I will never disown You' (Mark 14:31 NIV). And before you criticise him, listen: 'All the others said the same' (Mark 14:31 NIV). Wow! The moment of truth came for Peter, and it'll come for you too. When it does, you'll see in yourself: a) things you've denied b) things you've excused c) things you never thought were there. Sometimes the very point where you thought you were strongest is actually your point of hidden weakness, and God's showing it to you. Maybe you were raised to look as if you 'always have it together,' and now He's shaking some things up and permitting others to be stripped away.

Hebrews 12 says God is going to do 'a thorough housecleaning, getting rid of all the... junk so that the unshakeable essentials stand clear and uncluttered' (Hebrews 12:27 TM). Only when you reach that point can you start laying a true foundation for your future, for only then have you come to terms with the fact that you can do nothing of real value in your own strength. It's a painful lesson!

Peter was never the same after that night. He'd been humbled, now God could use him. The lesson had been burned into his conscience, now he could write, 'Clothe yourselves with humility... because God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble' (1 Peter 5:5 NIV). Has God been shaking you up lately?

DAY 11 The overcoming spirit

'He who overcomes will inherit all'
Revelation 21:7 NKJ

DAVE LONGABERGER graduated from high school at the age of 20. He repeated first grade and 'three-peted' fifth grade. He reads at eighth grade level, stutters, and has epilepsy. But Dave possesses the overcoming spirit. As a child he worked so many jobs, his family called him 'the 25-cent millionaire.'

As a seven-year-old in a grocery store he learned that the way to please his boss was to figure out what the boss wanted, and get it done. He studied people; and learned from them. He discovered that work could be fun, and that he did a better job when he enjoyed it. The more the people he dealt with liked him, the more likely they were to continue doing business with him.

He also learned how to become a risk-taker. For example, he started a tiny restaurant on a

shoestring. On the opening day he had \$135 that he used to buy the first day's breakfast ingredients. After breakfast, he'd enough money to buy supplies for lunch. Then he used the money he made from lunch to buy dinner preparations. Talk about starting a business on bare bones!

Later he bought a grocery store and ran it very successfully. All the time he was preparing himself for bigger and better things. In 2001, his company, The Longaberger Company, sold over \$600 million worth of home accessory items, through 36,000 independent sales consultants nationwide. What's his secret? These four scriptural qualities: a) faith b) patience c) hard work, and d) the overcoming spirit!

Prayer Point

Father, help me learn how to develop an overcoming spirit. I acknowledge it is Your heart's desire that I see my heart's desire fulfilled. I pray today that Heaven itself would empower me to reach my full potential in Christ. Amen.

DAY 12 What are you looking for?

'You'll do best by... meditating on... the best, not the worst'
Philippians 4:8 TM

ARE YOU blessing-conscious or problem-conscious? Before you answer, consider this story about identical twins: one, an optimist, whose motto was 'Everything's comin' up roses,' and the other, a pessimist, who always expected the worst.

Their parents took them to a psychologist, hoping to 'balance out' their personalities. He suggested that on their next birthday, they put each in a separate room to open their gifts. 'Give the pessimist the best toys you can afford,' the shrink said, 'and give the optimist a box of manure.'

The parents did as he suggested. When they peeped in at the pessimist, they heard him complaining, 'I don't like the colour of this toy. I don't want to play this game.' Next they looked in and saw the optimist smiling, throwing manure up in the air and shouting,

'You can't fool me. With this much manure, there's got to be a pony!'

Whatever you keep looking for – you'll eventually find, whether good or bad! If you're walking with God, here's what you should be looking for. Listen: 'You will be blessed in the city and... the country... when you come in and when you go out... the enemies... will come at you from one direction but flee from you in seven. The Lord will send a blessing on... everything you put your hand to... then all the peoples of the earth will see that you are called by the name of the Lord and they will fear you. The Lord will grant you abundant prosperity... the Lord will make you the head, not the tail, you will always have be at the top, never at the bottom' (Deuteronomy 28:3-13 NIV). Today, start looking for God's blessings!

DAY 13 Being in the right place

'Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel'
2 Kings 5:4 NKJ

GOD USED a cleaning maid to reach a five-star general, and introduce him to a God who could heal him of his leprosy. Her story is recorded in 2 Kings 5. Take a moment and read it. There are two lessons in it for you:

1) There's a purpose in your being where you are! Instead of complaining, start looking for somebody who needs what God's given you. This girl wasn't there just to make beds and clean toilets; she was there by divine appointment. Think: all of your life can be training for one moment, one crisis and one opportunity. Peter writes, 'Always be prepared to give an answer...' (1 Peter 3:15 NIV). She was ready; are you?

2) What a difference a day can make! Yesterday she was a nobody; today she's a gift from God,

and the most popular person in the house. The world focuses on the big names but when they've run out of answers and out of hope, God says He'll pour out His Spirit upon His 'handmaids' (Joel 2:29). When He does, people who 'normally wouldn't give you the time of day' will suddenly begin to listen, because you're in the right place, with the right answer.

Don't allow your lack of education, your ethnic background, your subservient position or your poor wages to silence you. Keep renewing your mind and strengthening your faith! Allow God to use you as only He can! And keep listening! The Master-conductor may be just about to give you your cue!

Prayer Point

Lord, I pray I could use everything unique that makes up me, for Your Glory today. Help me to identify the areas in my life where grace abounds, and help me focus on that. Father, help me realise what I can do, how I can help and what I can achieve for others. Motivate me, Lord, to be the blessing to someone that only I can be. In Jesus' Name.

DAY 14 "Graced" to handle it!

'Grace... in which you stand'
1 Peter 5:12 NKJ

GOD'S GRACE IS what gets us through the rough times. Paul acknowledged this when he spoke of his 'thorn in the flesh' (2 Corinthians 12:7 NIV). Ever have a splinter in your finger? You can still function, but it's painful. It won't kill you, but it can make you pretty miserable, right? What did God tell Paul? The same thing He's telling you: 'My grace is sufficient for you' (2 Corinthians 12:9 NIV).

Grace is what enables you to love an abusive mate, keep waiting for a prodigal to come back, endure prolonged illness, live with little yet give much, overcome disappointments, and forgive repeated offences. Grace takes you beyond your natural ability by forcing you to rely on God's strength alone. Paul said he looked forward to trials, 'that

Christ's power may rest upon me' (2 Corinthians 12:9 NIV). What a place to be! When you're there, the mere thought of doing anything on your own is a 'turn-off,' because you know His strength is so superior.

How can two people go through exactly the same trial, yet one fold and the other flourish? The answer is 'grace... in which you stand' (1 Peter 5:12 NKJ). Both may be equal in every other sense but one has been graced to handle it, the other hasn't. Stay in the areas where you're 'graced,' for that's where your strength and your success lie. You ask, 'Where do I find this grace?' Listen: 'The Word of His grace which is able to build you up' (Acts 20:32 NIV). It's His Word! Have you been spending time there lately?

DAY 15 25th-hour people

'Joshua spoke to God... and the sun stopped... stock still'
Joshua 10:12 TM

JOSHUA WAS FIGHTING WITH everything he had but there was an element he couldn't control. So he told God, 'I'll do what I can, but I'm calling on You to do what I can't; arrest the thing that controls the whole system.'

When you're running out of time and you need a 25th hour in your day, there's only one place to go; God! He can stop the sun and freeze the circumstances! He can give you 'extra time' to regroup, get a new strategy and win the battle.

The 25th hour is when God allows you to redeem the time you squandered fighting others (or feeling sorry for yourself) when you should have been out fighting the enemy. Theologically we'd call it grace. We don't get it because of our merits; we get it

because of God's favour. Has God ever done you a favour when you didn't deserve it? That's grace! Listen: 'There has never been a day like it before or since' (Joshua 10:14 NIV).

Twenty-fifth hour people are different: a) they pray prayers nobody's ever prayed before because they believe 'nothing is too hard for the Lord' b) they remember their wasted years and live with gratitude for the gift of a second chance c) they live with a sense of urgency and mission because, even though the clock has run out, God has given them extra time to win the game.

It's not too late for you. Joshua's God is your God! Talk to Him; He's still in control!

Prayer Point

Lord, I recognise that there is nothing too difficult for You to do. I pray that in the moments I feel stressed and cannot achieve what is needed, that You would supernaturally enable me to get done all I need to do. I pray that creativity in my life would flourish and Your ways, not my ways, would prove Your favour in my life.

DAY 16 Rules for living

'A cheerful disposition is good for your health'
Proverbs 17:22 TM

LEARN TO CONTROL the climate around you. Negativity is contagious, look out for its 'carriers'. Love them, lift them if you can but never let them infect you. When God wants to bless you He'll send a person; you'll know them by their spirit, for it will be the spirit of power (the 'can-do' attitude), love (which always looks for the best) and a sound mind (which is stable and consistent) – see 2 Timothy 1:7.

Smile, even when you're not on Candid Camera! A woman who'd been given a lovely plant took it home, watered it, fertilised it and set it in the sun. A year later, she discovered it was made of silk; and she still laughs about it! When you're secure you can laugh at yourself. It's also a hallmark of true humility. Smile muscles are linked to the part

of your brain that determines mood. That's why Solomon says, 'A cheerful heart is good medicine' (Proverbs 17:22 NIV).

Employ the 90/10 rule. When 90 percent of the circumstances are uncontrollable, focus on the 10 percent you can do something about. And remember one of God's ideas, just one, can change everything! Paul writes, we were harassed at every turn – conflicts on the outside, fears within.6 But God...' (2 Corinthians 7:5-6 NIV). Factor God in! He specialises in 'impossibilities.' He can take the situation that you've built into a mountain and bore a tunnel through it in a matter of seconds. All He asks you to do is involve Him!

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DAY 17 Promises for troubled times

'Not one word has failed of all His good promise'
1 Kings 8:56 AMP

POINTS TO PONDER:

- 1) 'If you say, "The Lord is my refuge," and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.' (Psalm 91:9-11 NIV)
- 2) 'The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him, and He delivers them' (Psalm 34:7 NIV)
- 3) 'I will take refuge in the shadow of Your wings until the disaster has passed' (Psalm 57:1 NIV)
- 4) 'The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit' (Psalm 34:18 NIV)
- 5) 'For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are attentive to their prayer, but the

face of the Lord is against those who do evil' (1 Peter 3:12 NIV)

6) 'He reached down from on high and took hold of me; He drew me out of deep waters. He rescued me from my powerful enemy, from my foes, who were too strong for me... He rescued me because He delighted in me' (Psalm 18:16-19 NIV)

7) 'Do not gloat over me, my enemy! Though I have fallen, I will rise. Though I sit in darkness, the Lord will be my light' (Micah 7:8 NIV)

8) 'You will be secure, because there is hope; you will look about you and take your rest in safety. You will lie down, with no-one to make you afraid, and many will court your favour' (Job 11:18-19 NIV).

Prayer Point

Rescue me, Lord, from all my enemies. I pray, Lord, as I feel it's too difficult to fight through another day, that You would fight on my behalf. I pray I would feel settled in who I am, strong in who I am in You and confident that my future with You is filled with hope, joy and peace. Amen.

DAY 18 Confidence is contagious

'Do not throw away your confidence'
Hebrews 10:35 NIV

CONFIDENCE IS CONTAGIOUS! It spreads throughout your sphere of influence. How many giant-killers were in Saul's army? None! When Goliath challenged the armies of God, they quaked with fear. Yet David, who came to bring food to his brothers, sized up the situation, went out in faith and killed the giant.

After David became king, how many other giant-killers arose in Israel? Lots! Listen: 'Then Sibbecai... killed Sippai, one of the descendants of the giants, and they were subdued. And there was war with the Philistines again and Elhanan... killed Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Hittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam. Again there was war at Gath, where there was a man of great stature who had 24 fingers and toes, six fingers on

each hand and six toes on each foot; and he also was descended from the giants. When he taunted Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimea, David's brother, killed him. These were descended from the giants in Gath, and they fell by the hand of David and by the hand of his servants' (1 Chronicles 20:4-8 NAS).

Now why do you suppose there were no giant-killers in Saul's army? Because Saul himself wasn't one! However, under David's leadership they were numerous, because David was a giant-killer! This illustrates the 'it takes one to make one' principle that runs throughout the Bible! When you develop confidence, those around you – friends, family, and associates – will increase their confidence levels too. Why? Because confidence breeds confidence!

DAY 19 Push!

'I press on towards the goal'
Philippians 3:14 NIV

WHEN YOU COMMIT to bringing forth all that God has placed within you, you may have to push against everything everybody ever did to you, or said about you. You may have to battle against years of suppression, oppression and depression. You may have to push in order to release the treasure God has placed inside you. He'll help you bring it out but it's up to you to push. In fact, it may not happen if you don't.

But what do we push against? Against satanic attacks in all their debilitating forms such as bad memories, low self-esteem and feelings of unworthiness. The devil may have spent years pushing you aside, pulling you back and putting you down, but today God is saying to you, 'I want to open you up, I want to

empower you to give birth to that which I've placed within you.' The time has come for you to rise up and say, 'It's my turn to conceive, for the treasure within me to come forth and for me to be loosed to do what God created me to do.'

When a baby is born everything in the family changes. The same is true for you. When you give birth to what God's placed within you, everything around you will be affected. God's blessing is an overflowing blessing and it'll touch every area of your life. Every woman knows when she's pregnant. The same is true in the spiritual realm. Don't fail to give birth to what God has put in you. Now is the time for the treasure to come forth. So push!

Prayer Point

Lord, I ask that You give me the strength to push through to the breakthrough. Victory seems so near, Lord, help me to live there, standing victoriously on Your Word and in Your name. I pray that You would break any hold the devil has on me today, in Jesus' Name, that I would reach the goal You have said I can obtain. Amen.

DAY 20 Dealing with depression

'Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression'
Proverbs 12:25 NKJ

LONG-TERM DEPRESSION drains your energy, distorts your reality, assaults your faith and affects everybody around you. One in five of us suffer from it. It is responsible for more workplace absenteeism than diabetes and heart disease.

Poor health can cause it, not to mention your surroundings; also stress, fear, loneliness, guilt and anger. And it's no modern-day disease either; it affected Bible characters too:

- 1) David experienced it because of unconfessed sin. Listen: 'I am... severely broken... my strength fails... My loved ones... stand... afar off' (Psalm 38:8-11 NKJ)
- 2) Job got so depressed about his financial, personal and family losses that he cursed the day he was born. (Job 3:1-3)

3) When Jezebel threatened Elijah, he went through the 'H.A.L.T.' syndrome: Hungry; he stopped eating. Angry; he got mad at God and the world. Lonely; he left his servant and went off by himself. Tired; he collapsed. But God had a prescription. He: a) changed his diet b) told him to rest c) let him know he wasn't alone, and d) sent an angel to minister to him. Those are still the steps out of depression!

David said, 'The Lord... brought me up out of a horrible pit' (Psalm 40:1-2 NKJ) and He can bring you out of your depression too! Don't isolate yourself and don't be ashamed to get help from your pastor, a trusted friend or a good counsellor. And remember, addictive behaviour and destructive relationships will only make things worse. The moment Elijah heard God's voice he began 'getting it together'. With God's help, you can too!

DAY 21 Moving on

'When you're between a rock and a hard place, it won't be a dead end – because I am God' Isaiah 43:2 TM

DIVORCE IS like an amputation; you survive but there is less of you. And it's worse if you didn't want the divorce or feel abandoned by a church that doesn't want to appear to condone it and does nothing to help you. So how can you move on?

1) Confess your mistakes and accept God's forgiveness. God hates divorce because of the pain it causes us. But He loves you! Listen: 'I am He who blots out your transgressions, for My own sake, and remembers your sins no more' (Isaiah 43:25 NIV). God forgives and forgets; you must do the same.

2) Forgive those who have hurt you. Forgiveness is the one power you always have over anybody who hurts you. So forgive and keep on forgiving until the past controls you no more. Make it a fixed attitude.

Prayer Point

Lord, help me find forgiveness for the deepest hurts in my life. Teach me this Lord, how to live in love and not bitterness, hurt or anger. Lord, You know what is best for me, moment by moment, so help me trust You, Lord, trust Your leading and trust Your guidance, in Jesus' Name. Amen.

DAY 22 Picked for a purpose

'Having been predestined according to His purpose'
Ephesians 1:11 NAS

DO YOU REALISE that before you were born, God's plan for you was already decided? Paul writes, 'All things happen just as He decided long ago' (Ephesians 1:11 TLB).

Notice, it says 'all things'. That includes the things you want to run from! When Jonah tried to run from God's will, God said, 'No way. My Word is already established. If I let you escape, I wouldn't be God. If I have to send tornadoes, rock your boat, shake up your comfort zone or put your entire life on hold, I'll do it in order to accomplish My purpose.' When Jonah could go no lower, he cried from the depths and God delivered him; just in time to preach in Nineveh. You can go the easy way or the hard way but you'll go!

3) Take your time. Don't make any life changes now. You're on an emotional roller coaster, vacillating between wanting them back and wanting them to suffer. You're vulnerable and easily drawn to anybody who pays you attention. Take time to heal; only healthy people make healthy choices.

4) Start giving back. Listen: 'He comforts us... so when others have trouble, we can comfort them...' (2 Corinthians 1:4 NCV). Once you discover that God hasn't turned His face from you (see 2 Chronicles 30:9), you'll start to become whole again. Then, out of what you've received, you'll have something to give to others. When you can do that, your future is bright and your possibilities are unlimited.

David said in Psalm 77, 'Your way... is in the sanctuary...' (v.13 NKJ). He also said, 'Thy way is in the sea [storm]...' (v.19).

The choice is yours. You've been picked for a purpose. God has got too much invested in you to let you get away with things. Even if you have to come on one leg, with one eye or on a stretcher, when He calls you, you'll come. If you have to leave behind a bottle, a habit or an addiction, you'll come. And you'll know it is God because you'll be able to leave behind you those things which now mean nothing for those things which have suddenly come to mean everything. Aren't you glad He chose you?



'YOU ARE NOT ALONE' - GOD


lookingforGOD.com

DAY 23 Don't miss what God's got for you! 'Let no one on the housetop go down to take anything out of the house' **Matthew 24:17 NIV**

THE BIBLE uses words like straightaway, immediately and suddenly to remind us that when God moves He does it quickly. He doesn't announce it with trumpets and fanfares so you need to stay prepared; especially when it's something you've been waiting a long time for.

God actually moves so quickly that one day you'll feel as if you're going through hell and the next as if you're seated in heavenly places. And in both instances it's 'God who works in you' (Philippians 2:13 NIV). Stay alert! You may be just a moment away from the answer you've been seeking. That's all the time it takes God to change things. Don't let procrastination steal your opportunity.

Listen: 'Let no one on the housetop go down to take anything out of the house' (Matthew 24:17 NIV). You've got to decide if you will go with what God has for you now, or return to the house because your unfinished business can cause you to miss it. So can others.

A sick man missed his healing for 38 years because he waited for others to act. He said, 'I have no-one to help...' (John 5:7 NIV). For years, he sat beside the solution but others caused him to miss it. Nothing is more important than what God wants to say to you and do for you today; not what's going on in your house; not the opinions of others. All that matters is being ready to receive what He has for you!

Prayer Point

Help me remain alert to the visions and callings in my life, Lord, and let my heart be ready to engage with Miracles on a daily basis. I pray that today I will follow the calling and conviction of my heart and prove You, even if it means stepping out in faith to seek Your Will. Amen.

DAY 24 Dare to be different 'Do not conform... to the pattern of this world' **Romans 12:2 NIV**

IF A MILLION PEOPLE do the wrong thing it still doesn't make it right! Listen: 'Nations and peoples of every language, this is what you are commanded to do... fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up.' (Daniel 3:4-5 NIV).

Everybody in Babylon was doing it. It meant death if you didn't. But neither peer pressure nor the threat of death could move the three young Hebrews. They said, 'If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us... But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods' (Daniel 3:17-18 NIV). That's not stubbornness – it's integrity! If there's nothing different about you, it's time to re-evaluate yourself.

Peter says you are part of 'a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people... called... out of darkness into His wonderful light' (1 Peter 2:9 NKJ). Did you get that? You're 'one of a kind,' called to bring glory to God in every circumstance and turn on the light wherever you go! Forget about having a consensus before you make a move, or conducting a poll before you obey.

Check your Bible: in most battles, God was on the side of the underdog! Don't let people with no vision vote on yours! Listen to God! Walk with Him! Do only what He tells you! When Martin Luther was told, 'The whole world is against you,' he replied, 'Then I'm against the whole world.' That's why he made a difference!

DAY 25 Be that someone

'Carry each other's burdens'
Galatians 6:2 NIV

TO WHOM would you turn if you suddenly discovered that your unmarried daughter was pregnant and wouldn't listen to you? Or one of your parents became an alcoholic? Or you lost your job through your own foolishness? Or got mixed up in an affair? Or dug yourself into a financial hole and couldn't get out?

It's easy to find places to meet, pray, sing and hear sermons from behind big wooden pulpits. Don't misunderstand, attending church is very important and the Truth is the only thing that will set you free (John 8:32). But sometimes what people really need is... a place to cry... a person to care... somebody to bind up their wounds... and a few friends who won't blab it all over the church!

Bill Riley leads the Overcomers programme at one of Atlanta's largest churches. During the past ten

Prayer Point

Lord, open my eyes to the people today that I could encourage, even those around me that seem to have everything together. Let me be the one that brings them peace today. I ask that You show what is causing me stress and pain and what I must do, so I am no longer trapped by the pain of the past. In Jesus' Name.

DAY 26 Let it go!

'Be kind and compassionate... forgiving each other... just as in Christ God forgave you' Ephesians 4:32 TMV

SOME SCIENTISTS set out to capture a rare species of monkey and bring it back alive and unharmed. To do this they devised a trap; a small jar with a narrow neck into which they placed a handful of nuts. Smelling the nuts the monkeys reached in to get them, but when they tried to withdraw their hands they discovered they couldn't get their clenched fists back out. They were trapped; unable to escape because they were unwilling to let go!

Sometimes we're just like those monkeys, aren't we? Unable to escape our past as we are unwilling to let it go! Has somebody mistreated you? Have you said to yourself, 'I'll never forget this as long as I live'? Whether you know it or not, you're not holding on to resentment, it's holding on to you.

years, they've helped over 15,000 people struggling with addictions. For some deliverance comes quickly. But most have to 'walk it out' day after day, using principles that date all the way back to John Wesley's prayer groups. Principles like: a) admitting you're powerless over the problem b) turning your life and your will over to God c) practising rigorous honesty d) becoming accountable to someone e) making amends where possible f) developing your relationship with God g) carrying the message to others who hurt.

When somebody falls, they need two things: 1) a safe place and 2) someone to lift them. For their sake and that of God, be that someone!

You're trapped! The real victim of resentment is the one who carries it. Are you a carrier? Prolonged hate is just a slow form of suicide. Do you think the other person is the one who needs forgiveness? Think again. Paul said, 'Forgive... as quickly and thoroughly as... Christ forgave you' (Ephesians 4:32 TMV).

How did Christ forgive you? a) when you were completely undeserving of it b) with no strings attached c) with full knowledge that you'd fail Him again. 'What's the answer?' you ask. Forgive and forget! More issues are forgotten than are ever resolved. To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner is you!

DAY 27 Joy!

'The joy of the Lord is your strength'
Nehemiah 8:10 NIV

CS LEWIS SAID, 'There's too much rigidity in dealing with sacred matters, too much speaking in "holy tones." And the tragic loss in all this pious gamesmanship is to the individual in the pew. He begins to feel that in the midst of all the religious razzle-dazzle he himself can't get through to God.

'Joy is more than earthly pleasure and more than what we call happiness. Joy is the enjoyment of God and the good things that come from Him. If the Bible provides us the wonderful words of life, joy supplies the music. If the way to heaven is an arduous climb, joy sets up the chair lift.'

Joy is the fuel God intends us to run on. So how come we feel so uneasy about seeking more of it? For the same reason that we feel guilty about taking time off. We think, 'We're Christians; we're

not supposed to enjoy ourselves.' Read your Bible! 'May the God of hope fill you with all joy' (Romans 15:13 NIV).

Ever notice how some people go through incredible difficulties yet still have joy, while others, who don't go through half as much, struggle to keep their heads above water? What's the difference? These people have a well within that they draw from daily; a well that can't be drained by what's going on around them.

Nehemiah said, 'The joy of the Lord [the joy that comes from knowing that He's Lord of every situation] is your strength' (Nehemiah 8:10 AMP). What's blocking you from experiencing God's joy? Find out ASAP and refuse to live another day without it.

Prayer Point

Father, I pray that my heart would be joyous and that joy would overflow in me, so that I would become infectious to others. I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me, so today Lord, I commit every aspect of my life and will to You, that Your Spirit in me will overcome every obstacle in Jesus' Name.

DAY 28 Developing a strong spirit

'The strong spirit of a man sustains him in bodily pain or trouble' Proverbs 18:14 AMP

WE'RE EACH made up of body, soul and spirit. Our spirit (inner man) is where God comes to dwell. But that doesn't mean we'll automatically have a 'strong spirit'. No, your spirit is like your body, it must be nourished.

Do you want to develop a strong spirit? First, spend time in God's Word. Why? Because it renews your mind and produces Christ-like qualities in you. Jesus knew the power of Scripture first-hand. He studied it as a boy, hid it in His heart and through it was able to overcome satan in the wilderness. Your Bible will: a) feed your soul: 'When Your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight' (Jeremiah 15:16 NIV) b) keep you strong in temptation: 'How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according

to Your Word' (Psalm 119:9 NIV) c) make you sharp: 'The unfolding of your words gives... understanding' (Psalm 119:130 NIV).

Second, recognise the power of prayer. Listen: 'He went up on a mountainside by Himself to pray' (Matthew 14:23 NIV). If Jesus needed to spend time in prayer, so do you.

John Bunyan said, 'You can do more than pray after you've prayed; but you can't do more than pray until you've prayed.' Think about that. In prayer, you commit it all to God, otherwise who is running things? Just that thought should bring us to our knees. Want to develop a strong spirit? One that will sustain you in bodily pain or trouble? Do these two things!



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