

*Living The
Legacy!*

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“Where two or three are gathered in MY Name...”

A 52 Weekend Devotional

Christmas 2015

Mary Ann & Kerry Lord

Dedication

All Glory to GOD and to the HOLY Spirit who teaches us in all things as we allow our precious LORD and Savior, JESUS CHRIST, to have HIS way in every area of our lives... May this book set ablaze your relationship with our CREATOR. At times you may have to ask the hard question covered on Page 99,

“Do I need to change?”

This 52 week devotional is dedicated to our awesome GOD-loving children...

Jasmine, Josiah, Kerisa, Abigail, Rachel, & Bethany

And our awesome sons and daughter through marriage

(Andrew, Christopher, Savannah, and future Mates!)

Many thanks to the following sources for wisdom and in some precious way effecting, affecting, and even infecting our lives:

GOD's WORD that has indeed been a 'lamp unto our feet & light unto our path'

Our wonderful parents and caring siblings

Our precious church family of over a quarter of a century!

Focus On The Family, Ed Cole, Gary Smalley, & those we failed to acknowledge.

For Bible Versions we use NIV, NLT, CEV, KJV (Permission Granted). Keep in mind...

GOD's Word will **NOT** return void. If you think you are using a less than adequate version of the Bible then find something that you can understand, memorize, and quote. **Your faith** in GOD's Word is **paramount** so **YOU** can be a useful tool in **HIS** hands. JESUS admonishes us in John 17:20-21:

“I am not praying just for these followers. I am also praying for everyone else who will have faith because of what MY followers will say about ME. I want all of them to be one with each other, just as I am one with YOU and YOU are one with ME. I also want them to be one with US. Then the people of this world will believe that YOU sent ME.”

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Themes

1 Chronicles 28:9 *"And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the GOD of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches every heart and understands every desire and every thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever."*

Psalms 27:4 *"One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple."*

For many years, as a family, we have asked GOD to give us a theme for the upcoming year. A theme's not a theme til HE gives a theme. Ask GOD to give you HIS theme for the year or perhaps for a particular season. Themes can be HIS Road Signs. HE loves to be asked! Ask HIM to give you something that will challenge you! We have found that the theme He gives always seems to "coincidentally" fit our circumstances and life seasons not just once, but many times throughout the year! In fact, several times the theme proved 'spot on' sometimes 11 months later! Why should this surprise us? If we ask GOD for wisdom and HE speaks something to us, wouldn't HE know the future since HE is GOD?

We usually post our yearly theme where all can see and repeat it out loud and often, like at dinner table, after devotions, etc. so that it becomes a way of life challenging us to live with expectation and hope. Looking back, I think the theme that had the most effect on us in a tangible way was "2003 - Victory On Our Knees!" I have vivid memories of us hitting the floor, sometimes reluctantly, but faithfully, and seeing GOD bring about so many miracles! My definition of a miracle is 'GOD simple doing what we can not.'

Here are some of the themes we believe GOD gave us in January of each year and months later we'd see clearly how HIS theme rang true to life! Praise HIM for HIS faithfulness!

2K - New Day - Focused on GOD's plan for us

2001 - Our Time Has Come – Bethany Born!, Dream job as CIO

2002 - Our Dreams Come True – Bus donated, Start ministry!

2003 - Victory On Our Knees - GOD provides so many needs.

2004 - Blessings Pour When We Hit The Floor!

2005 - Heart's Cry! Miracles Alive! - New bus!

2006 - Year To Fix Eyes On JESUS! - Focus on LORD of the work

2007 - Prepare For Heaven! - Angel our dog, vacation, new engine

2008 - Wait On The LORD! - Rest Sept/Oct. Saved emergency fund

2009 - Abide In The Vine – Asking for the harvest

2010 - Begin Again - Seeking HIM as our first love.

2011 - Manna From Heaven - Be Ready!

One the most incredible finds of the modern age is the realization of GOD's fingerprints, not just throughout HIS creation but especially in HIS Word. As you may know, the number 7 is a special number and means 'completion'. GOD rested on the 7th day, etc. We find "Be Still" seven times in the Old Testament! I don't think this is by any accident, therefore indicating to me GOD's sovereign hand keeping HIS WORD nearly perfectly intact and pure throughout the millennia! Take some time and 'Be Still and KNOW that HE is GOD!' Take some time as a family and seek GOD for a theme that you can come back to throughout the year to help you be focused on GOD's plan for your life. Interview each other, children included, about their thoughts and impressions from their quiet times and prayer and see how GOD will bring unity and confirmation as HE leads in HIS theme for your family. This is a process...we would usually give the family a heads-up a week or so before the new year so we could be in prayer and be thinking about what GOD may be impressing on our hearts and minds. Have fun with it, listening to all the ideas, then allow Dad to be the leader and decide which theme really speaks the loudest to the calling of GOD on your family.

Be Ready!

Matthew 24:42-44 *"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."*

I think most folks would agree that these are tenuous, tumultuous times perhaps fulfilling in many ways these prophecies from the book of Matthew penned so long ago. At any rate, I think all would agree it is prudent to 'be prepared' AKA (Also Known As) 'Be Ready' which was a theme for one of our Family Festival's years ago. 'Be Ready' for our LORD's return! HE did indicate in several places that HE is coming back just as HE left on the 'Clouds of Heaven' but this time to rule and reign. Many forces of evil are not happy about MESSIAH's return and I believe there is clear indication that they have been manipulating humans to try and stop The LORD of Host's return. Prophetic texts tell us about a time to come when there will be doom and gloom before the groom arrives so let's 'Be Ready!'

There are also other areas of our lives that we should 'Be Ready' including 'instant in season' ready to share the Gospel of JESUS with 'whomsoever will!' Who knows, we may be the only 'JESUS in skin' for them! Let us be led by the Spirit on all occasions.

Another area to 'Be Ready' is in preparation for emergencies. In the last few years we have seen natural disasters come upon this nation as perhaps GOD is removing HIS hand of blessing because of

America's many sins. We can and should repent for our nation like Daniel did in his book pleading with GOD to have mercy on our nation, on the remnant, etc. So it's wise in my mind to be prepared for power outages that may last for several days. Have what you need to live on for at least three days. Have 'go bags' or 'bug-out bags'. These are knapsacks that you can grab and go in case you're on a road trip or perhaps you have to leave your home quickly. The best way to see what you need is to do a 'test-run' on some weekend trying to live without power for 72 hours. For those of us that live in rural areas here in the Northeast we typically lose power several times a year, so it's wise to 'Be Ready' having extra on hand for visitors. Years ago when I was in Cub Scouts I learned their famous motto, "Be Prepared". Years later as a Boy Scout, my brother and I traveled by snowmobile out into the Maine wilderness to survive for a day in the dead of winter and to test our skills.

Finally, the best way to 'Be Ready' is to walk close to HIM daily, allowing Our LORD, through HIS Holy Spirit to teach us how to listen to HIS voice and to train us in ways that only HE can know! So that we can 'Be Ready' for whatever comes our way, 'for such a time as this'. I believe that because of the authority of JESUS, we as Believers can do and will do great feats in HIS Name. To accomplish this we must major on the little things that ABBA FATHER brings to mind daily so HE can trust us with the big things like miracles, signs, and wonders! I firmly believe that the day is coming when JESUS will speak to someone and say to them, "Tell this mountain to move into the sea." And it shall be done!

Over and Under Armor - Part 1

Ephesians 6:10-13 *“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of GOD, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of GOD, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.”*

A few years back, I went to the Baltimore Ravens Training Facility to fix a network problem. When I arrived I thought I was at the wrong address because all I saw were huge signs that said 'Under Armour'.

You know the sports underwear company? The security guard at the gate confirmed the right address, but he only allowed me access after checking ID and calling someone. That's what GOD's armor does for us! All the enemy sees are huge indications that GOD is here! They see HIS under armor and over armor all held together with HIS omni-ALL power only allowing through the gates what HE allows! Many firmly believe that 'The Full Armor' is more real than this page you're looking at!

I **PUT** on The Full Armor almost daily and even before I sleep depending on what's hitting us. I believe The HOLY SPIRIT, via Paul is strongly saying that the only way to be strong in the LORD and HIS mighty POWER is to **PUT** HIS Full Armor on. This force-field encircles us in the spiritual realm as well as in this physical realm, when we take the lead and **PUT** it on. This is one of HIS gifts for all Believers. GOD intends for us to STAND, because JESUS overcame

ALL the enemies of GOD! The enemy has a plan for your life and that MO (Method of Operation) is to kill, steal, and destroy. It's been said, the greatest trick the devil ever pulled, was to convince us he doesn't exist. Here we see listed four enemies that carry out the devil's schemes. They also can manipulate humans to do their nefarious bidding. Numerous reports from those on the front lines indicate these enemies can take on physicality, but never fear GOD is near! Ask GOD to teach you how to pray against each one and their plans and their powers. Notice this passage says "**WHEN** the day of evil comes" not **IF**. We don't have to fear and feed into their power for we just need to **PUT** on **HIS** powerful armor and **PRAY**.

Notice also **WHERE** the battle occurs... in the heavenlies. This indicates there are realms or dimensions other than just where GOD dwells. Biblically, we see things created in the spiritual before manifesting here in the physical, so it makes total sense to war at the root of all problems... The LORD of Host has not left us without tools to walk a victorious life! Let us learn how to use them!

When the armor isn't fully on, you'll see things happening that mess with your world. Stuff breaks down, one right after the other. You'll see trouble start to hit you and your loved ones from all sides. You'll have resources slip through your fingers. When in doubt **rebuke first** and ask questions later!

JESUS says in **Luke 10:19** "*I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome ALL the power of the enemy. NOTHING will harm you!*"

Over and Under Armor - Part 2

Ephesians 6:14-18 *“Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of GOD. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.”*

Notice there are seven pieces of armor listed. Prayer is often overlooked... Keep in mind it's not our armor but GOD's! Everything hangs off the belt of HIS Truth! The original language says 'girded loins' rather than waist. Interesting, that word *loin* means 'hips (by extension) *procreative power*'. The ancient mind believes our emotions dwell in the loins where our reproductive organs are. So quite possibly the first thing to do is to wrap GOD's TRUTH around our emotions and hormones! Pray that HIS TRUTH prevail over our perception of truth! The breastplate of righteousness was a solid piece that went over first the hands, then the head, and finally covered the heart. Pray that GOD cover our sin-nature that rears it's ugly flesh through our hands, head and heart and that HE cover it with HIS righteousness so that we can bear fruit to honor HIM, fruit that will last! Next we bind onto our feet HIS 'Gospel of Peace' which are shoes that have cleats for gripping into the ground. HIS Shalom is a supernatural Peace that passes all human understanding. We can walk through the day or night radiating HIS Shalom wherever we go! Notice that up until now, a good case could be made that we are protecting ourselves from our flesh, whereas the next piece, the Shield of Faith, protects us from the enemies of GOD. There were

two types of shields - a small, round one used in hand to hand combat and a large, rectangular one, almost as tall as the person, used by squads of soldiers advancing at their target. It's this latter, larger one that is referenced in the original language and would be used to make a wall over and around the squad to block **ALL**. So it's quite possible we are to war against the enemy in squads IE: corporately as a family, husband/wife, church body, etc. agreeing in prayer and coming against specific enemies. These shields were covered with leather which could be soaked with water to quickly put out the enemy's 'fiery arrows' which could do more damage if the arrow lit a fire around the soldier. Next is the 'helmet of salvation' and elsewhere we are told is the 'Mind of CHRIST'. Salvation is more than an insurance policy, it's an ever growing knowledge of **who and whose** we are in CHRIST and HIS mighty power. The helmet (AKA this 'Mind of JESUS') covers our eyes, ears, nose, brain, and mouth suggesting we should ask to see, hear, discern, think, etc. what JESUS would have us know! The next piece is the "Sword of the Spirit" (AKA the "Word of GOD"). Again there were two types of swords, a big one and a little one. It's the later that the original language uses implying that little words carefully placed are sufficient to take care of the enemy! The CREATOR 'Spoke' our physical realm into existence and gives humanity the power to create using our spoken words. Here we can pray scripture in full confidence knowing that using HIS Word adds strength to our words in fighting the enemy. This is clearly demonstrated by our LORD when satan tempted JESUS in the wilderness. JESUS battled each temptation using the phrase, "It is written..." (AKA GOD's Word)! The final piece is to PRAY ALWAYS in the Spirit on all occasions giving ABBA permission to interrupt our thoughts day or night with HIS List of people, places, and plans!

MONEY: More Or Less

Psalms 24:1 & in 1 Corinthians 10:26

"The earth is the LORD's and everything in it"

Matthew 6:24 *"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both GOD and money."*

I think it's huge when a person comes to the understanding that once they become a 'bond-slave' of JESUS CHRIST then NOTHING is really theirs because it's HIS and they are just a steward over the stuff, including money. To some HE has given much, and yes it rains on the good as well as the bad. The enemy has many resources and there are some filthy rich people who are owned by the enemy, but payday someday for them...

I have lived a testimony of GOD's faithfulness that never disappoints! It was not always in material things or in financial blessings, but GOD has taught me, over the years, to create the memories not the gifts. Many times when we didn't have anything to give, GOD would give one of us an idea of going someplace special like "Picnic Island" and have a scavenger hunt, or transform our kitchen into a restaurant with menus and all!! Some of our favorite memories surround doing the "hot and cold" presents for birthdays! I never spent more than a few dollars on any of them but the fun of hiding them and playing the game was always the best part of the day! Our camping trips almost always involved a scavenger hunt for penny candy in the trees, buried in the sand or wherever we could find a place! These simple joys were more memorable than anything we could have given for a gift. Don't be afraid to go against the grain of society and think "outside the box" when it comes to expressing love through gifts and material things. The stress that comes with spending money that we don't have or trying to compete with the "Jones'", is simply not worth it! And it teaches our children that happiness is dependent upon circumstances and material things rather than our joy being in the Lord Himself! Every day I am reminded of what it was like to live in complete dependence upon GOD to provide what we needed when we were in full time ministry without a steady income. I still marvel when I walk into the grocery store and realize I don't have to calculate every single dollar and end up taking back a third of what's in my cart. Not that we don't have limits, but we have a paycheck that we know will be coming at a certain time every month. That is a new experience for me. I have no regrets about the lessons GOD

taught me through the years concerning this. I thank GOD often that He taught me what's important and how to be content and trust Him. I am still learning in this area. He is faithful!

James 1:9 *"Any of GOD's people who are poor should be glad that he thinks so highly of them."*

I know many would like to tear that passage out because it's in the context of financial poverty. But think about it, in the next passage it warns those who are rich... v10 "But any who are rich should be glad when GOD makes them humble. Rich people will disappear like wild flowers" I've often wondered if that is why we've had such a hard time over the years. We've always had just enough to squeak by. Perhaps we're not mature enough to handle wealth. I suspect we'd give most of it away. But I put that passage here to give food for thought. I believe we can pray against poverty and rebuke the enemy from messing with our finances, but after we've done all that and we find we're still not much better off, then perhaps it's for HIS reasons. One thing is for sure, HE is faithful and HE never promised wealth. So many of our brothers and sisters all over the earth have lost everything including loved ones for HIS Name. We have nothing to complain about and we should be praying for them.

There is such freedom knowing that everything we have comes from GOD and belongs to Him. Many times if we've somehow been ripped off or if we've broken something valuable or lost something of value, or if there has been an emergency that gouged our finances- we've been able to reconcile it and have peace knowing "it all belongs to GOD", and He is in control. Consider this mindset for your family and see how it dissolves conflict and stress when we realize there is no blame appropriated when GOD is Lord over our finances. As long as we maintain unity in this area and share all of our successes and failures with each other before GOD, He will work it out for our good.

This week bring to the table any areas of your finances that have been causing tension between family members. Lay these concerns before the Lord and ask Him to be Lord over them. Determine to be in unity no matter how "bad" the situation may be. Cling to GOD and cling to one another! GOD can do the impossible and HAS DONE the impossible many, many times for us in this area! Wait and see what He will do for you when you submit your finances into His able arms!

Double Standards

Proverbs 11:1-2 *“The LORD detests dishonest scales, but accurate weights find favor with him. When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.”*

In this passage we have a picture of a ‘seller’ using dishonest scales to weigh something, hence leading the ‘buyer’ to think they were getting more for their money. This cheating AKA (Also Known As) lying, AKA hypocrisy is brought about by greed, which is actually a form of pride.

We all have seen hypocrisy in the education system, in politics, in churches, in friendships, and in families. People say one thing and then do another. The age-old adage is ‘Do what I say, not what I do.’

Early on when our children were babies our research on parenting informed us that one of the greatest reasons for children NOT to follow their parents' lead in religious beliefs was because of a ‘double standard’ in the home. Children clearly can see through these ‘dishonest scales’. Our actions do speak more than words. When one refuses to change this ‘double-speak’ and rationalizes it away, or as our “politically correct” society calls it ‘putting a spin on something’, the results are that children grow up doing the same things and are often cynical about the truths that the parents taught but didn't actually “live”!

A good example of this is when families have two standards for movies, etc. Mom and Dad can watch ‘adult’ movies. Mom and Dad

can have 'adult' drinks or 'adult' magazines. Over the years we read one sad case-study after another of these type of situations and vowed that with GOD's help we would NOT have a 'double standard' in our home. We believed that our children were worth any sacrifice it would take to leave the 'adult' material out of our family. We did get some criticism from friends, but looking back we agree it was worth it.

This standard also carried over into our marriage as well. Early on in our marriage 'BK' (Before Kids) I remember compromising on my values by watching various movies that I would rent knowing my wife wouldn't watch because of the foul language, flesh, etc. But praise GOD, I was convicted of this and decided many times to wait and watch the clean version after JESUS came back! <grin> I don't think I'm any worse for the wear. Even now in some of my research I'll be referred to various movies and have to read the analysis rather than watch it.

Now obviously, there are some things, like the news headlines, that aren't 'family-friendly' but again rather than watch the horrific mind-controlled media, one can read it.

Please take some time, pray, and then list some ways below after asking The LORD to lead you in vowing this day to end any double-standard in your marriage, in your family, and/or in your life.

Footsteps In The Night

1 Samuel 3:7-10 "Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. A third time the LORD called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if HE calls you, say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.... The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, 'Samuel! Samuel!' Then Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant is listening.'"

Now-a-days our children stay up later than we do, even sometimes throwing a party - so it seems! But years ago, I clearly remember when they were little ones tucked in bed at a 'decent hour'. Now and then I would walk through the house into each bedroom, kneel by their bed, and pray over them. I would ask GOD to lead them to salvation at an early age and to love HIM with all their being. I would also ask GOD to help me be the best Dad that I can be. I must admit this may sound noble, but let me be honest and say that most of the time these footsteps in the night were motivated by frustration even exasperation as a parent! Over the years we've met thousands of parents and find that most of them truly want the best for their children. But alas, many times, we as parents, simply do not know what to do in certain situations. We are like Samuel in the above passage. At first Samuel didn't realize it was the LORD who was audibly speaking to him! It took a not-so-GODly priest to tell Samuel WHO'S voice it was and what to say in response to GOD speaking.

We too, can often be so busy with life that we get frustrated in raising our children. The voice of the LORD is so dim amongst all the

noise of life. Yet, the first step is found here in this passage; that is to admit we but servant who need HIS help...

“Speak LORD, your servant is listening...”

Long ago, in my uncertainty as a parent, I would get up in the night and walk into the room of whatever child it was that was ‘perplexing’ me. As I knelt beside their bed, I would whisper an audible prayer asking GOD for clear direction in helping us raise this child in the way HE wanted them to go. Looking back I see the wisdom in this method and give credit where it is due. For when we come into the presence of GOD and the ‘problem’ we can speak audible words of faith to the situation. We speak to the child’s spirit that is always awake and even more so at night. And if there are unseen forces of evil afoot we/HE can take care of them! These ‘footsteps in the night’ gave me hope because I had invited HIM into the ‘situation’ and HIS peace flooded my soul. Looking back I see that quite often the ‘situation’ wasn’t always a ‘quick fix’ but by my persisting with my ‘footsteps in the night’ these prayer vigils did bring about good and GODly results. Praise The LORD for HIS faithfulness!

In later years, my ‘footsteps in the night’ would take on other ‘prayer vigils’ not only for my adult children and their children but for other battles in the heavenlies and here in this physical realm. Now, sometimes I don’t get out of bed but I lie awake praying for whomever or whatever comes to mind.

*“Direct my footsteps according to your Word” **Palms 119:133***

Words

Luke 4:36 *"All the people were amazed and said to each other, "What words these are! With authority and power HE gives orders to impure spirits and they come out!"*

1 Corinthians 2:4 *"My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power!"*

1 Thessalonians 1:5 *"Because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake."*

1 Peter 4:11 *"If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of GOD. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength GOD provides, so that in all things GOD may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen."*

WORDS can build or break. We see in the above passages examples of the power of words and not just human words but the words of GOD through the Holy Spirit. Let's read again those passages and look for a word that is repeated in each verse. Did you notice that in every verse the same noun is used over and over again? Look again and find it, then write it below and circle this powerful word <grin>. This original Greek word 'dynamis' is used 120 times in the New Testament and is where we get our word 'dynamite'. It literally means force and by implication specifically means 'miraculous power'. Have you recognized our English translation of this 'dynamic' word? Yes, it's POWER! Our words have POWER even supernatural POWER via the Holy Spirit that dwells within us!

Not on the par that GOD's WORDs have but, in my opinion, still powerful just the same.

You see when we are connected to the CREATOR of all who SPOKE this universe/physical realm into existence using 'words', HE then created humanity in HIS image and the speaking of powerful 'words' is part of our DNA. I don't think we see this in any of the animal kingdom, because we are unique. We have the power to bless or to curse. When our children we just beginning to be able to communicate with words I remember teaching them the phrase from the movie "Bambi" where Thumper said, "If you can't say 'sumpthin' nice, than don't say 'nothin' at all!" The word, "edify" was a vocabulary word we taught early on. Often we would over-hear conversations amongst our children and even with their friends, and ask them the question, "Is this edifying"! Lessons about words were a daily thing in our home...the tongue is a powerful tool or weapon, for building up with encouraging words or destroying with gossip or critical words. I pray that we use ours to speak life into those we encounter each and every day.

Psalms 109:28 "While they curse, may you bless; may those who attack me be put to shame, but may your servant rejoice."

Proverbs 30:11 "There are those who curse their fathers and do not bless their mothers."

Luke 6:28 "Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."

Romans 12:14 "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse."

Empowering Each Other

Ephesians 3:16 *"I pray that from His glorious, unlimited resources He will empower you with inner strength through His Spirit."*

Empowering not DEvouring the powerless! After I became a Mama to my first sweet baby, the world and my goals and desires changed dramatically. I found myself wrapped up in the swaddle with her! My world suddenly became all about my dreams and goals for" her" rather than for myself. Every "first" became a celebration and believe me...we celebrated! I no longer did things alone...everything I did, it seemed, I wanted to have Jasmine participate in and learn from. She became my "constant Christian companion"- as the radio station puts it!! It became my goal to enable her to become all that GOD created her to be. And then as each and every one of our children came along, I embraced the same goal for them. I wanted to instill in all of them the belief that they could do anything-and that they didn't have to wait to be an adult! I wanted to hone in on their interests and giftings and give them the "power" to explore and use them to glorify GOD!! I believe that one of the greatest gifts we can give our children is the confidence and faith to pursue what GOD has inspired them to do. Even if the "tools" are not yet in their possession, believing in their abilities and assisting them in acquiring the tools is the same as saying, "You CAN do this"!! "I believe in YOU!" It works the same way with our own dreams and desires. Walking towards the goal, even when it seems impossible, is walking in faith. When we first were married and had the dream of singing and traveling, Kerry picked up a rubber knob that held the reel onto the reel-to-reel tape recording equipment.

This really didn't amount to anything, but to us it was the first "installment" in fulfilling our dream. It was a symbol of the dream we felt called to.

As parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents and even siblings...it's not enough to listen to the dreams and seem interested. We are given this platform to influence either for empowering or "devouring" when we participate in these relationships. Let's use this power of influence to encourage, inspire and assist each other by believing and having confidence in - even the littlest among us!

I think of one such encounter that empowered me so long ago. I was a young teenager living in western Maine. A pastor from three hours away come by to visit my parents and ended up spending the night. He was a very charismatic person full of energy. He would almost always make time to talk with us kids which really impressed me and I made a vow so long ago to try and do the same if I ever became a leader. So many adults in Christian leadership pay the children no mind and this is a tragic mistake. He asked my parents if I could skip school the next day and go skiing with him! I was thrilled beyond words. We had a blast the next day and etched into my memory are those moments on the slopes with Pastor Lee and me.

Take some time and think about the people in your circle of influence. Ask FATHER GOD to bring to mind any names or faces of those that you can empower and influence in some way even though it might only be for a few encounters.

Persistent Prayer

Luke 18:1-8 *"Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: 'In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared GOD nor cared what people thought. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' 'For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear GOD or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!'" And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not GOD bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"*

The example above proves that coming to the LORD again and again for the same things is NOT what JESUS means when HE condemns 'meaningless repetitions' in Matthew 6:7. We are to be like this persistent widow! She came each day with heart felt pleas for the same cause!

One of the things we did as parents that I believe empowered our children in their personal faith-walk was to expect that GOD would speak to them just as He would to us! When there was a decision to be made that involved our family, and it was

appropriate, we would have a family meeting and encourage and expect the children to seek GOD for wisdom. Often we would take turns praying around the clock, or would give a deadline for coming together to share what we each felt GOD spoke to us. We trained the kids to seek GOD by worshiping and reading His Word and listening. We encouraged them to write down scriptures they turned to even if they didn't seem relevant at the time. When we gathered together to share our impressions and scriptures GOD always confirmed HIS will somehow through each and every one of us! We have this documented! This built faith and confidence in our ability to hear from GOD. I remember so vividly when Kerry called from work and said that we had been given a bus, Josiah falling from the couch and yelling out, "I LOVE PRAYING!!!!" These experiences in faith empowered our children to pray for others- even adults- without a second thought...it was just what we did! Kerry and I often shared personal needs with the kids as well, asking them to pray for us and allowing ourselves to be vulnerable with them. This kind of relationship with our children created genuine trust and respect for each other as individuals as well as parents and children. The Holy Spirit can speak to adults as well as children as long as the heart has ears to hear. Be that persistent prayer warrior!

"Err on the side of faith rather than stumble over unbelief" klord

Night Fears

2nd Timothy 1:7 *"For GOD has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline."*

Job 35:10 *"GOD my Creator, the One who gives songs in the night!"*

'Night Fears' is a term the kids came up with in regard to 'bad dreams' or scary 'things' in the middle of the night. In the early years before I was aware of spiritual warfare and related topics, I pretty much dismissed all 'night fears'. We'd let the child climb in bed with us and that was that. Then over time GOD matured us and we started becoming aware of the unseen realm. Not that we are to walk in fear because GOD hasn't given us that spirit. Fear comes from the enemy and I believe is the fuel that powers the kingdom of darkness. Because of our lack of knowledge of the unknown, fear can rise up in us especially in a child. It can even be something that is triggered by the enemy who knows humans all too well. In the above verse GOD has given us power, love and self-control. I believe we are not to be ignorant of the enemies tricks and I think one is missing the boat to think the enemy won't try to mess with our children at a young age. So I take 'night fears' seriously. We have ALL authority given by JESUS CHRIST, the LORD over all Realms. (Luke 10:19) So I look for patterns to the 'night fears'. What has the child been ingesting? It's like the ole computer adage of GIGO (Garbage In, Garbage Out). What are they listening to, watching, and/or reading? Books like 'harry potter' and vampires have real witchcraft. I let the child talk and tell me what they remember. I don't try to shut them down just because I don't want to 'go there' with my fears. The Bible says bring it all into the light. Pray with the child, putting the full armor of GOD on each night (See devo page 5).

I look for areas of their lives where the enemy might possibly get a foothold. The Bible describe these footholds as doorways/portals that the enemy can shoot fiery arrows into our lives. I believe one of the most powerful prayers is to pray the 'Blood of JESUS' over our children and teach them to pray out loud as well. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you if there are 'charged objects' in your home that should go. It's valid to anoint your windows, doors, door frames, property lines, etc. as the spirit leads for there are logical reasons for the power of the oil to bind your prayers of GOD's Word to these access points.

I along with many others over the years have experienced a crushing paralysis during my sleep that even prevents me from speaking. The great news is that just by thinking the **Name of JESUS** these attacks will be broken. Even non-Believers are finding relief from 'night fears' with HIS Name! We can command the entities to leave and not come back. That is why it's critical to KNOW power scriptures that render these forces powerless! JESUS when tempted by the devil used The WORD to battle the enemy. Remind them that 'payday, someday!' I believe at times, GOD has a purpose in allowing 'night fears' to train us in the faith and build our confidence in HIM and our AUTHORITY over the unseen realm. In the following passage we see the same words used here as in Ephesians on the Full Armor of GOD. Be strong and courageous!

Colossians 2:10 *"You have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority."*

Family Meetings

1st Timothy 4:12 *“Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.”*

Family Meetings is not a new idea, for we see it in ancient times, we see it in the corporate world, we see it in church committees... Having family meetings on a regular basis re-affirms everyone's worth as individuals. We communicate to each family member that they are valuable enough to be invited to a meeting! Therefore the agenda is wide open and not top-down driven, if you know what I mean <grin>. Let the little ones bring up their concerns, their wants, etc.

Family meetings is a concept that Kerry brought to the table in our family. Even when the children all were very little, he instituted the rules stating that everyone had a voice and would be respected and listened to by everyone in the family. Often times these meetings were very stressful for me as we painstakingly listened to each child's idea about something that I knew was not going to “work”. It was my instinct to immediately be realistic and not get “hopes up”, but Kerry always listened and encouraged even the most outrageous ideas to be entertained and discussed. I have learned that he was (and still is), very, very wise.

In not discouraging the children to “reach for the sky”, they have all attained unimaginable things already, in their young lives. I have also come to be a little more of a dreamer myself!

Kerry believed that if the children had an investment in our ministry then they would be motivated and have fun implementing the ideas. we also knew that the Holy Spirit can speak to them just as well as us and maybe even more clear! As we became “The Lord Family”, the meetings took on more of an executive flare and we upgraded locations from our kitchen table to the Ramada Inn conference room and other more professional venues ;)! With laptop computers, pens and folders, the children all rose to the occasion and behaved as professionals. Looking back I am amazed at the creativity and talent that GOD packed in all of them! It was just our job to provide a platform for our children to use those gifts for His glory, and the confidence to believe that they could! I believe that is the key. This is what this devotional excerpt is all about.

As spouses, parents, friends, siblings, aunts, uncles...we have the opportunity to influence each other and inspire each other to greater things by believing in and actively supporting one another in using the gifts we've been given. Whether you are two or one-hundred and two...if you still have breath GOD has a purpose for your life. We need to continue to speak truth into others...no matter how young or old!

Unity Gain

Psalms 133:1 “How good and pleasant it is when GOD’s people live together in unity!”

John 17:23 “JESUS says, “I in them and YOU in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that YOU sent me and have loved them even as YOU have loved me.”

Ephesians 4:3 “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”

Colossians 3:14 “And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”

What is perfect unity between spouses, friends, siblings? Putting on agape love more than all the other virtues which becomes the glue that binds together perfect unity. The original word for unity means ‘joint tie’ as a muscle is joined to a ligament which attaches to the bone!

Early on in our marriage, I would make decisions against my wife’s better judgment and I have learned the hard way! Now we as a couple don’t move forward on ANY large idea without complete unity between us. The phrase ‘unity or no gain’ has become part of our foundational beliefs. This phrase comes from an audio term one finds on mixer boards that mix sound from a microphone or instrument. You all are probably familiar with the ‘fader knob’ that slides up and down on a mixer board.

It's the thingie that makes the channel's mic/instrument louder or softer. When the fader is moved up, the signal is NOT being boosted electronically but actually the original sound source is being allowed through the mixer at full strength like water through a hose. So when the fader is turned down then the full raw signal is being 'choked' down. The point of allowing ALL the raw sound to flow through the mixer uninhibited is called '**unity gain**'.

To allow for 'unity gain' in your marriage, both wife and husband must previously agree to allow full input from both parties! This unity amongst a married couple brings tremendous strength when our Heavenly FATHER is asked to take part in all major decisions. You can then move forward with authority and confidence in knowing both spouses agree and GOD honors the power of agreement! Now, even though HE honors agreement, this doesn't always mean it's HIS perfect will couples go down this path. That is why on major decisions both couples need to have a vibrant relationship with the LORD and have previously developed a sense of hearing GOD's voice to know HIS clear direction. Then when you move forward in unity as a couple AND when you've heard from GOD about a situation... you can KNOW, that you KNOW, it's HIS will! You have 'unity gain'! This is so comforting and SO very powerful. This doesn't mean you won't run into roadblocks or hurdles. But when you do, you have the confidence to push through rather than give up! This can be critical in your marriage and growth with the LORD for these 'curve balls' will mature you in ways that couldn't otherwise be achieved had you not taken this course or path.

Don't Let The Sun Go Down On Me!

Ephesians 4:26-27 “*In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.*”

Every time I read this passage I think of the song from the 70's, with this chorus that said, “Don't let the sun go down on me.”

Most will agree that there are two types of anger. One that leads to sin and one that motivates one to righteous acts. It's important to note that the word here for 'anger' in the original language means rage or wrath. And most will agree it's probably not wise to be vein-popping raging mad when darkness arrives... The admonition here also indicates that allowing the sun to set on your wrath can lead to demonic footholds. The original Greek word for foothold is 'topos' where we get our words topology, topographical map, etc. It simply means place or location. The Holy Spirit through Paul is admonishing us to NOT give the devil or his minions a place or location in our lives because rage is a very close cousin to hate. So technically the context of this passage is probably not about close relationships, but it still is loaded with wisdom.

When it comes to relationships, not settling a matter or at least mutually agreeing to table it before sleep is a very wise policy to put in place. It tells each person they are of value. So going to bed miffed at your mate probably doesn't fit this scripture, but it IS dishonoring your spouse. I must confess, that I've gone to sleep when my wife has been upset with me. Not a good idea. I've learned we'll both sleep better if I man-up and make-up. Truth be known she has sought me out far more times than I've her.

Also another tip: Bringing up life-changing subjects just before sleep when both spouses are tired is a recipe for disaster. Don't share some horrific news item with her before you roll over and snore! It's very inappropriate... Trust me, I know!

One of the things we've picked up over the years is that disagreements are a part of life, especially if you're married. So have a plan in place for when it happens that you both have agreed upon.

One of the things suggested is that one gets on their knees. This action reminds both parties that prayer happens on the knees and it's harder to fight someone on their knees. Another neat tip to do in the heat of the argument is to touch your beloved, just lay a hand on their leg or shoulder. It can defuse tensions dramatically. These non-verbals can be done by either person and communicates, 'Hey, we're on the same team'.

Stay away from phrases that hurt like, 'You always' or 'you never'.

Use a few specifics not generalities like, 'When you do/say this it makes me feel..' Keep the Golden Rule in mind - 'Do unto others..'.

If you have deeply wounded someone, then realize they may clam up and it takes time for them to open back up. Usually spouse are opposites on many different levels and communication could be the big one where one spouse can out think and out talk the other thus winning a debate. But whoa, you're on the same team so you really lost by beating up your mate!

Spend the last few moments of your day together, before you close your eyes, praying and reaffirming your love for one another. If there are still unresolved issues, commit to each other a time to work through them. Most of the time when the time comes to deal with the issue, it's not nearly as important as it seemed the night before!

Submission

Ephesians 5:21 *"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."*

'Submission is to gain what pride is to loss' klord

When my husband and I were first married he definitely "led" in the area of spiritual growth in our relationship. He was always challenging me to stretch my faith and consider the things I had always taken for granted to be truth. He insisted from the get-go that we pray together as a couple...that meant I had to not only listen but also speak?!! I remember feeling so embarrassed and awkward at first and then so empowered that we could join together and go before the GOD of our universe!!! My husband has always been a solid rock for me but I didn't always enjoy and embrace that as a wife. I often struggled with the fact that GOD had placed him in authority over me and that I was to submit to him with loving respect. I remember early on in our relationship, one time with our Pastor, he came to our house to borrow some equipment and ended up visiting for awhile. As he was leaving he said something to the effect- "your wife needs to respect you and submit to your leadership." I remember remarking (understandably upset), "Call him up and tell him he's wrong and that I do submit to you!!!" As I think back on it I see my oxymoron and the humor of GOD!! It was an eye-opener for me. Another instance was after we had been going to this same church for a few years, the Pastor's wife noticed me not being outwardly respectful to my husband and just commented sweetly to me how I needed to respect and allow him to lead. No one likes correction and many times we want to retaliate, not own it but just make excuses.

But the truth was I didn't like the way it felt to tell him what to do or insist on having things my way. I just was afraid if I didn't speak my mind and control things that I would lose any say in matters. What I didn't realize was that GOD has set up the marriage relationship to model our relationship with HIM. It's totally a win-win situation when we do things HIS way!! Through my submission I position myself to receive blessings from GOD- even if my husband fails to make the best decisions! GOD blesses obedience!

If you find this topic rubs you the wrong way, then please sit back and ask GOD for wisdom and understanding. It's totally understandable that in today's culture many people would have a very hard time with this concept.

Hopefully you will begin to see the heart of this verse as well as other passages the talk about submission. That heart is the wisdom of GOD for all of us to be in submission to one another. Therefore, all GODly husbands are in submission to other GODly leaders some of which could be women. And those in leadership are to be in submission to others as well. For no one is exempt to temptations that can lead to corrupt leadership not only in the home but also in the church. JESUS modeled this concept beautifully by submitting to HIS Heavenly FATHER and in HIS words NEVER doing anything that the FATHER didn't already show HIM!

This is true servant-leadership.

Graced-Based Parenting

Proverbs 22:6 *“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”*

The Bible is full of GOD's grace for many individuals as well as whole nations. I think it's clear that GOD prefers Grace (GOD's Riches At CHRIST's Expense) over discipline. But HE will and does discipline those HE loves to make us better fit for HIS Kingdom and I suspect we'll thank HIM for it someday! Similarly we need to be quick on the side of grace with our children, our spouse, our friends.

When I look back at the years of parenting I have done, I am in awe of the grace that GOD has poured out on me! Not because I needed the grace to deal with my children as much as I needed the grace to deal with all my inadequacies that were revealed as I attempted to guide and teach my precious little ones. Day by day I would see my flaws exposed as one of them would say or do something I had modeled (by accident)!! Like bursting out in anger because I had spilled something on my clean floor! GOD has used my children to refine me and purify me as my desire has deepened to raise them with hearts in love with Him. Many times I have cried out to GOD to help me be the mom my kids needed...I still do, even with my adult children. GOD's grace is sufficient for me and has spilled over through me and onto my children. I am forever grateful.

Many times in the Bible we see people piling up rocks as memorials when GOD has done something big in their lives. We have tried to do something similar in our children as they reach milestones. We celebrate and rightly so! Graduations from various levels of school. Completion of various AWANA stages. Adolescent Trips when they were around 13. These trips usually tried to do something very

special with just the child and parents like an outing or overnight. We would focus on sexuality and maturing emotionally through those tween years from GOD's perspective using some pretty good materials from Focus On The Family.

The point in parenting is not to make clones of us but to challenge them to love the LORD their GOD with all their heart, mind, and soul. Because if they get a HOLD of HIM, HE'll work on the little stuff in HIS time whereas we would perhaps only exasperate them and cause rebellion. We've found out that no matter what, we as parents should never, never, never, never, never, never, let the kids see us disagree with each other, for that erodes the power of authority in our home.

As a parent we'll be accountable to GOD, for raising children is serious business in HIS eyes. JESUS warns those that would cause little ones to stumble... Be willing to do what ever it takes to save your family from the enemies infiltration even to the point of relocating, leaving lucrative careers, seeing life coaches when needed, killing pride at all cost, and learning to love unconditionally the precious lives GOD has bestowed upon you. See devo on the D-Word page 93.

We leave you with this acrostic for F.A.M.I.L.Y

Foundation built on THE ROCK. Families that pray together do stay together!
Always Affirm All members are vital and to be honored. Tearing is NOT tolerated
Mentoring by example and by pouring into their lives. No double-standards
I decrease they increase
Listen more than you talk (including parents) That's why 2 ears and 1 mouth!
Yield/compromise/work issues out even though it's like pulling teeth!

Wall Of Conflict

James 1:19 *“My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this - Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry. What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask GOD. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.”*

Conflict means growth - The type of family we grew up in, largely determines how we respond to conflict... many ethnic backgrounds effect how families model conflict. But these factors though huge don't have to affect a person throughout their lives... GOD is able, people are able to change. When my husband and I were dating and had decided we were “meant to be together forever”- I vividly remember an incident that will forever be a defining moment in my life. We were having a disagreement about something, (I have no idea what!), and I responded in the way I had grown up responding to conflict...raising my voice...maybe even yelling! With his gentle demeanor, he came over to me, made eye contact and said, “I can't marry someone who deals with conflict by yelling at me!” I remember being shocked. I had never thought about the fact that there were other ways to manage conflict. My parents had a wonderful marriage- things were always resolved and kisses sealed the resolutions! But my mom did dealt with conflict by raising her voice...and dad would always go out the door and come back later! It was as if I was suddenly made aware that this was dysfunctional and not appropriate!

Of course I was willing to change and learn because I was so in love with my fiance!! So we began to communicate and study each other to learn how to effectively share our opinions and ideas without yelling and leaving! "Practice makes perfect" is actually a very accurate statement. Although neither of us is perfect, we have learned and are still learning how to work through conflict lovingly and patiently so that we grow more intimate with each other. It may seem hard to believe, but it's actually through conflict that relationships grow and if we are always avoiding it, we are not doing ourselves any favors. The resentment and misunderstandings may seem to go away but eventually end up surfacing and erupting in an explosion of emotions.

Gary Smalley talks about this in detail in one of his books on relationships. It was a turning point for us when we began viewing our disagreements as stepping stones for intimacy instead of something that isolated us from one another. This concept is actually true in all relationships. Whether it is a sibling or a coworker or boss, if the relationship is valuable to you then it is worth dealing with the conflict and resolving the issue lovingly and patiently. I am so thankful that my fiance was able to honestly express his fear of a life time of potential 'boxing matches' with me!

Our relationship has grown more and more intimate and beautiful over the years and through each and every conflict that we've dealt with. We are blessed!

Traditions

1st Corinthians 11:2 *"I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the traditions just as I passed them on to you."*

2nd Thessalonians 2:15 *"So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter."*

Traditions often play a part in distinguishing our uniqueness as a family. That's why when we meet new people we ask questions like, "how does your family celebrate Christmas", or birthdays, or other holidays. The traditions themselves don't necessarily have to be associated with any holiday, they could be just things we do when we're on vacation, or when a family member is sick, or when there's a storm, etc.

As a child, I remember every time we had a thunder and lightening storm, my mother would wake us all up, (all six of us and any overnight guests!) She would make us hot cocoa and with pillows and blankets in hand, parade us out into our station wagon until the storm passed! My childhood friend, Mamie, always would marvel that my mom would make a storm so much fun!! But actually, she did this because when she was a child, their family barn and all the animals inside blew up in flames during a lightning storm. So this was her way of making sure everyone was safe. At any rate, whatever the reason, it turned into a family tradition for us!

Looking back, it makes me chuckle! How many families have this tradition??? I doubt that any other family does! But that's what makes it so precious to remember!

Whether you have children or not makes no difference in establishing family traditions. In fact, some of our traditions were well practiced before any of our children came along, and then again, we decided we would “delete” a few when we started having kids! (like eating supper in front of the TV!) As I think back over the years with our family, the traditions that really impress me the most are the ones that no one else would understand without an explanation. For example; every year since we moved to our home in Blue Hill, Maine, on November 11th, we would have a candle light dinner. This is a tradition because we actually moved into our house in August but didn't get electricity until November 11th! Simple, but uniquely a Lord Family tradition! Another one is random picnics at a spot we named “picnic island”. Many times, spur of the moment, we would pack up lunches and kids and go to our spot and have a scavenger hunt. Nothing really special except that we made memories there. Sometimes there was an actual treat to find and other times it was just a matter of what could we find in nature. I think all of our children look fondly back at these occasions and would call them traditions. I could go on and on recalling our traditions because it warms my heart to think about all the wonderful memories having traditions created! Please be intentional in your own lives about establishing traditions. Think about the simple and yet profound ways you can emphasize the things you feel are important in life. Don't look at other families and think that because they do things a certain way that you should model that. I made the mistake of doing that, at times, and then felt guilty that we couldn't seem to make that tradition carry on, (like celebrating Hanukkah). The traditions that make “you” who you are, are the ones that will effortlessly be practiced. But we must be intentional about creating those to begin with. Have fun exploring this concept!!!

Time To Mourn

Ecclesiastes 3:4 *“A time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance.”*

Matthew 5:4 *“GOD blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”*

1st Corinthians 15:55 *“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”*

Death is the last thing to be destroyed in this fallen world but until that future moment it has lost it's grip thanks be to JESUS CHRIST and HIS victory over death and the grave. These are two very real entities that came about with the fall of humanity and the changes that occurred in our physical realm that day in the Garden. Death is never fun and when we lose a loved one we can ache for years to come. Only GOD can fill that void by HIS Spirit. I think one way at looking at the above verse, is to see the stark contrast of both worlds. For we see in this realm those weeping and we see in the spirit realm Believers laughing as they find themselves in the presence of our LORD! Those here mourn and those there dance! I've heard many stories by credible witnesses who have 'graduated' and stepped into the arms of JESUS only to be pulled back to this realm by praying Believers. Theirs was one of dismay and so done with this world that in some case the Believers let them return to that Heavenly realm. You see this world is not our home! We are aliens in this dimension of time and space with a frail tent of flesh and blood. Once we have been enthused with HIS saving Grace our spirits long for our Heavenly bodies. This is what we were created in CHRIST for!

At the moment of salvation we gladly give up our dead spirit for new life in HIM. How is the moment of death any different when finally we give up our corrupt flesh for immortality? Sure while we are here GOD by HIS Spirit gives us strength, wisdom, miracles, anointing, hope, faith, love, discernment, joy, protection, provision, etc. in this physicality. But precious reader if we really believe all the Good News of JESUS CHRIST then our destination ultimately is like diving off the float on a hot summer's day. As we enter into the cool water and allow our flesh to experience the shock of that split second burst of cold leaving behind heat, sweat, and uncomfortableness to bask in the refreshing waters is kindred to when our spirit and soul finally unite with the body that our CREATOR intended for us to have back in the Garden when HE said, "**It is VERY GOOD!**" This is the hope that is within every Believer and is the knowledge within those who have come back from near death experiences to share encounters with The LIGHT of The World! We don't have to fear death for us or a loved one, for GOD has NOT given us a spirit of fear or timidity, BUT a Spirit of POWER of LOVE, and a sound MIND that can know, that we know, that we know, that death or the grave has no sting or victory over US! For those left behind it is a very sad transition akin to someone moving far away. But PRAISE GOD! We will see our precious loved ones again! Let us carry on in the power of HIS Spirit knowing HE is a LOVING GOD and cares deeply about our every needs. So who are we to say, HE doesn't send us holographic emails from our dear departed loved one? There seems to be some Biblical evidence and plenty of collaborative witnesses in recent years to this possibility that our loved ones are aware of our time, space, and goings on here on earth. (See Revelation 6:10). Soul ties can be very strong through the power of LOVE. At any rate our loving FATHER comforts us with HIS peace that passes all human understanding!

Study Your Mate

Ephesians 5:33 *“However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.”*

As you may know the New Testament was originally written mostly in Greek, the business language of that day. Unlike English, the ancient Greeks had four words for love. Our society is so flippant with that word that I can't help but wonder if that wasn't by design of Hellywood and Madison Ave advertisers <grin>. The Greeks understood something we don't today and that is to cherish something so powerful with it's own word. They had storge' which is the affectionate love parents have for children. Then there is Phillia which is affection among friends. Then there is the intimate love called Eros as between spouses. Finally there is Agape which is unconditional love meaning that no matter what you DO or SAY to me, I will still agapao you. Agapao is the verb form of agape. As you might suspect the agape love is practically impossible for humans to do day in and day out. Yet here in this passage we see the Holy Spirit prompting the writer to use agapao, an unconditional love. This is not fully possible in and of ourselves. That is why marriage is GOD ordained hence HE has to be involved not just consummating the relationship on the wedding day but every day. That is why a 'cord of THREE strands' is not easily broken when it comes to applying that concept to marriage. GOD should be and needs to be the third part of any marriage relationship.

Hence, when it comes to being a student of your mate, you don't have to go get a college degree! You just have to do three things to **A.I.M.** yourself into Best Spouse of The Year Award!

1 – **Ask** GOD to help you be the student of your spouse that HE wants you to be. In other words you are asking your CREATOR to make you the best mate possible! And remember that NOTHING is impossible with GOD! So you have the best teacher!

2 – **I**deas will come to mind so take note and write them down! Find out your mate's ideal date, find out their clothing sizes and yes it's ok to write that down too! Find out what their 'bucket list' is and help them to make it happen even if it takes years! Find out what they need weeks before their birthday arrives not hours before!

3 – **M**otion . Put into motion these ideas. So many of us procrastinate or hesitate or ruminate... Your spouse hates the 'ates'!

L.O.V.E

L -Learn their love language - How do they best respond?

Listen to them, don't just hear what they say.

O -Observe their dreams - Be a student of them!

V -Validate them - Honor them, build them up, sacrifice for them!,

Make it clear that they are very precious to you!

E -Enjoy them - When they are near, turn everything off & focus

Be excited to see them and be with them!

Finally, realize that LOVE is a VERB requiring action on our part and this usually means hard work! But it is all in preparation for you to become the bride of CHRIST as you agapao your mate!

Fleece - Seeking GOD's Will

1 Chronicles 25:6-8 *"All these men were under the supervision of their father for the music of the temple of the LORD, with cymbals, lyres and harps, for the ministry at the house of GOD... Along with their relatives—all of them trained and skilled in music for the LORD... Young and old alike, teacher as well as student, cast lots for their duties.*

Judges 6:36-38 *"Gideon said to GOD, 'If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised. look, I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said. And that is what happened."*

Acts 1:26 *"Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles."*

What Gideon did has become known as 'Putting A Fleece Out to GOD'. I realize this is a very controversial topic. For some this has worked and for others it has not. The key in my mind is the fact that IF we have a heart and mind to really hear from GOD, then HE will honor that. If we are skirting our responsibility in doing something we already know that we should do, then HE most likely won't honor a fleece.

GOD speaks in many ways. See other devotion titled 'Listening - Is More Than An Art' on page 53. To say that GOD doesn't honor fleeces like the one Gideon did anymore is in my humble opinion being presumptuous since scripture doesn't say it's wrong. In fact we see the early church after the day of Pentecost drawing straws for who will be the leaders of taking care of orphans and widows. The scripture does say we are to be taught by the Holy Spirit.

Seeking GOD's will doesn't always involve asking Him for a 'fleece', although that is perfectly acceptable. Many times over the years, we have sought GOD for guidance and direction by individually praying and allowing Him to lead us to scriptures, and then coming together and sharing what we found.

Most of the times we have done this as a family, GOD has beautifully orchestrated confirmations in one another's scriptures to clearly give us the answers we were seeking to find. Even the youngest among us was given scripture that was relevant to the situation. GOD is amazing!

There are times, however, that it seems like GOD is silent about His will in specific situations. When this has happened in our lives we have learned that taking steps towards what we believe is His will for our family has either opened doors or closed them. GOD 'tweaks' our path as long as we keep walking and believing and asking. He is a good Shepherd and will not lead us away from His purpose for our lives. We just constantly have to be seeking Him for who He is, rather than for answers to our questions! Sometimes He chooses to answer in tangible ways, and other times He leads us as we walk in faith. Either way, He is always with us.

James 1:5-8 *“If you need wisdom, ask our generous GOD, and He will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. But when you ask Him, be sure that your faith is in GOD alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind. Such people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Their loyalty is divided between GOD and the world, and they are unstable in everything they do.”*

I firmly believe in the above passage and want to point out a few things. This passage is for ANY person not just Believers! GOD will not fault anyone for asking BUT HE places a few conditions: 1-Put ALL your eggs in HIS basket. 2-Do not waver or allow dis-belief to enter the picture about your request for wisdom. We've all met people who say they ask GOD for wisdom then go on ahead and do what their intellect tells them. I take this scripture LITERALLY and allow GOD to speak HIS wisdom. Over the years I have had tremendous success in fully believing GOD to speak through HIS Word and HE does! Sometimes the verse I trust HIM to lead me to doesn't speak specifically to what I need wisdom for. It's at these times I usually realize I already have the answer! This topic alone could fill a book!

Seasons – Savor The Times

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 *“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.”*

I love that GOD created seasons! Whenever I am asked what season is my favorite, I have to pause and consider because I can't seem to make up my mind! Every season has it's own treasures; activities, sights, scents, foods, sounds, and even songs unique to that time of the year. We all know when spring comes the smell of the fresh mud and apple blossoms breathe new life into us! The summer seems to drift lazily, one day into another as the days begin by the water edge with sips of coffee overlooking the lake and end the day outside with campfires and marsh mallows. Then fall comes around with it's own personality briskly getting us back into routines and schedules...but oh my...the smells of burning leaves and pumpkin spice candles and apple cider!!! Last, but of course not least, is the winter...the month of coming together...gathering around the wood stove in cozy afghans and hand knitted woolen socks. As you can see, it's tough to choose a favorite!

I think, GOD has made our lives very similar to the seasons. Some times the world tries to convince us that there's only one season in which our lives have value and all the other seasons are either leading up to that or are evidence that we are “used up” and “worthless”. Thankfully that is not what GOD thinks! HIS Word is clear that as long as we have breath He has a purpose for our lives.

Proverbs 16:31

“Gray hair is a crown of splendor; it is attained by a righteous life.”

Just as the seasons hold their own treasures, each season of our life does as well. Growing up we can't wait to become independent and be an adult. When we reach adulthood we want to return to the safety of being a child! The key is to live in the present and sow and glean all we can from each chapter in our lives. The difficult part is when our “season” comes to an end and we have to transition into the next...not knowing what's ahead makes us vulnerable and unwilling to let go of what we have grown accustomed to. I think one of the most difficult transitions in my life was when my children started leaving the “nest”.

This may seem irrelevant to you because you may not even have children yet, let alone be at the place where they will be leaving home soon. But, hang on, there are lessons to be learned and these can be applied in varied ways! I remember as we were traveling people randomly saying to me, "So...what are you going to do when your children grow up and leave the ministry?" It still makes me recoil as I think back...what kind of question is that? It was as if they got some satisfaction out of causing me pain!! But in the back of my mind, I knew I would experience this sooner than I ever wanted to.

And then the day came...we said good bye to our oldest child as we left on our winter trip. I remember feeling as though someone had sucked all the air from my lungs. I couldn't catch my breath...this could not be happening to my little family!! And with every mile the pain grew greater and greater. I prayed for GOD to give me HIS grace and strength. I read HIS Word. I tried to refocus my thoughts. I kept remembering those warnings in years past, but I knew that there really was no preparing myself for this. It was just plain painful and it was a part of life. There was no escaping it, but GOD was there! It didn't catch HIM by surprise and HE didn't have to prepare in order to be my Strength and my Comfort. HE, ever so gently, impressed upon my heart that this was HIS will...not just for my child, but also for me and for my other children. As difficult as it was, I began to see HIS hand at work as my other children took on new roles. I saw things I had never seen before in each of them. So the time had come for me to deepen my relationships with the next oldest and then the next and so on. I look back on this with such deep emotions even now, that I could cry. I learned so much from this difficult transition and I can now encourage others, not speak dread and despair as people did to me. This change in seasons, although heart breaking, brought with it treasures I never would have discovered had I not listened to the still small voice of the FATHER whisper to me. HE whispered, "Look at this opportunity I have given you...opportunity to invest in and receive from each unique child that I have blessed you with." I now have not just one best friend in my children, but six best friends...each one a blessed treasure in my life. I am forever grateful.

What season in your life do you look to the future with fear and dread? Let this be an encouragement to live with the anticipation of GOD blessing you in it and through it!

Screen Time - Modern Mind Mess

Galatians 5:22-25 *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”*

The term 'screen time' has come to refer to time on devices with a screen (computers, tablets, smart phones, video games, etc) There are a growing number of studies indicating that the average of over 7 hours per day! Some studies are citing 'functional changes in brain regions involving emotional, processing, decision making, cognitive control, etc.'

Our flesh wants to master the media whether it's a computer, game boy, smart phone, etc. But keep in mind that the fact is that once the game/program/app is mastered then there's just another one, another site, another carrot dangling in front of us! Early on when the personal computer started seeing a plethora of software games, I too was caught up. I would play into the wee hours of the morning. I like so many was raised on TV coming home from school watching Gilligan's Island, and other programs. Why do you think it's called TV programming?! I left the TV on all day long as do many others. With two little ones crawling around listening to every word come out of that 'idiot box' <grin>. It was around this time that the LORD convicted us to turn off the TV and disconnect the antennae and only allow into our home edifying content via videos, etc. Also around that time I had a light-bulb moment regarding my PC and late game nights.

I decided to stop chasing the carrot since it wasn't productive for me or my family. Instead, I went to work on them making money building, repairing, programming PC's. I sort of transferred that desire to conquer the technology and cash in! But even now working almost 8 hours a day on a screen and then when I come home... Wow! LORD help us!

Sure, technology has given us tremendous tools to advance the Kingdom of Heaven and Gospel of JESUS CHRIST. Sure, we have the world at our fingertips and can do SO much good! But let us make sure we are focusing on the LORD of the work rather than the work of the LORD.

Lately at times, I have been taking a Sabbath day from listening to podcasts and using my smart-phone. I was even using it in church to read the scriptures and take notes!

We won't know the long term effects of screen time plus various other things permeating our lives like WiFi signals, cell phone signals, RF, and on the list goes of what has been added to the airwaves since the late 50's. One thing we DO know is that **nothing** should control us the way some this stuff does. Self-Control is a fruit of the SPIRIT and as Spirit-Filled Believers let us constantly be asking the LORD these questions: Is this much time spent on 'screen time' pleasing to YOU? Is it good for me? Is it in any way preventing me from hearing YOU more clearly? Those are some tough questions so please take some time and ask the Holy Spirit to lead you in this matter.

Debt

Plastic Surgery - Controlling The Credit Cards

Proverbs 22:7 *“The poor are always ruled over by the rich, so don’t borrow and put yourself under their power.”*

Once upon a time in a land far away there lived an awesome king. He loved his subjects and would give them anything from his kingdom as long as they tended the fields, the animals, the shops, the houses, the gardens, and so on. All were content until one day a stranger came into the kingdom with a horse drawn wagon that contained many trinkets and toys and things the kingdom didn't have. The stranger, whose name was Mort opened up shop and started 'selling' this wares to the subjects. They couldn't use the currency of the kingdom since Mort was from afar and had no use for the kings coins. So instead he had the subjects sign their names to a parchment promising to pay using the Mort's currency when he returned on his next trip through their kingdom. The subjects went wild buying this and that for they all of a sudden saw that they had 'need' of so many things! The king got word of this news and was in outrage for he knew that no good would come of it. He sent messengers to try and stop the people from signing the parchment. But alas, not many paid heed to the king.

Soon Mort left and all would think life would settle back to normal. But life did not, because those who had not made purchases from the stranger saw what their neighbors had and envy set in and even worse people started 'taking' what wasn't theirs! One rainy day Mort returned to the kingdom and he went to those who 'purchased' his items stating that they pay with his currency that he had delivered to them weeks ago. The people in shock informed Mort that no one had brought any foreign currency to exchange for the kings coins! Mort demanded an audience with the king. He requested the king pay in full for his currency called 'interest' had indeed been given to each of the subjects to whom he had 'sold' this wares. Then Mort presented the parchment with signatures of the king's subjects and there in small print they had indeed agreed to pay in 'interest' the currency of Mort. The king was outraged at Mort's trickery but alas when faced with the alternative of fighting a war with Mort's army,

he relented and paid all that his subjects owed by giving Mort valuable land. The subjects were so heart broken that Mort's 'interest' had taken something precious of their kingdom. The End.

The moral to the story is, **“Debt Is For Dummies”**. JESUS talked a lot about money warning us to never make a vow on debt. In the Old Testament, GOD forbid charging fellow Israelite interest! Throughout time many such 'strangers' would trick people and even create situations that forced people into 'paying' for goods and services. There is compelling evidence that the same financial group in Europe loaned money to nations on both sides of the world wars! Hmm. Not much has changed except these tricks have taken on different terms promoted by glamorous media-puppets. GOD would not have it be this way. I would suggest to you that our world system is designed to put individuals, families, corporations, and nations into debt because they all know that the borrower is a slave to the lender. It's a hard life to live trying to stay out of debt. But if one truly believes GOD will provide for all their needs then why are we so quick to turn to debt? When we chose to trust in GOD to provide for our needs, then the rewards are great because we'll become people of faith. We chose debt and many times it seems we are forced to get in debt. But as we let GOD lead and get HIM to confirm any debt situation we will at least have HIM on our side. Over the years we have seen first hand that credit cards can bring one into bondage and ruin things. We have often 'thought' that we'll put this on the 'card' and next week we'll have the cash to pay it off. But next week comes and a crisis more greater demands the cash! I've seen this over and over again. Even praying against the enemy from messing with our finances still has shown that at least for us plastic is spastic at best. I know most of us have mortgages for our homes and most Christian counselors say this kind of debt is ok.

This is something couples need to seriously seek the LORD about. Cause after all, the word Mort means 'death' and mortgage means 'death over time'. My prayer is that your life will have a happy ending. Please know that the number one marriage menace is finances. Have a 'tactic' for the plastic and kill 'Mort' before he ages!

Pew Warmers

Hebrews 10:23-25 *“Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”*

Over the years we have seen far too many pew warmers! By this we mean people who sit, soak, and sour. Some don't even take their Bible home! They would leave them in church in their pew alongside their shawl! LORD help us to sit, soak and soar! There is a time to sit and soak but that should be months not years as we heal from various life's issues. The whole purpose of 'gathering together' is to edify the body and recharge one another, then head back to the front lines! So please be active in church and if you can't then find a church where you can serve because it trains your family to be givers not just takers! This age has too many takers and few givers...

The book “Parenting in the Pew” gave us some new insight and ideas about how we wanted our children to participate in church. It mostly suggested ways to help children listen to the message and get involved with what was being talked about. But when we read this I remember thinking...why are we making the kids participate in messages that are not applicable to their lives...and haven't we, as parents, got the skills to feed ourselves with the Word-so wouldn't our time and efforts be better spent by investing in teaching our kids to love His Word and learn how to study it?! Before this I had always felt that if my kids couldn't sit through a service and be quiet and cooperative than I was a failure and everybody was “judging” my parenting skills.

Now my views suddenly changed...anyone can discipline their kid to sit (with enough correction)...but is that my desire for them??? -just that they sit through church quietly and get a reward afterward? This was the point when Dad and I decided that “if we can’t beat them-to join them”- and we are so glad we did!!! We started doing Children’s Church...something that our church had never done because everyone felt it was important for kids to participate in the main service with parents. We strongly felt that the children should participate with their parents as well...which is why we decided to create a “church service” that our children could actually participate with us in! We invited other children as well, of course. But our personal goal was achieved in the process and hopefully many other children were mentored and loved on by us through the dozen-plus years we’ve continued working with kids in children’s church.

All this to say...think outside the box! GOD has given you the responsibility to raise your children to love Him and serve Him first and foremost. Times change and what works in one generation may not for the next. But-the focus needs to stay the same-and whatever it takes to teach our kids these things, no matter how radical, we must be willing to take the steps to make it happen! Don’t wait for someone else to do it...it’ll be too late. I believe that as a result of creating “children’s church”, we have a family that is presently (even this very day) still passionate to serve and loves GOD with all their hearts!!!! Praise GOD!!!

Pet Phrases

Job 32:11 *"Behold, I waited for your words, I listened for your wise sayings, while you searched out what to say."*

Proverbs 24:23 *"These also are sayings of the wise."*

Pet phrases are sayings your family comes up with. These are proverbs that YOU own and use often. They honor everyone and create a sense of belonging to something greater. These cliches' are like re-bar in concrete which makes the foundation of your family so much stronger.

Perhaps the biggest pet phrase of all time is **'GOD rules and flesh drools'**. I think we came up with this for children's church to try explain our flesh nature. We've used it over the years and have share it in many churches. It clearly points out that each one of us have a choice to let our flesh rule or not. When this happens then GOD 'drool's wishing HE could be on the throne of our lives. So by asking the child or adult we simply ask, "Who's ruling? Flesh or GOD?"

This one was born out of a family meeting where we wanted the kids to come up with some rules. This one climbed to number one! It's simply one word, that a child could prompt another sibling or a parent could yell down the hall. It was, **"Edify!"** Just about every rule could be boiled down into that one word!

We sang this song to help our children in cleaning up after themselves. At young ages kids love to make a mess exploring, etc. When it comes time to clean up, they can be overwhelmed by it all.

So we'd start singing this song as we'd help them put things away... .
“Clean Up, Clean Up, Everybody everywhere! Clean Up, Clean Up! Everybody do your share!” Then as they got older we prompt them to clean up and start singing the song for them but we'd let them clean up all by themselves.

Putting a tribe of children to bed can be quite an ordeal so to help bring closure and affirm our precious ones, we wrote this little **Nite-Nite Song**... “Jasmine, I love you. I love and I bless you. May JESUS be with you all through the night. Josiah, I love you...” On through the order of each sibling we'd all sing it with Mom and I sitting in the hallway. Almost always Josiah would want to have the last word and would yell out, **“Love you all!”** Even as a teenager with a room downstairs, he'd still yell out just before descending the stairs!

Here's a "motto" that Mary Ann often recited to Jasmine when she was a toddler...**“Cleaning and scrubbing can wait til tomorrow** for babies grow up we've learned to our sorrow. So quiet down cobwebs, dust go to sleep! I'm rocking my baby and babies don't keep!”

Over the years the kids came up with words that just struck a chord with our family. Kerisa coined these two gems that seem to describe things better, **'Hopper Grass'** instead of grasshopper or **'Flutter By'** instead of butterfly! These are precious family "sayings" that are unique to our family and perhaps will be carried on by children and grandchildren in the future and maybe a few more will be added as well!.

Listening – More Than An Art

2 Timothy 3:16-17 *“All Scripture is breathed out by GOD and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of GOD may be complete, equipped for every good work.”*

Hearing is not listening. Listening is hearing taken up a few notches for it is reading between the lines... How many times have we been talking to someone and all of a sudden we make eye contact with them and see that they are looking at their watch or cellphone or someplace else! This communicates hearing but not listening to most people. Or in other words as our moms used to say, 'It goes in one ear and out the other!' Now I know many of you ladies can multi-task but for the sake of those talking who might not be, please humor them and ENGAGE! There is much one can learn from the non-verbals that can help with the art of listening. One common non-verbal is when the child speaks to the dad and he has his nose buried in the newspaper or laptop! Another one is when the parent speaks to the immature child and they have their fingers in their ears! I've seen adults do this one including me! There are many non-verbals like arms crossed, not making eye contact, slouching, etc. One of the greatest non-verbals used on the highway is half the peace sign. Although this is mostly accompanied by honking the horn!

When it comes to the Bible we can find many examples of how GOD spoke and how well people listened. GOD speaks in many ways to various individuals.

Sometimes He speaks in an actual audible voice although some people in the same vicinity might hear thunder instead! GOD speaks through experiences, like with Moses and the burning bush and through dreams as he did with Joseph in the Old and New Testaments! GOD speaks through people, his prophets, and even animals (remember Balaam's donkey?) GOD speaks through The Bible (THY Word is a lamp unto my feet, IE: so I know which way to go!) GOD speaks through opening and shutting of doors (parting the Red Sea and in Acts where the Spirit is preventing Paul and company from going to certain cities. GOD speaks through the Urim & Thummin that could mysteriously display whole sentences! GOD speaks through fleeces, through choosing of lots/straws. GOD speaks in the 'quiet of the wind' as in a still small voice. GOD speaks through HIS SON!

Does GOD speak today? I firmly believe the answer is a resounding YES! Because GOD is the same today, yesterday, and forever! If we but learn to listen!

S.P.E.A.K.S.

Scripture - HIS WORD is to be a lamp unto our feet!

People – Friends, Family, Enemies, Angels

Experiences – Dreams, visions, situations

Audible Voice – Like a friend on the phone

Knobs – Doors opening or closing

Spirit – Holy Spirit teach us in all ways, still small voice in us

Study how GOD did speak to various Bible Characters and ask HIM to reveal HOW HE wants to speak to you.

Foundations

Matthew 7:24-25 *"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand."*

Luke 6:48-49 *"They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete."*

Foundations - Every relationship is built on trust. Just like every building has to have a firm foundation or it won't last long, our relationship with GOD has to be built on a foundation of faith.

Mary Ann's family has a camp on a lake and sitting just offshore is a big rock. One year I got the idea to build a ramp way onto the rock so then we could go from the rock to a float with another ramp way. I asked some masons who worked with cement all the time about how to do this. They told me to drill down into the granite rock with a mason bit and then pound a bolt into the rock leaving about half a foot sticking out. Then I was instructed to build a rectangular-shaped box that would cover the top of the rock. I put a large plastic bag into the box and poked holes to allow the bolts to go through and to keep the cement from oozing out and falling into the water.

I was then told to mix up strong cement- there are many types of cement and they gave me instructions to use sand, gravel, and pieces of metal to lay into the cement as I poured in various layers. I happened to find an old bed spring and cut that up and laid parts of it throughout the mixture. The final task as the cement was drying/curing was to insert huge eye-bolts spaced just so, to allow us to bolt down our ramps. Days later I removed the box and pulled off the plastic bag. What I saw was beautiful! One honking piece of cement that had now fused with this big ole granite rock! We connected a huge float and two ramps to this rock. It held the float, boats, and canoes through many a storm over the years.

One thing about cement is that it needs time to cure or hardened so it is strong and it can't be used until this curing season is over. The same with a steel frame on a vehicle, for it too needs time to cure before it can obtain full strength. Our lives have seasons of these curing times where GOD turns up the heat and makes us malleable. During this time the junk in our lives can quickly surface and some of it is ugly! Let HIM scoop it off so HE can see HIS reflection! Then give time to cure and heal. Finally come back and allow HIM to build something more substantial, more beautiful on your life! Sadly, some run off because the crucible is too hard to endure. Or they are too quick to jump into something before the curing season is complete.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 *"All Scripture is breathed out by GOD and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of GOD may be complete, equipped for every good work."*

Lordship & Priorities

Deuteronomy 6:5 *"Love the LORD your GOD with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength."*

Matthew 22:37 *"Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your GOD with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'"*

Mark 12:30 *"Love the Lord your GOD with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."*

Have you made JESUS, LORD over every area of your life? I can remember so long ago but it's still so very clear in my memory the day Mary Ann and I made JESUS Lord over our lives. We'd been married a few years and we were living at the camp on Toddy Pond. I was struggling with my sleep life and getting 'beat up' and scared out of my wits. We were praying together, reading the Bible, staying in fellowship but there was still something missing. One day it dawned on us that JESUS wasn't LORD over every area of our lives, so how can every area be **"FATHER Filtered"**? HE was our Savior and so we had that assurance also known as 'insurance policy' that if we died we'd be with HIM. But I, at least, wasn't living in victory especially when it came to my dream life. Looking back I see a direct connection with a college course that I had taken on relaxation as part of my degree. At times I felt weird about some of the things the instructor was saying but I wasn't mature enough in my walk with the LORD to be able to identify the 'new age' teaching. During the class I learned to not just relax but fall asleep very quickly and do other things. I was ignorant of scriptures that warned against this and soon my sleep life was being plagued by other entities. But that day at the camp we knelt on the bed and prayed one of the most powerful yet simple prayers that changed everything. We asked JESUS to be LORD over every area of our lives including our marriage, sleep, work, finances and on we went listing areas that we knew we'd held back til that day of honest soul searching. My nights were peaceful from that moment on and some of the things

I learned to do in that relaxation class stopped. Not that now and then something doesn't happen at night but now I know how to deal with it! Praise the LORD!

Early on in our relationship even before we were married I knew GOD had to be first, number one, numero uno! I knew that if HE stayed first in my life then my marriage could succeed where so many around me had failed. I knew if HE was number one that I would be loving and able to be the best husband to my soon to be bride! I knew that with HIM numero uno I could be the best dad to any possible children. I didn't know we'd have so many! I knew that my career and/or ministry would also be blessed with HIM in the best place of my life.

1. GOD first
2. Spouse next
3. Family
4. Career/Ministry

Priorities can change according to our particular stages in life. When we enter adulthood it seems like the biggest priority, next to our relationship with GOD, is survival!! So we enter the “crazy race to success”...financial, educational, career success, and whatever else seems admirable and important to those around us. As a single person, I remember wanting to “impress” those who had gone before me (parents, siblings, pastor, teachers), with all my innovative ideas, skills and talents. I wanted to make them proud of me and to gain their respect. There's nothing wrong with the motivation to succeed, as long as it doesn't take **GOD** off the throne in your life and place **Goals** there instead.

Prayers That Are Hindered

1st Peter 3:7 *“Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.”*

I remember our first year of marriage Mary Ann's sister saying something that irked me to no end... “Because husbands are the priest of the home, when their umbrellas have holes the whole family gets wet.” Looking back I now see the reason it so rubbed me was that the LORD was trying to convict me to get to the place where I needed to be as spiritual head of my home. This didn't happen for a few more years until I read the above passage and the Holy Spirit hit me between the eyes of my heart! I could clearly see that junk was hitting our family, but there was a disconnect as to why. We had car breakdowns, conflicts, colds, cash problems, church issues, cops pulling us over, career issues, and a whole lot more! If this sounds familiar then please take heed to the words of a rough around the edges fisherman named Peter. I'm sure he had muscles on top of muscles from being raised on the Sea of Galilee following in his father's footsteps. Peter seemed to learn the hard way like most guys. So I can identify with Pete!

I've learned over the years to 'keep clean slates' before the LORD or as my grandmother used to say, 'keep your accounts short'. This was an old fashioned term that probably spawned from the local grocer giving people credit and the admonition was to keep your debt low. But it later took on an additional spiritual meaning to be quick to seek forgiveness for wrongs done against the LORD as well as other people.

Now if the above passage rubs you women in the wrong way, please know that it's not meant to be derogatory. In fact many passages in the New Testament were outright radical in favor of women and their rights as Christians including this one!

It was unheard of to say things like 'husbands be considerate of your wife' and 'treat them with respect as heirs with you'! This was revolutionary putting females on the same par with men in reference to being heirs! So please know ladies this is a great passage and is pregnant with meaning if you but meditate days on this asking Holy Spirit to teach you all that GOD has for you to receive regarding this passage.

Suffice it to say, for HIS reasons, GOD has wired men differently than women for the most part. I get that today we see many males who look and act more feminine and perhaps there are modern reasons for this. But typically men have less feelings associated with their logical decisions and so perhaps this is one reason for the above statement. It's often said, "We'd have less wars if the women controlled the armies." At any rate, guys the buck stops with us when it comes to being spiritual heads of our home. And if we aren't, then our prayers are being hindered for us, for our spouse, and for our children. I know this is true, because I've learned the hard way... many times. That word 'considerate' in the original Greek is 'gnosis' and is where we get our word knowledge and can also mean science or understanding ways. I think it's safe to say what is being communicated here is that we as husbands need to be students of our wives because as males we tend to lack in this area. When we mess up here, for whatever reason, our prayers are hindered. I suggest that prayers are hindered because we have allowed the enemy a foothold and this prevents, or at best slows down, GOD's help from arriving. What have we got to lose but our pride? We fix our umbrella and we have a happy woman because we are being 'considerate' of her and her needs!

I suspect many spouses bring to the marriage much baggage that can hinder GOD from doing all that HE wants to do. We live in a society that has so messed with our minds, wills, emotions and in many cases even our bodies. Good counselors can **help**, but only GOD can **heal**. So prayerfully contemplate this devo asking HIM to speak and reveal.

Seek YE First

Matthew 6:25-34 *"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how GOD clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."*

We've found over and over again that what ever need we have, if we really want to receive from the LORD! Then we need to practice giving something away! I know this sounds totally opposite from the world system of doing things. But GOD does say that HIS ways are not ours. By first taking time to seek HIM each morning and evening before sleep we are setting ourselves up for success! This principle of giving when you need is called 'sowing'. For example, if we need more time to work on something then give some time to someone in need. If we need some finances, then give to someone in need. Yes, you can't explain it logically... it's the GOD factor of seeking HIM first. I clearly remember that when I had my own computer business I got to the point that I was so busy that I started working on Sundays.

Now I know that Saturday is the Biblical Sabbath and that many Believers take their day of rest then. Likewise many Believers take Sunday as their day of rest but our family knows first hand that Sundays were seldom a day of rest! We got up early and got six children ready for church usually finding a spill or poopy diaper at the last minute. This became such an issue almost every Sunday that we started praying hard against it and voila it mostly stopped! Then the time at church can be so stressful for families keeping track of the kids, getting them off to class, retrieving them for church, then trying to keep them quiet during the main service, sometimes you'd go to the altar just to have a moment of quiet! Then after church, rushing home for a meal, then naps, then a short play time before heading into church for the evening service to do it all over again! Did I mentioned we had about a twenty minute drive each way?!! If we had to do it all over again, what would we change? I don't think we would, because the children saw that this was important to us. They saw us worshiping! We would hold the little ones as they stood on the edge of a chair and let them worship with us. We would let them take toys into the sanctuary and convert the back row into a play area. Yes at times we have to remove defiant loud ones to a place where correction could be learned. As the children became more active (Translated noisy) we decided to start a childrens church so we could be with our kids and teach them how to love the LORD. So we spent twelve years before ministry seeking first the LORD as a family every Sunday, and every morning in our living room before school. The children would often wake up to mom and dad on their knees and climb up on daddy's back to quietly wait until we were finished, as we sought Him first in our day.

Scripture Stop Signs

Hebrews 4:12 *“For the word of GOD is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”*

Psalms 18:30 *“As for GOD, his way is perfect; the word of the LORD is flawless. He is a shield for all who take refuge in him.”*

Isaiah 55:8-11 *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”*

Scripture memory has always been something that I have found so challenging and exciting. Many times my kids and I would learn passages together and quiz each other at morning devotions or before bed at night. We encouraged each other by holding one another accountable. To help us in this important endeavor, we would often write our passages out on

index cards and post them in places that would remind us to memorize and meditate on the verses. There were times when I could hardly see my reflection in my bathroom mirror around all the little sticky notes and index cards displayed!! Such a beautiful sight!! We took this seriously as a family because GOD's Word is alive and active-sharper than a double-edged sword and it does not return void. We knew these promises and wanted to be changed, renewed, and transformed by the Word. We wanted our family to go to the Word of GOD for all the answers we needed to live in this world, instead of relying on counselors, teachers or philosophers. The Holy Spirit is our Interpreter and Teacher. Memorizing the Word is more than tucking truths away in our hearts...it is changing our hearts and mind to be more like the heart of GOD- our Creator.

We all start walking with baby steps and so the same can be applied to our learning and reading GOD's WORD. I remember starting with one or two verses a day then adding more and more as the days went on. Today not only do we have many versions of the Bible that can fit on our smart phones but we have tools like dictionaries, commentaries, etc. We can even see the words in their original language!

There have been many studies done on how classical music affects babies in the womb. We encourage playing GOD's Word at night when the kids are drifting off to sleep. (Of course don't choose the blood and gore passages!)

Praise!

Psalms 117:1-2 *“Praise the LORD, all you nations; extol him, all you peoples. For great is his love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD.”*

Today while working on this book, Bethany is out in the den singing and writing a new song. It's a song of passion and powerful praise to her CREATOR. I suspect this highly pleases GOD. Then I had a light-bulb moment as I realized... Praise is a key to Kingdom living! At first glance this should go without saying. But think about it. In looking back over the years I see how our family has used original Praise Songs to stir up the power of the Holy Spirit within each Believer. The act of taking HIS Word and how it relates in our lives at a particular moment in time by crafting it into poetry that is put to music is perhaps the ultimate act of worship! The ancient Hebrew word for praise means hymn, a heart-felt desire to worship HIM in song! And of course the word Psalms means PRAISE!

Our son, Josiah at age 10 wrote the following praise song based on the above passage...

All you nations praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!

All you people praise HIM!

The LORD loves us very much and His truth is everlasting.

Praise the LORD!

Heaven belongs to GOD, but HE gave the earth to man.

We will praise the LORD, now and forever, Praise HIM!

One person alive with the power of GOD indwelling them can truly worship HIM in spirit and in truth as JESUS told the 'woman at the well' so long ago. Conversely, one who is dead can't worship as Psalms 115:17 bluntly puts it!

“The dead do not praise the LORD!”

I strongly urge all who want to experience their LORD on a whole new level to learn to play an instrument. After a few guitar lessons from a friend I was playing four chords forcing myself to endure the pain of pads growing on my fingertips. All this so I could worship the LORD with songs that made me come alive! All our children have learned to play chords on the piano, guitar, drums and can praise the LORD with a song in their heart, head, and hands! Or simply raise your voice to the Creator of music and make a joyful noise to the Lord!!!

GOD inhabits the praises of HIS people. Some scholars argue that that passage doesn't really say that. OK, then how about this passage in Matthew 18:20 where JESUS says, “Whenever two or three of you come together in my name, I am there with you.” Since praise is lifting up HIS name then I think we can safely say GOD inhabits the praises of HIS people! Plus, HIS Holy Spirit is present in each Believer! So praise is powerful and tears down strongholds. It was the praise team that led the warriors around Jericho! People who have come out of the occult have witnessed that Christian concerts clear the atmosphere for days hindering the plans of the enemy! So praise ON!

Devastation

Matthew 5:44-45 *"But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."*

Devastating times will come, that is a sad fact of a fallen earth who groans for it's redemption. We have said for years trials can make us either **better or bitter**. I clearly remember ole Pastor Gene in Avon Park saying, "You can't have a testimony without a test!" So devastation can make us stronger and mature us even though they are painful. Many people all over the earth this very hour are suffering not just for their faith but because evil is rampant. Thank GOD we don't walk alone.

"GOD never quits on you, don't quit on GOD." Ed Cole

Sometimes we make decisions that will be disastrous even taking years to get behind us. The most common is readily available credit that puts us into debt for years. (Please see devo page 47) That's one area I have struggled in and so hope and pray my children do better than I. The other kind of devastation is brought about by others either natural or man-made disasters which can rock one's world quite literally. If we are in the end-times then we know from scripture that these will be tenuous, tumultuous times. In my opinion one should be planning simply because it's a wise thing to do especially for those of us living in the cold northeast! But additionally look at those in the Bible, Noah prepared, Joshua prepared, Abraham prepared, Joseph prepared, Moses prepared, etc.

Therefore we have several plans in place simply because we live in Maine and the facts of this fallen world show that bad things do happen to good people in spite of prayer coverage, as the passage above says it rains on everyone. Plan A is a knapsack filled with what you'd need for 72 hours (3 days) as that is the average time it takes for rescue workers to help people in disasters. This plan includes having supplies in all vehicles. Most importantly all family members know where to meet in case of a disaster which include a 2nd meeting place should the first no longer be an option. Plan B is someplace where you can congregate with other like-minded folks to form a community that can protect and provide. Plan C is a place to relocate to should Plan B become compromised.

The knapsack commonly called a 'Go Bag' contains a small water filter, first aid, any prescription meds, feminine products, animal food, toilet paper, food, lighters, candles, compass, knife, rope, flashlights, map, cash, protection, Bible, etc.

Here are five F's to give you some food for thought so you can score an 'A' if/when devastation hits:

1. Faith - Vibrant relationship with CREATOR so you can Hear clearly
2. Finances – Cash at your fingertips, stuff to barter
3. Food - Water filtering, Food stocks, Knowledge on preserving food
4. Fire Power - Not just lighters to cook, but a way to protect and shelter
5. Family – There is power in numbers of like-minded people.

Dreaming

Genesis 37:19 *"Here comes the dreamer!" they said.*

The above passage uses two original Hebrew words translated should be 'master dreamer'. This verse is in the context of Joseph coming to 'check up' on his brothers. You all know the story. The brothers sell 'Little Joe' off to Egypt. This fulfills GOD's plans to raise up a nation within perhaps the greatest nation at that time granting them mighty favor for at least their first generation.

There are many wonderful life lessons to be learned from the life of Joseph, but perhaps one of the top ones is this: No matter where we find ourselves, we can remain unpolluted by our culture as well as find mighty favor with GOD, even if family turns against us, or even as a slave, or alas even in prison. GOD is there for the dreamers who dare to believe in the dreams HE has given them!

I should be clear about something. The dreams Joseph had were GOD given. Like Gideon of old, we can make sure that we know we've heard from GOD regarding any dream or vision or idea. (See devo page 41). So I'm not really talking about 'dreams' in the sense of what we do sometimes when we sleep. Although the Bible gives several examples of GOD giving direction and ideas during ones sleep. So please know there is a difference between our dreams/desires and those of our CREATOR. Everyone has dreams, even the kind that desire to do big things. But the first step in moving forward with any vision is to vet if it's from GOD and if it's from us!

I so vividly recall the years before we stepped into full-time ministry aching to be doing something for HIM with our family! I remember reading the little book that packed a big punch about 'The Prayer of Jabez'. I started praying it daily and even made place mats with it so that at meal times we'd be reminded. GOD did expand our borders didn't he as we ventured out of Maine into thirty-five states! And from our little church into hundreds of churches to reach thousands of

people sharing and singing about HIM!

GOD vetted our dream of being 'singing evangelists' many times through many people over the years leading up to our stepping out in faith on November 11th, 2001. But before I would leave my job and put my family at risk with no known income or insurances, I wanted to know that I knew HE was leading us to do so. In August during my quiet time, GOD led me to Psalms 20 where I read about HIM providing for us out of Zion and sending help through HIS sanctuary, protecting us, and giving us the desire of our hearts! Two months later during Mary Ann's quiet time GOD led her to this same passage in answer to her prayer concerns about supporting ourselves in full-time ministry. She was so excited that she ran down into my office to show me the answer that GOD had clearly given her to provide for us out of Zion. Instantly my mind remembered that passage and I opened my Bible and showed her the date and at that moment the Spirit of GOD confirmed in our spirits that if we would take step of faith then HE would provide and guide just like HE did for Gideon, for Joseph, for so many who have gone before us!

I leave you with seven steps from Peter's walking on the water found in Matthew 14:22-33

1. The idea/vision/dream will be birth in you. See JESUS doing it! Verse 27
2. Ask LORD for confirmation. Never contradict HIS Word. Verse 28
3. Wait for confirmation and signal to GO! Verse 29a
4. Step out of your comfort zone. Only then will miracles occur! Verse 29b
5. Keep your eyes on JESUS. Verse 29c
6. When you sink humbly cry out, refocus, and finish it! Verse 30a
7. Worship HIM for HE did it through YOU! Verse 33

Then in time look for HIM to challenge you to modulate!

Enemy Is ME

Matthew 26:41 *"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."*

The enemy is real and it's me! For the longest time I didn't understand sin nature and our fallen world. I thought humans were inherently good with a few bad apples who might have turned out better had they more education, secure environment, etc. I'm now pretty convinced that it isn't the uneducated who top the charts of evil deeds in human history, it's the well educated and wealthy. If one doesn't understand the Old Testament then one can't understand the New. Chuck Missler says, "The New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed; the Old Testament is in the New Testament revealed." Something HUGE happened in the Garden of Eden. I'm convinced it altered this physical universe as well as time itself. The disobedience of our original parents brought about death, disease, and a curse upon this physical cosmos. Some skeptics don't think GOD would allow one couple to so mess up billions of lives including with the animal kingdom. What they don't consider is that GOD can not change and is the same then and today. They don't consider or even know all the game rules/protocols in this cosmic chess match that has been going on since the beginning when the fallen one 'satan' allowed pride to take root and he deceived the first lady and her mate. Adam and Eve were given dominion of this physical realm called earth and they tragically blew it. Don't you think IF there was any other way to save humanity GOD would have opted for that route? Why would a loving GOD of the Bible allow his only begotten SON to leave all HIS glory behind, become a man, and suffer the most horrible execution known to man to save humanity?

I as well hadn't considered the chilling facts that humanity could not save him/herself and would live in a fallen state forever had not GOD intervene. One doesn't need to look too far (prisons and politicians) to surmise humanity has a serious problem.

So I think the Bible is clear that we all have a sin nature that has corrupted our very DNA including our soul (mind, will, emotions). And because of this apparent fact, we also have a dead spirit that belongs to the 'GOD of this age'. Just because in some minds it is not OUR fault, doesn't change these facts. The question should be what are we going to do about it? The first step, is allowing The SAVIOR to fix what HE can of this fallen three-part being (body, soul, spirit). This body is a temporary tent, and while we are here through the works and merits of MESSIAH we can live in victory over our flesh that is fallen during this life. I believe that upon our confession of faith in JESUS, The Savior of this kosmos, our dead spirit becomes alive and supernaturally GOD creates in us a clean heart and dwells within us as The Holy Spirit. I believe this event can be verified using science because it's a physical event in time in our spirit. Then as Believers our Soul (mind, will, emotions) must adjust to the new spirit that is now part of our core being. This process of adjusting is what we call 'sanctification'. Part of this process is asking JESUS to be LORD over every area of your life. Because our physical body is still in it's corrupt state, our soul and spirit daily is at war against our flesh. One day, this body will put on immortality and we (body, soul, spirit) will be like CHRIST with a new glorified body for all eternity!

Final Word

Ephesians 5:22-33 *"Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church for we are members of his body. 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband."*

Most of the time this passage gets only partially quoted by the male quickly reminding the female to submit. Ed Cole perhaps said it best, "Manhood and Christ-likeness are synonymous". This phrase by Ben Kinchelow really changed me, "Being a male is a matter of birth. Being a man is a matter of choice." Any male can say 'I do' at the altar but it takes a man to consistently love year in and year out by providing, caring, nurturing, and loving his wife as CHRIST loved the church. In other words to be willing to die for her. I suspect it is easier to take a bullet for one's spouse in the heat of the moment,

but living day in and day out, year after year crucifying himself for her greater good is probably much harder.

I understand that in today's world of marginalizing men and aggrandizing the female portraying her in masculine clothes, hairstyles, etc. Who's really being controlled here? I'm all for equal rights but I find it sad that so many females fall for this societies social engineering of femininity!

At any rate, no matter what side of the fence we find ourselves, we must admit that someone has to have the final word in a kingdom, in a company, and in a family. The apostle Paul makes it clear in this passage who is to lead in the home. We can take it or leave it, but the fact is that it's still there in the Bible and we can argue with Paul in heaven later about whether we agreed or not.

Looking back, I was not being the spiritual leader in my home. In fact our first pastor that really took the time to get to know us said to us, that I wasn't the spiritual leader of my home. My wife promptly told him he was wrong and turned to me and said, "Tell him that he's wrong!" I'm sure he thought... "Bingo!" We laugh about it now but then it wasn't so funny, because we both knew in our hearts it was true. I wasn't spending time in the word and on my knees so how could I be a spiritual leader. In time GOD matured both of us!

GOD knows our hearts and scriptures shows that HE's **NOT** looking for qualified experienced individuals. In fact HE picks inexperienced and unqualified every time HE finds a pure heart seeking HIM. Why? I think it's because HE gets more glory, because we know it wasn't us but it was HIM who made us who we are!

Law VS Love

Romans 13:8, 10 *“Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”*

Galatians 5:14 *“For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ”*

James 2:8 *“If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself,’ you are doing right.”*

Ed Cole said... “Little love, lotta law... lotta love little law”. In other words those who rule like corporate leaders, government officials, church leadership, parents, and even spouses have a choice of how they rule. If one fuels the home with love then they will need little or few laws/rules. If one fuels the home on little love then they need many rules/law. This is a principle of leadership that I have found is true. I have also found that this is so true in leading a ministry as well as a family. Sadly, at times I didn't always do the best that I could. I could get my kids to go the extra mile because I genuinely poured the love on. I remember as a youth working for people and those who treated me with kindness and concern I bent over backwards for, but those who had an attitude about being the boss, I just did what was necessary to get by. In later years while on the road we encountered many types of leaders. We would always try to submit to the leadership, being sensitive to their traditions, and leave the church better than we found it. Some pastors were just jerks and sadly their church mostly reflected that. Thank GOD HE spared us from worse,

for we heard about some really sad stories from other traveling ministries. Many times when we offended someone, we would come back with apologies and a soft voice to turn away wrath.

Promoting an atmosphere of love in your workplace or home or ministry is something we can all do whether or not we are in leadership for love does cover over a multitude of sins. When it comes to our homes, we as parents have ultimate control and this should cause us to be on our knees asking/begging GOD to help us lead these children with HIS unconditional love. We can only exhibit unconditional love if HE abides in us. This agape love as it is called in the original Greek is a supernatural gift by GOD. I don't believe it can be achieved by non-believers even though I've met some pretty wonderful people who don't profess JESUS. The fact still remains that we all react from our fallen state and at some point we'll snap but if GOD's love has a larger grip on our soul, then we will always react HIS way always. I believe this is achievable but only if one is fully sold-out to CHRIST and has matured to the point that no matter what happens to us or our loved ones, we can still love unconditionally the perpetrators as HE so leads. Not that we shouldn't protect our loved ones if we are able. But GOD help us to be fueled by HIS unconditional love in situations like Corrie ten Boom found herself in. Years after the war when she was speaking at a church she met one of the guards who had so abused her in the concentration camp and was able with GOD's help to forgive him and lead him to the LORD! This is the power of unconditional love and this is why I say that ONLY GOD can give it to those who are HIS.

Sleep

Psalms 4:8 “*In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, LORD, make me dwell in safety.*”

Sleep should be peaceful, but sometimes you have to go to war to have peace. When you think about it sleep is a critical component of our lives and takes up about 1/3 give or take of our entire lives! This is huge and so much can happen while we sleep or the lack thereof.

My wife says I have a gift to be able to shut my eyes and snore seconds later! It wasn't always that way. I used to lie awake for hours dreading this or that. In time the LORD showed me various passages that help me realize I should be resting not working when I lie down for sleep. That's not to say, HE doesn't wake me up in the middle of the night to go to war. Or sometimes if I have a problem that I can't solve, I'll solve it in my sleep. I clearly remember doing this years ago when I had my own computer consulting business. I had a client that had a laptop computer. That was when they were very expensive and people couldn't afford them including me. Therefore, I wasn't very familiar with working on them even though they basically had the same parts as the desktop models which I tore apart and rebuilt weekly. The laptop would turn on. The battery was fine, the charger was fine. There was voltage to the on/off button. Yet for some reason it would not fire up. I spent hours working on it looking for the reason, testing parts, and couldn't justify giving the owner a bill if I couldn't fix it. So I prayed and that night while sleeping I had a dream about it. In my dream I was examining the main-board inside the laptop that controls everything. My eyes fell upon a tiny screw wedge in between two solder points on the CPU

chip (central processing unit). The next day when I sat down to work on the laptop, I remembered my dream and turned the laptop over and closely examined the CPU area. Sure enough there wedged between two solder points coming off the CPU was a very tiny screw. Once I removed the screw, the laptop fired up! (I don't recall if I figured out where the screw went or not!)

Over the years GOD has taught me to do spiritual warfare before I go to sleep for myself and my family. It's important to cleanse your home and property if you haven't by praying over windows, doors, and property lines. When we stay in a motel room we pray over it taking authority over the unseen realm. Perhaps some of you have experienced some night fears, sleep paralysis, etc. (See devo on Page 21) As Believers we have been given authority by JESUS who conquered ALL the enemies of our soul. Let's use it. Additionally we can also speak peace to our soul by simply telling our soul to be still.

There are many things that can cause us to be anxious and therefore escape sleep. Speaking out loud in prayer can bring these into the light and allow GOD to pour HIS grace on them. Sometimes we need to make things right with our spouse, friends, etc. Years ago, being in so much debt was a big one for me. But also know this, that sometimes GOD wakes us up to pray and do battle for HIM. Note the time and you'll usually see that it about the same time. Ask HIM to bring to mind what you should be praying. This is where the gift of tongues can be so valuable for the spirit of the living GOD speaks in languages unknown to us but powerful in the other realms.

Date Night

Song of Songs 2:10 *"My beloved spoke and said to me, 'Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, come with me.'"*

Proverbs 5:18 *"May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth."*

This devo is for couples only... <grin> No, just kidding. It's something I wish I knew as a single person. GOD was brilliant when HE set up marriage and the whole, 'It's not good for man to be alone' thing, because with that almost always came a family. And these two institutions that GOD set up (marriage and family) are a template to ingeniously teach us how to relate to HIM on a personal level! GOD needed a family to bring forth MESSIAH and the Old Testament is essentially the story of HIM birthing a nation dedicated to HIM and HIS ways so HE could birth a genetically pure human that could house the divine to redeem mankind! Then this MESSIAH will need a bride, a purified church, that one day will wed the one and only SON. So beautiful and so ingenious. That's our GOD! Just like we need to foster a real relationship with our Redeemer, our future husband. (Guys don't get all squeamish on me... JESUS was/is a man's man!) We have a very real opportunity to prepare ourselves for every Believers future appointment! As a married couple we can every day practice loving and cherishing our spouse!

Early on in our relationship, I knew I was lacking in so many areas on how to treat a woman, so I started praying asking Holy Spirit to teach me how to creatively love my bride. Hey, the Bible says that the Holy Spirit is there to teach us in all ways!

I take that literally for every area of our lives and I mean EVERY area... (Hint, Hint) GOD created us and wired us so HE has unlimited secrets that HE desires to teach us how to honor and cherish our mates meeting their deepest desires. At least that's the GOD that I serve and have found to be very helpful over the last thirty plus years of marriage! One of these intimate areas is outside the bedroom chamber and that is 'Date Night'. It's easy early on in marriage but after the kids start coming, careers get busy, social calendars fill up, etc. it becomes harder and fewer. But rather than beat each other up about this, make the most of the moment. When you do connect with your spouse perhaps on the couch or in the car waiting, put the cell phone away, close the laptop, and visibly give them YOUR attention. Now, ladies I know that some of you can multi-task on a zillion things (one hand on the wheel, the hand clicking on the phone, while correcting the kids, and mentally mulling over the pantry to figure out what to do for dinner, etc.) Honor your mate and shut the gate to all those things, because it screams to HIM that you're not paying attention.

The point is to regularly connect and talk about YOUs. Not just bills, kids, church, honey-do lists, etc. Sure, date nights cost money and at times you should go all out (You did for your wedding didn't you?) Other times you can do a ritzy meal at home or a picnic at a park or just turn off the TV and talk. If you can't think of anything then bring up some wonderful memories! We try to do an overnight at least twice a year (including our anniversary). If you're not a creative person or you didn't have mushy role models for parents, then ask GOD to help you be the best spouse you can be!

Daddy's Story Time

Deuteronomy 4:9 *"Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them."*

Deuteronomy 11:19 *"Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."*

Psalms 34:11 *"Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD."*

Psalms 78:5 *"HE decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach their children."*

I think it's safe to say GOD wants us to teach our children and grandchildren all about HIS ways!

Years ago I was challenged by someone probably a teaching cassette tape or by listening to someone on the radio. I'm not sure where the idea came from but I was determined not to be a Dad that didn't care enough to lead my family at least some of the time into devotions so they could learn about the LORD and HIS ways, worship HIM, and see Mom and I in our relationship with our CREATOR. Hence, "Daddy's Story Time" was born. I was working full-time and my drive time to work was about 45 minutes each way. I remember taking an old cassette player that ran on batteries and

getting a microphone to record on a cassette my devotions for the family. Many times these devotions were spawned out of my own quiet times before I left for work or listening to Bible Teachers on the radio. I'd be driving along holding the microphone with one hand and the little Bible with the other hand! Opps, not wise, heh?

The theme song came from my childhood memory of the tune from the "Howdy Doody Show". I guess that will date me for sure! I soon graduated to a head set with microphone! Now-a-days, we have it made! We have all these hand held devices that not only can record but contain many versions of GOD's word. We can even upload to the internet or live stream a devotion! At night when I would get home I would take the cassette into the house and put it in the living room stereo system for their devotions the next morning. Then I would take the cassette they just listened to that day and add to it the next day on my way to work. It didn't happen every day, but it happen more than not. When I could be home we would try and do it all together as a family. Looking back now, it was hard work and our flesh didn't want to do it, especially on Mondays! But making our flesh drool so GOD can rule helped in so many ways. I believe we are still seeing the fruit of those "Daddy Story Times".

As I recorded on cassette, I would try to interact with the children telling them to go get their Bibles and open up to book, chapter, and verse. I would sometimes pause then say, "Now Josiah, I'm waiting for you to open up your Bible!" Many times they would tell me later that I was spot on! Praise GOD for HIS faithfulness!

Contentment

Philippians 4:10-13 *"I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through HIM (JESUS CHRIST) WHO gives me strength."*

We see here in this passage that Paul has learned the secret of being content... What is it? The answer is there in verse 13! And it's not a WHAT, but a WHO....

With the supernatural help of GOD's Grace that is given to every Believer in the works of HIS only begotten SON, then we can endure anything that life can throw at us as well as the after life! No other path/religion/cult/science can say this and provide quantifiable proof!

There are numerous stories that have filled volumes where Saints suffer at the hands of evil and have endured exponential pain because GOD turns up HIS Grace. It has been said G.R.A.C.E stands for GOD's Riches At CHRIST's Expense. This is true! But I further suggest that GOD's GRACE is a supernatural power that HE can at any moment through the indwelling of HIS Holy Spirit cause pain to decrease because GRACE has increased in an individual.

And if our spirits should leave the tents/bodies then all the more is our victory because in a blink of an eye we are in HIS presence!

Can you say Hallelujah!

Now don't go thinking I've got a handle on this one! For it's hard in our flesh to be content waiting for GOD to move in an area of our lives to bring deliverance or victory. But HIS Grace is sufficient if we will our flesh to be CONTENT! Here's an acrostic to help us...

C.O.N.T.E.N.T

- **CHRIST** - is #1 in my life... I can do all things through HIM who will strengthen me IF i let HIM
- **O**ppportunity to shine, time to set some goals in areas you do have control
- **N**eed something? Give something! This is a kingdom principle.
- **T**ime flies when you're having fun... make it fun! Thank HIM out loud for what you DO have.
- **E**valuate if you need to make any adjustments in your **attitude** which determines **altitude**!
- **N**otice any divine appointments... there is a reason for this season
- **T**ell your flesh to be content. We can will ourselves to be content. Sure it may be miserable but we can tell our flesh to drool and allow GOD to rule!

List some things that GOD has brought to mind on how you can better be CONTENT!

Careers

Colossians 3:23-24 *“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”*

I clearly remember my Senior year of High School getting called into the guidance counselors office. Up to that point I had pretty much thought about going into electronics since I loved to tinker on sound systems, radios, etc. Keep in mind this was the mid-70's. Back then the personal computer was a pipe dream for rich folks. But in the later months of my senior year I was hit with so much pressure to decide what am I going to do with my life. Should I go onto college? (Vocation/Tech schools weren't an option then) Should I head into the work-force? But as what? The more I looked into electronics the more the 'guidance counselor' tried to push me away because back then you needed to be good at math and 'the sciences'. Today you whip out your smart-phone and you have at your fingertips more information than perhaps all the universities combined! A person can learn advanced skills on youtube.com that many spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to get a degree in and invest four to six years of their life! This is HUGE! But back then in rural Maine, the state college was pretty much the only open door so I took it. I quickly changed my major to phys-ed after flunking calculus (I can't even spell it <grin>) I set my sites on becoming a teacher/coach and got a minor in 'Special Education' as they called it back then. By the time I got out of college, I was pretty sure I didn't want to work with brats in the public school system! Plus the pay wasn't enough to afford rent and pay school loans (Wonder who planned that one?) So I went into Recreational Therapy working out-of-state to get more money.

Well, my real reason was to be closer to this beautiful babe from Blue Hill that I later married!

The fact is that in our day and age, most people will change their careers about FIVE times and that is increasing! So don't fret what you will do or what you will become! Sound familiar? JESUS basically said this in Matthew 6:33! (See Devo on Page 61) Now there are free or low-cost aptitude evaluations that you can take online to help steer you into your gifted area, because we all have gifts! GOD has wired each of us with something we can do. I remember after we were married and started having kiddos that I still wasn't sure what I should be doing. I loved computers and was thinking about running a computer business but didn't know if I had the brains to do so. Our church paid for me to take an evaluation to determine what skill-sets I had and if this would be a good direction! It was and I did. I learned skills that would later help us in running a full-time ministry.

Keep in mind, we are meant to control our careers and not let the career control us!

What has GOD called you to? Don't let society pressure you Moms into working outside the home. Years ago Focus On The Family had figured out that for Mom's would have to make X amount of dollars to basically break even. This helped us in allowing a very talented lady with a degree to stay at home. The rest as they say is history!

Birthdays Are Best Days!

Colossians 2:16 *“Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath.”*

The Bible doesn't say much about birthdays except in a negative context. In Genesis we see on Pharaoh's birthday he 'lifted up' the head of the chief baker in the presence of his officials. In Matthew and Mark we're told that Herod's birthday party ended with John The Baptist's head on a platter... Ugh! But clearly we see in the original languages that there were words for 'birthday' in Hebrew and in Greek indicating it was at least part of their culture. In fact, in Hebrew the word birthday could mean 'day of conception' as well! How neat is that? So the passage I chose above pretty much clears up anyone passing judgment on those who want to celebrate a birthday and make it a festival! After all, it's their birth day! We see the angels celebrating on the birth of JESUS! Of course Emmanuel (GOD with man) for the purposes of redeeming fallen humanity is a few notches up there!

We've tried to honor each child with taking a day off for their birthday to focus on them and to do something they would like as a family. It doesn't have to be costly. As finances allow we have come to the opinion that we should try and spend more on their birthday than say Christmas, Valentines, or Easter. But whether lean times or not we have made many wonderful memories! We typically have several parties sometimes the day before or after where one is the child getting together with friends perhaps even for a sleepover.

The other party is family oriented and allows for some more focused and meaningful experiences. The goal is to HONOR this precious person that GOD has brought into our home! And honor we do! The birthday celebrity gets to choose the type of birthday cake, the meal, etc. We have had personalized banners made up with each person's name that wishes them a Happy Birthday. We get them breakfast (one they like <grin>). We play 'Hot N Cold', a game where we previously hide little gifts like candy bars, toothbrushes, etc around the kitchen/living room. Then each person takes turns directing the birthday celebrity to the hidden present by using terms, 'you're cold' to indicate they are heading in the wrong direction. Or 'you're warm' when they are heading in the right direction. When they get within arms reach we yell out 'You're hot!' or 'You're burning up!' Some of the kids have coined phrases like 'your butt naked and freezing!' when they are so far away from the hidden gift!

A few months ago we were trying to think who introduced 'Hot N Cold' to us and we realized it just evolved out of our desire to make BIRTHDAYs the Best days! I believe the idea was from The Holy Spirit whom teaches in all ways. GOD is concerned about families for HE ordained families in the very first book of the Bible. HE is especially concerned about what society is doing to the family unit today. So we should make every effort to counter our culture and stop social engineering by Hollywood (also known as Hellywood) and Disney Co.

Ask GOD for help making Birthdays BestDays for HE is one creative dude!

Arrows With Aim

Psalms 127:3-5 “Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them.”

Someone once said that sending children out into the world is a lot like shooting an arrow... Before releasing the arrow there is the greatest amount of tension. We have found this is true and sometimes this tension appears a few years before they are released which can be

It's normal to have friction when adult children start to spread their wings and get ready to move out of the nest. So the right thing is to address it, bring it into the light, and talk about it **before** 'the release'. If we've done our parenting right we won't chain them down with guilt about leaving or staying. On the contrary this is what we've prepared them for! We can let them know they are always welcome back. In our home we seem to happen upon a system that allows the adult child to keep their rooms until they marry. This proves to them they are still part of this family. Releasing the arrow is not the same each time but hopefully the loading, pulling, and aiming of the arrow is the same as GOD perfects the motion. Similarly there should be no set time as each child is different. So as a child reaches their upper teens we talk about it and lay out some goals.

Some believe GOD would have them go to college or take some courses past graduation. Some have gotten on-the-job training and have become very specialized on their fields. Either way don't chain them down with guilt. We have found so far that each child is ready when they are ready.

Adult children living at home can be quite a strain on the younger children at home. So ground rules need to be put in place. Sure the adult child may now have the freedom to supersede what was against the family rules. But because they are home they MUST honor the rules once again and not cause their younger siblings to stumble. Mary Ann wrote a powerful devotion that ties in with this, see page 43, "Seasons – Savor The Times".

My quiver is full, and I praise the LORD for HIS faithfulness in helping us raise GOD loving adult children! We couldn't have done it alone as HE led us to many 'good' books founded upon The Bible as well as to many mentors along the way. But the key, I firmly believe was our wiliness to keep on our knees to be honed and tweaked by HIM as a warrior tends to HIS bow checking daily for fractures and weak spots.

Take good aim our wonderful arrows and may the next generation leave yet another legacy for HIM!

Giving

Matthew 12:41 *"Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, 'Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.'"*

We don't know her name but she caught the eye of her CREATOR. Not that GOD needs money BUT **that we need to give!** We need to be more CHRIST-like by learning to give of all that we have – our time, talent, treasure, things, and thoughts. We are mere stewards of it all and to think otherwise shows our immaturity as a Believer and lack of knowledge of The WORD. GOD is all about mercy and grace and meets us where we are at. Couples please know it's not his paycheck or her savings account. It is all HIS, **IF** you have made HIM LORD over every area of your lives. (If HE is not LORD see devo on page 57)

The beautiful thing about this passage and giving of our time, talent, treasure, things, and thoughts is that all of these areas of our lives is in direct relation to what we have! Some have a lot, some don't. The pattern found in the Bible and a good place to start our giving is ten percent. Nice and easy to figure out... just move the decimal point! Even before Moses was given the Law, people were tithing (tithe means 10%) like Abraham and Adam. After the law was given people were giving lots more! Some sources say 35%!

Something happens if we keep a tight fist on our treasures, we become focused on me, I, mine, etc. Spiritual strongholds can form and prevent us from being the child that GOD so lovingly desires. That is why the Bible says the 'love of money is the root of all evil'.

Not that money is evil but the lust and love of it corrupts people.

When we hold things loosely recognizing it's all HIS and from HIM and for HIM, we can then be free! Free to bless others and free should the time come when we lose it all! Over the years we have given over and above the tithe. We have seen GOD so richly bless.

In **Malachi 3:10** we see GOD say this: *Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.*

Realize this passage is talking about food not money even though it's used by many to try and convince people to tithe to churches. Granted most people during this time period were farmers and brought their preserves to the storehouse. The purpose of the tithe then was to supply for the needs of the priests who were commanded by GOD not to farm, own land, etc. but to live off what sacrifices and offerings were brought to the temple. The tithe also was put into storehouses for the poor. This seems to be the only passage where GOD says to 'test HIM!' The concept is that GOD wants us to get to a place where we TRUST HIM for our provision and KNOW that HE can provide for all our needs. This principle has not changed but few discover the power of giving!

The New Testament doesn't teach tithing but talks about offerings and so I would safely say that we are not compelled by scripture to tithe. But out of what GOD has done inside our hearts we cheerfully give or tithe or whatever you may want to call it. The concept to tithe to your local church so you can support the place you fellowship is a good principle. But I don't believe we are to be dogmatic about 10%, etc. For I believe we should be giving more than 10% of our time, talent, treasures, things, and thoughts. And not just to a local church but to missions, those in need, etc. **James 1:27** sums it up...

Pure religion and undefiled before GOD and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself

unspotted from the world.

D-Word

Malachi 2:15-16 *“Has not [the LORD] made them one? In flesh and spirit they are HIS. And why one? Because HE was seeking GODly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. 'I hate divorce.' says the LORD GOD of Israel.”*

Matthew 19:7-9 *“ 'Why then', they asked, 'did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?' Jesus replied, 'Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning.' ”*

Looking back over the years I recall some things that just hit me in the head and heart so I knew, that I knew, that I knew it was the right thing to do. And this was one of those concepts... never, never, never, never, never, never, never SAY the d-word ... divorce.

Words can build or break a relationship and tossing the threat of that d-word out there at your mate is diabolically dumb and disastrous. Vow **NOW** to drop this word from your vocabulary and not to use it even in a joke. Because if our minds and mouths are quick to roll out words like that, then in the heat of the moment it will come out doing more damage than a dagger.

We've all seen individuals that have gone through the d- and as adults they still mourn the loss. I've met many that have deep seated issues because of that d-word.

How does one d-proof their marriage? First off, it takes a person willing to please GOD so much they will stay away from things HE hates. Also one MUST realize marriage is GOD's idea. No government or society can change it, even though they try. Only GOD can consecrate and bless the wedding ceremony. Secondly, an individual has to be willing to allow mature Believers AND the LORD to help them pick a mate, because 'flesh can be blind'. This decision is the second-most important life-choice. Because marriage is for life. With GODs help and by submitting to HIM a marriage CAN and WILL last through thick and thin times.

GOD in HIS love shows us a better way and will teach us in all things related to marriage by HIS Spirit! It's not an easy way. It's hard submitting to mentors and spouses by being transparent with them on a regular basis admitting at times that some of us need help in communicating, loving, etc.. It means putting faith in an unseen entity that left us an ancient book and allowing that book to become our foundation for all of life. It means fighting for your mate not with them. It means learning to pray together no matter how embarrassing it might be. It means fasting to break strongholds set up against your marriage. It means learning to fight the enemy with spiritual warfare.

Praise GOD for all HE has done, and is doing to bring about a legacy built upon HIS rock of marriage!

Covenant Eyes

Luke 11:34 JESUS says, “Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are healthy, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are unhealthy, your body also is full of darkness.”

Matthew 5:27-29 JESUS says, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.”

These are some ominous words from the mouth of our CREATOR. I dare say HE knows what HE is talking about. JESUS fully understands better than we the seriousness of allowing our eyes to wander and wonder after foreign flesh. HE alludes to something detrimental going on in the spiritual realm of our heart that can cause severe issues for us and our relationships, the scope of which is beyond this writing. Also realize that JESUS can identify with us for HE was tempted in every way just like us, yet HE did NOT sin (**Hebrews 4:15**). That should encourage us to cry out to HIM for help and victory and mercy!

In the above scripture from Matthew, JESUS directs this passage towards men. That is not by accident for as co-CREATOR HE knows that males are visually stimulated. Ed Cole says, “Being male is a matter of birth, being a man is a matter of choice.” JESUS agrees and indicates that we can choose to overcome this issue but the remedy sometimes requires **amputation!**

I can bring some wisdom to this situation as a man who has had many accountability partners over the years. First off, the word 'lust' JESUS used means 'to covet or long for'. It's not a quick glance, fleeting thought, etc. That's why we use 'The 3 second rule' which can give men victory to act upon and chose to dismiss those fiery arrows coming in. Then re-frame the situation like visualize her as your sister or grandma! Second, it's a fact, that lust when given time can birth porn issues that can lead to physiological addiction. It's a unquenchable cycle as the flesh is never satisfied since strongholds grip your soul. Third, don't fall for the lie, thinking YOU can overcome issues with lust, porn, etc. on your own power. The enemy of your soul knows if you keep things in dark then you can't bring it into the light and therefore expose it to **The LIGHT** which is the key in the above passages. So don't be ashamed to admit to problems. Fourth, the enemy has fooled the church into keeping quiet on these matters. JESUS says bring sin into the light! It's safe to say 100% of males have to deal with this problem. Even women, sadly in our society of mis-genderization are also suffering with porn addictions. Fifth, you must have accountability partners. One tends to overcome when we have to confess failures to friends and spouses. Sixth, killing our flesh is something we have to do on a regular basis like fasting, physical exercise, specific prayers, memorizing power passages from GOD's Word, and finally seventh - STOP watching media that feeds the flesh. VidAngel.com & FreeInDeedNE.org has many resources including coaches. Plus, I'm here to help.

Family Night

Ephesians 6:1-4 *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother’—which is the first commandment with a promise, ‘that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.’ Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”*

In the 80’s there was all this talk about **quality** time with your kids. We were told that when you are with your children make it count by loving on them, engaging them and don’t feel bad if you don’t have a lot of **quantity** time with them, because after all you’re having **quality** time.

Then a decade later the experts were saying, “No, it’s **quantity** time!” They said things like, “Don’t worry about what you do, just be around the child. After all it’s **quantity** time!”

As a Dad who worked outside the home, I pondered this for months, wondering which is it? Notice the difference between the two words... one has an **L** and the other has **NT**? I think these letters hold the truth. From my experience when I focused on **quality** time, I found that I spent **Less time (L)**. Sadly I didn’t feel guilty about it since the experts we’re saying it’s all about **quality**. Years later, when I focused on **quantity** I found that my interaction with the children became very small chunks of time, IE: a few minutes here, a few there, and I was distracted most of the time, not engaging, etc. So this basically amounted to **No Time (NT)**.

I believe GOD showed us that it’s not one **OR** the other, but it’s

BOTH 'quality and quantity' **L+NT** (Love a**Nd** Time)! This was hard for me to adjust to once I came into this realization for I needed my own time! Time to play, time to do projects, time to putter, etc. You know 'man time'! Back then they didn't have 'man caves'... but I did have a little room in the attic. And the only way there was up over the pull-down stairs! Good luck little one climbing up to my tower! In fact I recall I rigged it so I could pull the ladder up! (I know some of you are thinking evil thoughts about me... Ouch! Touche') Over the years as GOD matured me, I found that with each child that HE gave us, that I had to give up **more** of **MY** time!

"Less of me and more of THEE" goes the old hymn...

Yes, **Self** must decrease as a parent and even as a spouse... They (our spouse & children) must increase. Not that we spoil them but we invest in them. We pour into them! This is our first and foremost mission field... our family! Sadly many pastors/people in ministry miss this. I know I did many times. But thank GOD for a spouse with a sense that had her pulse on our family. I believe GOD wired women with this extra-sense. I think Adam probably had this special gift, but GOD tore it out of him when HE created Eve, Whoa-man!

Spend some time seeking the LORD about how HE would have you proceed regarding this topic. And if you're single then start investing in someone else other than yourself to prepare you for your future mate and possible family! Go house sit some kids and give the parents a weekend out! (Disclaimer: The opinions expressed here are not necessarily the views of this publisher and they in no way can be liable should you loose a house full of kids!)

Change Isn't Change Until It's Change

John 3:30 *“HE must increase, but I must decrease.”*

Years ago, shortly after moving to Blue Hill, I was hired on as a carpenter helping wire a house listening to some Ed Cole Cassette tapes over and over again. I was impressed with a man who would fast 40 days to hear from GOD and then start a ministry just for men. The phrase, “Change isn't change, until it's change' came from him. This phrase would haunt me in a good way on so many levels of my life. I'd see where I needed to make adjustments but kept procrastinating therefore, nothing would change! I was sort like the swimmer on a hot summers day slowly inch by inch getting into the water not wanting to get fully wet but just enough to cool down when what we really need to do is take the dive!

Over the years we would keep active in church but more than that we had the desire to fellowship outside of church. We would visit each others houses and sing into the late hours of the night allowing the children to fall asleep in our laps sitting on the floor talking, asking questions, fellow-shippin' as we called it. We would share about the books we were reading, or a radio broadcast that made an impact on us, or some portion of scripture that was inspiring us or troubling us.

The Holy Spirit can put HIS finger on areas of our lives that need to change. The correct question is **NOT**, “What must my spouse change?” **BUT** rather, “What must I change?” Change is easier to embrace when we see practical examples of GODly role models.

Here are some of those resources that made a difference in our lives.

“Revolution in World Missions” KP Yohannan

Rarely has a book so changed my life besides The Bible

“The DNA of Relationships” Gary Smalley

“Parenting Isn’t For Cowards” James Dobson

“How To Raise a Healthy Child in Spite of Your Doctor” Robert Medelsohn

“Heavenly Man” Brother Yun. A powerful modern day book of Acts!

“Maximized Manhood” Edwin Louis Cole

“This Present Darkness” Frank Peretti

“Preparing For Adolescence” James Dobson

“The Strong Willed Child” James Dobson

“Be Anxious For Nothing” Joyce Meyer

There are many missionary stories that we read for devotions as a family that inspired and challenged us, but perhaps the best was Mildred A Martin's **“Missionary Stories With The Miller Family”**

Arnold Ytreeide has written some awesome books for Advent:

Jotham's Journey, Tabitha's Travels,

Bartolomew's Passage, Ishtar's Odyssey,

and Amon's Adventure for Easter

Dinner Time Is Family Time!

Matthew 26:20 *“When it was evening, Jesus sat down at the table with the twelve disciples.”*

We have found that many things in life that are worth doing have to be **CONSISTENTLY FORCED** upon our lives. That is why we encourage you to write down goals you want for your life and your family. Print these out so you can see and be reminded. It is a choice of making dinner time mandatory for family members. We have found over the years this 'Dinner Time' is 'Family Time' and becomes the glue that GOD uses to bind our family together.

The dining table should be conducive for family dialog. Cell phones, hand held devices, etc. should be encouraged to be put away. Parents should steer the conversations allowing each child to 'have the stage'.

Today so many homes don't even have a full table for their whole family to sit around. Sadly so many families have different priorities like sports which they allow to trump family meals on a regular basis and even church time. Families are being ripped apart because of team sports! I can speak with authority on this subject as one who has a degree in Physical Education. We were taught that team sports were to be an outlet of teaching children to exercise which is basically 'play' and done in moderation as with most things in life. The fact is only a very small fraction of youth ever go on to play in the Olympics or professional sports. So why do we allow our children to go down this path? Is it really promoting socialization? Is it really teaching kids to play as a team? Is it really affirming the little child or

the big child in some parents' ego. Parents should control the schedules and not the other way around! So much can be said about how this is so wrong, think about how the enemy has cleverly laid this trap to 'divide and conquer'. Be a leader and set boundaries like only allowing one child per season to participate in outside activities that demand several games a week. Get active and form parent coalitions limiting the number of games and when they can be played. There have been numerous studies done on how excessive season schedules are harmful to children.

Dinner Time should be family time. We made conscious efforts to make this work and I think it was worth it. We've heard from families over the years who regret not having a cohesive time together on a regular basis. Kids in public school are being bombarded with values that contradict your world-view, sometimes more than 8 hours a day if they take a bus or go to daycare after school. Then add the multiple ways society hits them through media! Now add on top of all this team sports along with leisure time with friends! Is it even a wonder we see youth in crisis and the family unit disintegrating? Long gone are the days when a few hours at church could counter society's influence on our children. We have to step in and fight hard for OUR children are OUR responsibility! It's not the schools or the church.

We need a plan and need to work it hard! Being flexible is fine but fighting for your children's lives is our reality. It can be done because "We can do all things through CHRIST who strengthens us!"

We have used this question over the years to help us make decisions for our family...

"Will this really matter in twenty years?"

Mentoring

Matthew 28:19 *“Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”*

I'm told by Greek scholars that the above emphasis in the original language is not on 'GO' but on 'MAKE'. This implies that where ever we find ourselves we are to be about MAKING disciples. LORD help us to do so! Holy Spirit teach us YOUR ways in MAKING disciples. Let us please you Heavenly FATHER in this area. In JESUS Name we ask. Amen!

We all need accountability partners. Our spouses need them. Pastors need them. Children need them. Teenagers need them. We all need them unless we're perfect in every way! But then we should have even more accountability partners because the masses need to learn from our perfect ways <grin>! There should be no lone ranger Christians, but sadly there are.

We should tell our children to hold us accountable and if they see anything we do/say that contradicts the Bible then they have full right to bring it to our attention in love.

Mentors live by example and pour into others the living water that gets poured into them. A mentor should also put their spouse and children up most above mentoring others. This can be a fine line to walk on a daily basis, but is essential in our living by example. Over the years we have seen many in ministry who have neglected their primary mission in life, their family, only to see their older teens reject the LORD and live contrary to all that their parents stand for. We have always said that we would be willing to do ANYTHING to rescue our wayward children.

Looking back we see that the bus and our ministry on the road in many ways at many times became this avenue to 'rescue' our children and keep them from settling into relationships that weren't good. Thank YOU, FATHER.

We have an acrostic on DISCIPLESHIP taken right out of 'The Sermon On The Mount' by JESUS found in Matthew chapter 5.

D **Drive** out demons, disciplined ones,
I **I** am with you always,
S **Speak** with other tongues, snakes picked up, submit/obey all commands
C **Clothed** with power from on high, confidence/believe, commands
I **Into** all the world, baptize in the name of the Father, Son & Holy Spirit
P **Preach** good news, protected, praising GOD, poison not harm
L **Lay** hands on sick and they will be healed, learn/teach all commands
E **Empowered** by Holy Spirit, Believe/faith
S **Sick** get healed, signs & miracles accompany us

Matthew 28:18 “Jesus came and told His disciples, 'I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth.' ”

It was the early 80's and I was sitting in my student adviser's office reading a poster that said something like, 'Be willing to give up what you believe for what you can achieve.' Instantly I was challenged to start praying consistently this prayer. “LORD, I'm willing to give up everything I believe for what I can become in CHRIST JESUS!”

In the last six years I've been challenged to a new prayer, “LORD teach me all that YOU want me to know for these times we find ourselves in so I can lead my family and others.”