

shall not depart from your mouth,
meditate in it day and night,
obey to do according to
it is written in it.
make your way prosperous,
and you will have good success.

NUMBERS 1:8

of the LORD are right,
keeping the heart;
the word of the LORD is pure,
brightening the eyes.

PSALM 19:8

5

Accept God's Grace and Mercy

Many people don't fully receive God's love because they believe He is angry with them. They don't understand His grace and mercy and the extent of His complete forgiveness.

Before I learned how to receive God's love, I didn't think He was angry at me. I thought He didn't care enough about me to even *be* angry. I knew I had done many wrong things I wasn't proud of, and I could never go back and change all of that. I felt distant from God even though I tried everything I could to find a way to somehow connect with Him.

The various occult practices and Eastern religions I went into while searching for God held the promise of getting close to *a* god. At least, that's what I had heard and read, but they never came through. The spiritual realm I was searching in became more and more frightening as time went on. It proved to be anything but comforting. In fact, it was quite the opposite. With each new experiment into this spiritual world, I was left feeling more distant from *a* god than ever and increasingly disappointed, hopeless, and fearful.

It wasn't until I came to know the love of the one true God

through receiving His unfathomable gift—Jesus' sacrifice of Himself—that I began to understand how God not only knew *who I was*, but He also cared about *who I would become*. He loved me and would never leave me to fend for myself as I had always done in the past. I had been searching for the smallest crumbs under God's table, and He had prepared a magnificent feast for me in His royal banquet hall.

Only then did I begin to comprehend God's amazing grace and mercy, and I was overwhelmed by the love of God igniting both.

Understanding God's Grace

Grace is divine assistance that is undeserved, given to us so that we can be restored to right relationship with God. It's a reprieve or exemption from having to pay the price for anything we've done that is not according to God's ways. It's a gift to us because Jesus already paid that price and we have received Him by faith (Romans 3:24).

By the grace of God we are saved from the consequences of choosing our own ways over God's. This is no small matter because it is not something we can do on our own (Ephesians 2:8). And it is not about conjuring up anything with positive thinking. I am not saying that happy, hopeful thoughts accomplish nothing. They are good, but you can only go so far with them. Our good thoughts don't save us from the eternal consequences of our actions. They don't get us into a right and close relationship with God. They don't transform us. They don't bring us into eternity in God's presence. They can't.

We are not saved by doing everything perfectly. We are not capable of doing that anyway, no matter how hard we may try (Galatians 5:4-5). We are saved because *Jesus* did everything perfectly and we have chosen to receive Him by faith.

Grace is never given on the basis of what we've done. It is God's gift of love to us.

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He came to *us*.

To be with *us*.

He still comes to us, an
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God's "throne of grace"
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God's mercy is unmerited
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Instead, He shows mercy to
repentant heart.

God is merciful because
(Psalm 111:4). His mercy is
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God promises us so much
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homable gift—Jesus' sacrifice of Himself—stand how God not only knew *who I would become*. He loved me and died for myself as I had always done in order to get for the smallest crumbs under God's magnificent feast for me in His royal

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Understanding God's Grace

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we are saved from the consequences of our sins. This is no small matter because it is our own (Ephesians 2:8). And it is not accomplished with positive thinking. I am not able to accomplish anything. They are far from them. Our good thoughts have consequences of our actions. They are a relationship with God. They don't lead us into eternity in God's presence.

Everything perfectly. We are not capable of how hard we may try (Galatians 3:3). We did everything perfectly and we are not perfect.

It is God's gift

Imagine that you are locked up in prison and have been sitting on death row for years, waiting to die for a crime you committed. And there are eyewitnesses who saw you and testified against you. But one day someone high up appears to you and says, "If you put your trust in me, I will see you are pardoned so thoroughly that it will be as if it never happened. You will be completely free from all past transgressions forever." How relieved and joyful would you be? How indebted would you feel toward that person?

This is what happens to you when you put your trust in Jesus.

Jesus came because of God's love. Grace means we don't have to work our way to God. We don't have to struggle to be good enough to be with Him.

He came to *us*.

To be with *us*.

He still comes to us, and to anyone who doesn't know Him, in order to draw us all to Himself by His love and grace.

God's "throne of grace" is where we can go in prayer anytime in order to find the help we need (Hebrews 4:16).

Understanding God's Mercy

God's mercy is unmerited favor, an act of divine compassion that does not give punishment that is warranted. In other words, God does not give us what we deserve. He could judge us but He doesn't. Instead, He shows mercy when we come to Him with a humble and repentant heart.

God is merciful because He is "gracious and full of compassion" (Psalm 111:4). His mercy is shown to you because He loves you and has compassion for you. Signs of His mercy are everywhere when you know and love Him. "The earth is full of the goodness of the LORD" (Psalm 33:5).

God promises us so many things in Scripture that assure us of His mercy. For example, He promised that the flood in Noah's time would never happen again. He promised that "the mountains shall

depart and the hills be removed, but *My kindness shall not depart from you*, nor shall My covenant of peace be removed,' says the LORD, who has mercy on you" (Isaiah 54:10).

He promised a rainbow to remind us.

In the same chapter, God spoke that famous promise to those who love and serve Him. "*No weapon formed against you shall prosper*" (Isaiah 54:17). That promise is a sign of God's compassion and mercy.

With so much evidence in the Word that God is merciful toward us, why do so many of us doubt that? Is it because we don't read His Word? Or if we do, we don't believe it? Or do we look at God's Word as just history instead of His love letter to us? Or do we identify more with being guilty than we do with being forgiven? Or do we see the things that are wrong in our life and blame God for them instead of seeking Him for the solution and thanking Him for all that is good? Or when we read God's Word, do we look for His judgment more than His love?

Whatever the reason, we must ask God to help us recognize His mercy shown toward us every day, for that is evidence of His great love for us—His life-changing love.

God's Mercy Is a Sign of His Goodness and Love for Us

God's mercy is a sign of His constant, deep, unfailing love for us. We must "give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His *mercy endures forever*" (Psalm 136:1).

I had a pastor a number of years ago who was not only a great teacher and preacher of the Word, but he also clearly demonstrated the love of God. He was known for that. It was one of his great gifts.

Pastor Tim had been a professional football player and had even won a Super Bowl with his team. He had the Super Bowl ring to prove it. He was a very large man, and I am certain he looked extremely ominous to the opposing team on the field. Let's just say

that no one would want to be tackled by him. He was a quarterback.

When he later became a pastor, he was known for his large teddy bear because of his love to everyone in the church.

I remember a specific time when he spoke of the love and mercy of God. He based his message on the verse, "Surely goodness and mercy will dwell in the house of the LORD, forever and ever." He was demonstrating the way of demonstrating the love of God. And I have never forgotten it.

Pastor Tim demonstrated the love of God to the congregation to stand with him—and follow him where he leads. He wanted us to imagine that he was looking in the rearview and side mirrors for other "Mercy." He told us that we should imagine looking in the "Goodness" of God. He wanted us to imagine the "Goodness" of God on the other following us everywhere. He wanted us to know that they would always be there.

There's that mirror thing. We are seeing our past. Nor are we seeing our past reflected in those mirrors.

Not long ago I was driving in the car that had followed me, making every one of the people concerned, but every time I said, "Thank You, Lord, that You are with me." The car was of the days of my life. The car was probably just a neighbor, but as I turned left onto my street, the car was probably just a neighbor, and mercy gave me great peace.

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 to the quarterback.

When he later became our pastor, we thought of him as a very
 large teddy bear because he consistently and abundantly exuded
 God's love to everyone in a joyful, sweet, and non-judgmental way.

I remember a specific teaching of Pastor Tim's on the goodness
 and mercy of God. He based it on the last verse of Psalm 23 that says,
"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I
will dwell in the house of the LORD forever." Pastor Tim had a great
 way of demonstrating the points of his teaching so we would not
 forget it. And I have never forgotten this one in particular.

Pastor Tim demonstrated that verse by asking two men from
 the congregation to stand just behind him—one on either side of
 him—and follow him wherever he walked as he talked. He asked
 us to imagine that he was driving his car and he could see them in
 the rearview and side mirrors. He named one "Goodness" and the
 other "Mercy." He told us that as we walked through each day, we
 should imagine looking in the rearview mirror of our life and see-
 ing the "Goodness" of God on one side and the "Mercy" of God
 on the other following us everywhere we went. And we could trust
 that they would always be there until we went to be with the Lord.

There's that mirror thing again. Only we are not seeing *ourselves*.
 Nor are we seeing our *past*. We are seeing God's *goodness* and *mercy*
 reflected in those mirrors.

Not long ago I was driving home after dark, and I noticed that
 the car that had followed me out of the parking lot was still behind
 me, making every one of the many turns I did. I began to become
 concerned, but every time I looked in the rearview mirror I said,
 "Thank You, Lord, that Your goodness and mercy will follow me all
 of the days of my life." The car followed me into my neighborhood,
 but as I turned left onto my street, the car turned right. The driver
 was probably just a neighbor, but that mental image of goodness
 and mercy gave me great peace.

God's goodness and mercy are signs of His deep and unfailing love for us that tell us He has our back.

Now every time I'm faced with difficulties, I recall that picture. What a comfort that is. I hope you, too, will imagine a rearview mirror and see God's goodness and mercy following you every day of your life—all because He loves you.

God Shows His Mercy by Forgiving Us

Because of God's grace we are forgiven of everything we have ever done wrong in the past once we receive Jesus. In fact, we are forgiven by God so completely that He does not remember it. "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12). "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more" (Hebrews 8:12). God wants us to forget about our failures too, and stop reliving them, rehashing them, and beating ourselves up over them.

When we forgive someone who has hurt us, we *choose* to let it go but usually don't forget it. We *decide* to not allow the remembrance of the grievance to cause us to be bitter, angry, or unforgiving, but we still remember.

When God forgives us, our sin against Him is completely erased from the records.

David said, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity" (Psalm 32:1-2).

What it means when "the LORD does not impute iniquity" is that our sin is not even put on our record.

Sin is an archery term meaning to miss the mark.

Iniquity is immoral behavior.

Transgression is a violation of God's laws.

Rebellion is the same as witchcraft—which means living in opposition to God's ways (1 Samuel 15:23).

Being released from the consequences of our transgressions and

opposition to God's ways does for us.

However, once we have a transgression against the LORD of that. God asks that we confess our transgression we have done, but He wants us to be truly repentant.

God's mercy means that when we confess our transgression against God and decide not to do it again, He forgives us.

If we do not repent before Him, it puts a burden on our shoulders that we were not designed to carry. But when we confess our sin and release us from the consequences.

The physical, mental, and emotional consequences of confessed sin take a major toll on our lives. Unrepentant sin, said, "I was heavy upon me; my voice was heavy upon me; my vision was dimmed. I acknowledged my sin to you, O LORD, and you were gracious to me. I said, 'I will confess my iniquity to you, O LORD, and you will forgive the iniquity of my sin.' You are the most rebellious and rejecting of all, but you will forgive them if they repent before Him.

God doesn't forgive us because we are sinners. He loves us and is merciful to us.

We all recognize the physical, mental, and emotional ideas, feelings, and attitudes that we have in ourselves all too well in that we are sinners. We do it with us and therefore we do it.

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opposition to God's ways is one of the greatest acts of mercy God
does for us.

However, once we have received Jesus and we *again* commit a
transgression against the Lord, by His mercy He allows us to repent
of that. God asks that we come to Him with a repentant heart and
confess our transgression before Him. He already knows what we
have done, but He wants to hear it from us and see that our heart
is truly repentant.

*God's mercy means that when you confess and repent of any trans-
gression against God and decide to walk away from it and never intend
to do it again, He forgives you.*

If we do not repent before God, we become miserable and it ages
us. It puts a burden on our mind, emotions, and shoulders we were
not designed to carry. But when we confess our sins, He forgives us
and releases us from the consequences of them.

The physical, mental, and emotional consequences of uncon-
fessed sin take a major toll on us. David, who was no stranger
to unrepentant sin, said, "When I kept silent, *my bones grew old*
through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand
was heavy upon me; *my vitality was turned into the drought of sum-
mer. I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hid-
den. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,' and You
forgave the iniquity of my sin*" (Psalm 32:3-5). Even those who are the
most rebellious and rejecting of the Lord's ways are forgiven when
they repent before Him.

*God doesn't forgive us because we deserve it; He forgives us because
He loves us and is merciful toward us.*

We all recognize the places in our heart that harbor thoughts,
ideas, feelings, and attitudes that don't please God. We know our-
selves all too well in that way. And we assume God is not pleased
with us and therefore we don't deserve answers to our prayers.

But we have never *deserved* His blessings. That's what His mercy is all about.

We are forgiven of all past sins by His grace (Ephesians 1:7). After we receive Jesus, we are then forgiven of any subsequent sins because of His mercy.

God could just say, "I've forgiven you of all your past sins, but *that's it*. No more. I'm not doing this again. I expect you to be perfect from now on."

But it seems He knows us all too well.

God has set it up that the only way distance comes between us and Him is if we miss the mark He has for us—which we all do at one time or another—and then do not confess and repent of it. Our unconfessed sin sets consequences in motion, and God, who does not reward bad behavior, waits to bless us until we are sorry enough to turn to Him for forgiveness.

King David confessed and repented of his sinful affair with Bathsheba and the subsequent murder of her husband in order to hide his sin once she became pregnant. But David waited far too long to confess and repent. He had to be confronted about his choices by Nathan, a prophet of God. Once confronted, David went before God and said, "*Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin*" (Psalm 51:1-2).

Even though David finally repented, he had still allowed the consequences of his unconfessed sins to be set in motion, which was the death of his and Bathsheba's child together.

Don't allow disobedience to God's ways to put up a wall between you and Him. Bring it to Him immediately with a repentant heart—meaning you are sorry about it and don't intend to do it again. God waits to answer our prayers until we get our heart right.

Sin has consequences. That is just the way it is. No one gets away

without the consequences of forgiveness in response to our sequences of our errors.

That's mercy.

God's Mercy Is Not Ex

Have you ever been afraid I have. The evil around me c neighborhood into a safer on the Lord to protect you and y you from the path of evil? I h distress I called upon the LOR my voice from His temple, a His ears" (Psalm 18:6).

David said, "The pangs of of ungodliness made me afraid answered, he said of God, "I drew me out of many waters. I from those who hated me, fo confronted me in the day of n port. He also brought me out because He delighted in me" (Ps

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That's mercy.

God's Mercy Is Not Extended to Those Who Do Evil

Have you ever been afraid because of the evil around you? I know
 I have. The evil around me caused me to move out of a dangerous
 neighborhood into a safer one. Have you ever cried fervently before
 the Lord to protect you and your family and asked Him to remove
 you from the path of evil? I have done that countless times. "In my
 distress I called upon the LORD, and cried out to my God; He heard
 my voice from His temple, and my cry came before Him, even to
 His ears" (Psalm 18:6).

David said, "The pangs of death surrounded me, and the floods
 of ungodliness made me afraid" (Psalm 18:4). After his prayer was
 answered, he said of God, "He sent from above, He took me; He
 drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy,
 from those who hated me, for they were too strong for me. They
 confronted me in the day of my calamity, but the LORD was my sup-
 port. He also brought me out into a broad place; He delivered me
 because He delighted in me" (Psalm 18:16-19).

Is that not the mercy of God?

That is what I believe God did for me and my family after I
 prayed for Him to move us to a safer place.

Evil people don't fear God. They are full of deceit and have no wis-
 dom. They think about planning and doing wicked things day and
 night. They are never horrified by evil. In fact, they think highly of
 themselves when they do wrong.

David said of the wicked, "There is no fear of God before his eyes.
 For he flatters himself in his own eyes, when he finds out his iniquity
 and when he hates. The words of his mouth are wickedness and

deceit; *he has ceased to be wise* and to do good. He devises wickedness on his bed; he sets himself in a way that is not good; he does not abhor evil" (Psalm 36:1-4).

God protects us when we make Him the safe place we turn to.

When David fled from Saul, he prayed, "Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me! For my soul trusts in You; and in *the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge, until these calamities have passed by*" (Psalm 57:1).

David put his hope in God's mercy, and God protected him.

David said to God, "*You have delivered my soul from death. Have You not kept my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?*" (Psalm 56:13).

If it is not our time to go—and only God knows that—God can keep us from death when we pray and ask Him to do so. The psalmist said with faith in God's love and mercy, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD. The LORD has chastened me severely, but He has not given me over to death" (Psalm 118:17-18).

God's Mercy Helps Us Do What We Cannot Do on Our Own

When my children were small, they knew they would have certain privileges if they strictly obeyed the family rules. One of those rewards was going to a nice restaurant with us. My husband and I didn't have babysitters or family members around to take care of them for a few hours, and I wouldn't leave them with anyone unless I knew them well and completely trusted them.

Of course, we didn't take them out to nice restaurants if they were under the age of three—when they were still *all zeal and no wisdom*. But at three years old they knew their manners, especially toward the people serving us and other people around them in the restaurant. We were not about to inflict misbehaving children on others, and our kids were wise enough to know that.

Both children knew in advance that this night would be *all*

judgment and no mercy if minutes. As a result of knowers and soft spoken and because they wanted the great food they loved so much.

Many times a person over to our table to comm were and how pleasantly su ducted themselves more qu adults there. They felt they

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minutes. As a result of knowing that, they were perfect in their man-
ners and soft spoken and mature in their conduct. They behaved
because they wanted the privilege of going with us and eating the
great food they loved so much.

Many times a person or a couple in the restaurant would come
over to our table to comment on how well mannered our children
were and how pleasantly surprised they were when our children con-
ducted themselves more quietly and politely than many of the other
adults there. They felt they had to say thank you. I was grateful.

God's mercy toward us, on the other hand, doesn't require us to
be perfect in our behavior. That's why it is called mercy. It's His *com-*
passion toward us. Because He loves us He helps us to do the right
thing. He helps us to do beyond what we can do on our own.

God's mercy is not a "get out of jail free" card that allows us to
keep on disobeying His laws. There are consequences for violating
God's laws, just as there are consequences for breaking the laws of
a country. If there are no consequences, then there is either corrup-
tion in the system or there really are no laws. But if laws are upheld,
the system is good.

God expects us to uphold His laws, and there are consequences
when we don't. But He mercifully will help us to live His way when
we ask Him to do so.

David said that the *faces of those who look to the Lord are radiant*
and unashamed (Psalm 34:5). That is the same for the faces of chil-
dren who are raised with guidance, godly discipline, and the love
and mercy of the Lord. You can always tell the children whose par-
ents love them enough to teach them what they need to know. Their
faces reveal it.

God shows His great love and mercy in times of trouble. We have no
idea how many times He has saved us from danger or death. "*The eye*
of the LORD is on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His mercy,

to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine" (Psalm 33:18-19).

The best part about His goodness and mercy is that it allows you to dwell with Him forever. Jesus has prepared a place for you in eternity with Him where there is no disease, no crime, no evil, no sorrow, no fear, and no tears—once He wipes away all of yours, of course.

In the book of Revelation, John talks about what he saw regarding the end times. He said, "I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the Word of God and for the testimony which they held" (Revelation 6:9). These are the people who had been killed because they were Christians and stood up for God, His Word, and their faith. They—the martyrs—were asking God how long it would be until He avenged their blood. They wanted God's justice to prevail.

God told them to rest a while longer until the remainder of those who would also be killed for their faith was fulfilled. There were going to be more who would be martyred, and apparently God was giving the perpetrators time to repent. We wonder, *Why does God allow those who love and serve Him to be murdered?* But we don't see the great reward waiting for them in heaven. He keeps them close to Him.

I don't know about you, but if it were up to me, I would immediately strike the people who killed my children with death, and certainly they would have no future in heaven. But not God. He is too merciful and loving for that. He loves us even when we sin against Him—even to the point of allowing them to destroy His most loyal servants and ardent believers, His beloved children who served Him faithfully to the end. He waits for true repentance.

God loves us enough to wait for us to turn to Him so He can mercifully enable us to do what we cannot do on our own. That is, spend eternity with Him in heaven.

His grace and mercy are that deep.

He loves us that much.

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Prayer of Love

LORD, thank You for Your grace and mercy, which I know are never-ending signs of Your unfailing love for me. They are gifts beyond comprehension. For it is You who redeems my life from destruction and crowns me “with lovingkindness and tender mercies” (Psalm 103:4). Thank You, Lord, that You “will perfect that which concerns me; Your mercy, O LORD, endures forever” (Psalm 138:8). Thank You that You care about the things I care about.

Thank You for Your forgiveness. I can’t imagine the condition of my life and the state of my soul without it. I know that guilt is a killer and condemnation destroys. I am forever grateful that when I recognize my own error and bad choices that have led me to stray from Your ways, I can come to You with a humble and repentant heart and You not only will forgive me, but You remove my transgressions as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12). “Do not remember the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; according to Your mercy remember me, for Your goodness’ sake, O LORD” (Psalm 25:7).

Thank You for Your grace that drew me to put my faith in You and allowed me to be saved from death and eternity without You. Thank You that Your grace is the great manifestation of Your love for me, and Your mercy keeps me from being punished as I deserve. Help me to keep myself in Your love, dwelling in the flow of Your mercy, even into heaven with You after I leave this earth (Jude 1:21).

In Jesus’ name I pray.

Words of Love

By grace you have been saved through faith,
and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.

EPHESIANS 2:8

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

HEBREWS 4:16

The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him,
in those who hope in His mercy.

PSALM 147:11

As the heavens are high above the earth,
so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;
as far as the east is from the west,
so far has He removed our transgressions from us.

PSALM 103:11-12.

God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love
with which He loved us,
even when we were dead in trespasses,
made us alive together with Christ
(by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together,
and made us sit together in the heavenly places
in Christ Jesus.

EPHESIANS 2:4-6

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Recognize the Ways God Loves You

Love is like a vapor.

We can't see a vapor, but we can sometimes sense the effects of it. For example, we can't see a gasoline vapor until it's ignited by a spark. Then we can definitely observe the effects of that. We don't see airwaves, but we recognize the manifestations of them when our cell phone rings or we turn on the portable radio. The more we learn about vapors and airwaves, the more we recognize that they are all around us.

The same is true about God's love. It's all around us, and He shows His love for us in countless ways, but often we don't see the manifestations of His love until He opens our eyes to them. It all begins when we receive the Lord. That turns on the receptors in our brain, heart, and spirit. Then, with each new recognition, there comes a burst of joy in us that is set off by our understanding of what has been there all along but we could not see it until that moment.

When we finally understand things about God's love that we have never before imagined, it is like an explosion in our heart detonated by the signs of it everywhere we look. We see it in His beautiful

creation around us. We feel it in His grace and mercy extended to us. We recognize it in the things that happen for good in our life. His loving presence cannot be missed.

Even after our understanding of God's love for us is ignited, it will continue to explode in our heart like a blast to our senses every day, and each time it will touch us more deeply than the day before.

If you have never felt that, ask God to reveal the ways He shows His love to you. Even if you *have* felt His love in the past, ask Him to show you in new ways now. There is always more to learn and experience concerning God's love for you. Has He given you family, friends, relationships, healing, health, work, sun, and rain? I used to not appreciate rain until I was in a drought. Now every time it rains I praise God. I am not insensitive to those who have been in damaging floods, but even then, during frightening times when the forces of nature remind us how small and powerless we really are, God's love can still be seen in the way He protects us or provides for us. *There are so many things we do not appreciate in our life until we recognize God's love for us in them.*

Has God restored something in your life or removed something that needed removing? Has He protected you in ways you did not recognize at the time? Ask Him to show you what you have not yet recognized and thank Him when He does.

One of the primary ways we can identify God's love for us is by recognizing His promises to us in His Word and how He keeps them. What a comfort to know that everything He tells us is true and what He promises will come to pass.

When a parent promises a child that a particular thing will be done for him, that child does not forget. He *expects* it to happen. He *waits* for it. But if the parent forgets—or neglects to follow through—the child is hurt because he perceives it as a lack of love. Often, this disappointment is so deep that it can still be easily brought to mind decades later as an adult and the hurt is still there.

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Keeping a promise to someone is a sign of love.

God always keeps His promises. And every promise is a sign of His love to us. We don't dictate to Him *when* or *how* these promises will be fulfilled. It is enough to know they will be.

What follows below are just a few of God's promises that are evidence of His great love for you.

God Promises That Nothing Shall Separate You from His Love

The love of God is constantly active and present. His love didn't just happen once. It's forever moving *in* you and *in your life*. You are never separated from His love. You can't be. His love is everywhere because God is love and He is everywhere. No matter how difficult life becomes for you, trust that His love is with you always. Only you can put a limit on how much of it you receive.

Paul said, "I am persuaded that *neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Romans 8:38-39). This promise is not a small thing.

No matter what is going on in your life, nothing can separate you from God's love.

There is no *person* who can separate us from the love of God. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall *tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*" (Romans 8:35). God blesses us even when our enemies are attacking us. Our life always overflows with His favor (Psalm 23:5).

This means that because of the love of God revealed to you through Jesus, you are able to conquer the obstacles in your life. He will restore your troubled soul and lead you in the way you should go (Psalm 23:3). Even if you have to walk through a place of great danger, you don't have to fear because God is with you. Even His correction of you when you get off the path is a sign of His love. His

shepherd's crook will bring you back when you stray. That is a comforting sign of how much He loves you (Psalm 23:4).

His love for us broke the power of death and hell and gave us His Holy Spirit to be with us even into heaven. It means God is always on our side. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

God loves you completely, and there is nothing you can do to change that.

God Promises to Provide for You

Trusting that God will provide for you is not always easy, especially when you cannot even begin to see how what you need can possibly materialize. I have been in that place many times in my life, and God has come through in ways I could never have fathomed or dreamed of.

When you are convinced God loves you, and you look to Him with love and reverence in your heart, you will not lack anything. The Bible says, "Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him! Oh, fear the LORD, you His saints! *There is no want to those who fear Him... those who seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing*" (Psalm 34:8-10). What a remarkable promise to us. How can we *not* recognize God's love for us in those words?

God is a giver. It *pleases* Him to give us what we need.

Have you ever tried to give someone something you know they badly need but they will not accept it? It is very frustrating and kind of like a slap in the face. *Giving* is not the only sign of love; *receiving* is a sign also. Jesus said, "It is your *Father's good pleasure* to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). It's an affront to God to refuse to receive all He has for you. It's like saying, "I do not want or need what You have for me."

Jesus instructed us to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). That means when we look to God, He will give us everything we need. When we don't receive all God has for us, it's like saying,

"I'll get what I want by myself," says, "Without faith it is impossible to God must believe that *diligently seek Him*" (Heb 11:6).

I love that Scripture. I know it always brings great comfort because God loves us, He loves our heart.

God Promises to Transform You

When we walk with God, we are transformed into the glory as we are transformed. He not only wants you to do that. "We all, who are being transformed into the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the glory, just as by the Spirit of God." The Bible says that if we keep looking to Him, the more we become like Him, the more we become like Him.

That is true transformation.

God also promises to transform you. He promises to look to Him to be strong in you. They go from strength to strength. We choose to walk with God. (29:11). When we look to Him, we are transformed.

That is true love!

God Promises to Protect You

When we put our trust in God, we are protected more than we know. The key is to not wait for disaster to happen. God and difficult things happen in the midst of trouble. He will protect you.

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says, "*Without faith it is impossible to please Him*, for he who comes
to God must believe that He is, and that *He is a rewarder of those who*
diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

I love that Scripture. I have spoken it often in times of need, and
it always brings great comfort to my heart. We must believe that
because God loves us, He rewards us when we seek Him with all
our heart.

God Promises to Transform You into His Image

When we walk with God, He promises to take us from glory to
glory as we are transformed into His image. Don't you love that?
He not only wants you to become more like Him, but He will help
you do that. "We all, with unveiled face, *beholding as in a mirror the*
glory of the Lord, are *being transformed into the same image from glory*
to glory, just as *by the Spirit of the Lord*" (2 Corinthians 3:18). He
says that if we keep looking to Him—like looking into a mirror—
we will start seeing His image reflected back at us. The more we look
to Him, the more we become *like* Him.

That is true transformation!

God also promises to take us from strength to strength when we
look to Him to be strong in us. "Blessed is the man whose strength
is in You... they go from strength to strength" (Psalm 84:5,7). When
we choose to walk with God, we find our strength in Him (Psalm
29:11). When we look to Him, He shares Himself with us.

That is true love!

God Promises to Protect You

When we put our trust in God, He shields us from harm more
than we know. The key is to put our trust in Him *all the time* and
not wait for disaster to happen. Yet even when we put our trust in
God and difficult things happen, we must not let our trust waver, for
in the midst of trouble He will do great things *in us and through us*.

God is a safe place you can always run to when you are in danger. David said that the Lord "will be a refuge for the oppressed, *a refuge in times of trouble*" (Psalm 9:9). And He will never forsake anyone who seeks Him (Psalm 9:10). "For He will deliver the needy when he cries, the poor also, and him who has no helper" (Psalm 72:12). When we understand the condition of our soul without God's presence in our life, we see that we are poor and needy all the time.

This doesn't mean nothing troubling will ever happen, but it won't *keep on* happening. And God will do great things in the midst of it. "*He sets the poor on high, far from affliction*, and makes their families like a flock. . . . Whoever is wise will observe these things, and they will understand the lovingkindness of the LORD" (Psalm 107:41,43).

God's promise to protect us doesn't mean we can test Him by taking foolish chances. Satan tried to tempt Jesus to test God's love for Him. He took Jesus up to the pinnacle of the temple and said, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone'" (Matthew 4:6).

Even Satan knows the Word of God enough to use *what we don't know* about it against us. Jesus answered him by quoting the Word, saying we are not to put God to a test (Matthew 4:7 NIV).

When I lived in a "strong city" with danger all around, God protected me and my family. I used to declare the following verse often: "Blessed be the LORD, for He has shown me His marvelous kindness in a strong city!" (Psalm 31:21). But I never tested God on that. I didn't go out walking alone at night. I didn't send my children to play in the front yard near the street. I didn't open my door to strangers, and I taught my children to never do that as well.

God knows what is going on all around us even when *we don't*. He knows the plans of the enemy for our lives. We must *trust* God and not *test* God in these things. When we look to the Lord to protect us, He makes certain *His* plans for us succeed and not the

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always run to when you are in danger. He will be a refuge for the oppressed, *a refuge* for the needy. And He will never forsake anyone. "For He will deliver the needy when he lacks, the one who has no helper" (Psalm 72:12). In the condition of our soul without God's presence, we are poor and needy all the time.

Nothing troubling will ever happen, but it is because God will do great things in the midst of our affliction, and makes their families observe these things, and they will praise the greatness of the LORD" (Psalm 107:41,43).

This doesn't mean we can test Him by trying to tempt Jesus to test God's love at the pinnacle of the temple and said, "Don't throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'I will command my angels to protect you,' and, 'In their hands they will support your foot against a stone'" (Mat-

thew 4:6). Jesus was of God enough to use *what we don't* expect. He answered him by quoting the Word, "Do not be tested" (Matthew 4:7 NIV).

With danger all around, God promised to declare the following verse often: "I have shown me His marvelous kindness to me" (Psalm 138:8). But I never tested God on that. One night, I didn't send my children to the street. I didn't open my door to anyone who would never do that as well.

God is all around us even when *we* don't. We must trust God for our lives. We must trust God's Word. When we look to the Lord to do His plans for us succeed and not the

enemy's. But we don't hang around the enemy and entertain his suggestions just to see how well God is protecting us.

God didn't say we would never fall. He said *when* we do stumble, we will be upheld by Him. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, and He delights in his way. *Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the LORD upholds him with His hand*" (Psalm 121:23-24).

That means without God it could have been a lot worse.

The angel of the Lord "encamps" around those who reverence God and *delivers* them (Psalm 34:7). Don't you love that promise? Wouldn't you like to look into the spirit realm for even a moment to see the angel of the Lord encamping around you? But God wants us to live by faith and not by sight—faith that He protects whom He loves and who also love Him.

Enjoying the presence of God in the daytime, living in the safety and peace He gives us, allows us to sleep better at night.

God Promises to Hear Our Prayers and Answer Them

Think of how much you love your child or children—or whom-ever you love most in this world. Well, God loves you even more because He has greater capacity to do so. He doesn't have the capability to not love because He *is* love. He cannot be what He is not. Jesus said, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, *how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!*" (Matthew 7:11). He answers our prayers because He loves us.

Keep in mind, though, that He doesn't promise to answer our prayers exactly the way we prayed them, but rather according to His will (1 John 5:14-15). Every promise of God has a condition that must be met. The most common conditions are that we must have faith in Him, and live His way, and believe His Word.

Whenever we are overwhelmed, we must remember that God is not. We must look to Him at those times and stop focusing on our

situation. That doesn't mean we live in denial about it. "Denial religion" is not faith. We don't have to pretend our circumstance have not happened, as some do. We must be honest with God about our fears. David prayed, "Hear my cry, O God; attend to my prayer. From the end of the earth I will cry to You, *when my heart is overwhelmed; lead me to the rock that is higher than I*" (Psalm 61:1-2).

Jesus said, "*Whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive*" (Matthew 21:22). All we have to do is believe Him—that He is the Son of God and that He loves us and wants to answer our prayers. It is not our faith that does it. We are not having faith in our faith, as if we have anything to do with it. We have faith that He hears us and will answer our prayers according to His will, and that we are the recipient of His love when we pray.

God Promises to Deliver Us from Fear

The Bible tells us about the joy, blessing, and happiness of all those who fear God. *Fearing God means to reverence Him and fear what life would be like without Him.*

"Oh, how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for those who fear You... *You shall hide them in the secret place of Your presence from the plots of man*" (Psalm 31:19-20). He blesses those who reverence Him.

That is *godly* fear.

The other kind of fear is not of the Lord. It is a spirit that can torture us if we allow it to grow in our heart. "God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of *power* and of *love* and of a *sound mind*" (2 Timothy 1:7).

The *power* is God's power, which He shares with us.

His *love* comforts us and takes away our fear.

A *sound mind* means having clarity of thought, good judgment, and the ability to make wise decisions and choices. It means having self-control and not being out of control in our actions and behavior. It means having the mind of Christ.

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God Deliver Us from Fear

The joy, blessing, and happiness of all things God means to reverence Him and fear Him. His goodness, which You have laid up for us, *hide them in the secret place of Your mercy* (Psalm 31:19-20). He blesses those

of the Lord. It is a spirit that can torment our heart. "God has not given us a spirit of love and of a sound mind" (2 Tim-

which He shares with us. It takes away our fear.

clarity of thought, good judgment, decisions and choices. It means having control in our actions and behavior. Christ.

Beside that powerful verse from 2 Timothy above, Psalm 34 has always been my favorite place to go to in the Bible when I need God's Word to quickly take away fear and insecurity. The entire psalm is an encouragement. A fixer of the heart. A readjustment of the attitude.

In these verses David vows to worship God continually and invites others to do the same. He said, "*I sought the LORD, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears*" (Psalm 34:4). David chose to seek God, and God answered by delivering him from every fear he had.

Just reading that psalm gives me peace in my heart. I know it will do the same for you as well. And the peace of God is one of His greatest gifts to us.

God Promises Us the Crown of Life When We Resist Temptation

God knows we cannot be perfect, so He asks us to look to Him for strength to stand strong against any temptation to violate His ways for our life.

God promises to enable us to do things we cannot do without Him, but we have to declare our dependency upon Him. When we do, there are rewards for living His way.

James, the brother of Jesus, said, "*Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him*" (James 1:12).

The crown of life is no small thing. This verse is talking about when we are in heaven with the Lord. There are rewards in eternity we will forfeit if we continue to allow ourselves to fall into temptation instead of resisting it. We all have access to the power and strength to resist temptation when it comes if we run to God at the first inkling of it and depend on *His* strength and power to do so.

That means when we go through hard times—and we don't lose faith and end up doing something stupid or faithless or selfish—the

experience will cause us to depend on God so completely we will see that we need nothing else but Him.

James said, "*Count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing*" (James 1:2-4).

If we recognize the testing of our faith when temptation presents itself and we run to God, we can have joy in the process of resisting the enemy of our soul. If we depend on God to work in us and perfect us, we will see that everything we need can be found in Him.

The sooner we learn that, the better off we will be.

God Promises That You Have a Good Future Ahead

Because God loves you, He promises you hope and a good future. Listen to what He says about you in His Word.

I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, *to give you a future and a hope*. Then you will call upon Me, and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And *you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart* (Jeremiah 29:11-13).

God promises to us a great future with Him, but we must seek Him and search for Him with our whole heart. When we don't do that, He shows love for us in His discipline and correction. It means He loves us enough to care how we turn out. "For whom the LORD loves He chastens" (Hebrews 12:6). He said, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten" (Revelation 3:19).

In addition to the promises that reveal His love to us all the time, ask God to demonstrate the ways He shows His love to you personally. Has He spared you from something? Connected you with people you need to know? Put beauty in your path in amazing ways? Answered your prayers? Worked something out for good? Enabled

you to recover? Helped your heart? Given you a unexpected peace in the you from something Provided for you un that have delighted

Whatever it is, remember it. Tell Him to enable you to recover. For it is the love of God your love for Him—

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you from something bad? Met you at your greatest point of need?
Provided for you unexpectedly? Shown you things in His creation
that have delighted you?

Whatever it is, thank God for His love whenever you see or
remember it. Tell Him how much His love means to you. Ask Him
to enable you to recognize and receive His love for you in every way.
For it is the love of God you receive that will affect how you express
your love for Him—and how consistently you show love to others.

Prayer of Love

LORD, thank You that Your Word promises to those in need that “in the days of famine” we will “be satisfied” (Psalm 37:19). I don’t have to fear not having enough, and I can trust that because You are my Lord, I will not want for anything (Psalm 23:1). Thank You that You have a place of rest for me where there is fruitful abundance (Psalm 23:2). Thank You that You will not withhold any good thing from those who live Your way (Psalm 84:11).

Many of the promises in Your Word assure me that You will provide for me—all because You love me. I know Your ways are perfect and You have proven Your Word time after time. I know You will always be a shield to me because I trust in You (Psalm 18:30). Thank You that “*You have been a shelter for me, a strong tower from the enemy*.” I will abide in Your tabernacle forever; I will trust in the shelter of Your wings” (Psalm 61:3-4). “I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; for You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety” (Psalm 4:8).

Thank You, Lord, that You are “a God near at hand” and “not a God afar off” (Jeremiah 23:23). “You have also given me the shield of Your salvation; Your right hand has held me up, Your gentleness has made me great” (Psalm 18:35). “You, O God, have heard my vows; You have given me the heritage of those who fear Your name” (Psalm 61:5). “You have put gladness in my heart” (Psalm 4:7). Help me to recognize Your love for me in Your Word and in all the ways You reveal Your love for me every day.

In Jesus’ name I pray.

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Words of Love

Show Your marvelous lovingkindness by Your right hand,
O You who save those who trust in You
from those who rise up against them.

PSALM 17:7

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear,
because fear involves torment.
But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

1 JOHN 4:18

We know that all things work together for good
to those who love God,
to those who are the called according to His purpose.

ROMANS 8:28

The LORD will command His lovingkindness
in the daytime,
and in the night His song shall be with me—
a prayer to the God of my life.

PSALM 42:8

Your lovingkindness is before my eyes,
and I have walked in Your truth.

PSALM 26:3

Know What God's Love Will Do in Your Life

If God is love and God is everywhere, then that means we are surrounded by His love at every moment. Why, then, don't we always feel it? It's because the degree to which we sense God's love for us depends on our *expectation of* Him and our *response to* Him.

Some people accept God's love wholeheartedly the moment they have an understanding of who He is and what He has done. Others are slower to open up to Him. They don't *expect* Him to love them the way He does, so they don't respond to His hand on their life with complete trust.

For example, one woman I have been friends with for decades was a hundred percent sold out to God as soon as she gave her life to Jesus and never looked back. She received His love completely and didn't doubt it for a moment. I saw this with my own eyes and was always amazed. And then I had another close friend who received the Lord but could never fully accept that He loved her.

I knew both of them for years, and they were not extreme cases of great or little faith, yet what was the difference between them? After talking with countless women about this very subject over the

years, I believe these two friends actually represent many more people than we realize.

The first friend, who loved the Lord and received His love immediately, came from a very loving family. Their care and affection for one another was clear and unmistakable. Unfortunately, she experienced great tragedy in her life when both of her parents were killed in a car accident. But even though she was just a young woman at that time and had to take on the role of a parent for her young sister and brother, I have never seen anyone so fully committed to the Lord and who received His love as thoroughly as she did. I believe that because she had *been* loved and *felt* loved, she knew how to *receive* love.

The second friend had been raised by a seriously alcoholic mother and a father in denial. Her hurts were deep and she never felt loved. I led her to the Lord a year after I received Him myself, and although she loved God she had a hard time believing He loved *her*. She read the Bible. She prayed and went to church, yet she could not receive His healing love completely. She married a man who was unloving and unaffectionate because of his own loveless childhood. She died not many years later, and I believe her unmended broken heart weakened her so that she did not have the strength to recover when she became ill. She did not love herself and could never fully believe God loved her either. She didn't find the healing and wholeness God had for her because she had no expectations about His restoring love on her behalf. Therefore, her response to Him was, at best, weak. It was very sad. Saddest of all to the Lord, I'm sure.

As for me, I was somewhere in between those two. I felt unloved as a child. I felt unloved as an adult. But when I received the Lord, I felt His love in the church, in the pastor's office with my friend where I received Him, and in the believers around me. I believed God was the God of love, but I didn't fully believe He really loved *me*. I sensed His love from others, but I thought of it as more of an overflow from those who actually were, in fact, loved.

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Though it took awhile to truly believe God loved *me*, I did get
there eventually. It took trusting His Word to be a love letter to
me. And it took a lot of prayer—alone with God as well as praying
together with others. (More about this kind of healing in the fol-
lowing chapters.)

There is so much God wants to do in each of our lives, but all of
that will be hindered as long as we don't trust His love for us. We will
never view His love correctly until we understand Him. Unless we
understand that God *is* love, and we look for manifestations of His
love in His Word and in our life, we won't recognize them as such,
and so we will not rest in His love as we should.

It's important to know what God's love can and will accomplish
in you. There are wonderful things He does, and *can* do, and *will*
do in all of us. If we open up to His love working in us and receive
it fully, communicate often with Him in prayer, receive from Him
daily in His Word, and ask Him to reveal His love to us and help
us choose to believe Him, then we will grow in His love every day
and be able to receive all He has for us—which is nothing less than
total transformation.

Be on the lookout for the healing and restoring work of God's
love in you. His love is there for you because *He* is there for you.

What follows are just a few examples of how God's love will work
in you that need to be kept in your mind.

God Will Calm the Storms in You and in Your Life

The storms in me were unending until I surrendered myself
to the Lord at what was—and I am sure always will be—the low-
est point in my life. When I received the Lord, I had no idea how
much I was really receiving. It was a process to learn and under-
stand it all.

When I went for Christian counseling and the counselor, Mary
Anne, prayed for me, I was set free of the depression, anxiety, and
deep sadness I had lived with for as long as I could remember. I felt

the physical manifestation of those things being lifted off of my shoulders, and I was undeniably different afterward.

At that time I asked Mary Anne if I should change my name from Stormie to something normal because I never liked being teased about it growing up. I always wanted a simple name like everyone else that no one would make fun of or question.

I remember one time in church when we were asked by the pastor to form a circle of three to five people around us and introduce ourselves and pray for one another. When I introduced myself to the circle of four others, the only other woman in the group said loudly and insensitively, "What kind of parent would name their child a horrible name like that?"

I had only known the Lord a short time and had not yet had much emotional healing. As a result, her seemingly angry outburst hurt and embarrassed me, and I didn't know how to respond. I stood silent, hoping I would not cry and that someone else would speak.

My name always brought unwanted attention to me, and I didn't think it was a positive thing. But when I asked Mary Anne if I should change it, she immediately said, "*No, your name will be a testimony to how God calms the storms in our life.*"

And it has been. Little did I ever dream how many storms God would calm. Actually, He calmed them all.

The truth is that His love can do great things in each of us. We have no idea. It's beyond what we can even imagine. I never dreamed of all that God has done in me. I am still amazed every day. So many people end their lives because they cannot picture a future for themselves worth living. They cannot see a way out of their pain and trouble. They are unable to imagine love so great that God would reach down and touch them with transformation.

I know from experience that people don't really want to die; they just can't see any other way out of their misery. I know that pain. And I believe that part of the enemy's plan for our destruction is to

Know

blind us to the truth for us in our future.

The Bible says of their soul melts because their trouble, and He calms the storm, so that its waters are quiet; so He guides (28-30).

God not only calls us to go.

Jesus calmed the storm in the middle of the boat in the middle of the sea. He walked on water toward them. He calmed the storm. He was afraid, but because of His love.

God loves you so much that He will bring destruction but also a process of transformation to do so.

Whatever storm is in your life, He will.

He loves you that much.

God Will Bring

We can all find ourselves in a decision we have made, or something bad that has happened, and yet we are left to pass the time. Many years I have walked through a situation that seems to me to be a dead end. It comes, it's not impossible to see what is happening.

Never forget that with God, all things are possible.

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for us in our future.

The Bible says of those who are in a storm in their lives that
"their soul melts because of trouble...they cry out to the LORD in
their trouble, and He brings them out of their distresses. *He calms
the storm, so that its waves are still.* Then they are glad because they
are quiet; so He guides them to their desired haven" (Psalm 107:26,
28-30).

God not only calms the storm but also gets us where we need
to go.

Jesus calmed the storm for His disciples when they were out in a
boat in the middle of the raging sea. They feared capsizing, but He
walked on water toward them, and when He saw they were afraid
He calmed the storm. He didn't silence the storm because He, too,
was afraid, but because He *loved* them.

God loves you so much that He will not only save you from
destruction but also not leave you the way you are. He begins the
process of transformation in you immediately when you invite Him
to do so.

Whatever storm is raging in your life, ask God to calm it for you.

He will.

He loves you that much.

God Will Bring Good Out of Bad Situations

We can all find ourselves in troubled times because of a wrong
decision we have made, or a lack of judgment on the part of others,
or something bad that happens to us through no fault of our own
and yet we are left to pay the consequences. I have learned over the
many years I have walked with God that no matter how impossible
a situation seems to me, even if I don't see how it can ever be over-
come, it's not impossible for Him. I know to trust Him no matter
what is happening.

Never forget that *with God, nothing is impossible.* That's because

possible to those who believe in Him. Jesus said, "All things are possible" (Matthew 19:26). More than that. He turns the wilderness of our lives into a fruitful existence. The Bible says of God, "*He turns a wilderness into watersprings*" (Psalm 107:35). One assurance of God's love is that He will work for us when we love Him and live in the plans He has for us (Romans 8:28). The earlier verses before this one say, "It seems to me that we can't expect to work out for good if we do not love God and His help and His will."

Always Be with You You Are with Him

Can you know yourself. He always knows what you are doing and all that is happening in your prayers. He will stay out of your life if you don't want it. It's the old "free will" thing again. If you don't want Him from your life, then you forfeit the blessing of His presence.

You have searched me and known me. You know my rising up; You understand my bending my path and my lying down, and my ways... You have hedged me behind and before me" (Psalm 139:1-5).

Whether it feels like it at the moment or not, if you are with Him every day, He will lovingly lead you. Even when it seems your prayers are unanswered, God hears you and sees your circumstances and is looking to Him. Talk with God—before I found freedom

from depression, anxiety, and emotional pain—I valued being in church and sensing His presence in the worship and Bible teaching. I especially looked forward to the prayer time when the congregation broke into those small circles and prayed for one another. Even though it frightened me to pray out loud for others, I needed prayer so desperately I was willing to do whatever it took—even if it meant I might appear to look stupid—because it was the only time anyone ever prayed for me.

One Sunday morning when I was in church, the people around me all turned and separated into prayer groups, but I was left standing alone. I started crying because I was in such emotional pain that day I could not even speak to ask anyone to let me in their circle. But God sent a man who reached in from the aisle to pray with me. I don't know who he was and I never saw him again. I don't even know how he saw me because I was surrounded by people and none of them saw me. I felt invisible. I *was* invisible. But not to God. He saw me and sent someone to pray with me.

When you feel you will break down if you even try to talk to someone about your problems, don't allow yourself to be isolated. Ask God for help. I know He will do the same for you as He did for me if you cry out to Him.

David said, "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or *where can I flee from Your presence?* If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, *even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me*" (Psalm 139:7-10). God never leaves us once we receive Him. We have to believe that every day.

Even when you are deserted by others, God will never forsake you. David said, "*When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take care of me*" (Psalm 27:10). If you have been rejected or deserted by your family, God is your family now and He will never leave you. He is always there for you unless you exclude Him from

your life. Even then it is not that He leaves you, but His power in your life manifests only when you trust Him.

The Spirit of God came upon Azariah the prophet, and he said to King Asa, "*The LORD is with you while you are with Him*. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you" (2 Chronicles 15:2). That is a serious truth. God is always with us, but He does not intervene in our lives unless He is invited to do so.

The problem is, *we* are not always with *Him*.

We too often allow diversions, temptations, secret idols, preoccupations, and interests into our life. Some people who neglect to be *with Him* are the first to fault Him for not doing what they want. They blame Him for things that happen when they should have brought it to Him in prayer. They should have trusted His love for them and His work in their life.

Don't let that happen to you.

Tell God you are with Him every day, and thank Him that He is always with you.

God Will Be Your Hiding Place from Trouble

Jesus didn't say we would never have problems. He said He would be with us in them. The Bible assures us that "many are the afflictions of the righteous, but *the LORD delivers him out of them all*" (Psalm 34:19).

When we do good and not evil, God delivers us from trouble. When our hearts are broken, God is especially near to us. When we are humble, God saves us. "The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. *The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart*, and saves such as have a contrite spirit" (Psalm 34:17-18).

God's love for you gives you security. David said, "[God] heard my cry. *He also brought me up out of a horrible pit*, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps... Blessed is that man who makes the LORD his trust" (Psalm 40:1-2,4).

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When you make God your hiding place, He will surround you and you will be hidden in Him. "*You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble*" (Psalm 32:7). No matter what comes upon your life like a flood, God will protect you by lifting you out of it or taking you through it. "Surely in a flood of great waters they shall not come near him" (Psalm 32:6). That's why it is important to listen for the quiet voice of God's Spirit speaking to your heart and telling you what to do.

When you are overwhelmed by troubles, cry out to the Lord and say, "Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come to You...incline Your ear to me; in the day that I call, answer me speedily...My days are like a shadow that lengthens, and I wither away like grass" (Psalm 102:1-2,11). God always hears the prayers of anyone whose heart is humble, honest, and right in His sight.

You will never regret putting your trust in God. David said of the Lord that "*none of those who trust in Him shall be condemned*" (Psalm 34:22). Putting your trust in God does not mean demanding that He do what you ask. It's telling Him the desire of your heart and waiting on Him for the answer. I have found that the more time you spend with God in prayer, the more certain He will respond to a quick prayer when something sudden happens and there is little time for anything more.

God Will Not Forsake You in Old Age

God will never put you out to pasture. Isn't that good to know? Only the world does that. Only the world dares to say, *You don't have value after a certain age or a certain strength of body*. In God's eyes you are never over the hill. You are always valuable to Him. He never stops having a purpose for your life, and He will see to it that you bear fruit until He calls you home to be with Him.

The psalmist prayed, "*Do not cast me off in the time of old age; do not forsake me when my strength fails*" (Psalm 71:9). He also prayed, "Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, do not forsake

me, until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to everyone who is to come" (Psalm 71:18).

If you are still breathing, God has a purpose for your life. And there are people He will put in your life who need to hear the truth and good news He has for them. And you will be the one He has chosen to deliver His message and His love.

God Will Empower You to Live the Life He Has for You

Another wonderful thing about God is that He doesn't just leave us down here on earth to fend for ourselves. He doesn't say, "Don't call Me, I'll call you." He doesn't tell us, "Good luck. Call Me if you absolutely can't find any other solution."

Quite the opposite, actually.

A sign of God's great love for us is that He empowers us to do what we cannot do on our own. Knowing that truth gives us confidence to face seemingly impossible situations in our life.

Don't let the world, the government, the press, or godless people tell you what your future is or is not. *God* has given you a future and a hope. *God* says He will bless those who look to Him. Despite the troubles we see around us, this can be the best time of our lives if we correctly see what God is doing. He gave Joseph and Egypt seven years of plenty *before* the seven years of famine. He provided for His people in both seasons.

God will provide for you in every season of your life too. In the rough times as well as the good times. You don't have to fear the future because in the presence of God's love all fear is evaporated. His perfect love for you will cast out all fear in your life (1 John 4:18).

God says, "I am the LORD, I do not change" (Malachi 3:6). That means He doesn't change His mind about you. The apostle Paul said, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). Nothing in Scripture says that what Jesus did was only for the time He was here. Jesus said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, *he who*

believes in Me, the works that than these he will do, because

The same Holy Spirit who today worked in the miracles the same as well.

Paul prayed for the Ephesians with might through His Spirit. He wanted them to receive the love that would live in them, and to know the love of God "in *depth and height*" of God. He wanted them to "know the love of God" and be filled with the fullness of Christ.

Paul prayed that they would have the love—not just the knowledge of love. We ought to pray the same for ourselves.

Because God loves you, He has given you His peace. The peace of God will guard your hearts and minds. He will leave with you... *Let not your hearts be troubled* (John 14:27). He said, "The peace of God is with you. I have said it to you. You may have peace. I have said it to you. *Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*"

Jesus overcame the world.

The life God has for you

Jesus described Himself as the true vine. If we are in Him, we become branches of the vine. That is why we cannot bear fruit unless we are connected to Him as our lifeline. He said, "I have said it to you. *Without Me, you cannot bear much fruit; for without Me, you cannot be in Me, not bearing good fruit in your life. You must be in the true vine.*"

Jesus also said, "My Father

to this generation, Your power to (71:18).

He has a purpose for your life. And your life who need to hear the truth. And you will be the one He has and His love.

Live the Life He Has for You

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us is that He empowers us to do. Knowing that truth gives us confidence situations in our life.

ment, the press, or godless people is not. *God* has given you a future those who look to Him. Despite can be the best time of our lives going. He gave Joseph and Egypt ten years of famine. He provided

every season of your life too. In the times. You don't have to fear the God's love all fear is evaporated. at all fear in your life (1 John 4:18). not change" (Malachi 3:6). That about you. The apostle Paul said, today, and forever" (Hebrews at what Jesus did was only for the at assuredly, I say to you, *he who*

believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father" (John 14:12).

The same Holy Spirit who works in our lives and in the world today worked in the miraculous life of Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the same as well.

Paul prayed for the Ephesians that they would "be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man" (Ephesians 3:16). He wanted them to receive Christ in their heart so His Holy Spirit would live in them, and they would be "rooted and grounded in love" so that they could comprehend "*what is the width and length and depth and height*" of God's love (Ephesians 3:17-18). He wanted them to "know the love of Christ which passes knowledge" and be filled with the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:19).

Paul prayed that they would build on a foundation of God's love—not just the *knowledge* of God's love but the *experience* of it. We ought to pray the same for ourselves as well.

Because God loves you, you can have peace beyond comprehension. The peace of God can always be yours. Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you... *Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid*" (John 14:27). He said, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. *In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world*" (John 16:33).

Jesus overcame the world and now empowers you to do the same.

The life God has for you is a fruitful life.

Jesus described Himself as the true vine. He said when we receive Him, we become branches that are grafted into Him. He warned us that we cannot bear fruit unless we stay closely connected to Him as our lifeline. He said, "*He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing*" (John 15:5). If we are not bearing good fruit in our life, it's because we are not plugged into the true vine.

Jesus also said, "My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me

that does not bear fruit He takes away; and *every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit*" (John 15:1-2). In order for a branch to bear fruit it must be pruned. That means it must be cut back so the dead or unproductive areas are taken away and it can become stronger. We cannot prune ourselves as well or as thoroughly as *He* can. We need Him to see all that is dead in us that has to be cut off. He will get rid of whatever keeps us from producing more fruit.

If we choose to not walk with God and continue on in that way, we are then cut off from our life source. But if we stay connected to Him, or come back to Him in repentance, then our prayers are answered. Jesus said, "*If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you*" (John 15:7).

Abiding in the Lord is the key to having your prayers answered.

Jesus saves you *from much*, and *to much*, for a purpose. He wants you to bear good fruit. And because He loves you, He will enable you to do that.

God loves you more than you know. You can choose to open up your heart and receive it. When you do that, your life will never be the same. And I assure you that you won't want it to be.

Prayer

LORD, I am amazed at you because You love me. Help me of Your reach into my life when I am in the middle of a calm (Psalm 107:28-29). Turn my wilderness into a pool of rest. Thank You that You always hear me. I am grateful that because of my life, Your hand is active because I am with You, You are with me.

I have made You my hope. I know You will surround me (Psalm 32:7). Thank You that You and You will deliver me. Only You can bring good out of all that I have committed to You. I pray You will do all that is difficult and trouble me.

I am grateful that because of Your Spirit in me, I can be that Your Spirit is in me. Thank You that You will never leave me in old age I will always have You abide in You so that I will always have You. I know that without You I cannot live. Thank You that because You are with me, I have everything I need to live the life You want me to live.

In Jesus' name I pray.

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Prayer of Love

LORD, I am amazed at what You *can* and *will* do in me because You love me. Help me to understand the expanse of Your reach into my life. Enable me to remember this when I am in the middle of a storm and need You to bring calm (Psalm 107:28-29). Thank You that You can turn a wilderness into a pool of refreshing water (Psalm 107:35). Thank You that You always see me and know where I am. I am grateful that because I have invited You to be Lord over my life, Your hand is always upon me. Thank You that because I am with You, You are always with me.

I have made You my hiding place from trouble, and I know You will surround me "with songs of deliverance" (Psalm 32:7). Thank You that when I am afraid I can run to You and You will deliver me from all my fears (Psalm 34:4). Only You can bring good out of bad situations when I submit them to You. I pray You will bring great things out of all that is difficult and troubling in my life.

I am grateful that because You love me, there is no place I can be that Your Spirit is not with me (Psalm 139:8-10). Thank You that You will never leave or forsake me, and even in old age I will always have a great purpose. Help me to abide in You so that I will always bear good fruit in my life. I know that without You I can do nothing good and lasting. Thank You that because You love me You will give me everything I need to live the life You have for me.

In Jesus' name I pray.

Words of Love

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear,
because fear involves torment.
But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

1 JOHN 4:18

The wicked is ensnared by the transgression of his lips,
but the righteous will come through trouble.

PROVERBS 12:13

Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses.
For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought,
but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with
groanings which cannot be uttered.

Now He who searches the hearts
knows what the mind of the Spirit is,
because He makes intercession for the saints
according to the will of God.

ROMANS 8:26-27

The blessing of the LORD makes one rich,
and He adds no sorrow with it.

PROVERBS 10:22

Weeping may endure for a night,
but joy comes in the morning.

PSALM 30:5