

STRONG FAITH FOR THE LAST DAYS

Jack Hartman

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Dedication

To my business partner, Ed Hiers. Ed and I have been partners for eighteen years. He is a constant inspiration to me and to many others. I'm very grateful to the Lord for this fine

Christian man who works so closely with me.

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Unless otherwise indicated, all of the Scripture references in this book are from *The Amplified Bible*. I've used this version of the Bible extensively because it does exactly what the title says – it amplifies. *The Amplified Bible* was published because a group of Bible scholars believed that traditional word-by-word translations often failed to reveal the shades of meaning which were part of the original Hebrew and Greek words.

After eighteen years of extensive Bible study, I've found that *The Amplified Bible* reveals many spiritual truths to me that I can't find in other versions of the Bible. Because of this, I use this version of the Bible as my primary Scripture reference.

In some instances, I've used *The Living Bible*. I use this when I believe the clarity of the paraphrase contained in this version of the Bible illustrates the point I'm trying to make more clearly than any other translation.

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Introduction

In recent years I've observed many people wrestling with severe problems. It seems to me that many more people are faced with severe adversity today than in the past. I believe most of these people would be interested in clear, simple instructions on how to strengthen their faith.

I've dealt with a lot of adversity in my life. I've spent thousands of hours searching the Scriptures to learn how to strengthen my faith so I wouldn't fall apart under the pressure. This isn't a theoretical book!

If you'll glance through the pages in this book, you'll see that it's "loaded" with Scripture. There are more than 300 Scripture references in this book. Every point I'll make is solidly anchored in the Word of God.

I know what it is to have weak faith and to be faced with big problems. I've seen these principles work very well in my life and in the lives of many other people. I'm excited about

sharing these great truths with you.

There are no shortcuts to building a strong faith. Christians who want to increase their faith must be willing to work hard. If this description fits you, I believe you'll find the answers you're looking for. I pray this book will be a blessing to you.

Chapter 1

Adversity - the Key to Strong Faith

This book is for people who are “hurting.” I believe most of the people reading this book are going through some severe problems. I have been a Christian for more than 18 years. As I've gone through serious adversity during this time, I've often wondered why God has allowed these problems to happen to me when I'm one of His children.

I'm learning that our Father, in His wisdom, often allows what He could prevent because He sees many things we can't see. If you're a human parent, what would you do if you knew one of your beloved children was going to face some severe problems in the future and this child wasn't prepared? Would you do everything necessary to help your child?

Our heavenly Father is no different. He knows what the future holds. He knows the problems each of us will face. He also knows exactly how strong our faith is. If we're going to face severe problems in the future and our faith is too weak to deal with them, we can understand why our loving Father would want us to strengthen our faith.

Many of us would like God to shield us from the storms of life. However, He often does just the opposite by allowing storms to come into our lives that will give us the necessary motivation to strengthen our faith. We should realize that sometimes we're actually blessed if He allows us to go through a period of adversity. “Blessed (happy, fortunate, to be envied) is the man whom You discipline and instruct, O Lord, and teach out of Your law, that You may give him power to hold himself calm in the days of adversity...” (Psalm 94:12-13).

I ask each person reading this book, would you like to learn how to develop the ability to remain calm in the face of adversity? Would you consider it a blessing to be able to do this? The Word of God says we need to turn away from human thinking and learn God's ways of doing things in order to remain calm in the midst of problems.

The psalmist David went through a great deal of adversity in his life. He once said,

“Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now Your word do I keep [hearing, receiving, loving, and obeying it]” (Psalm 119:67).

If adversity causes us to get into the Word of God and stay there, this adversity is a blessing to us. Our Father doesn't want us going astray. He wants us to hunger and thirst for the instructions He has given us. He wants us to love His Word and to do our very best to live according to its instructions.

We won't be able to see things from our Father's point of view until we start to understand His plan for us. We'll understand that many of the problems we're going through really aren't so bad after all. “...I delight in Your law. It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Your statutes. The law from Your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces” (Psalm 119:71-72).

The Word of God says affliction can be good for us! This is hard for some people to understand. In our culture, most people look at affliction as being bad. It's difficult for most of us to realize what a tremendous blessing adversity can be. The Word of God says it's better to be afflicted and to learn the instructions from the Holy Scriptures than it would be to inherit a great deal of money.

Sometimes our Father has to allow us to be wounded to cleanse us from our evil ways. He knows we won't change unless we're motivated from deep down within ourselves. “Blows that wound cleanse away evil, and strokes [for correction] reach to the innermost parts” (Proverbs 20:30).

God's ways are very different from our ways. His Word says that sorrow is better than laughter and that sadness can actually make our hearts sing with joy. “Sorrow is better than laughter, for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better and gains gladness” (Ecclesiastes 7:3).

Do you want your heart to be made better? Do you want your heart to be glad and happy? We all want to receive these blessings, but many of us can't comprehend that we often have to go through sorrow in order to receive them. Our Father is much wiser than we are! “For godly grief and the pain God is permitted to direct, produce a repentance that leads and contributes to salvation and deliverance from evil, and it never brings regret; but worldly grief (the hopeless sorrow that is characteristic of the pagan world) is deadly [breeding and ending in death]” (II Corinthians 7:10).

This is an extremely interesting passage of Scripture. When God allows grief to come into our lives and we're humbled and learn from our problems, we'll never regret the pain we went through. We won't receive blessings from the problems in our lives unless they humble us and draw us closer to the Lord. This is very different from the problems unsaved people go through.

As Christians, we should be able to look at our problems as the wonderful opportunities they really are. If we permit the Lord to direct our lives, we'll never be sorry. He knows exactly what He's doing. Any problems He allows to come into our lives are a wonderful opportunity for blessing.

Many of us were disciplined by our earthly parents and this seemed horrible while we were going through the pain of correction. However, our parents knew what was best for us and the temporary pain turned into a blessing if we learned from it. If our heavenly Father allows us to go through difficult times, we'll also be blessed if we learn as a result of our problems:

"...we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we yielded [to them] and respected [them for training us]. Shall we not much more cheerfully submit to the Father of spirits and so [truly] live? For [our earthly fathers] disciplined us for only a short period of time and chastised us as seemed proper and good to them; but He disciplines us for our certain good, that we may become sharers in His own holiness. For the time being no discipline brings joy, but seems grievous and painful; but afterwards it yields a peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it..." (Hebrews 12:9-11).

Our Father allows us to go through seasons of adversity. He has wonderful blessings available at the end of this time if we learn what He wants us to learn. "...after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace [Who imparts all blessing and favor], Who has called you to His [own] eternal glory in Christ Jesus, will Himself complete and make you what you ought to be, establish and ground you securely, and strengthen, and settle you" (I Peter 5:10).

Do you want the Lord to make you complete and what you ought to be? Do you want to be strengthened and settled? If we want to receive these blessings, we shouldn't complain about what we have to go through in order to receive them. "Happy and fortunate is the man whom God reproves; so do not despise or reject the correction of the Almighty [subjecting you to trial and suffering]" (Job 5:17).

These words were spoken by Job. Have you read about anyone in the Bible who went

through more difficult times than Job? In spite of this, his faith didn't waver. Job knew God was in complete control and his words and actions showed his faith.

On one occasion, when Job was going through a particularly difficult time, he said "...He knows the way that I take [He has concern for it, appreciates, and pays attention to it]. When He has tried me, I shall come forth as refined gold [pure and luminous]. My foot has held fast to His steps; His ways have I kept and not turned aside. I have not gone back from the commandment of His lips; I have esteemed and treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:10-12).

This tells us that our heavenly Father knows exactly what each of His children is going through. He's concerned. He appreciates the magnitude of our problems. He pays close attention to what is happening to us. He knows exactly what He wants to accomplish in our lives. When we pass the test and learn what He wants us to learn, we'll come out safely on the other side as pure as gold that has been refined.

We do this by holding fast to the way His Word tells us to live. He doesn't want us to turn away from His way and insist on doing things our way. The Word of God is our spiritual food. We should treasure it more than anything we might be tempted to treasure in the world.

Many of the most desirable qualities any person can possess can only be developed as a result of hardship. "...pressure and affliction and hardship produce patient and unswerving endurance. And endurance (fortitude) develops maturity of character (approved faith and tried integrity)..." (Romans 5:3-4).

We all know people who have great character and proven faith. We can possess these desirable qualities. We need to go through the same kind of severe problems they have endured and learn to react according to the Word of God.

When we experience difficult times, we need to study and meditate continually on the Word of God. When the psalmist David faced severe adversity, he asked God to "...revive and stimulate me according to Your word" (Psalm 119:25). He knew the tremendous power of the Word of God would give him the energy to keep going. "This is my comfort and consolation in my affliction: that Your word has revived me and given me life" (Psalm 119:50).

Most of us won't study the Word of God and meditate on it continually unless the problems in our lives motivate us to reach out for help. If severe adversity causes us to realize that our faith is weak and inadequate, most of us will then pay the necessary price of Bible study

and meditation.

I believe the entire world will face severe problems in the last days before Jesus returns. Anybody who goes through severe adversity now should see it as a wonderful opportunity to develop faith. We must be equipped to stand strong during the difficult days that are ahead for all of us.

Chapter 2

Prepare For The Last Days

In the last chapter, I discussed the adversity some people are faced with. Before long, I believe everyone in the world will be faced with severe problems. "...in the last days will come (set in) perilous times of great stress and trouble [hard to deal with and hard to bear]" (II Timothy 3:1).

This verse tells us that the entire world will have to deal with times of great stress during the last days before Jesus Christ returns. Have the last days already started? I don't know. If they're not already here, they certainly seem to be imminent.

Jesus was asked, "...what will be the sign of Your coming and of the end (the completion, the consummation) of the age?" (Matthew 24:3). In Matthew 24:5-14 Jesus gave seven signs that would indicate His return. These signs were a false Christ, wars and rumors of wars, famine, an increasing number of earthquakes, persecution of Christians, defection of Christians and worldwide preaching of the gospel. All seven of these signs are present today.

II Timothy 3 gives additional signs of the last days – selfishness, greed, pride, abusive behavior, unfaithfulness, loose morals and preoccupation with pleasure. We see all of these signs today.

I'm not trying to predict when Jesus will return. No one knows, but the stage appears to be set. Jesus told us what to do when we begin to see signs of his return. He said, "...when these things begin to occur, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption (deliverance) is drawing near" (Luke 21:28).

I believe the word "begin" is a very important word in this passage of Scripture. Jesus said our redemption is drawing near when the signs of the last days "begin to occur." I believe most Christians will agree that these signs have begun to occur.

In one respect, this is wonderful news. Before too much longer, all Christians will be living with Jesus in the paradise of heaven. On the other hand, we're told to prepare ourselves for perilous times. The Word of God says we'll face times of great stress and trouble.

I believe the world is coming to a time when each of us will have to have enough faith to place all of our trust in God. Many people (including some Christians) look to external sources for security. I believe many external sources we all have trusted throughout our lives will fail.

I hope I'm wrong. Perhaps our debt-laden economy will prosper for many more years. Maybe the AIDS epidemic won't become a worldwide disaster. Perhaps many of the other "storm clouds" on the horizon of the world will pass by and we'll enjoy many years of worldwide peace and prosperity.

I don't want to be a prophet of doom, but I personally want to strengthen my faith as much as possible based on what I see in the Bible and in the world. I ask each person reading this book, if perilous times of great stress and trouble come upon our generation, is your faith strong enough to trust completely in the Lord? Can you honestly say, "Dear Lord, I see every source of external security crumbling around me, but my heart is at peace because I honestly do trust completely in You."?

Past crises have shown that people who put their security in external sources tend to fall apart during times of extreme pressure. When the stock market failed in 1929, many people committed suicide.

A close relationship with a husband or a wife is a great blessing. However, some people reading this book have experienced the sudden loss of a spouse. Others have lost children tragically. Others thought they were in good health only to hear a doctor say, "You have only a few months to live." Others thought they had economic security only to lose their source of financial security.

We must not place our primary trust in other human beings, in our employers, in our economic system or in any form of government. All Christians should place their trust in the Lord. In the last days, Christians who survive will have abundant amounts of the supernatural Word of God living in their hearts. They will have established a long-time pattern of surrendering each day of their lives to the control of the Holy Spirit living within them.

These Christians will have their priorities in the right order. Their security will be from the inside out. They'll be able to keep going when their security from external sources is falling

apart. Self-centered people cling to earthly things for their security and face severe problems when they lose their external security. Christ-centered Christians cling to heavenly things for their security and react with calm, quiet confidence during periods of adversity. They won't succumb to doubt, discouragement and despair when and if panic sweeps our land.

These people will realize that our wonderful Lord is completely dependable. When the entire world seems to be falling apart, He is fully able to take care of every problem. "For though the mountains should depart and the hills be shaken or removed, yet My love and kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall My covenant of peace and completeness be removed, says the Lord, Who has compassion on you" (Isaiah 54:10).

I believe a great shaking will take place all over the world before Jesus returns. We'll feel as if the hills and mountains of the world are shaking or have disappeared. We can trust in the love and kindness of the Lord! He has compassion for us. If we truly have deep faith in Him, we won't panic. We'll trust Him completely.

The promises in the Word of God aren't dependent upon worldly conditions. There is no place in the Bible that says God's promises are "null and void" if the Dow Jones Index falls below a certain level, if the Social Security system fails or if unemployment goes above a certain percentage.

Christians whose hearts are filled with the Word of God and whose lives are controlled by the Holy Spirit will continue to be secure in Christ regardless of external conditions. We can depend upon our precious Lord. "...The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him; He covers him all day long, and makes His dwelling between his shoulders" (Deuteronomy 33:12).

Christians have the greatest security this world has ever known. We've just seen that the Lord makes His dwelling between our shoulders. The apostle Paul said, "...it is no longer I who live, but Christ (the Messiah) lives in me..." (Galatians 2:2).

Jesus Christ lives inside of us! There is no greater security. No matter how bad the problems of the world might be, Jesus has everything under control. He said, "...All authority (all power of rule) in heaven and on earth has been given to Me" (Matthew 28:18).

If we really believe what Jesus said, why would we ever be afraid of anything that is happening on earth? There is nothing to fear if we're living our lives according to God's ways and not according to man's ways. "...in the latter days it shall come to pass that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of mountains; and it shall be exalted

above the hills, and peoples shall flow to it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that He may teach us His ways, and we may walk in His paths..." (Micah 4:1-2).

This passage of Scripture refers to the last days before Jesus returns. When everything is falling apart and worldly systems that have worked very well for many years aren't working any more, many people will turn to the Lord so that "...He may teach us His ways, that we may walk in His paths."

God also spoke to the prophet Daniel about this. He said, "...O Daniel, shut up the words and seal the Book until the time of the end. [Then] many shall run to and fro and search anxiously [through the Book], and knowledge [of God's purposes as revealed by His prophets] shall be increased and become great" (Daniel 12:4).

God's ways are superior to the ways of the world! The time is here for all Christians to learn everything they can about the ways of God. We must prepare for the perilous times ahead. If a weather forecaster says a hurricane is coming and we see the weather starting to change dramatically, we take advantage of this warning to prepare ourselves in every possible way.

Spiritual storm clouds are on the horizon. I believe the world we live in will come "unglued" in the relatively near future. Christians have a tremendous advantage during the last days. Our heavenly Father has provided us with a Book of Instructions to tell us exactly what to do during these difficult times. The holy Scriptures "...were written to admonish and fit us for right action by good instruction, we in whose days the ages have reached their climax (their consummation and concluding period)." (I Corinthians 10:11).

This passage of Scripture definitely applies to the last days. Our generation very well could live in the "days the ages have reached their climax (their consummation and concluding period)." The Word of God has given us our warning. It tells us exactly how our Father wants us to live during these difficult times.

We must have strong faith during the last days. There is no way we'll please our Father during the last days or any other time if our faith is weak. He wants us to trust Him completely. "...without faith it is impossible to please and be satisfactory to Him..." (Hebrews 11:6).

The Word of God doesn't say it's difficult to please our Father without faith. It says it's impossible to please Him without faith! When we're faced with problems we can't possibly face with our limited human ability, our Father wants very much to help us. He's pleased when we

remain calm in the face of severe adversity because we trust completely in Him.

What earthly father would be pleased if he saw his children suffering unnecessarily because they didn't believe he would do what he said he'd do for them? Our heavenly Father is no different. He has given us everything we need to deal with the difficult problems we face today. He has given us everything we need to deal with the difficult problems the entire world will face in the last days.

We've been given a total and complete victory through Jesus Christ. We've been given the Word of God which is filled with thousands of promises telling what our Father will do for His children who dare to trust Him. Our Father has given us the Holy Spirit to live within us, to strengthen and guide us every day of our lives.

We can see why it's impossible to please our Father without faith. If He has given us everything we'll need and we still refuse to trust Him, how can we expect to please Him? Would you be pleased if your children ignored your instruction? Our Father still loves us if we don't trust Him. He wants so much to bless each of us. Faith is the channel our Father has provided to give us the blessings His Word promises.

Jesus said, "...all things can be (are possible) to him who believes!" (Mark 9:23). Jesus didn't say some things are possible. He didn't say everything would be fine except during the last days when perilous times come upon us. He said all things are possible. However, there are four qualifying words – "to him who believes." When difficult times come upon us and we seem to be faced with unsolvable problems, they won't be unsolvable if our faith is strong. Our Father places a great deal of emphasis on strong faith. His Word speaks of "...[your faith] which is infinitely more precious than the perishable gold which is tested and purified by fire..." (I Peter 1:7).

This passage of Scripture doesn't just say our faith is precious to God. It says our faith is "infinitely more precious" than gold. In the world, gold is a great treasure. However, our faith is infinitely more precious to God than all the gold in the world!

Our Father knew the world would go through difficult times in the last days before Jesus returns. His Word tells us exactly what to do. "When you are in tribulation and all these things come upon you, in the latter days you will turn to the Lord your God and be obedient to His voice. For the Lord your God is a merciful God; He will not fail you..." (Deuteronomy 4:30-31).

When difficult times come upon us during the last days, we cannot turn to any external

source of security. We're told to turn to the Lord and obey the instructions He gives us. If we do this, He won't fail us. He'll do His part. We must do ours.

Perhaps I'm wrong and our generation won't be the one that faces the difficult times that are prophesied to take place shortly before Jesus returns. If I am, isn't it still extremely important to develop a strong faith in the Lord? A strong faith will be extremely beneficial to all of us during the remainder of our lives on earth.

Jesus wants us to be solidly anchored in the Word of God when He comes. He wants us to be completely free from fear. He wants us to be calm and quiet because we trust totally in Him. "...be eager to be found by Him [at His coming] without spot or blemish and at peace [in serene confidence, free from fears and agitating passions and moral conflicts]." (II Peter 3:14).

Now that we've seen the Scripture references telling us how important strong faith will be during the last days, let's look into the Word of God at the step-by-step instructions our Father has provided to show us how to increase our faith in Him.

Chapter 3

Pray Believing

In the first two chapters of this book, I've focused on two points. First, I believe God always knows when we need more faith. As a result, He often allows adversity to come into our lives because He knows we'll be motivated to pay the price to increase our faith. Second, we've examined the Scriptures to see that every person in the world will face difficult problems in the last days before Jesus returns. Our generation could be the one that will face this worldwide adversity.

Whether we're faced with severe personal problems or the whole world is faced with a crisis, I believe the first thing we should do is to pray. Our Father is delighted when His children come to Him in prayer. "...the prayer of the upright is His delight!" (Proverbs 15:8).

He wants us to pray to Him continually. "...be constant in prayer" (Romans 12:12). He doesn't want us to stop praying. "Be unceasing in prayer [praying perseveringly]..." (I Thessalonians 5:17).

Our Father wants us to pray morning, noon, and night. "...I will call upon God; and the Lord shall save me. Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall

hear my voice. He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me..." (Psalm 55:16-18, *The King James Bible*).

Our Father doesn't want us to pray mechanically. He wants our words to come from our hearts! "...when you pray, do not heap up phrases (multiply words, repeating the same ones over and over) as the Gentiles do, for they think they will be heard for their much speaking" (Matthew 6:7).

When we pray, we should pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is tremendous power in this name. "...God has highly exalted Him and has freely bestowed on Him the name that is above every other name, that in (at) the name of Jesus every knee should (must) bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue [frankly and openly] confess and acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord..." (Philippians 2:9-11).

We have been given the precious privilege to use the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in prayer and on many other occasions. Jesus told us how powerful our prayer will be when we come to our heavenly Father in His name. He said, "...I assure you, most solemnly I tell you, that My Father will grant you whatever you ask in My Name..." (John 16:23). We have a tremendous blessing to be able to pray in the name of the Lord. "...Blessed (to be celebrated with praises) is He Who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Luke 13:35).

When we come to our heavenly Father and pray in faith in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Jesus Himself intercedes for us with His Father. "...we have an Advocate (One Who will intercede for us) with the Father – [it is] Jesus Christ [the all] righteous [upright, just, Who conforms to the Father's will in every purpose, thought and action]" (I John 2:1).

We should be greatly comforted to know that, when we pray to our Father in the name of Jesus Christ, Jesus, Who always conforms to what His Father wills, intercedes on our behalf. He wants very much to intercede for us. "...He is always living to make petition to God and intercede with Him and intervene for them" (Hebrews 7:25).

We must realize the immense power of our prayers. When we continually come to our Father and pray from our hearts with strong faith in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, great spiritual power is released. "...The earnest (heartfelt, continued) prayer of a righteous man makes tremendous power available [dynamic in its working]" (James 5:16).

If we're very serious about our prayer life, we will produce results. Our Father wants us to pray intensely with great sincerity. If we come continually and persistently to His throne, He

will honor our prayers.

Many people who aren't Christians pray to God. They don't know that God doesn't listen to their prayers. However, our Father does listen when His children pray. "We know that God does not listen to sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and a worshipper of Him and does His will, He listens to him" (John 9:31).

Our Father wants us to do our very best to live our lives the way He wants us to live. If we do, when we come to Him in prayer, we can be assured that He hears us. "...the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous (those who are upright and in right standing with God), and His ears are attentive to their prayer..." (I Peter 3:12).

Many times we don't receive answers from our Father because we don't ask. Other times we fail to receive because we ask with wrong motives. "...You do not have, because you do not ask. [Or] you do ask [God for them] and yet fail to receive, because you ask with wrong purpose and evil, selfish motives. Your intention is [when you get what you desire] to spend it in sensual pleasures" (James 4:2-3).

We can be assured that our Father hears every one of His children's prayers. If we pray carnally, our Father doesn't answer these prayers. If a little child asks his father for a sharp knife, would his father give it to him? Of course not. Even though the child wants it, his father knows the knife could hurt him and he won't give it to him.

Our heavenly Father is in a very similar position in regard to some of our prayers. We may want the answer badly and we might come to Him with great faith that He will answer, but if He knows this answer is not in our best interest, He won't give it to us. He only answers prayers that are in line with His will for our lives.

How do we know when our prayers are in His will? First of all, we should pray according to His Word. The Word of God tells us His general will for all of His children. Second, we should pray continually asking Him to reveal His specific will. If we do this, and if we live our lives to the best of our ability according to the instructions in His Word, we can believe that our prayers are according to His will.

We are blessed to know beyond any doubt that our Father hears these prayers! "And this is the confidence (the assurance, the privilege of boldness) which we have in Him: [we are sure] that if we ask anything (make any request) according to His will (in agreement with His own plan), He listens to and hears us" (I John 5:14).

Would you pick up the telephone and call the President of the United States and believe he would answer? Would you try to call the governor of your state and believe he would listen to you at any time? We all know how fruitless these calls would be, but the truth is that we are able to go to the Creator of the universe with absolute confidence that He will listen to us any time we make prayer requests that are in agreement with His will for our lives!

We can rest assured that He'll listen to us, and we also can be certain He will answer these prayers! "And if (since) we [positively] know that He listens to us in whatever we ask, we also know [with settled and absolute knowledge] that we have [granted us as our present possessions] the requests made of Him" (I John 5:15).

Our Father wants very much to answer our prayers. Sometimes this requires a great deal of faith and perseverance, but we have seen that His Word says He'll answer every prayer that is in accordance with His will for our lives.

We must have the faith to believe this truth! The purpose of this book is to develop our faith to the point where we're certain God will answer us when we pray according to His will. Jesus said, "...whatever you ask for in prayer, believe (trust and be confident) that it is granted to you, and you will [get it]" (Mark 11:24).

Jesus didn't say that our Father would answer some of our prayers according to His will. He didn't say He would answer most of these prayers. He said our Father would answer whatever we ask Him in prayer if our faith is strong enough!

Our Father will always do His part. His part is to answer our prayers. Will we do our part? Will we do our very best to seek God's will for our lives at all times? Will we study His Word continually and do our best to follow its instructions? Will we work steadily at developing our faith so we really dare to believe our Father will answer our prayers? Our Father will answer every prayer if we pray according to His will, if our faith is strong and if we refuse to give up.

When I was a new Christian, I thought it was preposterous to believe God would answer every prayer. Then, I read two amazing books – *George Mueller - Man Of Faith and Miracles* and *George Mueller – Delighted in God*. Whenever anyone says God doesn't answer every prayer according to His will, I always think of George Mueller.

This saint's faith was legendary. After being a sinner in his youth and going to jail at the age of 16, he became a Christian at the age of 20 and his life was transformed. Mueller read the Bible from cover to cover approximately 200 times. He read the Bible in its entirety more than

100 times on his knees.

George Mueller opened an orphanage for children at the age of 30. At the age of 32, he had 96 orphans living in 3 separate houses. He had no guarantee of funds. He lived entirely by faith. He never asked anyone for anything. He simply prayed continually and trusted the Lord.

Before long, George had over 2,000 orphans under his care. On many occasions he found himself in a position where he had to feed 2,000 children when he had absolutely no money on hand. He dared to trust God. His faith was always honored.

My mind was boggled when I read that George Mueller kept a notebook listing every one of his prayers and when they were answered. He said that over 50,000 of his prayers were answered in his lifetime! He said that 5,000 of his prayers were answered on the same day he prayed. On the other hand, he also had to wait more than 50 years to have one of his prayers answered.

Our Father will honor our faith! Our goal should be to develop our faith so that it is as strong as George Mueller's faith. We should dare to believe our Father will answer all of our prayers. The remainder of this book is devoted to this purpose. Now that we've seen that we will face difficult times in the future and that our Father wants us to come to Him in prayer, we're ready to look into the Word of God to see how we can develop our faith so it will be strong enough to receive answers to our prayers.

Chapter 4

Developing the Faith We Were Given

Our Father wants all of His children to have strong faith in Him. His eyes search the earth looking for children who trust Him completely. It isn't easy to find Christians with strong faith. "...a faithful man who can find?" (Proverbs 20:6).

I know from personal experience that it is impossible to develop strong faith before being reborn spiritually. I became a self-employed businessman nine years before I surrendered my life to Jesus Christ. During this period of time, I was often on the verge of financial failure. I tried very hard to develop my faith. I read hundreds of positive thinking books such as *Think and Grow Rich* and *Psychocybernetics*.

After reading these books for many years, I found that I didn't worry as much. I actually

gave quite a few speeches in the United States and Canada on the subject of positive thinking. I thought my faith was strong, but when my financial problems got worse and I faced bankruptcy and a nervous breakdown, I fell apart. All of my theories on positive thinking didn't hold up.

I tried to study the Bible before I was saved, but I didn't understand it. I now realize that Satan tries desperately to blind all unsaved people to the ways of God. "For the god of this world has blinded the unbelievers' minds [that they should not discern the truth], preventing them from seeing the illuminating light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ (the Messiah), Who is the Image and Likeness of God" (II Corinthians 4:4).

Satan is described as "the god of this world." He wants to control our lives. He doesn't want anyone to learn how to appropriate the victory of Jesus Christ that is available to every person. So, Satan tries to blind our minds so we can't learn the ways of God.

God has other plans for our lives. He reaches out to our hearts to attract us and draw us so we'll surrender our lives to Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "No one is able to come to Me unless the Father Who sent Me attracts and draws him and gives him the desire to come to Me..." (John 6:44).

We can see that we're caught in a spiritual "tug of war" between Satan and Almighty God. Will we be so caught up in the ways of the world that we can't feel our Creator tugging at our hearts? Or, will we respond to the drawing of God, repent of our sins, believe in our hearts and confess with our mouths that Jesus Christ is the only way we'll ever get to heaven?

If we ask Jesus to become our Saviour, the veil between the natural realm and the spiritual realm is removed. Satan can't blind us any longer. We're able to start learning God's ways. "...whenever a person turns [in repentance] to the Lord, the veil is stripped off and taken away" (II Corinthians 3:16).

When we become members of the family of God, an entire new realm of understanding opens up to us. We're able to understand great spiritual truths that weren't available to us before we were saved. "...To you it has been given to know the secrets and mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given" (Matthew 13:11).

Many Christians can testify that they were unable to understand the Bible before they were saved, but they were able to understand it after their salvation. I can't explain why this happens, but I've seen it happen time and time again. "Whoever is of God listens to God. [Those who belong to God hear the words of God]..." (John 8:47).

Our Father gives us new hearts when we're reborn spiritually. "A new heart will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you..." (Ezekiel 36:26). Our Father imprints His Word on our minds and in our hearts. "...I will imprint My laws upon their minds, even upon their innermost thoughts and understanding, and engrave them upon their hearts; and I will be their God and they shall be My people" (Hebrews 8:10).

When we become Christians, we're given the ability to "tune in" to the Holy Spirit. He enables us to understand spiritual truths we couldn't understand before we were saved. Many Christians have a great hunger to learn everything they can about the ways of God. "...I endorse and delight in the Law of God in my inmost self [with my new nature]" (Romans 7:22).

In addition to the gift of being able to understand the Word, we're also given a specific amount of faith to start us off on our new life as Christians. We don't earn this faith. We don't deserve this faith. It's a gift from "...Jesus, Who is the Leader and the Source of our faith [giving the first incentive for our belief]..." (Hebrews 12:2).

I believe every new Christian is given the same amount of faith. "God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" (Romans 12:3, *The King James Bible*). The Greek word that's translated "measure" here is the word "metron." This word is similar to the English word "meter." It refers to a specific amount of measurement.

All Christians have the opportunity to increase the amount of faith they were given. Some Christians pay the price of working diligently to increase their faith. Please look at the person you know who has more faith than anyone else. Realize you were given the same amount of faith as this person!

Our Father wants us to hold tightly to the precious measure of faith He gave us. He wants our faith to grow continually so that it will be strong and adequate at all times. "...we have become fellows with Christ (the Messiah) and share in all He has for us, if only we hold our first newborn confidence and original assured expectation [in virtue of which we are believers] firm and unshaken to the end" (Hebrews 3:14).

We must not let this precious gift of faith wane. Our Father wants His children to trust completely in Him at all times. On four different occasions, the Word of God tells us that our Father wants His children to live by faith:

(1) "...the [rigidly] just and the [uncompromisingly] righteous man shall live by his faith and in his faithfulness" (Habakkuk 2:4).

(2) "...The man who through faith is just and upright shall live and shall live by faith"
(Romans 1:17)

(3) "...The man in right standing with God [the just, the righteous] shall live by and out of faith..." (Galatians 3:11).

(4) "...the just shall live by faith [My righteous servant shall live by his conviction respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, and holy fervor born of faith and conjoined with it]; and if he draws back and shrinks in fear, My soul has no delight or pleasure in him" (Hebrews 10:38).

There's no doubt that our Father wants His children to live their lives based on strong faith in Him. The word "just" that's used in each of these Scripture references means we're justified before God. Because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, our position before God is perfect — just as if we had never sinned.

All Christians share in the victory of Jesus Christ. The manifestation of this glorious victory will be automatic when we get to heaven, but we're only able to bring it into manifestation here on earth through faith. We must not draw back because of doubt and unbelief.

We actually sin if we don't trust in God. We must believe our Father will do exactly what He says He'll do. "...For whatever does not originate and proceed from faith is sin [whatever is done without a conviction of its approval by God is sinful]" (Romans 14:23).

We can see how important it is to have faith. Our faith should grow steadily after we're saved. I studied *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* to find different levels of faith that are mentioned in *The King James Bible*. I found there are at least ten levels of faith:

- (1) "no faith" (Mark 4:40)
- (2) "little faith" (Matthew 6:30)
- (3) "weak in faith" (Romans 14:1)
- (4) "steadfast faith" (Colossians 2:5)
- (5) "strong in faith" (Romans 4:20)
- (6) "rich in faith" (James 2:5)
- (7) "great faith" (Matthew 8:10)
- (8) "full of faith" (Acts 6:5)
- (9) "exceeding abundant faith" (I Timothy 1:14)
- (10) "faith made perfect" (James 2:22).

There's no doubt that Christians are able to develop different degrees of faith. I ask each person reading this book, where do you stand on this list? What level of faith do you require to deal with the problems in your life today? What level of faith do you think will be necessary during the difficult times the world will face in the last days before Jesus returns? Would you like to increase your faith? Do you know how to do this?

The apostles went to Jesus to ask Him to increase their faith. He explained how faith works. "The apostles said to the Lord, Increase our faith (that trust and confidence that spring from our belief in God). And the Lord answered, If you had faith (trust and confidence in God) even [so small] like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, Be pulled up by the roots, and be planted in the sea, and it would obey you" (Luke 17:5-6).

When we first receive the measure of faith when we're saved, it's relatively small. However, like the mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds, our faith can grow tremendously. Jesus said, "It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all seeds upon the earth; yet after it is sown, it grows up and becomes the greatest of all garden herbs and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air are able to make nests and dwell in its shade" (Mark 4:31-32).

In two places the Word of God tells us that Jesus compared our faith to a mustard seed. This tiny seed grows into a large plant ten or twelve feet high. It's large enough that birds can make nests in its branches and live in its shade. Jesus gives us this illustration to show us that we can take the small measure of faith we're given when we're saved and develop it so we'll be able to trust Him no matter how big our problems might seem to us.

All Christians are given this same "seed" when they're saved. Unfortunately, some of us allow it to lie dormant. Jesus wants us to "water" this seed, "fertilize" it and pull out the "weeds" that will try to stop faith from growing in our hearts.

In the remaining chapters of this book, we'll look into the Word of God to see exactly what it says about developing our faith. The measure of faith we receive is God's gift to us. What we do with this faith is our gift to Him! We can only build a strong faith if we start by building on a solid foundation. Let's look into the Word of God to see the foundation our Father has provided for our faith.

Chapter 5

A Rock-Solid Foundation

Before I became a Christian, I was close to bankruptcy and a nervous breakdown. A friend of mine changed my life when he said, “Jack, you’re a good man. You believe in God. You work hard. You have spent many hours reading books written by men and women, but you have never built your faith on the solid foundation of the one Book that was inspired by God.”

My friend told me that everything in the Bible was inspired by God Himself. Scripture is the foundation of the faith of a Christian. “Every Scripture is God-breathed (given by His inspiration)...” (II Timothy 3:16). The same God Who created each of us and the world we live in has given us a Book of Instructions!

The Word of God is the foundation for our faith. Our heavenly Father has given us a foundation that will stand up against any problem we’ll ever face. Nothing can shake the solid foundation of the Word of God! “...the firm foundation of (laid by) God stands, sure and unshaken...” (II Timothy 2:19).

I believe a great shaking will take place throughout the world during the last days before Jesus returns. Many people all over the world will find that the foundations they have built their lives upon will not stand up under the shaking. The Word of God cannot be shaken. It will stand up under any problem in this world. “Every word of God is tried and purified; He is a shield to those who trust and take refuge in Him” (Proverbs 30:5).

We can depend entirely on the promises in the Word of God. Our heavenly Father is always completely reliable. “God is faithful (reliable, trustworthy, and therefore ever true to His promise, and He can be depended on)...” (I Corinthians 1:9).

Our Father stands behind every promise in His Word. He knows exactly what we’re going through. He knows when His children are placing all their trust in the promises in His Word. He’ll never let us down. “...I am alert and active, watching over My word to perform it” (Jeremiah 1:12).

When the bottom is falling out of our lives, God is our Rock. He’s on a much higher level than we are. When everything is going wrong, we can reach up and hold tightly onto the promises in His Word. They’re as solid as a rock. They will hold us up. “...when my heart is overwhelmed and fainting; lead me to the rock that is higher than I...” (Psalm 61:2).

Please stop for a moment and think of the one person on this earth you trust more than anyone else. If this person told you he or she would do something for you, would you believe this person? The promises of God are much more dependable than the promises of any human being. "...when you received the message of God [which you heard] from us, you welcomed it not as the word of [mere] men, but as it truly is, the Word of God, which is effectually at work in you who believe [exercising its superhuman power in those who adhere to and trust in and rely on it]" (I Thessalonians 2:13).

God has blessed us with the ability to have a relationship with another human being that's so close we can rely completely on that person. However, the Word of God is much greater than the word of any human being! It will change our lives beyond human comprehension if we dare to follow its instructions and trust and rely on its supernatural power.

The apostle Paul was the most prolific writer in the New Testament. His writings have changed the lives of millions of people. Paul tells the source of every word he wrote. He said "...the Gospel which was proclaimed and made known by me is not man's gospel [a human invention, according to or patterned after any human standard]. For indeed I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but [it came to me] through a [direct] revelation [given] by Jesus Christ (the Messiah)" (Galatians 1:11-12).

We must understand that the Word of God has a heavenly origin. We can't compare it to anything created by man. It transcends everything on this earth. "Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven [stands firm as the heavens]" (Psalm 119:89).

When something is settled, it's firmly in place. It's established. It's permanent and stable. The Word of God is firmly settled in heaven. Our Father's Word is so dependable that He exalts it above everything else! "...You have exalted above all else Your name and Your word and You have magnified Your word above all Your name!" (Psalm 138:2).

When we're trying to build a strong faith, we must understand the magnificence of God's Word. We can rely completely on "...the ever truthful God Who cannot deceive..." (Titus 1:2). He is completely trustworthy. He'll never back down on any promise in His Word. If He says something, we can rely on it! "...the Scripture cannot be set aside or cancelled or broken or annulled..." (John 10:35).

When we read a promise in the holy Scripture, we can't compare it with anything of human origin. It's in a class by itself. "...everything [human] has its limits and end, [no matter

how extensive, noble and excellent]; but Your commandment is exceedingly broad and extends without limits [into eternity]" (Psalm 119:96).

We must not limit the Word of God! Every promise in the Bible is indestructible. The Word of God gives us the permanence and certainty we need in these uncertain changing times. Jesus said, "Sky and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away" (Matthew 24:35).

The Word of God isn't affected by worldly conditions. We've just seen that the earth will pass away one day. It won't last forever. However, the Word of God is eternal. Nothing can compare with its stability. "...the word of our God will stand forever" (Isaiah 40:8).

The Word of God is amazing. It has a spiritual origin. Nothing on earth can compare with it. Jesus told us that His Word is actually alive! "...The words (truths) that I have been speaking to you are spirit and life" (John 6:63).

The Word of God is filled with the power of God. It's a perfect foundation for our faith. "For the Word that God speaks is alive and full of power [making it active, operative, energizing, and effective]; it is sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating to the dividing line of the breath of life (soul) and [the immortal] spirit, and of joints and marrow [of the deepest parts of our nature], exposing and sifting and analyzing and judging the very thoughts and purposes of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

I love this passage of Scripture. It tells so much! The Word of God is filled with the energy and power of God Himself. It's able to invigorate and activate us. If we can learn to harness its supernatural power, it will release the effectiveness of God in us and through us. If our hearts are filled with the living power of the Word of God, we'll be able to do things we couldn't possibly do with our limited human abilities.

The Word of God is compared here with a sword. When this was written, soldiers carried two-edged swords that were honed to razor sharpness. The Word of God is sharper than the sharpest sword man has ever created. It's able to cut deep down inside of us to show us what we're really like. It helps us to see ourselves as God sees us.

The Word of God is so penetrating and powerful that it's actually able to separate our souls from our spirits. It's able to sift our innermost thoughts and desires. When something is sifted, it's passed through a sieve to separate the waste. This is what the Word of God is able to do for us! It's able to separate everything in our lives that doesn't have eternal value. This enables us to cut waste out of our lives.

When something is analyzed, it's separated into component parts. The Word of God enables us to separate the thoughts and purposes of our hearts to see them from God's point of view.

We certainly can trust the supernatural Word of God as a foundation for our faith. It's so powerful that the world we live in and all of the planets, stars and galaxies in the entire universe are controlled by it. "...upholding and maintaining and guiding and propelling the universe by His mighty word of power..." (Hebrews 1:3).

I'm overwhelmed every time I think about this passage of Scripture. First, we're told that the entire universe is held up by the Word of God. If this incredible Book has enough power in it to hold up the entire universe, we certainly can depend on it to hold us up when we're dealing with problems in our lives!

We're told the universe is maintained by the Word of God. When something is maintained, it's kept in working order so that it operates efficiently. The Word of God keeps the universe in perfect working order at all times.

We are also taught that the Word of God guides the universe. A guide keeps us on course and directs us. The Word of God is able to keep everything in the universe on course and headed in the right direction.

Finally, we're told that the universe is propelled by the Word of God. The word "propel" means "to drive forward." The Word of God keeps the universe going forward at all times. When we place all of our trust upon it, it's able to keep us moving forward at all times.

This passage of Scripture gives each child of God an inkling of what is available to us if we can learn to appropriate the supernatural power of the Word of God. Most human beings think nuclear power is a tremendous power. We must understand that the Word of God is much, much greater than nuclear power!

Faith requires us to step from the seen into the unseen. In order to take this step, we must have an absolute certainty that we're stepping out upon a solid foundation. "For His divine power has bestowed upon us all things that [are requisite and suited] to life and godliness, through the [full, personal] knowledge of Him Who called us by and to His own glory and excellence (virtue). By means of these He has bestowed on us His precious and exceedingly great promises, so that through them you may escape [by flight] from the moral decay (rottenness and corruption) that is in the world because of covetousness (lust and greed), and

become sharers (partakers) of the divine nature” (II Peter 1:3-4).

This passage of Scripture is filled with stunning facts! First, it tells us that God has given us everything we’ll need to live a godly life here on earth. He has given us “precious and exceedingly great promises” in His Word. These promises are extremely valuable to all of us. They’re described by the words “precious” and “exceedingly great.”

When something is precious, it’s exceedingly valuable. No one can put a price on the value of the Word of God. It’s more valuable than anything we can comprehend. We have no earthly frame of reference for comparison. We can’t fathom the greatness of the promises in the Word of God by human terms and measurement.

We’re told that, through these precious promises, we’ll be able to escape the moral decay that fills the world today. How will we be able to do this? We’ll actually be able to partake of the divine nature of Almighty God. The promises of the Word of God are so great that, when they get inside of us, they’ll enable us to partake of the nature of God Himself. This is the foundation we’re building our faith upon!

Our Father wants us to be in complete awe of His Word. He wants us to give it the reverence it deserves. “...this is the man to whom I will look and have regard: he who is humble and of a broken or wounded spirit, and who trembles at My word and reveres My commands” (Isaiah 66:2).

I’ve written an entire chapter in this book about the relationship between humility and faith. Our faith won’t work unless we’re humble. It also won’t work unless we treat the awesome, supernatural Word of God with the same reverence and awe we would have if we were face to face with God Himself.

This chapter is filled with Scripture references that tell us why we can build our faith on the solid foundation of the Word of God. We’re now ready to proceed to take the first step in building a strong faith. If our faith is going to be built on the foundation of the Word of God, we must learn to study this precious Book in order to build our faith effectively.

Chapter 6

Study the Word of God

Now that we have a solid foundation for our faith, we’re ready to take the first step to

build upon this foundation. In order to do this, we must learn how to get the Word of God up off the printed page, into our minds and down into our hearts. We start this process by learning how to fill our minds continually with the supernatural power of the Word of God.

Satan wants to get into our minds. When we're faced with problems, he wants us to think about them repeatedly. He wants the problems in our lives to consume our thinking.

Our Father doesn't want us to give Satan a foothold in any area of our lives. "Leave no [such] room or foothold for the devil [give no opportunity to him]" (Ephesians 4:27). We must not allow Satan to control our thinking! Our Father gives each of us the right to control our own thinking.

If Satan attempts to get us to think in a manner that's contrary to the Word of God, our Father wants us to reject these thoughts. We should "...refute arguments and theories and reasonings and every proud and lofty thing that sets itself up against the [true] knowledge of God; and we lead every thought and purpose away captive into the obedience of Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One)" (II Corinthians 10:5).

If we refute something, we refuse to accept it. Satan wants us to believe the problems we face are greater than the promises in the Word of God. This is a lie! However, our problems are very real to us. Satan wants us to think they're much greater than the words contained in the Bible.

We've seen that the words in God's Book are supernatural. They're alive and filled with the power of God. If we fill our minds continually with these precious promises, we'll be able to refute the arguments, theories and reasonings Satan tries to put in our minds. We'll be able to reject them because we've "programmed" our minds with the truth of the Word of God.

The human mind is similar to a computer. Our Father has given us the ability to program our minds with His Word. If we do this continually, our minds will refuse to accept any lies that are contrary to its programming. These lies come from Satan and his evil spirits.

In II Corinthians 10:5, we find the description, "every proud and lofty thing that sets itself up against the [true] knowledge of God." Satan certainly is a "lofty thing." At one time, he was an archangel named Lucifer who was very high in the Kingdom of God. However, his pride led him to rebel against God and he was ejected from the Kingdom of God. He then changed from Lucifer into Satan.

Satan wants us to believe the promises in the Word of God can't possibly be greater than

the seemingly immense problems we're faced with. He uses many subtle techniques to try to get us to give up. He wants us to deny the victory of Jesus Christ.

Jesus wants us to bring His victory into manifestation in our lives. This starts by learning how to control our thinking. "...whatever is true, whatever is worthy of reverence and is honorable and seemly, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely and lovable, whatever is kind and winsome and gracious, if there is any virtue and excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think on and weigh and take account of these things [fix your minds on them]" (Philippians 4:8).

Instead of thinking about our problems continually, we need to fill our minds with the Word of God so that they're immersed in its beautiful promises. We should fix our minds continually on these promises. If we do, Satan won't be able to get us to fix our minds on our problems!

I believe spiritual warfare boils down to whether we think what Satan wants us to think or what God wants us to think. We don't require any training whatsoever to think what Satan wants us to think. We don't need to study how to be selfish, worried, afraid, angry or jealous. Negative thoughts are easy to think. Positive thoughts aren't as easy.

I agree with the principles of positive thinking, but they must have a solid spiritual foundation! In the years before I became a Christian, I tried to control my thoughts and think positively. It worked up to a point, but when the pressure reached a certain level, I fell apart and gave in to negative thoughts and emotions.

I've learned positive thinking is only effective for severe pressure if Jesus Christ is in control of our lives and if our thoughts are solidly anchored in the Word of God. Satan can't get at us with his negative thoughts if we do this!

Satan controlled our lives at one time, but he doesn't control us if we're reborn spiritually. "...at one time you walked [habitually]. You were following the course and fashion of this world [were under the sway of the tendency of this present age], following the prince of the power of the air. [You were obedient to and under the control of] the [demon] spirit that still constantly works in the sons of disobedience [the careless, the rebellious, and the unbelieving, who go against the purposes of God]" (Ephesians 2:2).

Before we became Christians, we lived the way the world lives. People who do this are easily swayed by Satan. He still controls unsaved people, but we shouldn't let him control our

thinking!

Our Father wants us to separate ourselves and stand strong in Him. “Do not be conformed to this world (this age), [fashioned after and adapted to its external, superficial customs], but be transformed (changed) by the [entire] renewal of your mind [by its new ideals and its new attitude], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, even the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His sight for you]” (Romans 12:2).

Christians shouldn't be conformed to the way the world lives. The world is superficial. Its principles operate from the outside in. God's ways are much different from the ways of the world. Instead of conforming to the way the world lives and giving in to the thoughts Satan tries to put into our minds, our Father wants us to be transformed by continually renewing our minds in His Word.

The Greek word that's translated as “transformed” here is the word “metamorphoo.” This is very similar to the English word “metamorphosis” which means a complete change – a total transformation. After we're reborn spiritually, our Father wants us to be completely transformed from the ways of this world.

This change doesn't happen automatically. We must pay the price of renewing our minds continually in the Word of God. When something is renewed, it's given a fresh start. It's rejuvenated. This is what happens to our minds when we make the decision to turn away from the way we used to think and continually study the Word of God.

We can only change from our old thoughts and habit patterns by making a conscious decision to change ourselves from the inside out. “Strip yourselves of your former nature [put off and discard your old unrenewed self] which characterized your previous manner of life and becomes corrupt through lusts and desires that spring from delusion; and be constantly renewed in the spirit of your mind [having a fresh mental and spiritual attitude]...” (Ephesians 4:22-23).

When we “strip” ourselves of something, we take it off. We remove it. This is what our Father wants us to do with the way we used to live! He wants us to discard it. He doesn't want us to think the way we used to. He doesn't want us to allow Satan to get into our minds with the subtle techniques he used for so many years.

Instead, the Word of God tells us to be constantly renewed in the spirit of our minds. The word “constantly” is very important. When we're going through difficult times, we can't afford

to be inconsistent in our Bible study. If we're consistent, we'll have a "fresh mental and spiritual attitude." Satan won't be able to get into our minds.

If we pay the price of continually renewing our minds, we'll think more and more the way God thinks. As this process takes place over a period of time, we'll be able to see life from God's perspective. We won't believe the lies of Satan. We'll be able to see them for what they are when they're held up against the truth of the Word of God.

For 12 years, I taught a weekly Bible study class. We started each of these hundreds of classes with the same verse of Scripture. "Study and be eager and do your utmost to present yourself to God approved (tested by trial), a workman who has no cause to be ashamed, correctly analyzing and accurately dividing [rightly handling and skillfully teaching] the Word of Truth" (II Timothy 2:15).

Let me ask you some obvious questions. Do you want God to approve of the way you live? Of course you do! Do you want to bring the victory of Jesus Christ into manifestation in every area of your life? Of course you do! Do you know how to win God's approval? Do you know how to appropriate the victory of Jesus Christ?

We accomplish these goals by studying the Word of God eagerly and fervently. If we do this, we present ourselves to our Father as children who have learned how to appropriate the victory of Jesus Christ. If we've learned how to study the Word of God properly, we'll never be ashamed. We won't give in to Satan. Because our minds have been renewed, we won't succumb to the thoughts he tries to put in our minds.

In this book, I won't go into the minute details of Bible study. This is a separate subject in itself. Anyone who wants to learn about a proven and very effective method of studying the Bible may want to read my book, *How to Study the Bible*. This book gives a step-by-step explanation of how to study the Word of God.

In this book, we're talking about increasing our faith. How do we go about studying the Word of God to do this? We've just seen that this is done by "correctly analyzing and accurately dividing" the Word of God. We can't open our Bibles and find one chapter that tells us everything we need to know about how to strengthen our faith.

Our Father has interspersed hundreds of instructions on strengthening faith throughout His Word. If we want to increase our faith, we need to pay the price of finding and "digging out" these instructions. It's amazing to see how they all fit together so beautifully. "...precept upon

precept, precept upon precept, rule upon rule, rule upon rule; here a little, there a little” (Isaiah 28:10).

This is the way we study the Bible on the topic of faith or any other subject. We learn how to find precious nuggets of spiritual truth throughout the Bible. This isn’t easy. When we study the Bible, we don’t just skim on the surface. We pore over whatever we’re studying. We dig deeply to extract every bit of spiritual truth we can.

My book, *How to Study the Bible*, explains how to use various tools for studying the Bible. If I wanted to study the subject of faith, I’d start by looking up this category in *Nave’s Topical Bible*. In this book, Dr. Orville Nave has categorized more than 100,000 Scripture references into more than 20,000 topics and subtopics.

Anyone wanting to study the subject of faith will find 18 reference pages in this topical Bible. Dr. Nave has broken this down into subheadings such as Faith, Faith - enjoined, Faith - exemplified, Faith - instances of, Faith - in Christ, Faith - instances of and Faithfulness. If I wanted to increase faith, I’d start by going through these Scripture references to the ones that were meaningful to me.

I’d then look up each Scripture in my *Thompson Chain Reference Bible*. This Bible links Scripture references into topical chains. Many of these chains have several subtopics. Most of the Scripture references in the chain reference Bible will be the same as those in the topical Bible. However, I’ve always found fresh, new “nuggets” whenever I followed the instructions in either of these two Bibles.

Bible study requires a tremendous commitment. We must not let fear get at us and cause us to be discouraged. “...we do not become discouraged (utterly spiritless, exhausted, and wearied out through fear). Though our outer man is [progressively] decaying and wasting away, yet our inner self is being [progressively] renewed day after day” (II Corinthians 4:16).

This passage of Scripture sheds new light on how to fight discouragement and keep going in spite of severe problems. We all know that problems seem worse when we’re tired. Satan knows this, too. When we’re exhausted and weary, he often tries to get at us with the spirit of fear.

How can we resist the enemy? We renew our minds day after day. Every human being grows older with every passing day. Our bodies decay and waste away. Our Father wants us to offset the aging process that takes place so subtly by renewing our minds in His Word every day.

We build ourselves up in the inside. This offsets the aging process that takes place in our bodies and enables us to fight off fear and discouragement.

Bible study gets the Word of God off the printed page into our minds. This is the first step to increasing our faith. In the next chapter, I'll explain the second step – meditating on the Word of God. All Christians who learn to study the Word of God effectively and meditate on it continually will be able to build themselves up spiritually to repel the attacks of Satan.

Chapter 7

What Is Meditation?

I can't think of one spiritual ingredient that's more important to developing a strong faith than continual meditation on the Word of God. Christians who study the Word of God and stop there will find it much more difficult to strengthen their faith than Christians who add daily meditation to their Bible study.

Let me attempt to prove this by asking each reader of this book a very obvious question. Would you like to live your life so it's a success in the eyes of God? Virtually everyone will answer "yes" to this question. The next question will be more difficult for most people to answer. Do you know the only verse of Scripture in the Bible that contains the word "success?"

There are more than 500,000 words in the Bible. *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, which contains every word in the Bible, includes the word "success" only once – in Joshua 1:8. The Hebrew word "sakal" that's translated "success" here means "an expert – someone with great wisdom and understanding who is prosperous, skillful, and able to teach others."

When Moses died, God selected a young man named Joshua to replace him. God knew how overwhelming this was to Joshua. So, He gave him very specific advice, saying, "This Book of the Law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may observe and do according to all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall deal wisely and have good success" (Joshua 1:8).

Joshua had a tremendous responsibility. He had been chosen to be the leader of more than one million people. He had to battle against overwhelming odds. I believe this is why God gave Joshua such specific instructions. God made it very clear that meditating day and night on His Word would be vitally important to Joshua's success. Meditation also is extremely important to

any Christian who desires to build the strong faith that will be an absolute essential for success in the last days before Jesus returns.

At this point, I'd like to ask two additional questions of each person reading this book. First, if meditation is so important for success, do you honestly know what it means to meditate day and night on the Word of God? Many Christians don't know how to meditate. For those who do know what this means, I would like to ask whether you actually are meditating day and night on the Word of God.

Unfortunately, many Christians will answer this question negatively. It's possible for some of these people to get by in the relatively calm atmosphere that exists in the world at this time. However, in the very difficult times that will prevail in the last days, I believe meditation will be absolutely essential to success.

If meditation is so important, we first of all must define it. Some people confuse Christian meditation with the meditation of Eastern religions. Buddhists, Hindus and people who practice yoga and transcendental meditation place significant emphasis on meditation. The way they meditate and the way Christians are instructed to meditate are vastly different.

Most Eastern religions emphasize the necessity of "nothingness" in the mind of the person who is meditating. Our Father never intended for us to meditate on nothing! Christian meditation is based on continually filling our minds and hearts with the supernatural power of the Word of God.

We play right into Satan's hands if we empty our minds during meditation. He's looking for empty minds he can fill with deception. Satan isn't afraid of empty minds. He's afraid of minds that are renewed continually in the Word of God. He's afraid of hearts that are filled to overflowing with holy Scripture.

What is Christian meditation and how do we meditate? When I meditate on the Word of God, I always start with prayer. I ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate the portion of Scripture I'm meditating on. I ask Him to personalize it. I ask Him to show me exactly how it pertains to me.

I then ponder over the passage of Scripture. When I meditate, I try to determine exactly what God is saying. I look at the passage of Scripture as a personal message from Him to me. I reflect on this throughout the day and night. I turn it over and over in my mind. I deliberate on it. Sometimes I divide this passage of Scripture into smaller portions and reflect on these portions.

When I meditate, I dig, probe and explore. I absorb everything I can from the Word of

God. I soak it up. I consume it. Instead of gulping it down quickly, I chew on it slowly. I extract everything I can. I'm in no hurry. If I want to go into a second or third day of meditating on the same portion of Scripture, I can.

Let me be more specific. When people tell me they don't know how to meditate, I usually respond by saying everyone knows how to meditate because worrying and meditating are very similar. When we worry, we do the same things we do when we meditate on the Word of God, except that we make negative application of principles that are meant to be used positively. To meditate on the Word of God, we should reverse the things we do when we worry by a full 180 degrees.

We all know people who worry a great deal. If they can't find something to worry about, they'll make something! Chronic worriers are consumed by the problems in their lives. They think about them continually.

They turn these problems over and over in their minds. They look at them from every conceivable angle. They imagine what will happen if the things they worry about come into manifestation. They actually visualize these things happening to them. "Your mind will meditate on the terror..." (Isaiah 33:18).

The Word of God uses the same word for godly meditation to describe the negative meditation that takes place when someone continually thinks about things that cause terror. Instead of meditation on terror – the problems that chronic worriers think about constantly – our Father wants us to meditate continually on His Word. When we worry, we meditate continually on things we don't want to happen. Our Father wants us to learn how to meditate continually on the things He does want to happen in our lives!

When I first became a Christian 18 years ago, I was on the verge of bankruptcy. Because of my financial problems, I was almost paralyzed with fear. I thought about my problems continually. I imagined what would happen if the bottom fell out.

I often worried about having to tell my wife and children we would have to move out of the home we had lived in for 12 years. I thought a lot about how disappointed they would be if we had to move into a low rent apartment. I was afraid of their reaction. I was also very concerned with what my business associates and friends would think.

I thought about this continually. It consumed me. Many times I'd wake up in the middle of the night and my financial problems would be at the forefront of my mind. I'd often get up

and walk the floor at night pondering my problems. This process continued on a daily basis for a period of several months.

I was definitely performing negative principles of meditation at that time. However, by the grace of God, the Lord used a friend of mine to lead me to Jesus Christ at that particular crisis time in my life. My friend convinced me that I needed to “saturate” myself in the Bible. I immediately started to study and meditate continually on the Word of God.

I studied the Bible primarily in the early morning hours. Each morning when I studied, I wrote down verses of Scripture that were particularly meaningful to me. I put these Scripture references on 3x5 file cards. I took these cards with me and meditated on them throughout the day and night. This was very effective!

I learned at this time that Christians who meditate continually on the Word of God throughout the day and night put themselves in a position where Satan has very little opportunity to get his thoughts into their minds. If our minds are already filled with the Word of God, there isn't any room for the seeds of doubt and unbelief Satan tries to plant in them!

Some people who read this may react by thinking, “I'm too busy to meditate day and night.” Would our heavenly Father, with His wisdom, tell us to do something that isn't possible? He knows exactly how busy every one of His children is. Satan is the one who wants us to think we're too busy. Our Father knows better. He wouldn't tell us to meditate day and night on His Word if we weren't able to do this successfully.

Our Father is practical. He knows most of us have to work for a living. He doesn't tell us to study His Word throughout the day and night. He knows most people can't do this. However, He does tell us to meditate day and night upon His Word. He knows we can do this.

Many of us have more discretionary time than we think. If the problems in our lives are severe enough and if we want to badly enough, we can meditate on the Word of God while we're getting dressed in the morning and while we're eating breakfast. Sometimes I put a 3x5 card on the dashboard of my car when I'm driving. I speak that passage of Scripture out loud throughout the day whenever I'm in my automobile. I comment on it. I personalize it.

Some of us have discretionary time to meditate on the Word of God while we're at work. One laboratory technician told me he kept a 3x5 card in front of him throughout the day while he worked. I've often seen a 3x5 card on my secretary's desk.

Most of us can meditate during a portion of our lunch hour and while we're driving to

and from work. Most Christians can free up quite a bit of time to meditate on the Word of God during the evenings and on weekends. If we're hurting badly enough, we'll make time to meditate continually on the Word of God!

I know several Christian housewives who meditate continually on the Word of God while they're cooking meals, washing clothes, ironing, doing dishes and cleaning. They're determined to soak up every bit of spiritual power they can. They make routine household chores into a thrilling experience by using this time to meditate continually on the supernatural power of the Word of God.

Let me give you an actual example of what I did when I meditated on a verse of Scripture that literally saved my life during my early days as a Christian. During those difficult times when I was on the verge of bankruptcy and a nervous breakdown, I continually read and reread the *King James Version* of Philippians 4:13 which says, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

At that time, I honestly didn't understand the importance of meditating on the Word of God. I now see that, by the grace of God, even though I didn't understand, I actually meditated on this verse of Scripture in my early days as a Christian.

When the pressure in my life seemed immense and there didn't seem to be any way out of my problems, I would walk around in the basement of my home where my small office was located. I'd open my mouth continually and talk about this particular passage of Scripture. It was the only way I could keep my mind off the problems I believed were threatening to consume me.

Let me tell you exactly what I did with the first passage of Scripture I meditated on. I often said something like, "This doesn't say I can do some things. It doesn't say I can do most things. It says I can do all things! If I can do all things, this definitely includes the problems I'm facing. They aren't going to lick me! If we couldn't come out safely on the other side, the Word of God wouldn't say I can do all things through the strength of Jesus Christ.

"I know I can't solve these problems with my own ability. I'm too weak. The problems I'm facing are much more than I can handle. I admit this. I don't have to depend on my abilities! I'm depending completely on Jesus Christ. The Word of God says .he'll give me the strength and ability to solve these problems.

"I refuse to give up! I don't care how long this takes. I believe Philippians 4:13 is true. I receive this promise by faith. Jesus Christ won a total victory over all problems. This includes

the problems I face. His victory belongs to me!

“I know Jesus will bring me through. I have complete faith in Him. He won’t let me down. I know I can handle every problem through His strength. I believe this with all my heart. Thank You, Jesus, for the victory You have given me. I receive this victory by faith. I praise You and I thank You.”

During that extremely difficult period in my life, Philippians 4:13 consumed me. I thought about it constantly. I persevered. I spent so much time meditating on this one verse of Scripture that my mind and heart were filled with it.

Sometimes I’d speak this verse of Scripture until I had repeated it 100 times. I can clearly remember being at my desk saying, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me,” and writing down the number “1” on a pad. Then I’d say it again and write down the number “2.”

I continued until I had 100 numbers written on a pad. Try this. It’s a long process, but it’s definitely worth the time and effort. It worked for me then and it has worked many times since then.

Philippians 4:13 is my favorite verse of Scripture. Whenever I’m faced with severe problems, I inevitably turn to it and other passages of Scripture pertaining to the strength of the Lord. It always refreshes me to meditate on the fact that God’s strength is available to me whenever my human ability is insufficient. (Chapter 12 of this book explains this principle in detail).

Chapter 8

How Do We Meditate on the Word Of God?

So far, I’ve explained what it means to meditate on the Word of God and I’ve given an example using one verse of Scripture. This same process can be repeated many times with different passages of Scripture. As we personalize the Word of God day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year, our hearts become filled with the supernatural living Word of God. The power of the holy Scriptures comes alive deep down inside of us.

Then we are able to look at problems that seem to be extremely difficult and know deep down inside of ourselves that we have the victory of Jesus Christ. If we strengthen our faith each

day by meditating throughout the day and night on the Word of God, we know this victory is being manifested in our lives. As this process takes place, we develop a deep inner confidence that our Father will bring us through and that we will emerge victorious over the problems we face.

Unfortunately, some Christians don't have the Word of God living in their hearts. Others have only two or three passages of Scripture. Some Christians have 10 or 20 Scripture references living in their hearts. Our Father wants us to have hundreds and, ultimately, thousands of instructions and promises from His Word programmed deep down inside of us.

If Christians only meditate on two passages of Scripture in a week, they will produce a great harvest over a period of time. This plan requires meditating on only one passage of Scripture every 3-1/2 days. People who only meditate this much will deposit more than 100 passages of Scripture in their hearts every year! In ten years, this amounts to more than 1,000 Scripture references living inside of them!

I've been doing this quite consistently for 18 years. I know I have more than 1,000 passages of Scripture living in my heart. I often find myself speaking Scripture I didn't realize I knew. I can't emphasize too much how important it is to have large amounts of the Word of God living in our hearts. This is invaluable when we're faced with problems that seem to be unsolvable.

This is important at all times, but it will be especially important in the last days before the Lord returns. The Word of God is our spiritual food. We eat spiritual food by studying the Word of God. We digest spiritual food by meditating day and night on the Word of God.

When we meditate, we "chew" on the food provided by a portion of Scripture. As we do this throughout the day and night, our food is digested. The process of spiritual digestion moves the food from our minds into our hearts where it produces spiritual energy and vitality called faith. The more spiritual food we digest, the stronger our faith becomes.

We must realize the importance of immersing ourselves in the Word of God. When we meditate on God's Word continually and regularly over a long period of time, the cumulative total of all of the Scripture we consume comes alive inside of us. Our hearts are filled with spiritual strength! I can't think of anything more important to building strong, unwavering faith than to meditate continually on the holy Scriptures, to breathe in the Word of God morning, noon and night.

In addition to the method I illustrated in the last chapter, there are other ways to meditate on the Word of God. I've found it very helpful to spend a lot of time meditating on the faithfulness of God. During the past 18 years, our Father has proven Himself faithful to me. I've also observed His tender loving care of other people. When I'm faced with a difficult problem, I often reflect on the various times in the past I've been faced with adversity and the Lord has delivered me.

Instead of focusing on my present problems, I often divert my attention by thinking about the times the Lord has blessed me. I review them over and over in my mind. I open my mouth and talk about them. I boldly say that I know He'll pull me through the problems I'm facing in the present. "...be ever mindful of the days gone by in which, after which you were first spiritually enlightened, you endured a great and painful struggle..." (Hebrews 10:32).

Sometimes I spend quite a bit of time meditating on the lives of friends who have been helped by God. Over the years, I've developed many relationships with Christians who have been greatly blessed by the Lord. When I'm going through a season of adversity, I associate as much as possible with other Christians who have strong faith. I ask them to tell me what God has done for them. I meditate on what they tell me until I get to the point where I believe God will do the same for me. This really helps. Try this and see for yourself.

Another effective method of meditation is to meditate on the great works of God that are described in the Bible. The psalmist David went through many difficult ordeals. I believe he was able to persevere and keep going in the midst of severe adversity because he meditated day and night on the mighty deeds of God.

In one psalm he said, "I will meditate also upon all Your works and consider all Your [mighty] deeds" (Psalm 77:12). At a later time, he wrote something that was quite similar. He said, "...I meditate on all Your doings; I ponder the work of Your hands" (Psalm 143:5).

The Bible is filled with wonderful examples of God bringing people successfully through seemingly impossible situations. The story of David and Goliath is an inspiration. The deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego is a wonderful example of God's blessings. The entire Book of Job is a tribute to God's faithfulness in the face of seemingly impossible problems.

Christians who are going through difficult times can receive strength by meditating on the story of Daniel in the lions' den. I believe it's very inspirational to meditate on Moses

crossing the Red Sea. We should be able to actually imagine ourselves being there when the waters of the Red Sea parted. We should try to understand how Moses and the Israelites felt.

We also could imagine ourselves with Joshua and his followers marching around the walls of Jericho. Some of these people must have had doubts as they marched around the walls of Jericho saying absolutely nothing for six days. However, God had given them instructions and they obeyed Him.

On the seventh day, God told the Israelites to march around the walls and to shout. Once again, they did exactly what they were told to do even though this might have seemed silly to them. God honored their faith. “Because of faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encompassed for seven days [by the Israelites]” (Hebrews 11:30).

I’ve also been greatly encouraged by meditating on the victorious earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. I’ve meditated on the four gospels on many occasions. As I’ve turned them over and over in my mind, contemplating them and personalizing them, Jesus has come alive to me. I’ve been able to see much more clearly how God brought Him through trials as a result of His faith. This has helped my faith to grow.

I’d like to close this chapter by carefully going over another passage of Scripture that tells us to meditate day and night on the Word of God. I’ve often thought that, out of the 150 psalms, God has put some of the most valuable information in the first three verses of the very first psalm.

Let’s start by looking in detail at the contents of the first verse of the first psalm. “Blessed (happy, fortunate, prosperous, and enviable) is the man who walks and lives not in the counsel of the ungodly [following their advice, their plans and purposes], nor stands [submissive and inactive] in the path where sinners walk, nor sits down [to relax and rest] where the scornful [and the mockers] gather” (Psalms 1:1).

If we want our Father to bless us, it’s important to follow His instructions. He doesn’t want us seeking advice from people who aren’t Christians. How can they possibly give sound advice if they aren’t solidly anchored in the Word of God? How can they effectively counsel us if they aren’t guided by the Holy Spirit? We make a big mistake if we look for advice from people who don’t understand God’s way of doing things.

Next, we’re told we’ll be blessed if we refuse to fall into a sinful life. It isn’t hard to sin. It’s always easy to take the path of least resistance. Our Father doesn’t want His children to sin.

Instead, He wants us to program ourselves continually with His Word.

Finally, the first verse of the Psalms says we shouldn't associate with people who scorn and mock others. It's easy to gossip and criticize. It makes some people feel good for a moment when they "talk down" concerning other people. People who do this feel they are lifting themselves up. This never lasts. It always turns out negatively over a period of time.

The first two verses of the Psalm are direct opposites. The first verse explains what our Father doesn't want us to do. The next verse tells what He does want us to do. "But his delight and desire are in the law of the Lord, and on His law (the precepts, the instructions, the teachings of God) he habitually meditates (ponders and studies) by day and by night" (Psalm 1:2).

Our Father wants us to delight in His Word! He wants us to have a consuming passion to learn everything we can from His supernatural Book of Instructions. He wants us to work continually at understanding the precepts, instructions and teachings of the holy Scriptures. He wants us to make a habit of meditating day and night on His Word.

The third verse of the first Psalm tells of the blessings we'll receive if we follow the instructions in the first two verses. "And he shall be like a tree firmly planted [and tended] by the streams of water, ready to bring forth its fruit in its season; its leaf also shall not fade or wither; and everything he does shall prosper [and come to maturity]" (Psalm 1:3).

What does this mean? Imagine a lengthy drought where no rain fell for several months. Think how brown the grass, foliage and trees would be. Then, try to visualize several trees next to a stream that are still green and producing fruit. Why aren't these trees affected by the drought?

Our Father tells us that His children who meditate day and night on His Word will be like trees next to a stream. We can be in the midst of a "drought" where everyone else is failing to produce fruit and we'll still be able to produce fruit in our lives. We'll be productive because we'll be like trees with roots that are able to reach down and pull up water from a stream when no water is coming down in the form of rain.

We've seen that II Timothy 3:1 tells us that the world will experience a severe "drought" in the last days before Jesus returns. Worldly systems that used to work well will be unproductive. However, Christians who have paid the price of meditating day and night on the Word of God will be able to put their roots deep down into the supernatural power of the living

Word of God. This will enable them to produce fruit when people who don't meditate day and night are going through a very severe dry spell.

Psalm 1:3 explains that Christians who have learned to meditate on the Word of God will always prosper. The Hebrew word "tsalach" that's translated "prosper" here actually means "to push forward, to break out, to go over, to be good, to cause to be profitable." If we want to be able to keep going and to prosper from God's point of view during difficult times, we must meditate day and night on His Word!

I can't imagine how any Christian can attempt to build a strong faith without continually meditating on the Word of God. The Bible doesn't do us any good sitting on a shelf in our homes. We must learn to get it off the printed page, into our minds and then down into our hearts. We must be certain that we digest our spiritual food daily. The Word of God contains supernatural "spiritual vitamins" to energize and strengthen us.

If we're faced with severe adversity, we must program our minds and hearts continually so we'll react to the promises and instructions in the Word of God instead of reacting to the problems we face. If we meditate continually on the Word of God, we program ourselves continually for success.

Meditating on the Word of God has helped my faith to grow. I've seen many other Christians apply these principles of meditation to help their faith to grow. Joshua 1:8 and Psalm 1:1-3 guarantee success to Christians who habitually meditate day and night on the Word of God.

We're now ready to go into more detail concerning the next step of building a strong faith. In the past two chapters, I've talked about the process of getting the Word of God up off the printed page, into our minds and down into our hearts. Now we're ready to look in more detail into the Word of God to see several things it tells us about the importance of filling our hearts continually with the supernatural power of the living Word of God.

Chapter 9

Our Hearts - the Key to Our Lives

Although our minds are very important, the key to our reaction in any kind of pressure situation is what we really believe in our hearts. When we were created, God gave us our minds to think with and our hearts to believe with. When we continually meditate day and night on the

Word of God, we constantly feed its supernatural power into our hearts. As this process continues over a period of time, it causes us to develop deep inner conviction and trust. “Keep and guard your heart with all vigilance and above all that you guard, for out of it flow the springs of life.” (Proverbs 4:23).

This passage of Scripture explains how important our hearts are. When I speak of the heart, I want to make it clear that I’m not speaking of the physical organ that pumps blood through our bodies. When the Bible refers to our hearts, it refers to “the real us.” The heart is the absolute center of our being. It’s what we’re really like deep down inside of ourselves.

This passage of Scripture tells us “Keep your heart with all vigilance...” When we keep at something, we do it continually. We’re persistent. When we do something vigilantly, we’re alert and watchful. We pay very close attention. This is what our Father wants us to do with our hearts. His Word tells us to guard our hearts above all else. Nothing else is more important!

Our Father has created a home for His Word here on earth. This home isn’t a bookshelf, desk or table in our homes. “Let the word [spoken by] Christ (the Messiah) have its home [in your hearts and minds] and dwell in you in [all its] richness...” (Colossians 3:16).

The Word of God is meant to make its home in our minds and hearts. It enters our minds through Bible study. Through continual meditation it settles down and takes up permanent residence in our hearts. There is no question that our hearts are the key in our lives. “... as he thinks in his heart, so is he...” (Proverbs 23:7).

God’s ways are vastly different from man’s ways. Some people are much more concerned with what they look like on the outside than they are with the condition of their hearts. They spend hours before a mirror working on their external appearance. They place a great deal of emphasis on clothing and shop very carefully to buy clothing that presents them to other people in the best possible light.

I’m not saying it’s wrong to look good on the outside, but we must understand that our heavenly Father doesn’t look at things in this way. He focuses on what we’re really like down deep in our hearts. “...the Lord sees not as man sees; for man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart” (I Samuel 16:7).

On the final night before He was betrayed, Jesus told His apostles many things they would need to know after He left. He emphasized how important it was for them to keep their hearts in good spiritual condition. He said, “...Do not let your hearts be troubled, neither let them

be afraid. [Stop allowing yourselves to be agitated and disturbed; and do not permit yourselves to be fearful and intimidated and cowardly and unsettled]" (John 14:27).

Notice the similarity of the words "let," "allow" and "permit" in this passage of Scripture. We must each decide the condition of our hearts! We determine what we'll allow to get deep down inside of us. We must not let our hearts be troubled or afraid. We must not allow ourselves to be agitated or disturbed. We must not permit ourselves to be fearful, intimidated, cowardly and unsettled.

Jesus told us what we should do if we want to receive blessings from Him. The following passage of Scripture is the core of this chapter. Jesus said, "If you live in Me [abide vitally united to Me] and My words remain in you and continue to live in your hearts, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you" (John 15:7).

Strong faith comes from a Christ-centered life. Weak faith comes from a self-centered life. We're meant to live lives of faith, placing all of our trust in Jesus Christ who lives inside of us and in His Word living in our hearts.

Jesus told us to live our lives "vitally united" to Him. When we're united to someone, we're joined together as one. Jesus added the word "vitally" to His description of this close relationship. Our relationship with Him isn't optional. It's vital!

When we're going through a crisis situation, we need to be conscious of the indwelling presence of Jesus Christ at all times. We also should fill our hearts continually with the Word of God. Jesus told us that strong faith requires the Word of God to "remain in you and continue to live in your hearts."

The words "remain" and "continue" are very important. If we want to have a strong faith, the Word of God must take up permanent residence in our hearts. The only way this will happen is to study the Word of God and meditate on it continually. This will keep our faith strong. Jesus said, "Ask whatever you will and it shall be done for you."

When we fill our hearts continually with the spiritual energy and power of the supernatural Word of God, this builds up great faith in our hearts. "Receive, I pray you, the law and instruction from His mouth and lay up His words in your heart. If you return to the Almighty [and submit and humble yourself before Him], you will be built up..." (Job 22:22-23).

The apostle Paul encouraged the elders of the church at Ephesus by speaking the following words. They apply just as much to us today. "...I commend you to the Word of His

grace [to the commands and counsels and promises of His unmerited favor]. It is able to build you up and to give you [your rightful] inheritance among all God's set-apart ones (those consecrated, purified, and transformed of soul)" (Acts 20:32).

Our heavenly Father gave us His Word as a gift. It's filled with commands, instructions and promises. When we fill our hearts with it, it's able to build us up. We can then receive our rightful inheritance as members of the royal family of God. Our Father can bring into manifestation the magnificent victory Jesus Christ won for us.

I believe our hearts are very much like a bank account. When we go through difficult times, we make withdrawals from whatever we have "deposited" into our hearts. The amount of faith in our hearts must be more than sufficient to offset the withdrawals we make. This is why it's so important to continually deposit the Word of God in our hearts, so we'll always have enough to draw on when we're faced with a crisis situation.

When difficult times come upon us, we always react based upon what we've stored up in our hearts. If we don't have any spiritual power on deposit, we'll be anxious and worried. If our hearts are filled with the Word of God, they'll sing with joy. "Anxiety in a man's heart weighs it down, but an encouraging word makes it glad" (Proverbs 12:25).

If the "bad news" of problems in our lives is able to get into our minds and then into our hearts, our hearts will be heavy. However, if the "good news" of the gospel fills our hearts, we'll be lighthearted and filled with the joy of the Lord regardless of how bad our problems seem to be.

In these difficult last days, the key to bringing the victory of Jesus Christ into manifestation is to fill our hearts with the Word of God and to obey its instructions. "My son, attend to my words; consent and submit to my sayings. Let them not depart from your sight; keep them in the center of your heart. For they are life to those who find them..." (Proverbs 4:20-22).

We must pay close attention to the Word of God and live our lives in submission to its instructions. We must fill our hearts continually with its supernatural power. This is a matter of life and death when we're engaged in spiritual warfare. Satan is doing everything he can to discourage us and get us to give up. If we've diligently paid the price of building up our hearts, we won't allow the problems in our lives to get inside of us. If we allow sorrow to remain in our hearts, we're in severe spiritual trouble. "...by sorrow of heart the spirit is broken" (Proverbs 15:13).

However, if we fill our lives continually with the good news of the gospel, we won't allow the circumstances in our lives to wear us down. We'll realize that the Word of God living in us is much greater than any problems we face. "...he who has a glad heart has a continual feast [regardless of circumstances]" (Proverbs 15:15).

If we can understand how important it is to fill our hearts continually with the Word of God, we'll gladly pay the price of meditating day and night on the holy Scriptures. We'll be following our Father's instructions when we do this. He said, "...lay up these My words in your [minds and] hearts and in your [entire] being..." (Deuteronomy 11:18).

Our Father wants His Word to consume us. God and His Word are one. When we store up the spiritual power of His Word in our hearts, we store up the supernatural power of Almighty God in our hearts.

All human beings have an innate desire to "store up." Unfortunately, some Christians utilize this God-given desire to store up worldly goods. This isn't what our Father wants us to do. Instead, He wants us to store up His Word in our hearts. "My son, keep my words; lay up within you my commandments [for use when needed] and treasure them" (Proverbs 7:1).

Some Christians focus too much on storing up worldly treasure. Our Father tells us the treasure He wants us to store up. He wants us to "lay up" His Word in our hearts so we'll have it when we need it. "Wise men store up knowledge [in mind and heart]..." (Proverbs 10:14). If we're wise in the Lord, we'll store up His Word in our hearts. "The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide" (Psalm 37:31).

When we're going through difficult times, we'll be able to keep our "spiritual equilibrium" if our hearts are filled with the Word of God. Our problems won't be able to knock us off our feet when we pay the price of storing up the precious treasure of God's Word in our hearts. "...the Word of God is [always] abiding in you (in your hearts), and you have been victorious over the wicked one" (I John 2:14).

The wicked one is Satan. Do you want to emerge victorious over him during the ferocious attacks he'll mount against us in the last days before Jesus returns? The key to winning this battle is the amount of the Word of God abiding continually in our hearts.

If we haven't paid the price of filling our hearts with the Word of God, Satan has us right where he wants us. He knows he'll be able to deceive us. We won't have enough truth living inside of us to discern the lies he tells us. We can't stand up against Satan unless the Word of

God abides in our hearts!

If our hearts aren't filled with the Word of God, Satan will be able to walk all over us. If our hearts are filled with the Word of God, we'll walk all over Satan! Our hearts will sing with joy. "Your words were found, and I ate them; and Your words were to me a joy and the rejoicing of the heart..." (Jeremiah 15:16).

This chapter is filled with one fact after another from the Word of God telling us of the importance of filling our hearts with its supernatural qualities. Can there be any doubt whatsoever of the absolute importance of filling our hearts with the Word of God? I believe all Christians reading the voluminous Scripture references in this chapter should be highly motivated to pay the price to fill their hearts continually with the power of the Word of God!

Chapter 10

From Our Hearts to Our Mouths

When I first referred to the Word of God on the subject of meditation, I mentioned Joshua 1:8, the only verse of Scripture in the Bible containing the word "success." This passage of Scripture contains two other requirements for success. One of these says, "This Book of the Law shall not depart out of your mouth."

Our Father wants our mouths to speak His Word continually. This is why he gave human beings an ability He didn't give to any other living creatures. We have been given the ability to express ourselves with words.

The average person speaks approximately 30,000 words a day. These words have immense spiritual power. Our heavenly Father wants us to use this power constructively. Satan wants us to use it destructively.

In recent years, there has been a lot of teaching about the power of "positive confession" – speaking positive, faith-filled words at all times. It's important to do this, but we can't do this through willpower. Simply "mouthing" passages of Scripture is insufficient. These words must be backed by a renewed mind and a heart filled with the Word of God.

Joshua 1:8 tells us to meditate day and night on the holy Scripture so we'll have renewed minds and believing hearts. This gives us the deep inner trust we must have to release spiritual power with the words we speak. "I believed (trusted in, relied on, and clung to my God), and

therefore have I spoken..." (Psalm 116:10).

The spiritual power of the words we speak is measured by the faith in our hearts. If we trust deeply in the Lord, rely on Him completely and cling to Him with unwavering faith, the words that come out of our mouths won't be empty words. They'll be filled with the power of God!

Many people have little or no understanding of the words they speak. Even if we do understand, we must still learn to control our tongues. This isn't easy to do. "...the human tongue can be tamed by no man. It is a restless (undisciplined, irreconcilable) evil, full of deadly poison" (James 3:8).

When we're under severe pressure, we can't control our words through sheer willpower. If we allow negative words to pour out of our mouths when we're going through trials, we're doing exactly what Satan wants us to do. He knows the power of our words. He wants Christians to deny the victory of Jesus Christ. Satan does everything he can to get inside of our minds and hearts because he wants to influence the words we speak.

Jesus wants us to do exactly the opposite. He wants the words we speak to be influenced by the Word of God. He tells us how to do this. "...out of the fullness (the overflow, the superabundance) of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man from his inner good treasure flings forth good things, and the evil man out of his inner evil storehouse flings forth evil things" (Matthew 12:34-35).

Whenever we're in a pressure situation, the words we speak will be based on whatever we deeply believe in our hearts. If we have filled our hearts to overflowing with the Word of God, it will automatically flow out of our mouths when we're in a crisis situation. If we haven't paid this price, negative, fear-filled words will flow from our lips.

We must understand the connection between the Word of God in our hearts and the words that come out of our mouths. Throughout the Bible we can see the correlation between faith in our hearts and the words that come out of our mouths. "...The Word (God's message in Christ) is near you, on your lips and in your heart..." (Romans 10:8).

I explained in the last chapter that the Word of God is the basis for our faith. There is a definite relationship between deep faith in the Word of God in our hearts and faith-filled words coming out of our mouths. "...with the heart a person believes (adheres to, trusts in, and relies on Christ) and so is justified (declared righteous, acceptable to God), and with the mouth he

confesses (declares openly and speaks out freely his faith)...” (Romans 10:10).

This passage of Scripture applies primarily to spiritual rebirth. We can’t be born again unless we believe in our hearts that Jesus Christ is our Saviour and tell others of this belief with our mouths. This same principle applies to received blessings from the Lord after we become members of His royal family.

I believe there is one principle of building a strong faith that requires us to speak the Word of God. The following passage of Scripture has transformed my life since I first began to understand it. “...faith comes by hearing [what is told], and what is heard comes by the preaching [of the message that came from the lips] of Christ (the Messiah Himself)” (Romans 10:17).

This doesn’t say faith comes from reading the Word of God. It says faith comes from hearing the Word of God! Our Father didn’t make a mistake in Romans 10:17 when He said faith comes from hearing His Word. The written Word of God serves a definite purpose, but we must hear it continually if we want to be strong continually.

In the original Greek, the written Word of God is referred to as “logos” and the spoken Word of God is referred to as “rhema.” Logos is the source of the power of God. We must study and meditate on the written Word of God to appropriate its power. Rhema releases this power! We must open our mouths to release the power of the Word of God living in our hearts.

Virtually every Christian has experienced the remarkable power of the spoken Word of God. Most of us have heard an anointed preacher, teacher or evangelist boldly speaking the Word of God. It’s alive and electric and it can motivate us tremendously.

This is one reason why it’s so important for Christians to attend a church where the Word of God is preached continually under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Pastors are called by God to preach His Word so we’ll be able to trust Him. “...how are they to believe in Him [adhere to, trust in, and rely upon Him] of Whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher?” (Romans 10:14).

Anointed preaching is extremely important to building a strong faith. How can we possibly have strong faith in Someone we’ve never seen unless someone speaks to us continually to help us develop this faith? I’ve spent thousands of wonderful hours sitting in the house of God hearing the Word of God.

Unfortunately, some people go to church and listen without really hearing. Faith grows

when we hear and understand what is said. This is why I always take my Bible and a pad of paper with me when I go to church. I'm expecting to hear great spiritual truths that will increase my understanding of the Kingdom of God.

Over the years I've written thousands of pages of notes when I've heard the Word of God explained. Whenever I take notes, I always leave room in the left-hand margin to write a one or two word caption to summarize each portion of the notes I take. When I go home, I take a pair of scissors and cut up my notes and file each of the appropriate comments under a particular heading.

I've done this for 18 years. As a result, I now have five four-drawer file cabinets overflowing with the Word of God. These cabinets are filled with hundreds of files arranged alphabetically. Some of these files are so full that they contain over a thousand separate notes.

Sometimes people ask how my books contain so many Scripture references on so many different subjects. The answer is that I've spent many thousands of hours writing down notes that are inspired by sermons in a church, anointed cassette tapes and my quiet time alone with the Lord.

I'm finally starting to learn that I must do this continually without stopping. If faith comes by hearing the Word of God, then faith must go by not hearing the Word of God! Faith never stands still. It's always increasing or decreasing. If we want our faith to increase continually, we must hear the Word of God continually.

We should go to church on Sunday. Most churches also have a midweek service. It's great to hear the Word of God preached in the middle of the week. However, one or two spiritual meals each week won't cause our faith to grow rapidly. Most people feed their bodies each day. If we want our faith to grow continually, we must feed our spirits daily.

In addition to going to church two or three times each week, I've made it a practice for many years to also spend a great deal of time listening to the Word of God on Christian radio and television and on cassette tapes. I've learned a lot from Christian radio and television, but I usually have no control over what I hear. However, I can control whatever I hear whenever I choose a Christian cassette tape.

I've spent thousands of hours listening to hundreds of anointed preachers and teachers on cassette tapes. I can't begin to explain how much this has helped my faith to grow. I'd like to repay some of what I've been given. As a result, I've carefully built up a list of sources for

Christian cassette tapes that have helped me. I've also compiled a list of free Christian cassette tape lending libraries. If any reader would like a list of sources for Christian cassette tapes, please send me a stamped, self-addressed envelope in care of the publisher.

We should hear other anointed Christians speaking the Word of God, but I believe there is one source of hearing the Word of God that's even more important. Our faith can grow from hearing other people speaking the Word of God, but I'm convinced our faith grows at a much faster rate when our ears continually hear our mouths speaking the supernatural Word of God! It's sad, but true, that some Christians go weeks and months without ever opening their mouths to speak the Word of God. This is tragic!

The psalmist David knew the importance of meditation on the Word of God. He explained that musing (meditating) on the Word of God lit up his heart. As a result, he then spoke with his mouth. "My heart was hot within me. While I was musing, the fire burned; then I spoke with my tongue..." (Psalm 39:3).

Meditation causes the Word of God to come alive in our hearts. When our hearts are "hot" and the fire of God's Word burns within us, great spiritual power will flow from our mouths. It's very important for us to speak the Word of God. "...he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully..." (Jeremiah 23:28).

When we meditate continually on the Word of God, the same spirit of faith comes into operation that human authors received many years ago when they wrote the inspired Word of God. We should believe the Word of God. We should speak about what we believe. "...we have the same spirit of faith as he had who wrote, I have believed, and therefore have I spoken..." (II Corinthians 4:13).

When we meditate continually on the Word of God and speak it continually with our mouths, a spiritual force called faith is produced. If we meditate continually on our problems and talk about them continually, a spiritual force called fear is produced. We should be very careful what we meditate on and what we speak with our mouths.

Most of us speak tens of thousands of words each day. It's extremely important for as many of these words as possible to be filled with faith. Faith-filled words build us up. Fear-filled words tear us down. In the last days before Jesus returns, it will be imperative to speak faith-filled words.

Over the years, I've found that if we keep saying something long enough, we'll believe it.

Some people have used this principle in a negative way. Some of us know that people who continually tell a lie about a certain subject often end up believing what they say is actually true. Our Father wants us to apply this principle positively.

This is how faith grows. If we keep speaking the Word of God long enough, we'll believe it. The more we speak it, the stronger our faith will be. This is why it's so important to fill our hearts continually with the Word of God and to speak it continually.

Satan knows these are the last days before Jesus returns. He's determined to inflict as much damage as he can. Our heavenly Father has given us every weapon we'll need to fight against Satan. We fight Satan with the words we speak!

We can't double up our fists and hit Satan. We can't shoot him with a gun. Spiritual battles are fought with our hearts and with our mouths! We must understand how powerful the spoken word can be. "How forcible are words of straightforward speech!..." (Job 6:25).

The words we speak are always very important, but I believe they'll be more important than ever in the last days before Jesus returns. When many different forms of external security disappear completely, our lives will depend upon what we believe in our hearts and speak with our mouths. "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and they who indulge in it shall eat the fruit of it [for death or life]" (Proverbs 18:21).

Jesus said we can set ourselves free with the words we speak. On the other hand, He taught us that we also can also imprison ourselves with the words that come out of our mouths. "For by your words you will be justified and acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned and sentenced" (Matthew 12:37).

When we're faced with an extreme crisis, there is a great temptation to react emotionally. We won't be able to afford this luxury during the last days. We must learn how to control the words that come out of our mouths. "He who guards his mouth keeps his life, but he who opens wide his lips comes to ruin" (Proverbs 13:3).

When we're faced with a pressure situation, the best thing we can do is to open our mouths and speak the Word of God or words that line up with the principles of the Word of God. If we can't do this, the next best thing is to say nothing.

Our Father gave us our mouths to release words of faith. He wants our words to work for us. Unfortunately, some Christians open their mouths in times of adversity and speak words that deny the victory of Jesus Christ.

We must not do this! Satan wants to block the victory of Jesus Christ from being manifested in our lives. Satan can only receive spiritual power if he's able to steal our victory from us. If we speak words that deny the victory of Jesus Christ, we give Satan power he can't receive in any other way.

Satan wants to destroy us. This is his mission in life. Our Father has given us several weapons to use against Satan. One of our most effective weapons is to speak the Word of God boldly when Satan tries to destroy us. "...by the word of Your lips I have avoided the ways of the violent (the paths of the destroyer)" (Psalm 17:4).

All Christians are able to partake by faith in the overwhelming victory that Jesus won over Satan. Whenever Satan comes against us, we should open our mouths and boldly proclaim the victory we have been given over him. "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He has delivered from the hand of the adversary..." (Psalm 107:2).

Satan can't win if we know our rights in Christ and stand firmly on them. If our hearts are filled with facts about the glorious victory Jesus has given us, this will pour out of our mouths and we'll be set free from Satan. "...the mouth of the upright shall deliver them..." (Proverbs 12:6).

When we're engaged in spiritual warfare, we have the ability to fight back. When Satan fires his darts at us, we should open our mouths and strike back at him with the sword our Father has given us. "...the sword that the Spirit wields, which is the Word of God" (Ephesians 6:17).

The Holy Spirit lives inside of us. Satan is petrified with fear of Him. The Holy Spirit has given us a sword to attack Satan with. It is the Word of God. When we're engaged in spiritual warfare, we should get out our swords and fight back. We have the ability to apply tremendous pressure to Satan.

Satan doesn't want anything to do with the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. He knows he's in big trouble if we know how to come at him with the sword the Holy Spirit has provided for us. He can't stand up under a continued barrage of the Word of God. "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7, *The King James Bible*).

Our heavenly Father also has given us angels to help us when we're engaged in spiritual warfare. It's very important for all Christians to understand that we're actually able to put angels to work on our behalf by opening our mouths continually and speaking the Word of God. "...you His angels, you mighty ones who do His commandments, hearkening to the voice of His word"

(Psalm 103:20).

Christians have the power to cause mighty angels to go to work on their behalf! We're all surrounded by a host of angelic forces. God's angels and Satan's fallen angels wait for us to give them their "marching orders" by the words we speak.

Satan's fallen angels hover around us eagerly waiting for us to speak words that deny the victory of Jesus Christ. This enables them to steal power they can't get in any other way. God's angels wait expectantly for us to boldly speak the Word of God. This releases them to use their mighty power to fight spiritual battles for us.

When we're faced with problems that seem to be impossible, it's very important to realize that angels are waiting to work for us. If we'll pay the price of building ourselves up by filling our hearts with the Word of God, spiritual power will flow out of our mouths. We'll actually decide who will win spiritual battles. Satan wants to take what we say and use it against us. God wants us to take what we say and use it for us. We each make this decision several times each day of our lives.

When we realize the power of the spoken word, we'll understand how important it is to meditate day and night on the Word of God so that its power will flow out of our mouths continually. This is important at all times, but it will be especially important in the last days before Jesus returns. We'll win all of our battles if we know how to stockpile an arsenal of spiritual ammunition so we can continually fire words of faith at Satan.

Chapter 11

Obeying God's Instructions

In the last two chapters I've amplified two of the three specific instructions for success from Joshua 1:8 – meditating day and night on the Word of God and speaking the Word of God continually. In this chapter, we'll cover the final instruction from this passage of Scripture which, referring to the Word of God, tells us to "...observe and do according to all that is written in it..."

If we want to be successful from God's point of view, our Father wants us to learn everything we possibly can about the way He wants us to live our lives. He wants us to "observe" everything that is written in His Word. Then, we're told to do everything His Word

tells us to do.

In this book, we're talking about developing strong faith. If we want to do this, we need to "observe" everything we can find in the Word of God pertaining to developing our faith. Then we need to do exactly what it tells us to do.

We prove how strong our faith is by action. Our heavenly Father is looking for us to step out on our faith. "...a man is justified (pronounced righteous before God) through what he does and not alone through faith [through works of obedience as well as by what he believes]" (James 2:24).

When we're faced with a severe problem, we won't step out in faith unless we have a very strong conviction that God is Who He says He is and that He'll do exactly what His Word says He'll do. If we have paid the price of continually renewing our minds in the Word of God, meditating on it day and night and speaking it continually with our mouths, we'll be willing to act upon our faith. "...the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your mind and in your heart, so that you can do it" (Deuteronomy 30:14).

Our faith should be so strong that we're willing to step out in faith when we're in the midst of extremely unfavorable conditions. Sometimes we say we're unwilling to stand in faith because the conditions aren't right. This is usually a mistake. "He who observes the wind [and waits for all conditions to be favorable] will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap" (Ecclesiastes 11:4).

This passage of Scripture refers to farmers. It's easy for farmers to plant seeds when all conditions are favorable. However, farmers who refuse to sow their seeds because the clouds, wind or other conditions are not right won't reap the harvest. The same principle applies to us. We can't wait until everything is just right before we step out on faith. We must dare to trust God and act upon our faith when the bottom is falling out and everything that can go wrong seems to be going wrong.

When we're faced with difficult problems, most Christians pray to God asking for His help. Our Father wants very much to help us. He wants to answer our prayers. However, we must do our part. "...we receive from Him whatever we ask, because we [watchfully] obey His orders [observe His suggestions and injunctions, follow His plan for us] and [habitually] practice what is pleasing to Him" (I John 3:22).

Our Father will answer our prayers if we do what His Word tells us to do. He wants us to

make a habit of learning everything His Word tells us to do and then to live each day of our lives to the very best of our ability according to the instructions in His Word.

We need to do more than just learn what the Word of God tells us to do. When we're faced with a crisis situation, we need to obey its instructions. Jesus compared two men who were going through storms and told us what to do if we want to survive the storms in our lives:

“So everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts upon them [obeying them] will be like a sensible (prudent, practical, wise) man who built his house upon the rock. And the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not do them will be like a stupid (foolish) man who built his house upon the sand. And the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell – and great and complete was the fall of it” (Matthew 7:24-27).

When you're facing severe problems, do you want to be sensible, prudent, practical and wise in the eyes of the Lord? I do. Every child of God who really wants to survive the storms of life must pay the price of learning what our Father's Book of Instructions tells us to do. However, if we stop here, we aren't building our faith on a strong foundation. The storms of life will be too much for us. If we want to survive the difficult storms of life, we must learn what the Word of God says, and then we must follow its instructions!

We make a big mistake if we learn what the Word of God tells us to do and fail to act on its instructions. “...be doers of the Word [obey the message], and not merely listeners to it, betraying yourselves [into deception by reasoning contrary to the Truth]” (James 1:22).

Some Christians react to the problems of life based upon human reasoning. Sometimes the instructions in the Word of God don't make sense to us, so we do what seems right. If we do this, we play right into Satan's hands. We betray ourselves by reasoning that's contrary to the truth of the Word of God.

It's very easy to be so busy with personal goals that we fail to study the Word of God each day and meditate on it throughout the day and night. If we fall into this trap, we can only react to adversity by doing what seems right to us. “There is a way which seems right to a man and appears straight before him, but at the end of it is the way of death” (Proverbs 14:12).

God's ways are different from ours. We can only understand them and obey if we continually renew our minds in His Word. It's easy to have a theoretical faith, but it's often hard

to step out in faith. "...faith apart from [good] works is inactive and ineffective and worthless..." (James 2:20).

None of us would like our faith to be inactive, ineffective and worthless. However, this is exactly how the Word of God describes faith that's theoretical. "...faith, if it does not have works (deeds and actions of obedience to back it up), by itself is destitute of power (inoperative, dead)" (James 2:17).

Faith that isn't manifested in action is dead. It's cold, barren and powerless. It doesn't work. Action releases the power of faith! If we truly love God, we'll show our love by obedience. We'll do exactly what His Word tells us to do. "...the [true] love of God is this: that we do His commands [keep His ordinances and are mindful of His precepts and teaching]..." (I John 5:3).

Our Father doesn't want us to be defeated. When we're engaged in spiritual warfare, He wants us to come out on top of Satan. "...the Lord shall make you the head, and not the tail; and you shall be above only, and you shall not be beneath, if you heed the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you this day, and are watchful to do them" (Deuteronomy 28:13).

Here in America we have a saying about the "tail wagging the dog." This is what happens if Satan deceives us into failing to take action on our faith. If we want the Lord to make us the head and not the tail and to cause us to come out on top every time, we must do our part. We must learn what the Word of God tells us to do. Then we must obey these instructions.

Satan wants to deceive us. He wants us to be engulfed in darkness. Our heavenly Father wants us to come out of the darkness into the light. He wants us to be obedient to what His Word tells us to do. "...he who practices truth [who does what is right] comes out into the Light..." (John 3:21).

As we review the Scripture references in this chapter, it's very obvious that we need to do what the Lord wants us to do. Sometimes our Father blesses His children through grace. He always blesses His children who obey His instructions and refuse to give up. "Keep the charge of the Lord your God, walk in His ways, keep His statutes, His commandments, His precepts, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may do wisely and prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn" (I Kings 2:3).

This is an exciting passage of Scripture. All of us want to have wisdom to do the right

thing when we're faced with difficult problems. Our heavenly Father promises us that we'll be able to "do wisely and prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn." This is an all-inclusive statement. It applies to every problem any of us has ever faced and every problem any person will face.

Our Father has told us how to come out on top every time. He wants us to do exactly what His Word tells us to do! He wants us to dare to follow His instructions at all times. "...No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly" (Psalm 84:11).

Please go back and read I Kings 2:3 and Psalm 84:11 again. There aren't any "loopholes" in these passages of Scripture. God's promises are very definite. He'll bring us through every time if we dare to do what His Word says to do!

Our Father wants to bless all of His children. He doesn't exclude any of us. He blesses every one of His children who habitually stand in faith on His Word. "Blessed (happy, fortunate, to be envied) is everyone who fears, reveres, and worships the Lord, who walks in His ways and lives according to His commandments" (Psalm 128:1).

I love the word "everyone" in this passage of Scripture. This includes you. It includes me. Our heavenly Father will bless every one of His children who reverently fears Him and lives according to the instructions in His Word.

Great blessings are available to the children of God who believe He'll do what His Word says He'll do and then step out in faith upon this. The Word of God tells us again and again the blessings our Father has for His children who do what His Word says. "...Blessed (happy and to be envied) rather are those who hear the Word of God and obey and practice it!" (Luke 11:28).

Anyone reading the Scripture references in this chapter can see without the slightest doubt that our Father will bless us if we stand in faith on His Word. However, this often is easier said than done. I believe it's very important for Christians to learn to develop their faith to solve small problems. It's quite difficult if we haven't paid the price of developing our faith and suddenly find ourselves faced with very severe problems. Jesus taught us that we should develop our faith for small problems first. He said, "He who is faithful in a very little [thing] is faithful also in much..." (Luke 16:10).

Our faith grows by stages. The entire world is going to face very severe problems in the not too distant future. We must not wait until severe problems come upon us to start developing our faith. Now is the time to start developing a strong faith. If we dare to use it for minor

problems and find out how well it works, we will have more faith when we're faced with larger problems. Each time our Father honors our faith, He gives us one more successful experience to build upon in the future.

Our Father wants us to use our faith consistently over a period of time. Every time we act on His Word and He honors our faith, our faith becomes that much stronger. Our Father didn't intend for us to use our faith only for major problems. He wants His children to use their faith every day.

We develop strong faith by stages. It doesn't happen all at once. It's progressive. Faith is like a muscle. Our muscles grow when we use them continually against resistance. When people lift weights, they're usually able to lift only light weights at first. However, as they develop their muscles, they gradually get to the point where they can lift heavier weights.

The same principle applies to our faith. It will grow when we use it continually against resistance. I pray several times each day asking the Lord to help me. Before I step out and make a decision, I always want the Lord's guidance. God has honored these prayers thousands of times in my life since I have been a Christian. This reservoir of answered prayer is extremely beneficial to any Christian.

The last days will be here soon if they aren't here already. The time is here to step out boldly on our faith in the Word of God. Each time we do this, our faith will grow. We must not delay. All Christians must work diligently at building their faith and standing on their faith before the very severe problems of the last days come upon us.

I pray that each reader of this book will be highly motivated to follow each of the instructions in Joshua 1:8 – meditate continually upon the Word of God, speak the Word of God continually and obey all of the instructions in our Book of Instructions. Our heavenly Father promised success to Joshua if he did these three things. He promises success to us as well.

Chapter 12

Strong Faith Starts with Weakness

In the first eleven chapters of this book, I explained why it is necessary to build a strong faith and the foundation our Father has given us to build our faith on. We've seen how to build faith through studying the Word of God, meditating on it daily, speaking it continually and doing

what it says to do.

Now that we have the overall instructions pertaining to faith, we're ready to look at some of the finer points. I want to repeat that God's ways are different from ours. This chapter teaches us that strong faith can only be built on a foundation of human weakness.

Some people look at faith as something that's tied into human strength. They believe we must reach down inside of ourselves for "something extra" when we're faced with a severe problem. The Bible doesn't teach this. It tells us to "...put no confidence or dependence [on what we are] in the flesh..." (Philippians 3:3).

Strong faith in the Lord must be based upon a sincere recognition and admission of our human weakness. "...My strength and power are made perfect (fulfilled and completed) and show themselves most effective in [your] weakness. Therefore, I will all the more gladly glory in my weaknesses and infirmities, that the strength and power of Christ (the Messiah) may rest (yes, may pitch a tent over and dwell) upon me!" (II Corinthians 12:9).

If we want the strength and power of Jesus Christ to be made perfect in our lives, we'll actually glory in our human weakness and inadequacy! We should be pleased when we're faced with problems that are too difficult for us to handle. "So for the sake of Christ, I am well pleased and take pleasure in infirmities, insults, hardships, persecutions, perplexities and distresses; for when I am weak [in human strength], then I am [truly] strong (able, powerful in divine strength)" (II Corinthians 12:10).

The apostle Paul had a strong faith. One of the reasons for his great faith was knowledge of his human weakness. Instead of being discouraged by his personal shortcomings, he knew he should rejoice because they opened the door for the strength and ability of Jesus Christ to be released on his behalf.

As we study the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, we'll see that He also was aware of His human inadequacy. Once, when He was being persecuted by the Jews, "...Jesus answered them by saying, I assure you, most solemnly I tell you, the Son is able to do nothing of Himself (of His own accord)..." (John 5:19).

Jesus took no credit at all for the miracles He performed. He knew they were done through Him and not by Him. He emphasized His weakness a second time when He said, "I am able to do nothing from Myself [independently, of My own accord – but only as I am taught by God and as I get His orders]..." (John 5:30).

If Jesus Christ wasn't able to do anything with His own ability, why should we ever think we can solve difficult and complex problems with our limited ability? Jesus doesn't want us trying to solve difficult problems with our abilities. We can't do anything without Him! "...apart from Me [cut off from vital union with Me] you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

The words "vital union" are used to describe our relationship with Jesus. When something is vital, it's absolutely necessary. It's indispensable. When we're faced with problems that are more than we can handle, we must have an extremely close relationship with Jesus. We can't overcome difficult problems without this.

No matter how difficult our problems might seem to us, they aren't difficult to Jesus. He has no limitations whatsoever. He wants to give us the strength we need. "I have strength for all things in Christ Who empowers me [I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him Who infuses inner strength into me; I am self-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency]" (Philippians 4:13).

As I mentioned before, this is my favorite verse of Scripture. It has sustained me during many difficult times when I knew I couldn't solve the problems I faced. This passage of Scripture promises us we will always have strength for anything we'll ever face. By faith, Jesus Christ "infuses inner strength" into us. He is all we need!

A Christian can't have strong faith and also be self-confident and self-centered. Strong faith requires Jesus Christ to continually increase in importance. It also requires our faith in ourselves to decrease. "He must increase, but I must decrease. [He must grow more prominent; I must grow less so]" (John 3:30).

Satan loves to see people who are self-confident. He knows he can defeat them every time. The Word of God warns us against self-confidence. We're told that it can destroy us. "...the careless ease of [self-confident] fools shall destroy them" (Proverbs 1:32).

We make a big mistake if we trust in our human ability. "He who leans on, trusts in and is confident of his own mind and heart is a [self-confident] fool" (Proverbs 28:26). We should never trust in ourselves instead of the Lord. "...Cursed [with great evil] is the strong man who trusts in and relies on frail man, making weak [human] flesh his arm, and whose mind and heart turn aside from the Lord" (Jeremiah 17:5).

I became a Christian in the first place because I knew how inadequate I was. The Word of God tells us to continue the rest of our lives here on earth with a continual awareness of our

weakness. “Are you so foolish and so senseless and so silly? Having begun [your new life spiritually] with the [Holy] Spirit, are you now reaching perfection [by dependence] on the flesh?” (Galatians 3:3).

We didn’t depend on our flesh (human ability) when we were saved and we shouldn’t depend upon our flesh to solve our problems after we’re saved. I believe people who have a great deal of natural ability have a great liability. These people have to fight a tendency to trust in themselves. “...the way of a man is not in himself; it is not in man [even in a strong man or in a man at his best] to direct his [own] steps” (Jeremiah 10:23).

Our Father knows how easy it is for gifted people to trust in themselves. He warns every one of His children against falling into this trap. “...I warn everyone among you not to estimate and think of himself more highly than he ought [not to have an exaggerated opinion of his own importance], but to rate his ability with sober judgment...” (Romans 12:3).

Human ability is completely inadequate in the eyes of God. Every bit of the power and ability we need comes from Him. “Not that we are fit (qualified and sufficient in ability) of ourselves to form personal judgments or to claim or count anything as coming from us, but our power and ability and sufficiency are from God” (II Corinthians 3:5).

If we’re proud of our human ability, we actually force our heavenly Father to oppose us! People in their right minds don’t want Almighty God opposing them! This is exactly what He does if we’re proud. “...God sets Himself against the proud (the insolent, the overbearing, the disdainful, the presumptuous, the boastful) – [and He opposes, frustrates, and defeats them]...” (I Peter 5:5).

This same passage of Scripture goes on to tell us that God “...gives grace (favor, blessing) to the humble” (I Peter 5:5). If we want to receive these wonderful blessings from God, we must humble ourselves before Him and place all of our trust in Him. “Therefore humble yourselves [demote, lower yourselves in your own estimation] under the mighty hand of God, that in due time He may exalt you” (I Peter 5:6).

The word “exalt” means “to lift up.” If we’re being battered by the storms of life and want our heavenly Father to lift us up above them, we must lower ourselves in our own estimation. Our heavenly Father lifts up the humble. Also, He doesn’t always lift us up when we think He should. We’re told that He’ll exalt us “in due time.” We must trust God’s timing just as we trust Him in every other area of our lives!

Most Christians know we're supposed to give our problems to the Lord and not take them back. However, this is easier said than done. Most of us have experienced the folly of giving our problems to the Lord only to take them back a few days later. Then, we give them to the Lord again in a few days and take them back soon after that when nothing seems to be happening.

We're actually proud when we take control back from God. If we knew how weak and inadequate we are, we'd be so humble we'd never take our problems back! We'd realize that only God can solve these problems. "Casting the whole of your care [all your anxieties, all your worries, all your concerns, once and for all] on Him, for He cares for you affectionately and cares about you watchfully" (I Peter 5:7).

The Lord doesn't find many people who know how weak they really are and depend on Him completely for their strength. He looks throughout the earth for people who will allow Him to be their strength. "...the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him..." (II Chronicles 16:9, *The King James Bible*).

Our Father is a big God. He wants us to take advantage of His enormous strength. In order to do this, we must realize how weak we are and gladly place all of our trust in Him.

This chapter is loaded with Scripture that proves beyond any doubt that the Lord wants us to be very weak and humble before Him. He doesn't want us to trust in our own ability. Some of us were raised with the principle of exaltation of self. The principles in this chapter are very important. I urge every reader to go back and meditate day and night on the Scripture references.

They must get deep down inside of our hearts before we'll be able to completely resist our natural tendency to try to manipulate and maneuver in order to solve problems ourselves. It isn't easy to let go completely and trust the Lord. I have found that the only way I can do this is to realize how woefully inadequate I am.

Now that we've seen the importance of acknowledging our human weakness, let's look into the Word of God to study another quality that must be present if we're to have a strong faith. This quality is love.

Chapter 13

Faith Works by Love

I've read many books and listened to many cassette tapes on the subject of faith. Very few of them mention weakness and love as important ingredients for strong faith. Faith doesn't work on a "me first" basis. It works through love. "...faith activated and energized and expressed and working through love" (Galatians 5:6).

This verse tells us that love activates our faith. It gets our faith going. Love gives energy to our faith. We express our faith through love. Faith can't work without love.

Would you like your faith to be so strong that it could actually move mountains? All of us would. However, even if our faith is this strong, it's worthless in the eyes of God without love! "...if I have [sufficient] faith so that I can remove mountains, but have not love (God's love in me) I am nothing (a useless nobody)" (I Corinthians 13:2).

Faith is great, but love is greater. "And so faith, hope, love abide [faith—conviction and belief respecting man's relation to God and divine things; hope—joyful and confident expectation of eternal salvation; love—true affection for God and man, growing out of God's love for and in us], these three; but the greatest of these is love." (I Corinthians 13:13).

When I became a Christian, I was struggling to overcome difficult problems in my life. I studied faith constantly. My life revolved around faith. I thought it was the most important thing to do. Then, one Sunday morning our pastor gave a sermon on I Corinthians 13 and I heard for the first time that love was greater than faith and that faith worked by love.

I was a brand new Christian and I didn't know very much about studying the Word of God. So, I looked up the word "love" in my concordance to try to understand why love was so important. Suddenly, I saw it in three short words. "...God is love" (I John 4:8).

This verse doesn't say, "God has love." It says, "God is love." God and love are one and the same. Love isn't something that God produces. Love is what He is. The very essence of Christianity is love. "For God so greatly loved and dearly prized the world that He [even] gave up His only begotten (unique) Son, so that whoever believes in (trusts, clings to, relies on) Him shall not perish (come to destruction, be lost) but have eternal (everlasting) life" (John 3:16).

This passage of Scripture doesn't say God gave up His only Son because He loved Christians. It says He made this magnificent sacrifice because He greatly loved the world. God loves atheists who deny His existence. He loves every sinner in the world in spite of their sins. God hates sin, but He loves sinners.

God loved everyone in the world so much that He gave up His only Son so that every

person, through faith in Jesus Christ, could live eternally in heaven. Can you imagine a human father with one son who loved people who didn't love him so much that he would cheerfully give up his only son? Could you watch your only child die a horrible death for people who didn't even know him? Could you watch your son pay the price of the sins of people who denied his existence?

God made this sacrifice! He loves us more than we can possibly comprehend. He didn't just talk about His love for us. He showed us His love. "...the love of God was made manifest (displayed) where we are concerned: in that God sent His Son, the only begotten or unique [Son], into the world so that we might live through Him" (I John 4:9).

When we're going through difficult times, it's extremely important to realize how much our Father loves us. The love of this world is fickle, but God's love for us never changes. It isn't conditional based on what we do or don't do.

God loves each of us as much today as He'll love us after we've been in heaven for millions of years. It's very important for us to realize this fact. We'll be able to rest securely in His love if we can begin to comprehend how much He loves us!

God loves us so much that He permits each of us to become members of His royal family and be called His children. "See what [an incredible] quality of love the Father has given (shown, bestowed on) us, that we should [be permitted to] be named and called and counted the children of God! And so we are!..." (I John 3:1).

Our Father doesn't love one of His children more than another. It's easy to believe that He loves Jesus very much. However, it's not easy for some of us to understand that God loves each one of us just as much as He loves Jesus Christ! Jesus said, "...You have loved them [even] as You have loved Me" (John 17:23).

When we go through times of adversity, it often will help us if we'll open our mouths and say, "God loves me just as much as He loves Jesus! I trust His love. It's the foundation for my faith. I won't give up because I know He loves me more than I can possibly comprehend."

We wouldn't ever be afraid of anything or anyone if we truly understood how very much our Father loves us. "...If God is for us, who [can be] against us? [Who can be our foe, if God is on our side?] He who did not withhold or spare [even] His own Son but gave Him up for us all, will He not also with Him freely and graciously give us all [other] things?" (Romans 8:31-32).

We have every right to trust our Father. No one is as great as He is. If another human

being is against us, we must realize that God is for us. His love is greater than anything anyone can do to us. If His love is so great that He didn't even spare his own Son, can't we trust Him to solve every problem we face?

Sometimes the problems in our lives seem to be overwhelming. They actually are overwhelming to us, but they're not to God! He has given us a tremendous victory over every problem we'll face. "...amid all these things we are more than conquerors and gain a surpassing victory through Him Who loved us" (Romans 8:37).

The word "all" in this passage of Scripture is very important. This doesn't say we can overcome "some" of the things that trouble us or "most" of these things. It says we can overcome all of them!

We would be very excited if the Word of God just said we are conquerors over every problem we'll ever face. However, God didn't stop there. His Word says we're more than conquerors! God didn't put in the words "more than" by mistake. These words were included to give an indication of the magnitude of victory we have been given through Jesus Christ.

The word "surpassing" is another key word in this passage of Scripture. We have been given a victory that's greater than any other victory in the history of the world. When we're faced with severe problems, we can be assured of victory in every situation through Jesus Christ.

The next two verses of Scripture explain even more about this great victory we have been given. "For I am persuaded beyond doubt (am sure) that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things impending and threatening nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

No matter how bad our problems might seem, nothing can separate us from the love of God! No problem is greater than His love. Instead of focusing on our problems and thinking about them constantly, we should focus continually on our Father's love for us. Nothing can separate us from His love unless we allow it to.

Our heavenly Father loves us so much! His Son loves us, too. His love is every bit as strong as His Father's love. Jesus said, "I have loved you, [just] as the Father has loved Me; abide in My love [continue in His love with Me]" (John 15:9).

When we're going through difficult times, Jesus wants us to "abide" in His love. He wants us to rest in His love no matter what problems we face. Jesus loves each of us just as much

as His Father loves Him! Stop and meditate on this great truth for a while. Try to imagine how much God loves His only Son. Jesus loves each of us this much!

Before Jesus was crucified, He received a horrible whipping across His bare back. He was lashed with a whip of leather thongs with many jagged pieces of bone and metal tied at the end of the thongs. “Jesus was beaten and bloodied, so disfigured one would scarcely know it was a person standing there” (Isaiah 52:14, *The Living Bible*).

Jesus loves us this much! He was so bloodied and disfigured that it was hard to even tell He was a person. He loves us so much that He died an agonizing death on the cross for each of us. Try to visualize Jesus on the cross looking directly into your eyes saying, “I love you this much!”

Jesus loves us so much that He lives inside of us by faith. “May Christ through your faith [actually] dwell (settle down, abide, make His permanent home) in your hearts! May you be rooted deep in love and founded securely on love, that you may have the power and be strong to apprehend and grasp with all the saints [God’s devoted people, the experience of that love] what is the breadth and length and height and depth [of it]; [that you may really come] to know [practically, through experience for yourselves] the love of Christ, which far surpasses mere knowledge [without experience]; that you may be filled [through all your being] unto all the fullness of God [may have the richest measure of the divine Presence, and become a body wholly filled and flooded with God Himself]!” (Ephesians 3:17-19).

Do you believe Jesus Christ actually lives inside of you? This is His permanent home here on earth. He lives in our hearts. If we really believe this and if we sincerely believe He loves us much more than we can comprehend, we have a wonderful foundation for our faith.

The roots of our faith are very deep when they’re rooted in the love Jesus Christ has for us. This love is wider, longer, higher and deeper than we can possibly comprehend. It far surpasses mere human knowledge. We can’t understand this supernatural love with our minds. We can only understand it through a close personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

If we put quiet time with Him ahead of all other activities in our lives, we’ll get to know Him. His love for us will be very real and meaningful. If our lives truly center around Jesus Christ and not around ourselves, we’ll experience the fullness of His love. We will be secure.

We’ve seen how much our Father loves us. We’ve seen how much Jesus loves us. God and Jesus want us to love others. They know our human love is often inadequate. So, we have

been given God's love. "...God's love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit Who has been given to us" (Romans 5:5).

We all know people who are very difficult to love. When we can't love these people with our inadequate human love, we can love them with the love of God that lives in our hearts. If we can get to the point where we're actually able to do this, people who are difficult to love won't be able to pull us down. Instead, we'll lift them up by the love of the Lord.

If we're able to continually reach out to other people with divine love when our human love is inadequate, God's love is perfected in us. "...if we love one another, God abides (lives and remains) in us and His love (that love which is essentially His) is brought to completion (to its full maturity, runs its full course, is perfected) in us!" (I John 4:12).

There is a very definite relationship between perfect love and strong faith. If we're able to reach out to other people who are difficult to love, we'll have a continual consciousness of God living in our hearts. His mature love will be brought to completion in us. His love will be perfected in us.

This process is vitally important because the Word of God teaches us that perfect love enables us to overcome fear. "There is no fear in love [dread does not exist], but full-grown (complete, perfect) love turns fear out of doors and expels every trace of terror! For fear brings with it the thought of punishment, and [so] he who is afraid has not reached the full maturity of love [is not yet grown into love's complete perfection]" (I John 4:18).

All of this truth fits together beautifully. Perfect love is God-centered. Imperfect love is self-centered. Most of us are somewhere between these two extremes. The more self-centered we are, the easier it is for fear to get at us. The more God-centered we are, the harder it is for fear to get at us.

Many people believe fear is overcome through faith. The Word of God tells us fear is overcome through perfect love. Faith operates by love. We can see how important love is. It enables us to overcome fear. It activates and energizes our faith.

As we become more and more conscious of the love of God living within us, we'll be more loving and forgiving toward other people. As we truly begin to understand how much we're loved and how much we've been forgiven, we'll reach out to others with much more love, compassion, and forgiveness.

Every time we do something to another human being that isn't based on love and

forgiveness, our faith is weakened. Each time we reach out to other people with love and forgiveness, our faith is strengthened. Love is very powerful.

A hard heart blocks the Lord. A compassionate heart opens the door to him. Jesus is our example in every area of our lives. During His earthly ministry, He was always warm, loving, and compassionate. He wants us to be the same.

If our faith is solidly anchored in His love, we'll never give up. We'll be able to keep going in the face of any problem. "Love bears up under anything and everything that comes, is ever ready to believe the best of every person, its hopes are fadeless under all circumstances, and it endures everything [without weakening]. Love never fails..." (I Corinthians 13:7-8).

Perfect love never criticizes. It always believes the best about others. It looks for the good in people, not for their faults. It looks at people not as they are, but as they can become.

Proud, self-centered, critical people are wide open to the spirit of fear. Humble, loving, Christ-centered people are seldom afraid. A spirit of fear can't get at us if we're always ready to believe the best about others and refuse to criticize them.

People who live this way have a love that "bears up under anything and everything that comes." They never give up. If our lives truly revolve around the love of God living in our hearts, we'll be able to endure anything without weakening. Love never fails!

God is able to overcome any problem in our lives. Love is able to overcome any problem in our lives. God and love are one. God never gives up. He's always able to keep going. If our lives are centered around His love, we'll never give up.

Once we realize how important this is, we should learn everything we can about love. Nothing is more important than to live a life centered around love. "Eagerly pursue and seek to acquire [this] love [make it your aim, your great quest]..." (I Corinthians 14:1).

Chapter 14

When Human Logic Is Insufficient

We're learning that the ways of God are very different from the ways of the world. We've seen that faith works best when we know how weak we are. Also, we've learned that faith doesn't work well unless it's based on love. Now we'll see that faith works best when we learn to bypass the limitations of human logic and reason.

Faith can't be understood by human logic and reason. When we're faced with severe problems, we often reach a point where we don't know what to do. Some people panic when they're in this situation. Christians shouldn't react this way. If we can't figure out an answer intellectually, we have other alternatives.

I'm not belittling human logic and reason. When our Creator gave us the gift of human logic and reason, He did this to guide us in the worldly realm which is limited to our five senses. "The plans of the mind and orderly thinking belong to man..." (Proverbs 16:1).

Both saved and unsaved people have received the gift of orderly thinking. Our intellectual faculties are designed to be empowered by the Spirit of God. God's ways don't make sense to human logic. Christianity is founded on the fact that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin. Human reasoning says no one can be born from a virgin. However, the Bible says, "...the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a Son..." (Matthew 1:23).

The Bible is filled with many spiritual truths that don't make logical sense. When God told Noah to build an ark, the world had never seen rain. "...the Lord God had not [yet] caused it to rain upon the earth..." (Genesis 2:5). The people at that time couldn't visualize a flood. We can imagine how people who knew nothing of rain must have ridiculed Noah when he spent almost 100 years building a large boat.

Noah's labor made no sense whatsoever to the people who observed him. However, Noah didn't try to figure things out. He obeyed God. We should be thankful Noah didn't insist on following human logic and reason. Because he obeyed God, the human race wasn't completely destroyed.

The earthly ministry of Jesus Christ was filled with occurrences that don't make sense to human reason. Jesus started His earthly ministry by turning water into wine. He was able to feed 5,000 people with 5 loaves of bread and 4,000 people with 7 loaves of bread. He walked on the water. He lifted His hand and stopped a storm. He raised a man from the dead.

One of the best examples of faith transcending reason took place early one morning after several apostles had fished all night without any results. These men were professional fishermen. They knew all the technicalities of fishing and it wouldn't seem as if someone without professional experience could advise them.

Try to imagine how these men felt. They must have been tired and hungry. They probably were discouraged. Early that morning, Jesus watched the fishermen washing their nets.

He borrowed one of their boats and spoke to a crowd of people while standing on the boat a short way from the shore. After Jesus finished speaking, He told Simon Peter to take his boat back out into the deep water and to lower his nets once again.

Can you imagine how Peter and the other fishermen must have felt? It didn't make sense to them to go back out into the water again and to drop their nets. However, they reacted by faith. "And Simon (Peter) answered, Master, we toiled all night [exhaustingly] and caught nothing [in our nets]. But on the ground of Your word, I will lower the nets [again]" (Luke 5:5).

When human reason tells us there is no hope, Jesus wants us to act based upon His Word. We must learn to step out in faith on what He says instead of basing everything on the limitations of our five senses. When the fishermen did what Jesus said, He honored their faith. They received results that seemed impossible. "And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish; and as their nets were [at the point of] breaking, they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and take hold with them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink" (Luke 5:6-7).

Think how exciting this sight must have been for these fishermen! Their food, clothing and shelter depended on the number of fish they were able to catch. When they stepped out in faith upon the word of Jesus Christ, they caught so many fish that their nets almost broke. They had to bring their second boat out from the shore to hold the excess.

Both boats were so full of fish that they almost sank. All of this occurred at the same place where they hadn't been able to catch any fish. This is an example of what the Lord can and will do for us if we develop our faith to the point where we'll be able to go past the limitations of human logic and reasoning to trust completely in Him.

People who haven't been reborn spiritually can't comprehend this truth. It makes no sense to them. "...the natural, nonspiritual man does not accept or welcome or admit into his heart the gifts and teachings and revelations of the Spirit of God, for they are folly (meaningless nonsense) to him; and he is incapable of knowing them (of progressively recognizing, understanding, and becoming better acquainted with them) because they are spiritually discerned and estimated and appreciated. But the spiritual man tries all things [he examines, investigates, inquires into, questions, and discerns all things]..." (I Corinthians 2:14-15).

Christians don't have the limitations of unsaved people. We don't have to limit ourselves just because the ways of God seem like meaningless nonsense to others. We must learn to go

past the limitations of human logic and reasoning. We should continually examine, investigate, inquire into and attempt to discern the ways of God. We should always be open to spiritual principles we never understood before.

There's a vast difference between the mind of a Christian that's continually renewed in the Word of God and the mind of carnal, worldly people. "...the mind of the flesh [with its carnal thoughts and purposes] is hostile to God, for it does not submit itself to God's Law; indeed it cannot" (Romans 8:7).

Unsaved people can't submit to God's ways because they're not members of His family. Christians are members of the family of God. We're not hostile to our heavenly Father. We can submit ourselves completely to His ways. Are we willing?

Some people become Christians and still think very much the way the world thinks. They don't grow spiritually. They refuse to pay the price of renewing their minds daily and meditating day and night upon the Word of God. Paul warned the Ephesians "...you must no longer live as the heathen (the Gentiles) do in their perverseness [in the folly, vanity, and emptiness of their souls and the futility] of their minds" (Ephesians 4:17).

We must not fall into the trap of thinking the way the world thinks. The world operates based upon foolish pride and selfishness. They have no way of knowing the ways of God.

The apostle Paul spoke of the "futility" of people's minds. This echoes the inspired words written by the psalmist David many years before. "The Lord knows the thoughts of man, that they are vain (empty and futile...)" (Psalm 94:11). On another occasion, Paul also wrote about the worthlessness of human wisdom. "...The Lord knows the thoughts and reasonings of the [humanly] wise and recognizes how futile they are" (I Corinthians 3:20).

Each of these three passages of Scripture uses the word "futile" to describe human logic and reason. When we become Christians, we should turn away from the old way of doing things. We're given a fresh, new start. Everything in our lives is new and different. "...if any person is [ingrafted] in Christ (the Messiah) he is a new creation (a new creature altogether); the old [previous moral and spiritual condition] has passed away. Behold the fresh and new has come!" (II Corinthians 5:17).

We have been set free from the way we used to think! We shouldn't try to operate any longer under the limitations of traditional human thinking. This blocks faith and renders it ineffective. Our Father gave us faith to enable us to go past the point where traditional, logical

thinking leaves off.

Many Christians fail to grow spiritually and still live their lives largely in the traditional way of living that has been handed down from generation to generation. We must not fall into this trap. "...for the sake of your tradition (the rules handed down by your forefathers), you have set aside the Word of God [depriving it of force and authority and making it of no effect]" (Matthew 15:6).

We actually have the ability to deprive the Word of God of its supernatural power! We're able to make it void and ineffective. How are we able to do such a horrible thing? We're able to do this by living our lives traditionally. Some Christians do this by continuing to live the way they lived before they were saved.

This situation often happens with people who didn't become Christians until later in life. I was 43 years old when I asked Jesus Christ to become my Saviour. I had to change habit patterns that were very deeply set for 43 years. Many things in the Bible didn't make sense to me. Much of what I read was vastly different from anything else I'd experienced.

If we weren't brought up according to the ways of God, we must learn to turn away from the worldly traditions we've held for many years. Jesus once told a group of Jews that they were hanging on to Jewish customs because they were traditional. He warned them against this. "...you were redeemed (ransomed) from the useless (fruitless) way of living inherited by tradition from [your] forefathers..." (I Peter 1:18).

These same words Jesus spoke to Jewish people 2,000 years ago apply to us today. When we were reborn spiritually, we were redeemed from the useless, fruitless way we used to live. We were set free from our previous value system. We're not restricted by the limitations of human logic and reason.

Let me give you an example that illustrates this clearly. A pilot flying an airplane by the use of instruments is quite similar to the way our Father wants us to live after we're saved. Sometimes pilots have to fly in conditions where their visibility is very limited. They can't trust their eyesight. They must place their trust in the instruments in the cockpit before them and in a voice from a control tower in an airport.

This situation is quite similar to the one Christians find themselves in when they can't see any solutions to their problems according to the limitations of their five senses. We're not limited by human logic and reason! We have been given the Word of God which is similar to the

instruments in the pilot's cockpit. We have been given our Own "voice in the control tower" – the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit.

In the last days before Jesus returns, Christians must learn to "fly by instruments" when worldly principles and techniques that worked very well for centuries fail completely. When we're faced with problems that seem to be unsolvable, we must learn to hear the voice of the One Who has the answers to all problems. He will tell us what to do and how to do it.

We must free ourselves from the erroneous logic that there is no hope just because the world's way of doing things has failed. God's ways will continue to work very well when the ways of the world don't work at all. The apostle Paul urged the Corinthians to live "so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men (human philosophy), but in the power of God" (I Corinthians 2:5).

The power of God transcends human wisdom. For many years, I've turned to one passage of Scripture whenever I was faced with a situation that was beyond the limitations of human understanding. "Lean on, trust in, and be confident in the Lord with all your heart and mind and do not rely on your own insight or understanding. In all your ways know, recognize, and acknowledge Him, and He will direct and make straight and plain your paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Please take a pen or a pencil and underline the words "do not rely on your own insight or understanding." Many Christians fall into this trap! When we're faced with a problem that seems unsolvable, we must realize we're able to go beyond the limits of human understanding. Instead of trusting in our own insight or understanding, we're told to "lean on, trust in, and be confident in the Lord with all your heart and mind."

We can lean completely on the Lord when we can't lean on human understanding. He will hold us up if we place all our trust and confidence in Him. Everything we do should recognize and acknowledge Him. If we do our part, He will direct us and show us clearly what He wants us to do and how He wants us to do it.

This passage also urges us to turn away from limited human wisdom. "Be not wise in your own eyes; reverently fear and worship the lord and nun [entirely] away from evil. It shall be health to your nerves and sinews, and marrow and moistening to your bones" (Proverbs 3:7-8).

The words "be not wise in your own eyes" tell us how foolish it is to try to figure things out with human reasoning. Instead of doing this, we're told to "reverently fear and worship the Lord." If we fear the Lord, we hold Him in complete awe at all times. Because of our reverent

awe of Him, we continually study His Word to learn how He wants us to live. We turn away from Satan and the way he tries to get us to live.

This is a very healthy emotional and physical reaction. When we're faced with severe problems, some of us tend to tighten up and lose control of our emotions. Our nerves, muscles and bones don't seem to work as well under pressure. We'll be able to relax when we're faced with stressful conditions if we learn to trust the Lord instead of reacting based upon the limitations of human logic.

As Christians, we have enormous advantages available to us. Unsaved people can't understand the Word of God. Problems that seem overwhelming to human understanding are very simple to the Holy Spirit. We must dare to turn from human ability and place our total trust in God!

Chapter 15

Deeply Rooted Faith

We've seen that our Father doesn't want us to try to solve difficult problems with human logic. Instead, He wants us to work continually at strengthening our faith so we'll be able to trust Him to solve these problems for us. In the difficult times that lie ahead for all of us, we'll need deeply rooted faith in order to overcome our problems.

The storms of life reveal the strength of our faith. I remember walking around the day after a hurricane looking at several trees that were uprooted by the storm. Other trees next to them remained upright. The trees with the deepest roots were able to withstand the hurricane while the trees with shallow roots could not.

Spiritual storm clouds are on the horizon. Will the roots of our faith be deep enough? “[Most] blessed is the man who believes in, trusts in, and relies on the Lord, and whose hope and confidence the Lord is. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters that spreads out its roots by the river; and it shall not see and fear when heat comes; but its leaf shall be green. It shall not be anxious and full of care in the year of drought, nor shall it cease yielding fruit” (Jeremiah 17:7-8).

This passage of Scripture tells us that Christians with deeply rooted faith will always be blessed. We'll be like trees next to a river. During a period of severe drought, trees everywhere

are dry and barren. However, some trees next to a river are able to remain lush and green while they continue to produce fruit.

Why does this happen? Some trees near a river are able to continue to produce fruit during a drought because their roots go so deep they're able to pull up water from the river. We saw the same analogy in a previous chapter where Psalm 1:1-3 told us to meditate day and night in order to be like a tree planted next to a stream.

The world will face a severe "drought" in the future. Christians with deeply rooted faith will continue to endure. The storms of life can't tear up the roots of Christians who walk closely with the Lord. "...the root of the [uncompromisingly] righteous shall never be moved" (Proverbs 12:3).

This passage of Scripture tells us it's possible to have a faith that's so deeply rooted that nothing can move it. We must be "uncompromisingly righteous" if we want to develop this kind of faith. The word "righteous" in this context means to live our lives the way the Lord wants us to live them. Righteous people do their very best at all times to obey the instructions in the Word of God. If we live our lives in this way, we'll refuse to compromise. We won't give in to any situation that tempts us to live in a different manner from the way the Word of God instructs us to live. Our faith will be very bold. "...the [uncompromisingly] righteous are bold as a lion" (Proverbs 28:1).

I believe the key to deeply rooted faith is to know the Lord intimately. One way we get to know Him is by combining daily Bible study with daily meditation on the Word of God. When we study the supernatural Word of God each day, this helps us to be single-minded. Our minds are renewed daily and brought under the control of the Holy Spirit. This makes it very difficult for Satan to influence our thinking.

When we meditate day and night on the Word of God, we "plant" it in our hearts. The Word of God is a seed. "...The seed is the Word of God" (Luke 8:11). Our Father wants us to continually plant this seed in our hearts.

Satan wants to distract us. He doesn't want us to continually study and meditate on the Word of God. He does everything he can to take the Word of God out of our hearts before it has a chance to take root. "The sower sows the Word. The ones along the path are those who have the Word sown [in their hearts], but when they hear, Satan comes at once and [by force] takes away the message which is sown in them" (Mark 4:14-15).

Do you want to be on the path God wants you to be on? I do! This passage of Scripture tells us that Christians who are on this path continually sow the seeds of the Word of God in their hearts. We should expect Satan to do everything he can to stop these seeds from taking root.

Some of us have had the experience of going to church on a Sunday morning and hearing an inspired sermon by an anointed pastor. When we leave church, we feel as if we could lick lions with our bare hands. Our faith is very strong.

However, Satan often is able to distract us with worldly problems to get our minds off the inspiring message we have heard. In a day or two, some of us have forgotten completely about the message we heard in church. When this happens, Satan has been effective in digging up the seed of the Word of God before it has the chance to become deeply rooted.

We can prevent this from happening by renewing our minds daily in the Word of God and meditating on it day and night. If we do this, we plant seeds continually. Satan doesn't have an opportunity to dig them up. We don't give him an opening. He can't get at us because we're constantly in the Word of God. We continually plant its seeds in our minds and hearts.

If we pay this price over a period of time, our faith will become deeply rooted. People who don't pay this price won't be able to keep going when they are faced with severe problems. Jesus said, "...they have no real root in themselves, and so they endure for a little while; then when trouble or persecution arises on account of the Word, they immediately are offended (become displeased, indignant, resentful) and they stumble and fall away" (Mark 4:17).

We can't endure and persevere in the face of severe problems unless our faith in the Lord is deeply rooted. Christians with shallow roots are only able to "endure for a little while." When we're faced with severe problems, the Word of God in our hearts should be more powerful to us than the problems we face. We shouldn't let anything shake our faith in the supernatural Word of God. We should be single-minded at all times.

Christians who continually sow the good seed of God's Word into the spiritual soil of their hearts will reap a tremendous harvest. "...those sown on the good (well-adapted) soil are the ones who hear the Word and receive and accept and welcome it and bear fruit – some thirty times as much as was sown, some sixty times as much, and some [even] a hundred times as much" (Mark 4:20).

Our hearts are good soil. They're adapted to the Word of God. Christians who hear God's Word and receive, accept and welcome it can produce a tremendous harvest. We'll produce this

harvest if we humble ourselves before the mighty power of the Word of God.

We should know how important it is to have it living inside of us. We should do everything we can to “plant” it in our hearts continually. “...in a humble (gentle, modest) spirit receive and welcome the Word which implanted and rooted [in your hearts] contains the power to save your souls” (James 1:21).

People with weak faith are proud people. They try to control their own lives. Christians with strong faith are humble because they are very much aware of how weak they are. They welcome the opportunity to plant the seeds of the Word of God deeply into the soil of their hearts. When something is implanted, it’s planted deeply. It’s embedded. This is what our Father wants us to do with His Word.

He has provided us with everything we’ll need. Before we were reborn spiritually, our hearts were barren soil. We couldn’t plant the seeds of God’s Word in them then. When we were reborn spiritually, our hearts became fertile soil. Our Father gives us the seed of His Word to plant continually in our hearts.

Seeds have great multiplying power. A small seed is able to duplicate itself many times over to produce a substantial harvest. If we willingly pay the price of meditating day and night on the Word of God, the roots of our faith will grow deep and we’ll be able to withstand severe problems.

Satan can do everything he can to knock us off our feet, but he can’t win if our faith is deeply rooted. We’ll be able to take everything Satan gives us and refuse to give in. “Withstand him; be firm in faith [against his onset – rooted, established, strong, immovable, and determined] ...” (I Peter 5:9).

In order to resist the attacks of Satan, our faith must be deeply rooted, established, strong, immovable and determined. We must not allow Satan to plant thoughts in our minds. “Let your eyes look right on [with fixed purpose], and let your gaze be straight before you. Consider well the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established and ordered aright. Turn not aside to the right hand or to the left; remove your foot from evil” (Proverbs 4:25-27).

Satan wants us to think continually about the problems in our lives. He wants us to meditate on them. He wants us to turn them over and over in our minds to visualize how bad the future will be because of the problems we face. He wants us to be single-minded in our focus upon the problems in our lives.

Our heavenly Father wants us to be single-minded, too. However, He wants us to focus continually upon the solution. He wants our attention focused at all times upon the promises He has given us in His Word and upon the Holy Spirit living in our hearts. He doesn't want us turning to the right or to the left. He wants us to keep going straight ahead at all times without being distracted by Satan.

Our Father has given a magnificent promise to all of His children who will keep their minds focused upon Him. "You will guard him and keep him in perfect and constant peace whose mind [both its inclinations and its character] is stayed on You, because he commits himself to You, leans on You, and hopes confidently in You" (Isaiah 26:3).

God Himself promises to guard us and keep us in perfect and constant peace! He'll always do His part. Will we do our part? Our part is to remain single-minded at all times. We should focus continually on God. Our lives should be totally committed to Him. We should lean on Him because we believe He'll hold us up. We should have absolute hope and confidence in Him at all times.

If we remain single-minded and focus totally on Him, He'll give us His supernatural, perfect peace. Nothing will bother us. No matter how bad our problems seem to be, we'll know deep down inside of ourselves that God is in complete control. We can rest in His sovereignty.

If we're single-minded at all times and keep our minds on the Lord continually, we'll always walk in His light. However, if we allow Satan to get our attention, he'll try to pull us into darkness. "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness" (Matthew 6:22-23, *The King James Bible*).

If we keep our eyes on the Lord at all times, we'll be single-minded and we'll walk in His light. We must not allow ourselves to be double-minded. Some Christians have great faith one day, but just a few days later they're extremely concerned with the problems they face.

Our Father wants all of His children to be single-minded. He wants our faith to be constant. "...it must be in faith that he asks with no wavering (no hesitating, no doubting). For the one who wavers (hesitates, doubts) is like the billowing surge out at sea that is blown hither and thither and tossed by the wind. For truly, let not such a person imagine that he will receive anything [he asks for] from the Lord, [for being as he is] a man of two minds (hesitating, dubious, irresolute), [he is] unstable and unreliable and uncertain about everything [he thinks,

feels, decides]” (James 1:6-8).

There are many passages of Scripture that urge us to be single-minded. However, I can’t think of any other that’s as emphatic as this one. Our Father definitely wants His children to be single-minded. He doesn’t want us to allow doubt and unbelief to get into our minds at any time. If we’re double-minded, we’ll be like waves in the sea that are tossed back and forth by the wind. We block the Lord from blessing us.

Satan loves to see Christians jump back and forth between faith in the promises of the Word of God and fear concerning the problems they face. Faith is single-minded. Fear is double-minded. Faith focuses continually on the solution. Fear either focuses continually upon the problem or it goes back and forth between the problem and the solution.

When God created us, He gave each of us the power of choice. If He didn’t, we’d be mere robots. This power of choice is a tremendous asset. However, it also can be a big liability. “...be careful that this power of choice (this permission and liberty to do as you please) which is yours, does not [somehow] become a hindrance (cause of stumbling).” (1 Corinthians 8:9).

When we’re under severe pressure, we must not dwell upon the problems we face. We make a big mistake if we allow Satan to get into our minds. “You cannot drink the Lord’s cup and the demon’s cup. You cannot partake of the Lord’s table and the demon’s table” (1 Corinthians 10:21).

The psalmist David went through many difficult problems. He learned to focus continually on the Lord. He knew the Lord would lift him out of Satan’s grasp and put him safely back on his feet. “My eyes are ever toward the Lord, for He will pluck my feet out of the net” (Psalm 25:15).

We must not give Satan a foothold. If we take our eyes off the Lord and focus on our problems, it’s very easy to be overwhelmed. We must make a continual decision to focus on the Lord. “Unto You do I lift up my eyes, O You Who are enthroned in heaven” (Psalm 123:1).

Our Father can and will bring us safely through the problems in our lives if we’ll keep our attention focused on Him. Why would we ever focus on a problem if we truly believe our Father is greater than any problem we’ll ever face? “...set your minds and keep them set on what is above (the higher things), not on the things that are on the earth” (Colossians 3:2).

There is a definite relationship between being single-minded and having deeply rooted faith. If we really believe deep down in our hearts that the Lord will bring us through, we’ll be

single-minded at all times. “For the Lord God helps Me; therefore have I not been ashamed or confounded. Therefore have I set My face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame” (Isaiah 50:7).

A flint is an extremely hard rock. When this passage of Scripture was written, a flint was used to start fires. It is so hard that the friction caused by striking it against something else that is hard produces flame. When we’re told to set our faces like a flint, this means we should be rock-solid in our determination. If we truly believe the Lord will help us, we should never waver in our thinking.

Faith is intensified by single-mindedness. Deeply rooted faith refuses to focus on obstacles. It focuses continually upon the Lord and absolutely refuses to give up because He never gives up. He is more than sufficient to overcome any problem we’ll ever face.

It isn’t easy to focus continually upon the Lord when we’re faced with severe problems. It’s easy to focus continually on the problems. This comes naturally to us. We must renew our minds continually in the Word of God and fill our hearts continually with the Word of God. If we do, our faith will be deeply rooted and we’ll be able to resist the temptation to dwell our problems.

We can’t “will” ourselves to focus continually on the Lord. We must prepare our minds and hearts in advance. If we do this correctly, we’ll be able to be calm and quiet in the midst of extreme pressure.

Chapter 16

Calm and Quiet Faith

As the roots of our faith grow deeper, we’ll find that we’re able to remain calm in situations that used to be very agitating. As we draw closer to the Lord and understand more about His ways, we’ll be able to remain calm and cool deep down inside of ourselves. “...a man of understanding has a cool spirit” (Proverbs 17:27).

The Word of God doesn’t teach us to react emotionally when we’re faced with a crisis situation. We can’t trust our emotions. We can trust the Word of God. When our hearts are filled with it, we’ll be steady in the face of adversity. We’ll react to the promises in the Word of God instead of reacting emotionally to the problems we face.

If the process of studying and meditating on God's Word is continual in our lives, we'll keep our Father's instructions in front of us at all times. We'll "program" ourselves each day with the holy Scriptures. We won't forget them. We'll live our lives the way they tell us to live.

Our Father is very pleased when we do this. He promises great blessings to His children who follow His instructions. "My son, forget not my law or teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments; for length of days and years of a life [worth living], and tranquility [inward and outward and continuing through old age till death], these shall they add to you" (Proverbs 3:1-2).

Would you like to have inner and outer tranquility at all times from now until the day you die? This is available to God's children. There is more. Our Father also promises us long, full days and many worthwhile years of living if we'll keep His instructions before us at all times and do our very best to live the way He wants us to.

If we do this continually, the problems of life won't be able to get inside of us. We'll be able to remain calm in crisis situations because we have programmed ourselves continually with the Word of God. Our Father wants us to react confidently to the promises in His Word instead of reacting emotionally to the problems in our lives.

When I'm faced with a crisis situation, I often turn to a passage of Scripture that I've reflected on many times over the years. When I meditate continually on the following words, they have a great effect on me. They always calm me down. "...be still, and know (recognize and understand) that I am God..." (Psalm 46:10).

When I'm tempted to "lose my cool," I often look at these words and repeat over and over the two beautiful words, "be still" ... "be still" ... "be still" ... "be still." Sometimes I say these two words dozens of times. This has a wonderful calming effect on me. Why should we be still when we're faced with severe problems? We should be still because we don't have to solve problems that are too difficult for us! Our heavenly Father is in complete control.

He wants us to be still because we know Who He is. Even though it may not look like it, He wants us to be still because He's Almighty God and He's in complete control. He's omnipotent. This means He is all powerful. No matter how difficult our problems might seem to us, they're not difficult for Him! He wants us to trust completely in Him. He wants us to identify with His omnipotence instead of reacting emotionally to the problems we face.

On one occasion, Isaiah was writing about a conflict between the Egyptians and the Israelites. He explained where the Israelites got their strength from. The Word of God

consistently teaches that strength comes from a calm, still heart. "...Their strength is to sit still" (Isaiah 30:7, *The King James Bible*).

When we're faced with severe pressure, it doesn't seem logical to "sit still." Some people are frantic when they're under pressure. They feel they must do something. It isn't easy to wait patiently on the Lord, but this is how we release His strength. "...in quietness and in [trusting] confidence shall be your strength..." (Isaiah 30:15).

This passage of Scripture tells us how to activate the Lord's strength. We can do this if we're able to remain quiet in the face of pressure because of our trust in the Lord. Over the years, I've meditated many times on Isaiah 30:15. When I'm faced with a severe problem, I often say something like the following as I meditate:

"Dear Lord, I need Your strength to deal with this problem. It's too difficult for me. I can't handle it with my ability. Your Word says Your strength is available to me if I'll remain calm and trust completely in You. I don't want to block You, Lord, so I'm going to calm down. I know You'll pull me through this situation. Thank You, dear Lord."

I always become calm if I meditate continually on the promises from God's Word that are included in this chapter. Our Father wants us to quietly rest in Him when we're going through difficult times. "Be still and rest in the Lord; wait for Him and patiently lean yourself upon Him..." (Psalm 37:7).

He wants us to remain calm and trust in Him. No matter how long He requires us to wait, He wants us to rest quietly because we trust Him. He has given us rest from every problem we face. "...the Lord has given you rest from your sorrow and pain and from your trouble and unrest..." (Isaiah 14:3).

We'll never enter into God's rest if we struggle and strain to try to make things happen with human ability. There is only one way to enter into the rest of God. "...he who has once entered [God's] rest also has ceased from [the weariness and pain] of human labors..." (Hebrews 4:10).

In order to understand this concept, try to imagine a group of students in a class with a swimming instructor. In these classes, some students don't progress because they fight the water. They thrash and splash. This causes them to sink because they don't "let go" and trust the water to hold them up.

Good swimmers trust the water. They glide along almost effortlessly. This is what we

need to do to enter into God's rest. Instead of struggling and straining to do everything ourselves, we should do the best we can and then let go, trusting completely in the Lord to hold us up.

Once we've done our very best, we can't do any more. We must stop striving. Our Father doesn't want us fretting and worrying. He knows exactly what we're going through. He can easily solve problems that we can't solve with human ability.

He wants us to release our problems and give them to Him because we know He'll never let us down. "Cast your burden on the Lord [releasing the weight of it] and He will sustain you; He will never allow the [consistently] righteous to be moved (made to slip, fall, or fail)" (Psalm 55:22).

Little children let go of their problems because they trust their parents. Our Father wants us to do the same. He wants us to give our problems to Him. He wants us to completely release the weight of our problems. He can't carry them for us if we insist on carrying them ourselves! He is more than sufficient. If we live our lives the way His Word tells us to live, we can rest assured that He won't let us fail.

We must have simple, childlike faith. Can you imagine how the parents of a two-year-old would feel if they knew their child worried continually about the future and doubted whether they would be able to take care of him? Little children don't do this. They instinctively trust their parents.

Our Father wants us to get our worldly logic and intellect out of the way and trust Him. He wants us to be calm and quiet as little children are calm after they're weaned from their mothers. "Surely I have calmed and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with his mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me [ceased from fretting]" (Psalm 131:2).

When little children are weaned from their mother's milk, they're content. They're ready for food other than their mother's milk. As we grow and mature as Christians, we'll be able to feed ourselves with the spiritual food of the Word of God. We'll become quiet and calm.

If we continually study and meditate on the holy Scriptures and follow their instructions, we'll lead a righteous life. This is a life that's right in the eyes of God. As we learn the way our Father wants us to live and do our best to adhere to His instructions, a quiet trust will develop within us. "...the effect of righteousness will be peace [internal and external], and the result of righteousness will be quietness and confident trust forever" (Isaiah 32:17).

Our Father has given this wonderful promise for His children who trust in Him. If we

consistently do our best to live according to His Word, we'll have a quiet trust deep down inside of ourselves. We'll also react calmly on the outside when we're faced with adversity. This quiet confidence will last forever!

The apostle Paul went through many difficult times. He learned to live so that he didn't react to external situations. Instead, he remained calm and quiet no matter what he faced. "...I have learned how to be content (satisfied to the point where I am not disturbed or disquieted) in whatever state I am" (Philippians 4:11).

Nothing disturbed Paul. He learned to take everything in stride. He willingly relinquished control of his life to the Holy Spirit living inside of him. The Holy Spirit is always content. Nothing bothers Him. He wants us to always identify completely with Him instead of focusing on the problems in our lives.

It's easy to be agitated, worried and tense when we're in a pressure situation. It isn't easy to remain quiet and calm. We must learn to do this by continually drawing closer to the Lord. As we do this, we'll find that "...godliness accompanied with contentment (that contentment which is a sense of inward sufficiency) is great and abundant gain" (I Timothy 6:6).

If we learn to be content, we won't react emotionally to adversity. Instead, we'll have a continuous sense of the inward sufficiency of the Holy Spirit. He's always calm and content because He is in complete control.

Satan hates to see us react calmly to adversity. He wants us to react emotionally. He wants us to be worried and afraid. He knows that we block the power of the Holy Spirit when we react negatively. On the other hand, we provide a wonderful channel for the power of the Holy Spirit to be released if we react with calm, quiet faith.

If the Holy Spirit truly is in control of our lives, we'll always be at peace. His perfect peace will be transmitted to us if we cheerfully allow Him to live His life through us. "...let the peace (soul harmony which comes) from Christ rule (act as umpire continually) in your hearts [deciding and settling with finality all questions that arise in your minds...]" (Colossians 3:15).

Jesus Christ lives inside of us. He wants to control our lives. However, He'll never force Himself on us. We must continually allow Him to rule our lives because we trust completely in Him. When we do this, we'll experience wonderful peace in our souls. Our minds will remain calm in the face of adversity. Our emotions will be completely under control. We'll be able to make decisions calmly and quietly because we'll know we're guided by the Lord.

No problem Satan can bring against us is greater than the Holy Spirit Who lives within us. By faith, children of God have a total victory over Satan. “Little children, you are of God [you belong to Him] and have [already] defeated and overcome them [the agents of the antichrist], because He Who lives in you is greater (mightier) than he who is in the world” (I John 4:4).

We are members of the royal family of God! We have nothing to fear. Jesus Christ has already defeated Satan and all of his assistants. He has already won a victory over everything we’ll ever face. He’s much greater than anything Satan can bring against us.

If we really comprehend what Christ has done for us, we’ll be calm and quiet at all times. There is a very definite relationship between quiet confidence and continual awareness of the Holy Spirit living within us. Let’s look at several facts from the Word of God that will help us to identify with the Holy Spirit when we go through adversity.

Chapter 17

Trust the Holy Spirit

Our Father has made the gift of the Holy Spirit available to all of His children. Many blessings are available to us if we’ll receive this gift by faith. Jesus said, “If you then, evil as you are, know how to give good gifts [gifts that are to their advantage] to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask and continue to ask Him!” (Luke 11:13).

Our Father has given us the Holy Spirit to give us an advantage. As children of God, we have been given a special blessing if we’ll take Jesus at His word and believe the Holy Spirit really lives inside of us. Many Christians pay mental assent to this as a doctrine, but we’re talking about a close personal relationship. It’s good to believe in our minds that the Holy Spirit is inside of us, but when we’re faced with a crisis situation, we must have faith in our hearts. If we do, we’ll show our faith in the Holy Spirit by our words and actions under pressure.

Jesus placed great emphasis on the importance of the Holy Spirit. Just before He left His disciples to go to the cross He said, “...I am telling you nothing but the truth when I say it is profitable (good, expedient, advantageous) for you that I go away. Because if I do not go away, the Comforter (Counselor, Helper, Advocate, Intercessor, Strengtheners, Standby) will not come

to you [into close fellowship with you]; but if I go away, I will send Him to you [to be in close fellowship with you]" (John 16:7).

Once again, Jesus spoke of the advantage Christians have as a result of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The disciples must have found it hard to understand why it was good for them if Jesus went away and left them. When Jesus was on earth, each of His individual followers was able to spend only a small amount of time alone with Him. The Holy Spirit is constantly available to every child of God.

He wants to bless us abundantly. He is able to comfort, counsel and help us. He represents us to God and intercedes for us in prayer. He gives us strength and He stands by us at all times. He should be the center of our lives. We should be in close, continuous fellowship with Him.

If we are, we'll turn away from preoccupation with the things of the world. The world is Satan's kingdom. God's kingdom is inside of us, where the Holy Spirit lives. "...the kingdom of God is within you [in your hearts]..." (Luke 17:21).

When our lives are centered around the Holy Spirit living in our hearts, we won't have to struggle and strain trying to get everything done with human ability. Great things aren't accomplished by us. They're accomplished through us. "...Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit..." (Zechariah 4:6).

Just before He ascended into heaven, Jesus emphasized once again the tremendous advantage we receive from the Holy Spirit. He told His followers "...you shall receive power (ability, efficiency, and might) when the Holy Spirit has come upon you..." (Acts 1:8).

Jesus made a wonderful promise. When we can't solve problems with human ability, the magnificent power and might of the Holy Spirit is available to us. When our human ability is insufficient, His supernatural ability is more than sufficient.

We're also told that His efficiency is available to us. The most intelligent person on this earth can't begin to compare with the efficiency of the incomparable Holy Spirit. He knows how to solve every problem with a minimum of effort. He's an expert in every area where we'll need help.

The Holy Spirit is so powerful that He actually was able to raise Jesus Christ from the dead. We can't begin to comprehend the enormous spiritual power that must have been required to transform the dead Jesus into the risen Christ. By faith, all Christians have this same immense

power living inside of us! "...the Spirit of Him Who raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you..." (Romans 8:11).

All Christians must appropriate this startling fact by faith. Whenever I teach a class on this subject, I always have members of the class open their mouths and say, "The same Holy Spirit Who raised Jesus from the dead lives inside of me! If He was able to resurrect Jesus, He certainly can solve every problem in my life!"

Are you struggling with a problem? Please open your mouth now and repeat the two sentences from the last paragraph over and over. We've seen how our faith grows by hearing spiritual truth. When our ears hear our voices speaking this great spiritual truth again and again, our faith will increase.

Don't take my word for it. Try this. See for yourself. During the next few days, constantly speak this spiritual truth boldly and with conviction. Meditate on the great fact that the same Holy Spirit Who raised Jesus from the dead actually lives inside of you. Think about this constantly. Speak to Him continually. Listen to Him continually. Watch your faith grow!

All of us are stronger in some areas than we are in others, but the Holy Spirit is strong in every area. When we have to solve a problem in an area where we're not very confident, we can turn to the Holy Spirit and ask for His help. He will respond to strong faith. "...the [Holy] Spirit comes to our aid and bears us up in our weakness..." (Romans 8:26).

We don't have to overcome difficult problems with our human strength. The Holy Spirit will give us the energy, power and desire to carry out His will for our lives. "[Not in your own strength] for it is God Who is all the while effectually at work in you [energizing and creating in you the power and desire], both to will and to work for His good pleasure and satisfaction and delight" (Philippians 2:13).

We must realize the tremendous blessing our Father has made available to His children. Everything we'll ever need is available to us from the Holy Spirit. "...be strengthened and reinforced with mighty power in the inner man by the [Holy] Spirit [Himself indwelling your innermost being and personality]" (Ephesians 3:16).

There is no limit to what the Holy Spirit can do in us and through us. We can't begin to comprehend His immense power. "...Him Who, by (in consequence of) the [action of His] power that is at work within us, is able to [carry out His purpose and] do superabundantly, far over and above all that we [dare] ask or think [infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires,

thoughts, hopes, or dreams]...” (Ephesians 3:20).

This is a powerful promise! The Holy Spirit has specific plans for each of us. If we sincerely seek God’s will with all our hearts, the Holy Spirit is at work within us enabling us to carry out God’s purpose for our lives. We’re able to reach much greater heights than we realize. Our highest goals and loftiest dreams can’t begin to compare with what the Holy Spirit is able to do in us and through us if we trust completely in Him!

I believe continual study and meditation in the Word of God is very important if we want to activate the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. He is the true Author of the Word of God. All forty of the human authors of the 66 books of the Bible were inspired by the Holy Spirit.

As we study and meditate continually on the Word of God, we’ll understand the Author much better and hear His voice much more clearly. Just as sheep know the voice of their shepherd and follow him, we’ll get to know the voice of the Holy Spirit and follow Him. “...the sheep follow him because they know his voice” (John 10:4).

Sometimes the Word of God is referred to as Truth. Jesus said, “...Your Word is Truth” (John 17:17). As we get more and more of the Truth inside of us, we’ll be able to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit much more clearly. “...Everyone who is of the Truth [who is a friend of the Truth, who belongs to the Truth] hears and listens to My voice” (John 18:37).

The Holy Spirit talks to each of God’s children all day long every day of our lives. He is like a 24-hour radio station that never goes off the air. We must learn to “tune in” to His voice. We do this by continually listening to the “spiritual radio station” WORD. As we learn how to effectively study and meditate on the Word of God, it will come alive in our hearts and enable us to hear the Holy Spirit much more clearly.

It’s vitally important to study and meditate continually on the Word of God. Most us won’t hear the voice of the Holy Spirit clearly when we first start to do this. When we first start to hear His voice, it’s usually quite faint. If we tune in to a radio station that’s hard to hear, we must be tuned in very precisely in order to hear it clearly. It’s no different with the Holy Spirit.

We must spend time alone with Him regularly in order to find His “wave length.” As we become much more experienced at this, we’ll be able to hear Him much more clearly. He’ll guide us to live our lives according to the instructions in the Word of God. “...I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall heed My ordinances and do them” (Ezekiel 36:27).

The Holy Spirit is our guide in every area of our lives. Because our relationship with Him is so greatly influenced by the Word of God, He is referred to as the Spirit of Truth. Jesus said, "...when He, the Spirit of Truth (the Truth-giving Spirit) comes, He will guide you into all the Truth (the whole, full Truth)..." (John 16:13).

The Holy Spirit will guide us as we study and meditate on the truth of the Word of God. Life can be very complex at times, but the Holy Spirit always knows exactly what to do. He'll guide us if we allow Him to. "...the Lord God has sent His Spirit in and with me. Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: I am the Lord your God, Who teaches you to profit, Who leads you in the way that you should go" (Isaiah 48:16-17).

The Holy Spirit is our constant companion. "...He lives with you [constantly] and will be in you" (John 14:17). If we trust completely in Him, there is absolutely nothing to fear. He is with us in the midst of every problem we face. "...Be not afraid, neither be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9).

Every Christian should walk closely with the Holy Spirit. We need Him now and we'll need Him even more during the difficult days ahead of us. We must not block His power from operating in our lives. "Do not quench (suppress or subdue) the [Holy] Spirit..." (I Thessalonians 5:19).

This is an amazing statement. The Holy Spirit has so much power that He's actually able to raise the dead. Nevertheless, you and I are actually able to block His tremendous, supernatural power! We do this by lack of knowledge about Him, lack of awareness of His presence or lack of faith in Him.

I want to experience the fullness of the Holy Spirit every day of my life. Because of this, I've meditated for many years on several different Scripture references pertaining to the Holy Spirit. I open my mouth continually and talk about the Holy Spirit living in me. He's more real to me than any human being. He's the center of every day of my life.

When I awake in the morning, I usually start my day by saying something like this. "Dear Father God, thank You for a fine night's sleep. Thank You for this great new day that You have made. I rejoice in it. I look forward to the day ahead.

"Dear Holy Spirit, please take charge of my life throughout this day. Live Your life through me. I don't want to control my life. I want to do what You want to do, when You want to do it and how You want to do it. I surrender my life to You. I trust completely in You. Anoint me

and guide me through this day to carry out Your will.

“Satan, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I bind you and every one of your evil spirits in every area pertaining to my life throughout this day, tonight, and until I bind you again. During this period of time, I loose angels to minister and aid me in every way. I do this in the name of Jesus Christ.”

I like to start each day by talking with the Holy Spirit and inviting Him to control my life. I sincerely want to relinquish control of my life to Him. He’s so much more able than I am. I do this the first thing in the morning and I continue to do this throughout the day.

As I go through each day in my life, I have to make a series of decisions. Some of these are seemingly small decisions, but they’re decisions none the less. I continually pray and ask the Holy Spirit to guide me in every decision – big or small. When I have a business appointment, I always pray and ask Him to give me wisdom and to speak through me. I never sit down to write a book without first praying to ask for His anointing and guidance.

The Holy Spirit is a big part of my everyday life. Actually, it’s incorrect to say He is a part of my life. He is the center of it! Every area of my life revolves around Him. I want to be conscious of His magnificent indwelling presence as much as I possibly can throughout each day.

Many times I open my mouth to admit my human weakness and ask for His guidance. I say something like the following. “Holy Spirit, this problem is too much for me. I can’t solve it. I’m so glad You live inside of me. Please guide me with this problem. I place all of my trust in You. Thank You for this wonderful guidance. I receive this guidance by faith in the name of Jesus Christ.”

I often open my mouth and talk with the Holy Spirit. I want to flood my consciousness with an awareness of the Holy Spirit living within me. I speak often of His supernatural ability to solve every problem I face. I often ask Him to help.

We’re foolish if we try to solve complex problems with our limited human abilities and ignore the power inside of us that is much greater than nuclear power. Christians are spiritual powerhouses! We should be constantly committed to draw closer to the Holy Spirit and to yield our lives to His control.

In the difficult times of the last days before Jesus returns, our Father will pour out the power of the Holy Spirit. We must know how to appropriate this power. “And it shall come to

pass in the last days, God declares, that I will pour out of My Spirit upon all mankind..." (Acts 2:17).

I ask each person reading this book, are you walking closely with the Holy Spirit? Are you being blessed by the tremendous advantage He is to all children of God? This chapter merely touches on the blessings of the Holy Spirit.

Many additional Scripture references can be found by using a reference Bible and a topical Bible. Any Christian who is serious about drawing closer to the Holy Spirit can look up these references and meditate continually on them and the Scripture references listed in this book. This will give all of us great hope in the midst of these uncertain times.

Chapter 18

There Are No Hopeless Situations

In this chapter we'll study the subject of hope. Many Christians have had quite a bit of instruction on the subject of faith, but not many Christians know what the Bible says about hope. We'll discuss what hope is, the difference between faith and hope and the relationship between the two.

When most of us speak of hope, we speak of something we want to happen. We think of hope as wishful thinking. The Christian definition of hope is much stronger than this. An accurate composite description of the Hebrew and Greek words that are transcribed as "hope" in the Bible is "confident expectation of good." Our Father doesn't ever want us to lose confidence in Him.

There are no hopeless situations for Christians. Satan doesn't want us to believe this. One of his primary goals is to persuade people to give up because they feel hopeless about a situation in their lives. Satan has been very successful in this area. There is a lot of bad news in the world today. Many people feel hopeless about the future. Actually, unsaved people have good reason for feeling this way. "...you had no hope (no promise); you were in the world without God" (Ephesians 2:12).

How do people live without the Lord? I can't imagine a life without the promises of the Word of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It's easy to see why people who aren't Christians have no hope. They live in a world without a close personal relationship with the

Lord.

Their only hope is in various forms of external security. When we have to place our hope in the fragile, changing security of this world, it's easy to feel hopeless. However, Christians should never feel hopeless. The basis for our hope for the future is Jesus Christ. "...My trust and assured reliance and confident hope shall be fixed in Him..." (Hebrews 2:13).

Jesus won a total and complete victory over Satan. We have every right to trust completely in Him. We can rely on Him. We can be assured that He will bring us safely through our problems if we place all of our hope in Him.

The psalmist David went through many anguishing situations. He learned to place his hope entirely in the Lord. "...Lord, what do I wait for and expect? My hope and expectation are in You" (Psalm 39:7). When everything around us is falling apart and the situation looks hopeless, we can share the hopes of the psalmist who said "...You are my hope; O Lord God, You are my trust from my youth and the source of my confidence" (Psalm 71:5).

Our Father has given us the precious gift of hope. We didn't earn hope. We don't deserve it. Our Father gave it to us through His grace. "...God our Father, Who loved us and gave us everlasting consolation and encouragement and well-founded hope through [His] grace (unmerited favor)..." (II Thessalonians 2:16).

Our Father loves us so much that He has provided everything we'll ever need. He has given us consolation and encouragement that will last forever. No matter how bad the problems in this world might become, our Father has given us "well-founded hope."

Christians shouldn't allow Satan to trap them with the feelings of hopelessness he uses to trap unsaved people. We have great hope for the future because our hope is in the Lord instead of anything in this world. We should never give up hope because God never gives up hope. "...With men this is impossible, but all things are possible with God" (Matthew 19:26).

The primary reason our Father gives us hope is to enable us to turn away from the hopelessness of living eternally in hell. "...By His boundless mercy we have been born again to an ever-living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead..." (I Peter 1:3). Death can't rob us of our hope for eternity. "...the [consistently] righteous has hope and confidence even in death" (Proverbs 14:32).

Our Father also has given us hope for life here on earth. In order to bring this hope into manifestation, we must renew our minds continually in the Word of God and meditate day and

night on the holy Scriptures. We've seen that we renew our minds by studying the Word of God continually. We fill our hearts with the supernatural power of the Word of God by meditating on it day and night.

Our heavenly Father gave us hope to set the goal for our faith. Faith has enormous power, but it must be pointed in the right direction. If we renew our minds continually in the Word of God, this gives us something to aim our faith at. It's impossible to release our faith unless we're able to keep our minds under control. A renewed mind is the key to hope.

Hope is the starting point for faith. It keeps our eyes on our goals. Satan wants us to take our eyes off our goals. He wants us to feel hopeless. He wants us to give up. Christians should never give up!

Our Father has given us hope to provide us with an anchor in our lives. "[Now] we have this [hope] as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul [it cannot slip and it cannot break down under whoever steps out upon it – a hope] that reaches farther and enters into [the very certainty of the Presence] within the veil, where Jesus has entered in for us [in advance]..." (Hebrews 6:19-20).

Boats need an anchor when they float in the water. Boats are unsteady in the water unless they have an anchor to secure them. Jesus is our security in this unstable world. When everything around us is unstable, He is the anchor for our lives. This is why hope is referred to as a "sure and steadfast anchor of the soul."

As I explained previously, the soul consists of the mind, the emotions and the will. When we're faced with adversity, we must be able to control our thoughts. We require an anchor to keep our emotions under control. We need an anchor to help us make correct decisions.

We can control our souls through hope in Jesus Christ. He's completely trustworthy. When we place our hope in Him, we won't slip and slide. He'll always hold us up. We can place all our weight on Him. He gives us the ability to remain stable and secure in the midst of worldly situations that offer absolutely no external stability or security.

Christians are able to place their hopes in Someone Who reaches far beyond anything in this world. We're actually able to enter into the very certainty of the Presence of God because Jesus has made this possible. When we pray to our Father in the name of Jesus, we're able to go directly to the throne of God.

Many years ago, our Father anointed 40 human authors to write 66 separate Books of the

Bible. The words were written to instruct us, to enable us to endure in the midst of severe adversity and to encourage us to hold fast to our hope. “For whatever was thus written in former days was written for our instruction, that by [our steadfast and patient] endurance and the encouragement [drawn] from the Scriptures we might hold fast to and cherish hope” (Romans 15:4).

We’re told to “hold fast to and to cherish hope.” When we cherish something, it means a great deal to us. When we hold fast to something, we cling to it. We hold onto it tightly. This is what our Father wants us to do with the precious gift of hope He has given us.

The Word of God is filled with thousands of promises. There is no place in the Bible where we’re ever told anything is hopeless. Our Father never looks at anything as hopeless. So, we should never fall into the trap of thinking we’re faced with a hopeless situation. If we do this, we believe the problems we face are greater than Almighty God.

In the last chapter, we saw the importance of having faith in the Holy Spirit. He also is the source of our hope. “May the God of your hope so fill you with all joy and peace in believing [through the experience of your faith] that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound and be overflowing (bubbling over) with hope” (Romans 15:13).

How can we ever feel hopeless about anything if we have a continual consciousness of the power of the Holy Spirit living within us? Nothing is ever hopeless to the Holy Spirit. He is much greater than the worst problem any of us ever faced. If we really trust the Holy Spirit, we’ll overflow with hope! Our hope will know no bounds. The Holy Spirit will fill us with His peace and joy. We’ll turn away from the problems in our lives and focus continually on Him.

Christians who allow feelings of hopelessness to get inside of them indicate that the Holy Spirit really isn’t in control of their lives. If we feel hopeless about anything, this is an indication that we’re in control of our lives. If we’re in control, we have good reason to feel hopeless. Human beings have many inadequacies. If the Holy Spirit truly is in control, we’ll never feel hopeless about anything. He is more than adequate.

If we could pick one person in the Bible who might have an excuse for feeling hopeless, I believe Job would be that person. Job went through excruciating problems. However, he said, “...forget your misery; you shall remember it as waters that pass away. And your life shall be clearer than the noonday and rise above it; though there be darkness, it shall be as the morning. And you shall be secure and feel confident because there is hope...” (Job 11:16-18).

Most human beings don't like adversity. If we had our choice, our lives would be pleasant at all times. However, our Father looks at things in a different way than we do. As I explained in the first chapter, He often has definite reasons for allowing adversity to come into our lives.

He doesn't want us to focus on these problems. Job says we should forget our misery. He compares it with waters that pass away. There is "a light at the end of the tunnel" for all Christians. We can "be secure and feel confident because there is hope." We don't have to give up our confidence. The victory of Jesus Christ belongs to us!

We bring this victory into manifestation through faith. However, we can't do this unless we have something to aim our faith at. This is why hope is so vitally important. It gives us a goal to keep in front of us at all times.

If we fervently seek the will of God, we'll always have goals to aim at. We must focus continually on the goals our Father has given us and wait as long as He requires for these goals to be brought into manifestation. "...if we hope for what is still unseen by us, we wait for it with patience and composure" (Romans 8:25).

Our Father's eyes search the earth looking for children who wait patiently on Him and place their hopes in Him. "Behold, the Lord's eye is upon those who fear Him [who revere and worship Him with awe], who wait for Him and hope in His mercy and loving-kindness, to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine" (Psalm 33:18-19).

If we truly hold Him in reverent awe at all times and trust completely in Him, we won't be impatient. We'll remain calm and confident as we wait for Him to give the answer in His good timing. We'll have hope in His mercy, love and kindness to bring us safely through whatever problems we're faced with.

The psalmist knew he shouldn't allow feelings of hopelessness to get inside of him. One day he talked to himself saying, "Why are you cast down, O my inner self? And why should you moan over me and be disquieted within me? Hope in God and wait expectantly for Him..." (Psalm 42:11).

Christians should never give up hope! Our Father is on the throne. He is omnipotent. He's in complete control. He'll bring us through if we keep our minds renewed and our hearts filled with His Word. We will be successful if we continually relinquish control of our lives to the Holy Spirit. We can place all of our hope in God and wait expectantly for Him to answer.

He cares about us. He won't let us down. "It is because of the Lord's mercy and loving-kindness that we are not consumed, because His [tender] compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great and abundant is Your stability and faithfulness. The Lord is my portion or share, says my living being (my inner self); therefore will I hope in Him and wait expectantly for Him. The Lord is good to those who wait hopefully and expectantly for Him, to those who seek Him [inquire of and for Him and require Him by right of necessity and on the authority of God's word]" (Lamentations 3:22-25).

This passage of Scripture is loaded with encouraging words! We're told that the Lord's mercy, love and kindness won't allow us to be consumed. He won't fail us. He'll bring us through our problems one day at a time. This is why He gives us a fresh portion of mercy, love, kindness and compassion each morning.

He wants us to keep our hopes up. He wants us to wait expectantly for Him. He is good to His children who hopefully and expectantly wait for Him and seek Him continually. He wants us to require Him. He wants to be our only hope. No matter how difficult the problems in our lives might seem to be, He wants us to refuse to give up because we trust Him.

Christians are really blessed. Our Father has given us many promises to keep our hopes up. If you are ever tempted to feel hopeless, go back over the Scripture references in this chapter. Fight the feelings of hopelessness Satan is trying to give you with the sword of the Spirit – the Word of God.

Meditate day and night on these promises pertaining to hope until they come up off the printed page, enter your mind and drop down into your heart. Speak these promises boldly. Step out on them in your life. Our Father doesn't want us to give up hope!

In the next chapter, we'll carry the principles we've been studying here one step further. We'll look into the Word of God to learn everything we can about how to walk by faith instead of walking by sight.

Chapter 19

Fight The Good Fight

In the past several chapters, we've seen many Scripture references that tell us Christians have been given a magnificent victory over the problems of life. We have so much to be thankful

for! "...thanks be to God, Who in Christ always leads us in triumph [as trophies of Christ's victory]..." (II Corinthians 2:14).

Please take a pen or pencil and underline the word "always." This is a very important word. This passage of Scripture doesn't say we triumph some of the time. It doesn't say we triumph most of the time. It says we always triumph!

This isn't an isolated passage of Scripture. It can be backed up by several other equally strong statements from the Word of God. Satan tries to bring many problems into our lives, but we have been given a victory over him every time. "Many evils confront the [consistently] righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all" (Psalm 34:19).

Please take a pen or pencil and underline the word "all." Again and again, the Word of God tells us we have been given a total victory over our problems. Jesus said, "...In the world you have tribulations and trials and distress and frustration; but be of good cheer [take courage; be confident, certain, undaunted]! For I have overcome the world. [I have deprived it of power to harm you and have conquered it for you]" (John 16:33).

Jesus warned us that we'd have to deal with tribulation, trials, distress and frustration. Adversity is part of our lives here on earth. We can't escape it. Sooner or later, everyone has to deal with adversity. Jesus told us exactly what He wants us to do when we face the problems of life – "be of good cheer [take courage; be confident, certain, undaunted]!"

Jesus doesn't want us to become discouraged. He doesn't want us to worry and be afraid. Instead, Jesus wants us to face our problems with joy and optimism. He wants us to face them courageously. He doesn't want us to give up. We have every right to be confident and certain we have victory over our problems. Nothing can stop us except lack of faith and perseverance!

Jesus said He has "overcome the world." He has already won a magnificent victory over every problem any of us has ever faced, every problem we face at this time and every problem we'll face in the future. He said He has taken away the power these problems have to harm us. They can't hurt us if we know our rights in Christ and refuse to give in!

The Word of God is filled with promises telling us of the unconditional victory we have won through Jesus Christ. These promises are very heartening, but the truth is that many Christians are struggling with problems and some Christians give up. Why is this?

The victory of Jesus Christ belongs to every Christian, but it isn't automatic here on earth. This victory will be automatic for all of us when we get to heaven, but we must bring it

into manifestation by faith while we're on earth. "For whatever is born of God is victorious over the world; and this is the victory that conquers the world, even our faith" (I John 5:4).

Have you been born of God? Have you experienced spiritual rebirth by believing in your heart and confessing with your mouth that Jesus Christ is your Saviour? If you have done this, you have victory over every problem in this world. The Word of God says so!

If our faith is strong enough, we can't lose. Satan wants us to quit. He does everything he can to get us to give up when we're faced with problems. Our Father wants us to persist because we trust in Him. "The strong spirit of a man sustains him in bodily pain or trouble..." (Proverbs 18:14).

When we're faced with difficult problems here on earth, we must have a strong spirit to sustain us. How do we get a strong spirit? We achieve this by renewing our minds continually in the Word of God and by meditating day and night on the Word of God. A strong spirit is a spirit that's filled to overflowing with the power of the Word of God!

If we have a strong spirit, we won't react negatively to the problems of life. Instead of reacting to adversity, we'll react based on faith in the Word of God. Our Father wants us to "... walk by faith, not by sight..." (II Corinthians 5:7, *The King James Bible*).

The six words in this passage of Scripture are the key to bringing the victory of Jesus Christ into manifestation in our lives. He doesn't want us walking "by sight." He doesn't want us to react to the problems we see in front of us; Instead of reacting to what we see, He wants us to react based on belief in the promises of the Word of God. When we do this, we walk by faith and not by sight.

The Word of God tells us to "Fight the good fight of faith..." (I Timothy 6:12, *The King James Bible*). If there is such a thing as a "good" fight of faith, there also must be a "bad" fight of faith. Some Christians aren't bringing the victory of Jesus Christ into manifestation in their lives because they aren't fighting the good fight of faith.

This is exactly what Satan wants us to do. He's completely defeated. He can't win spiritual warfare against a Christian unless he's able to deceive us so we won't fight the good fight of faith. He tries in every way he can to get us to focus continually on the problems and frustrations in our lives. He does everything possible to stop us from paying the price of daily study and meditation on the Word of God. Satan knows he can't win the fight of faith if we have plenty of spiritual ammunition and know how to use it.

I believe the fight of faith takes place between the external “bad news” of whatever problems we’re faced with and the internal “good news” of the Word of God living in our hearts. We must know how to fight this fight! “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...” (Hosea 4:6).

This passage of Scripture doesn’t tell us that sinners are destroyed for lack of knowledge. It says God’s people are destroyed for lack of knowledge! We must know how to fight the good fight of faith. This is why I wrote this book. It’s filled with hundreds of facts from the Word of God telling us exactly how to fight the good fight of faith.

Satan wants to destroy us. This is his mission. It’s the only reason for his existence. “The thief comes only in order to steal and kill and destroy...” (John 10:10). We must not allow Satan to destroy us. If we do this, we waste the magnificent victory of Jesus Christ. John 10:10 goes on to say, “...I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance (to the full, till it overflows).”

We fight the good fight against Satan by knowing we have the victory! We bring this magnificent victory into manifestation by knowing the promises our Father has given us and daring to stand in faith on them when everything in our lives seems to be going wrong.

The good fight of faith is fought with minds and hearts that are filled to overflowing with the supernatural power of the Word of God. The good fight of faith is fought by speaking God’s Word continually and doing what it says to do. The good fight of faith is fought by cheerfully surrendering control of our lives to the Holy Spirit.

We have been given everything we need to fight the good fight of faith. If we know how to fight this fight, we can’t lose. No matter how difficult our problems might seem to us, we can actually laugh if we deeply believe we have been given an unconditional victory over them. “At destruction and famine you shall laugh, neither shall you be afraid of the living creatures of the earth” (Job 5:22).

In the difficult times ahead of us, I believe we’ll face destruction and famine. The Word of God tells us exactly what to do when we face these severe problems. We can laugh at them because we know we have victory through Jesus Christ if our faith is strong and enduring!

This passage of Scripture also tells us we shouldn’t be afraid of any human being. The created is never greater than the Creator! The Creator of the entire universe lives inside of us. If we really believe this, why should we ever be afraid of anyone He created?

We shouldn't be frightened by Satan. If we know how to fight the good fight of faith and if we fight it according to the instructions in the Word of God, we'll win every time. "And do not [for a moment] be frightened or intimidated in anything by your opponents and adversaries, for such [constancy and fearlessness] will be a clear (proof and seal) to them of [their impending] destruction..." (Philippians 1:28).

We should never be frightened by anything Satan tries to do to us. We should never be intimidated by him. If we refuse to be discouraged by the attacks of Satan and his evil spirits, we clearly show them they can't win over us now or in the future.

We fight the good fight of faith by drawing close to the Lord. This enables us to appropriate His victorious faith. We have been given a shield that's able to stop anything Satan might fire at us. "Lift up over all the [covering] shield of saving faith, upon which you can quench all the flaming missiles of the wicked [one]" (Ephesians 6:16).

Once again, please take a pen or pencil and underline both times the word "all" is used in this passage of Scripture. God doesn't speak in generalities. He's very specific. His Word is filled with many strong promises containing words such as "all," "always" and "every." Our Father doesn't leave any doubt about what He says!

Satan is able to fire many different "missiles" at us. He has many weapons he uses against us and he's very skilled in spiritual warfare. He has had thousands of years of experience. If our faith is strong enough, we'll be able to lift up our shield of faith and ward off every missile our enemy fires!

Satan can't get at us if our faith is strong enough. We need large, strong shields of faith. The shield that's referred to here was a very large, rectangular shield that was used by soldiers when this was written. These shields were so large that they protected every part of the soldier's body.

If we pay the price of strengthening our faith continually, we'll be able to protect our spirit and soul from the attacks of Satan. If he can't get his thoughts inside of us, he can't defeat us. If our shield of faith is strong enough, we won't let his thoughts get into our minds and hearts.

Satan can't hurt us if we know our rights in Christ. Jesus has given us total victory over Satan. He said, "...I have given you authority and power to trample upon serpents and scorpions, and [physical and mental strength and ability] over all the power that the enemy [possesses]; and

nothing shall in any way harm you” (Luke 10:19).

This passage of Scripture is loaded with spiritual power! Please underline the words “all” and “nothing.” If we truly grasp the truth of the statement Jesus made here, we’ll never be afraid of Satan.

Jesus has given us His authority. He has given us His power. We can “trample” on our enemies. The words “serpents and scorpions” refer to Satan and his followers. When we trample on them, we walk all over them. We crush them under our feet!

Satan’s only hope is to deceive us. This is why we must pay the price of building a strong faith so we can look at the problems in our lives and say, “Yes, I know this situation looks impossible. I can’t handle it. It is too much for me. However, I don’t have to overcome this problem. I’m standing on the promises in the Word of God and I know the Lord will take care of everything. I praise Him and thank Him for the total and complete victory He has given to me.”

Chapter 20

Praise and Thanksgiving

No matter how bad our problems seem to be, we shouldn’t complain. “Do all things without grumbling and faultfinding and complaining [against God]...” (Philippians 2:14). When we complain, whether we realize it or not, we’re actually complaining against the Lord. “...Your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord” (Exodus 16:8).

Because of this, the Lord doesn’t like to hear us complain. “And the people grumbled and deplored their hardships, which was evil in the ears of the Lord...” (Numbers 11:1). When we complain, this causes problems in our lives. “...I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed...” (Psalm 77:3, *The King James Bible*). If we complain, we deny the victory Jesus Christ has given us over every problem. We give power to Satan that he can’t get in any other way. Complaints are music to his ears!

Christians who truly comprehend the magnitude of the unconditional victory we have been given will always praise the Lord instead of complaining. He is worthy of our praise! “Great is the Lord and highly to be praised; and His greatness is [so vast and deep as to be] unsearchable” (Psalm 145:3).

When we praise the Lord and thank Him, this is an offering to Him just as it is when we

put money into a collection plate at church. We should give freely of praise and thanksgiving to honor the Lord. “He who brings an offering of praise and thanksgiving honors and glorifies Me...” (Psalm 50:23).

When we praise the Lord in the midst of severe adversity, we turn away from the battle and focus on the victory Jesus Christ has given us. Praise takes our eyes off our problems and focuses them on the Problem Solver! If the Lord really is first in our lives, we’ll show this by praising Him when we’re in the midst of adversity. We demonstrate our faith when we praise the Lord.

Praise is an aggressive action in the spiritual realm. When we praise the Lord boldly and continually in the midst of our problems, we show Satan that our faith is strong. We let the devil know he is the one who is going to retreat, not us.

When the bottom seems to be falling out and everything that can go wrong seems to be going wrong, we should praise the Lord. This seems incongruous, but if we truly believe He’ll bring us through, we’ll praise Him and thank Him even though we can’t see the answer.

If we truly believe the victory of Jesus Christ will be manifested in our lives and if we know the victorious Jesus Christ lives inside of us, why shouldn’t we praise Him and thank Him at all times?

We should praise the Lord and thank Him before we see the manifestation of His victory. If we really know He’ll bring us through, we’ll praise Him when everything seems to be going wrong. Our faith will grow significantly.

When we need more faith, we should do two things. First, we should draw close to the Lord. We should fellowship with Him regularly, pray continually, study His Word daily, meditate on it day and night and speak it continually with our mouths. Our ears need to hear our lips speaking the Word of God continually for our faith to grow.

Second, we should praise the Lord and keep on praising Him. Something happens deep down inside of us when we boldly praise the Lord in the midst of trouble. Praise has great power in the spiritual realm. Satan and his evil spirits cower in fear when we continually praise the Lord in the midst of adversity.

A bold attitude of praise and thanksgiving transforms us and lifts us up. Constant praise in the midst of adversity prevents doubt and unbelief from getting a foothold in our minds and hearts. A continual attitude of praise in the face of severe problems carries us past our doubts and

brings us into alignment with the victorious Jesus Christ Who lives in our hearts. Faith and praise are closely related. Faith causes us to praise the Lord. Continual praise strengthens our faith.

When we're going through difficult times, praise draws us closer to the Lord. He lives in the midst of our praise. When we praise Him, we come into His presence. "...You are holy, O You Who dwell in [the holy place where] the praises of Israel [are offered]" (Psalm 22:3).

When the Israelites praised the Lord, He inhabited their praises. This same spiritual principle applies to us today. When we praise the Lord continually, we come into His presence just as the Israelites did. "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving and a thank offering and into His courts with praise! Be thankful and say so to Him, bless and affectionately praise His name!" (Psalm 100:4).

Is there any better place for us to be in the midst of severe problems than in the very presence of God? This is where our praise brings us! Satan hates to hear us praise the Lord continually. He can't stand up under a barrage of continued praise.

Satan's habitat is darkness. When we're going through difficult times, he tries to fill our minds with dark thoughts. When we praise the Lord in the midst of this, we come out of the darkness into the light.

Satan can't stand the light. Did you ever turn over a rock and see what the insects do? They're used to an atmosphere of darkness. They run away when they're exposed to light.

This is exactly what Satan does when we praise the Lord continually. He flees! Satan can't remain in the presence of the Lord. He knows from bitter experience what happens to him if he does. Praise closes the door to Satan and opens the door for us to receive blessings from the Lord.

I've mentioned in a previous chapter that James 4:7 tells us we must submit ourselves to the Lord when we try to resist the devil. This is what causes Satan to flee! When we're submitted to the Lord, we're fighting our spiritual battles with His weapons. When we do this and force Satan out of the darkness and into the glorious light of the glory of God, Satan has no alternative. He has to run away!

Satan knows he can't win when we praise the Lord continually in the midst of severe problems. He wants us to be despondent, depressed and discouraged. The Holy Spirit wants us to exchange praise for the heaviness Satan is trying to put on us. "...the garment [expressive] of praise instead of a heavy, burdened, and failing spirit..." (Isaiah 61:3).

When we're faced with severe problems, we should wrap praise around us just as a garment is wrapped around us. When we do this, we drive out the spirit of heaviness. It can't exist in a constant atmosphere of praise and thanksgiving. Praise can move mountains that can't be moved in any other way!

We see an excellent example of this in the story of what took place when the apostle Paul and his friend, Silas, were imprisoned by the Romans. These men of God were put into a dungeon and their feet were fastened into stocks.

How did they react to this? Did they complain? No, they didn't! "...about midnight, as Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the [other] prisoners were listening to them, suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the very foundations of the prison were shaken; and at once all the doors were opened and everyone's shackles were unfastened" (Acts 16:25-26).

I'm not saying God will cause an earthquake to happen every time we praise Him in the midst of adversity. I am saying that continual praise coming out of a faith-filled heart in the midst of adversity is an immensely powerful spiritual weapon. The cumulative effect of this praise over a period of time releases the power of the Lord on our behalf.

Spiritual maturity and character are required to praise the Lord in the midst of adversity. It doesn't come naturally to us to praise the Lord at such a time. However, His Word instructs us to make this sacrifice. "...let us constantly and at all times offer up to God a sacrifice of praise, which is the fruit of lips that thankfully acknowledge and confess and glorify His name" (Hebrews 13:15).

When we praise the Lord continually in the face of severe problems, a great spiritual cleansing takes place deep down inside of us. "As the refining pot for silver and the furnace for gold [bring forth all the impurities of the metal], so let a man be in his trial of praise [ridding himself of all that is base or insincere; for a man is judged by what he praises and of what he boasts]" (Proverbs 27:21).

When this passage of Scripture was written, silver was put into a pot and gold into a furnace so the fire could rid them of impurities. The Word of God compares this to making a sacrifice of praise when we're in the midst of fiery trials. If we're able to praise the Lord continually from a faith-filled heart, this rids us of our impurities. It cleanses us. It draws us closer to the Lord.

We should praise the Lord continually when we're on the mountaintops of life. We should praise Him continually when we're in the valleys. Christians all over the world should praise Him from the first thing in the morning to the end of the day. "From the rising of the sun to the going down of it and from east to west, the name of the Lord is to be praised!" (Psalm 113:3).

Instead of just speaking praise, I've found that my faith really grows when I sing songs of praise. If we really believe the Lord will bring us through safely, our hearts will sing with joy. "The Lord is my Strength and my [impenetrable] Shield; my heart trusts in, relies on, and confidently leans on Him, and I am helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoices, and with my song will I praise Him" (Psalm 28:7).

The merriment of our hearts will be expressed by songs of praise flowing out of our mouths. The psalmist David knew this. He went through many excruciating problems, but he showed his trust in the Lord by singing praise to Him. David said, "...I am poor, sorrowful, and in pain; let your salvation, O God, set me up on high. I will praise the name of God with a song and will magnify Him with thanksgiving..." (Psalm 69:29-30).

Some readers of this book attend churches where praise is freely expressed. I believe this is one reason why people flock to these churches. Worship brings us into the presence of the Lord. "Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all you lands! Serve the Lord with gladness! Come before His presence with singing!" (Psalm 100:1-2).

I've often assembled with other Christian believers in the house of the Lord in the wonderful atmosphere of musical praise. Have you experienced this in your church? Have you sensed the presence of the Lord in the midst of glorious songs of praise and worship? It is good to sing praises to the Lord! "Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God, for He is gracious and lovely; praise is becoming and appropriate" (Psalm 147:1).

Most churches today understand the power of musical praise. This is why so many churches start their services with twenty to thirty minutes of praise and worship. This sets the stage for the Holy Spirit to move. "...ever be filled and stimulated with the [Holy] Spirit. Speak out to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, offering praise with voices [and instruments] and making melody with all your heart to the Lord, at all times and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father" (Ephesians 5:18-20).

Do you want to be filled with the Holy Spirit? The Word of God tells us exactly what we

need to do to experience the infilling of the Holy Spirit. This highly desirable condition is related to praise with our mouths and with musical instruments. If our hearts sing with joy to the Lord, the abundance of our hearts will cause songs of praise to flow out of our mouths. When we do this “at all times and for everything,” we are filled with the magnificent presence of the Holy Spirit.

Praise is the language in heaven. When we get to heaven, we’ll praise the Lord continually. Everyone in heaven has the spiritual discernment to truly understand what the Lord has done for us. If it’s good to praise the Lord in heaven, it is good to praise Him continually here on earth.

I’ve been inspired by writing this chapter. I hope it has inspired you. I pray that many readers will be highly motivated to praise the Lord continually. We can’t outgive the Lord. As we praise Him continually, He will bless us abundantly. Praise the Lord! Thank you, dear Lord!

Chapter 21

Sharing Faith with Other Christians

I’ve explained many different principles for developing a strong faith. Each of these principles can be developed through studying and meditating on the Word of God and doing what it says to do. In this chapter, we’ll discuss principles of faith that occur as a result of our relationship with other Christians.

When some people face severe pressure, they withdraw from other people. I understand this. I can be a “loner.” In the past, when I’ve faced severe adversity, I’ve often withdrawn from other people to spend endless hours studying and meditating on the Word of God.

Spending many hours in the Word of God is good, but it isn’t right to withdraw completely from other people. Our heavenly Father wants His children to interact with each other. He wants us to encourage each other. He wants us to share our faith with our brothers and sisters.

I learned these facts the hard way several years ago when I was going through a difficult time in my life. I knew I needed to make a fresh, new start and I moved to another state. During my first few months there, I isolated myself and licked my wounds. I had a real “pity party.” I knew I shouldn’t do this, but I did it nevertheless.

I finally realized it was important for me to find a church in my new community. I went to several different churches and prayerfully asked the Lord to show me the church He wanted me in. I liked two or three of the first churches I visited, but I kept looking. One wonderful June morning, I went into a church and I immediately felt at home there. I was certain this was the church for me.

I enrolled in the class for new members. A pastor who taught one of these classes said something that changed my life. He said he was sure many of the people in our class were going through difficult times. He challenged each person in the membership class to come to church for one month every time the doors of the church were opened. He guaranteed this would change our lives even if our problems remained the same.

At that time, I lived about thirty-five minutes away from the church. Nevertheless, I decided to follow the assistant pastor's suggestion. Our church has services on Wednesday night, Sunday morning and Sunday night. We also have prayer meetings at the church at various times during the week. The largest and most important prayer meeting is on Saturday night.

I vowed to attend church at least four times each week for at least one month. I soon found I was blessed much more than I was when I only attended church on Sunday morning. The faith of the senior pastor was uplifting and contagious. As I listened to him several times each week, my faith grew rapidly. Sometimes I didn't feel like making the long drive four times a week, but I did it and I was always glad I did.

I soon developed new habits. It became more normal for me to go to church several times each week than it was to stay home and only go on Sunday mornings. I soon became involved in various groups within the church and met many wonderful Christians. Before long, I had several Christian friends who really cared about me. As I got to know these people better, I found that many of them had strong faith. Some of them had been through times that were as bad as I was going through or worse.

As I got to know the pastor and the mature Christians in this church better, my faith grew by leaps and bounds. "Remember your leaders and superiors in authority [for it was they] who brought you to the Word of God. Observe attentively and consider their manner of living (the outcome of their well-spent lives) and imitate their faith (their conviction that God exists and is the Creator and Ruler of all things, the Provider and Bestower of eternal salvation through Christ, and their leaning of the entire human personality on God in absolute trust and confidence

in His power, wisdom and goodness)” (Hebrews 13:7).

Most churches have pastors, elders, deacons, teachers and other people in positions of leadership who live by the Word of God and have strong faith in it. As we get to know these people in our respective churches better and observe the way they live and how much they trust the Lord, our faith will be strengthened. I can’t emphasize how much this has helped me.

Most readers of this book know some Christians with strong faith. I encourage you to get to know them well. You’ll find their faith is contagious. I never cease to be amazed by some Christians I know. I feel my faith is quite strong, but their faith is always an inspiration to me.

Our Father wants us to interact with one another. We’re all members of the body of Christ. Our Father created us to be dependent on one another. “For as in one physical body we have many parts (organs, members) and all of these parts do not have the same function or use, so we, numerous as we are, are one body in Christ (the Messiah) and individually we are parts one of another [mutually dependent on one another]” (Romans 12:4-5).

This passage of Scripture compares our physical body with the body of Christ. In our human bodies, our arms, legs, hands, feet and other parts of the body are interrelated and dependent on one another. The body of Christ is no different. Our Father created us to be mutually dependent. We need the fellowship of other believers.

This sense of belonging is always important, but it’s absolutely indispensable when we’re going through a season of adversity. I can’t recommend too much the advantages of fellowshiping regularly with other believers during severe problems. Our Father wants His children “...standing firm in united spirit and purpose, striving side by side and contending with a single mind for the faith of the glad tidings (the Gospel)” (Philippians 1:27).

When we’re going through difficult times, we should stand firm and united with other Christians. We should reach out in love and encourage each other and pray for one another. Our Father wants all of His children standing together with strong, unwavering faith in Him.

We make a big mistake if we don’t assemble together regularly with other Christian believers. “...let us consider and give attentive, continuous care to watching over one another, studying how we may stir up (stimulate and incite) to love and helpful deeds and noble activities, not forsaking or neglecting to assemble together [as believers], as is the habit of some people...” (Hebrews 10:24-25).

Our Father wants us to pay close attention to one another. He actually wants us to study

how to stimulate and motivate others through love and compassion. It's very easy to fall into the trap of missing church. This is exactly what Satan wants us to do, but it isn't what our Father wants us to do.

Satan wants to get us "one on one." He wants us to isolate ourselves and try to do battle with him without support from our Christian brothers and sisters. He knows his chances for success are much better if he can get us to isolate ourselves from other believers.

Our heavenly Father wants us to assemble together continually. We should love to be in the house of the Lord. This is the place where the family of God gathers together. Continued fellowship with our brothers and sisters should be vitally important to us. God's children are the finest people in the world.

When we assemble together in the house of God, we assemble with other believers, but we also come into the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no more secure place on the face of the earth than to be with other Christians in the presence of the Lord. "For wherever two or three are gathered (drawn together as My followers) in (into) My name, there I AM in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20).

My life was transformed when I started attending church at least four times each week. Things are going much better in my life now, but I still attend church three or four times every week. My favorite meeting is Saturday night prayer meeting. Each Saturday, between 300 and 400 people come to our church at 6:00 PM for an hour of prayer. These people are the core of our church. Their faith is very strong. I've been to many of these Saturday night prayer meetings and I always find my faith is invigorated.

Our relationship with other Christians should go both ways. In addition to receiving from others, our Father also wants us to share our faith with others. Love is the essence of Christianity. If we really love others, we'll reach out to them with encouragement. When we care enough to encourage others, we'll help them to become what our Father wants them to become. "...love (affection and goodwill and benevolence) edifies and builds up and encourages one to grow [to his full stature]." (I Corinthians 8:1).

During periods of adversity when many people are prone to discouragement, it's very important to get encouragement from others. The words "encourage" and "discourage" are each centered around the word "courage" which means to face difficult problems bravely. When people are discouraged, the obstacles they face seem to be insurmountable. Courage disappears.

On the other hand, when people are encouraged, they're given hope and confidence. Courage is added. They are built up.

Jesus is our example in every area of life. He always encouraged people. The apostle Paul also was a great exhorter. He encouraged many people during his lifetime and his writings have encouraged millions of people since he died. Paul's writings have always been a source of great encouragement to me. I often reflect that much of what he wrote was written in the midst of severe personal adversity.

Every Christian should be an encourager. We should let other people know we're standing with them as they go through difficult times. We should share our faith with them. We should let them know someone cares. It's very helpful to know other people are praying for us.

When I've gone through difficult times in my life, I've received tremendous comfort from the knowledge that several other Christians with strong faith were holding me up in prayer on a regular and continuing basis. I'm absolutely certain that the prayers of other people have been very important in my life. I thank the Lord for the power of intercessory prayer.

When we've been through difficult times in our lives, this should motivate us to reach out to other people who are going through adversity. "Bear (endure, carry) one another's burdens and troublesome moral faults, and in this way fulfill and observe perfectly the law of Christ (the Messiah) and complete what is lacking [in your obedience to it]. For if any person thinks himself to be somebody [too important to condescend to shoulder another's load] when he is nobody [of superiority except in his own estimation], he deceives and deludes and cheats himself" (Galatians 6:2-3)

We should never think we're so important that we don't have to reach out others with burdens. We delude ourselves if we think this way. Christians should encourage others and help them build their faith. "...encourage (admonish, exhort) one another and edify (strengthen and build up) one another..." (I Thessalonians 5:11).

This attitude should be a way of life for all Christians. We should all reach out to others continually. This isn't something to do occasionally. Our Father wants us to do this on a daily basis. "... (admonish, urge, and encourage) one another every day..." (Hebrews 3:13).

One of the primary reasons for our existence is to help others in any way we can. We shouldn't hesitate to get involved. We should be eager to help others. "...let us then definitely aim for and eagerly pursue what makes for harmony and for mutual upbuilding (edification and

development) of one another” (Romans 14:19).

Our Father didn’t put us on earth to pursue personal goals. We were created to help others. “Let each one of us make it a practice to please (make happy) his neighbor for his good and for his true welfare, to edify him [to strengthen him and build him up spiritually]” (Romans 15:2).

If our own faith is strong and the Lord is honoring our faith, we shouldn’t turn our backs on others because things are going well for us. Instead, we should humble ourselves before others and think more highly of them than we think of ourselves. “...in the true spirit of humility (lowliness of mind) let each regard the others as better than and superior to himself [thinking more highly of one another than you do of yourselves]. Let each of you esteem and look upon and be concerned for not [merely] his own interests, but also each for the interests of others” (Philippians 2:3-4).

We should always reach out to others with enthusiasm. The word “enthusiasm” comes from two Greek words, “en” and “theos.” The prefix “en” means “in.” The word “theos” means “God.” The English word “theological” comes from this. When we’re enthusiastic, we reach out to others because God lives inside of us in the person of the Holy Spirit.

Christians who are very enthusiastic are enthusiastic because God Himself is reaching out through them. Enthusiasm is contagious. Everyone likes a humble, loving person who is genuinely enthusiastic. It’s wonderful to know the Holy Spirit lives inside of us and that He will use us to minister to other people.

Many times over the years I’ve had people come to me for help with seemingly impossible problems. I often tell them, “If you’re looking for help from me, we’re in trouble. Your problem looks extremely difficult to me, but it isn’t difficult to the Holy Spirit. Let’s pray and ask Him to guide us.”

On several occasions, I’ve prayed and asked God for guidance. Then, I’ve started talking with people whose problems seemed completely insurmountable to me. Again and again, I’ve heard words coming out of my mouth that I didn’t speak consciously. I knew the Holy Spirit was counseling these people through me. When this happens, I’m just as interested as the people I’m talking with to hear what the Holy Spirit will say next.

The Holy Spirit never looks at people as they are. He looks at them as they can become. He wants us to encourage other people to grow and develop. He wants us to help others to see

what they can become in Christ.

When we reach out to other people, we're doing the opposite of what Satan does. He tries to pull people down. Our Father wants us to lift people up. When we're headed in the opposite direction from Satan, we know we're doing what our Father wants us to do.

For many years, I've exhorted large numbers of people. I've taught over 600 Bible classes. I've had numerous "one-on-one" counseling sessions. I've served as an elder in two churches. Recently, I've felt led to change this. I've taken a leave of absence as an elder and Bible teacher to concentrate entirely on writing and publishing Christian books.

Most of the books I write are "overcoming" books. I write them because I've been through severe problems in my life. When I went through these problems, I was led to study and meditate continually on the Word of God to solve my personal problems. When this worked for me, I wrote about the spiritual principles I learned because I wanted to share them with others.

Our Father wants each of us to use the spiritual gifts He gave us to help others. We'll be blessed if we do this. If we give away our faith continually, our heavenly Father will give us more faith. This is the way the kingdom of God operates.

In the natural world, if we want to receive more of something, we don't give away what we have. We hold tightly on to it and try to acquire more of the same. However, in the spiritual realm, if we want to receive more of anything, we should give away what we have. When we give freely of our finances or when we encourage others, our Father uses this as a channel to give back to us financially and to encourage us. We can't outgive God!

We should never reach out to others with the intention of receiving a reward from God. However, it's a fact that our Father will always give freely to us when we give freely to others. "Give, and [gifts] will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will they pour into [the pouch formed by] the bosom [of your robe and used as a bag]. For with the measure you deal out [with the measure you use when you confer benefits on others] it will be measured back to you" (Luke 6:38).

Our Father is incredibly generous. He wants us to give to others. In return, He will give back to us. If we give sparingly to others, He will give sparingly to us. If we give liberally to others, He'll give liberally to us. "...he who sows sparingly and grudgingly will also reap sparingly and grudgingly, and he who sows generously [that blessings may come to someone] will also reap generously and with blessings" (II Corinthians 9:6).

Nothing we do on earth is more important than reaching out to others. Every parent knows the great reward that comes from giving to our children. This same principle also applies to giving of ourselves, our God-given talent and the money the Lord has given to us.

I like to write motivational Christian books. I usually spend between 700 and 1,000 hours on each book I write. I spend endless hours on study and research. This isn't easy. Sometimes, writing a book can be very tedious.

Nevertheless, I've written consistently and I believe the Lord will lead me to write two books every year until I go to be with Him. I can tell you I've learned much more from writing books than I knew before I started. I pray my books have been a blessing to others. I know they have been a tremendous blessing to me.

I encourage Christians to have a strong desire to reach out to others in any possible way. It's extremely important for all of us to help others to increase their faith. This will also help to build our own faith in the final difficult days before Jesus returns.

Chapter 22

Continually Increasing Faith

I've worked diligently at building my faith in the midst of several crisis situations only to lose my zeal after the Lord blessed me. If anyone had ever given me the same instructions I'm giving you here, I'd have said, "I'll never stop doing this," but I did!

We never stand still in the kingdom of God. If we're not moving forward, we're moving backward. If we don't reinforce our faith continually, it's very easy to lose what we have. We must not think our faith is stronger than it actually is. "...let anyone who thinks he stands [who feels sure that he has a steadfast mind and is standing firm], take heed lest he fall [into sin]" (I Corinthians 10:12).

Our Father doesn't want us to have faith in our faith. He wants us to have faith in Him. When we go through difficult times and pay the price of diligently building our faith on a daily basis and the Lord honors this, it's an exhilarating experience. It's very easy after this to have faith in our faith. If we do this, we play right into Satan's hands.

The Word of God tells us to take heed that we don't fall when we get into this position. In these last days before Jesus returns, there is no excuse for starting and stopping the process of

building our faith. We must develop and maintain a very close relationship with the Lord and a very strong faith in Him.

Jesus gave us an example of overconfidence in our faith. He knew He was about to leave the apostles. He was especially concerned about Peter's faith. "Simon, Simon (Peter), listen! Satan has asked excessively that [all of] you be given up to him [out of the power and keeping of God], that he might sift [all of] you like grain, but I have prayed especially for you [Peter], that your [own] faith may not fail..." (Luke 22:31-32).

Jesus knew these men would face very difficult problems. He knew how headstrong Peter was. This is why Jesus singled him out. Peter's reply showed his overconfidence. He completely misunderstood what Jesus was trying to tell him. "And [Simon Peter] said to Him, Lord, I am ready to go with You both to prison and to death" (Luke 22:33).

Peter thought his faith was very strong. He believed he was ready to face anything. He believed he could go to prison for Jesus and even die for Him. Jesus knew Peter's faith wasn't strong enough. "...Jesus said, I tell you, Peter, before a [single] cock shall crow this day, you will three times [utterly] deny that you know Me" (Luke 22:34). Early that morning, Peter denied on three different occasions that he knew Jesus Christ.

I'm not condemning Peter. Jesus later forgave him for this and Peter did great work for the Lord. However, we all should learn by this example that Jesus doesn't want us to be overconfident in our faith. In the severe adversity we'll all face in the last days before Jesus returns, I believe some of us will find our faith wasn't as strong as we thought. "If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small" (Proverbs 24:10).

When we're faced with severe problems, our strength isn't sufficient. As we've seen, we need the strength of the Lord. We can do all things through the strength of Jesus Christ. His strength is made perfect in our weakness. First of all, we must realize how weak we are. Only then will we work diligently at keeping our faith strong.

Many people are in good physical condition in their teens and early twenties. However, some of us start to "get out of shape" physically in our late twenties. As we marry, have children, and start on a career, it's easy for some of us to turn away from the regular exercise we did when we were younger. This happened to me in my late twenties and early thirties and I believe this happened to other people who are reading this book.

This same principle applies in the spiritual realm. If we don't continually pay the price of

building ourselves up spiritually, we won't be able to deal with severe problems. We're actually able to block the Lord from blessing us when He wants very much to do this.

It's hard to believe this is true. The Lord is so strong that it doesn't seem as if any human being could block Him. However, the Word of God tells us that doubt and unbelief actually are able to block the Lord from blessing us the way He wants to.

We see an example of this when Jesus returned to His home town of Nazareth. "...many who listened to Him were utterly astonished, saying, Where did this Man acquire all this? What is the wisdom [the broad and full intelligence which has been] given to Him? What mighty works and exhibitions of power are wrought by His hands! Is not this the Carpenter, the son of Mary and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not His sisters here among us?..." (Mark 6:2-3).

When Jesus returned to His home town, the people heard Him teach amazing concepts. However, their faith in Him was dulled by familiarity. They "...took offense at Him and were hurt [that is, they disapproved of Him, and it hindered them from acknowledging His authority] and they were caused to stumble and fall" (Mark 6:3).

Familiarity breeds contempt. The people of Nazareth took offense at some of the things Jesus said. They showed their disapproval and refused to acknowledge His lordship. Because of this, "they were caused to stumble and fall." Can we imagine how much this must have hurt Jesus?

How would you feel if you went back to your home town and saw many people you had known and loved for several years? If you had the healing power Jesus possessed, wouldn't you especially want to heal some of the people you had known personally for a long time?

I believe Jesus really wanted to perform miracles in His home town. However, he realized He couldn't receive the honor and respect He deserved. "...Jesus said to them, A prophet is not without honor (deference, reverence) except in his [own] country and among [his] relatives and in his [own] house" (Mark 6:4).

Immediately after this, Jesus spoke words I've thought about time and time again. The following words are very important to every Christian. "And He was not able to do even one work of power there, except that He laid His hands on a few sickly people [and] cured them. And He marveled because of their unbelief (their lack of faith in Him)..." (Mark 6:5-6).

The words that amaze me are "was not able to do." Jesus performed tremendous miracles

throughout His earthly ministry, but there were no miracles in His home town. This doesn't say Jesus didn't perform miracles. It says He wasn't able to perform them!

The people of Nazareth blocked Jesus from performing miracles because of their doubt and unbelief. We must not fall into this trap! I believe Jesus wants to do great miracles in the life of every person. Unfortunately, some of us stop Him from doing what He wants very much to do because our faith in Him is weak.

In the last days before Jesus returns, we must be prepared. We cannot allow our faith to waver. It will be very important to stay close to the Lord. Our faith must grow continually. "Be alert and on your guard; stand firm in your faith (your conviction respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, keeping the trust and holy fervor born of faith and a part of it). Act like men and be courageous; grow in strength!" (I Corinthians 16:13).

Growth in faith moves forward slowly and backward rapidly. The only way to maintain a strong faith is to work continually at keeping it strong. This is a lifetime process. We don't arrive at a certain point of strength in our faith and remain there. We never stand still.

Some Christians think they know the Lord well and have a close relationship with Him. However, the only way we'll know how well we know Him and how much we trust Him is by what we actually do when we're faced with severe pressure. "They profess to know God [to recognize, perceive, and be acquainted with Him], but deny and disown and renounce Him by what they do..." (Titus 1:16).

In a previous chapter I said I believe the level of our faith is similar to the balance in a checking account. Most of us write checks regularly against a balance in our account. We must make deposits that are more than the amount we withdraw in order to keep our bank account solvent.

We'll need to "write a lot of checks" on our faith bank account in the last days before Jesus returns. Now is the time to make many "faith deposits" into this account. I know what it's like to be astonished to find that my faith account has been overdrawn.

In the natural world, it's an unpleasant experience to receive a notice from a bank saying our checking account has been overdrawn. However, this can't compare with the frustration of finding that our faith account isn't adequate.

When I first became a Christian, my world was falling apart around me. I was on the verge of bankruptcy and a nervous breakdown. I had a tremendous motivation to build my faith.

I gladly paid the price. In fact, I actually kept records of the amount of time I spent building my faith.

In my first month as a Christian, I spent 89 hours. I spent 72 hours the next month, 80 hours the month after that and 89 hours the month after that. I spent 93 hours the next month. As I look back on the records I kept almost 18 years ago, I see that I spent seven hours one Saturday building my faith. This must have been a very difficult day in my life.

I continued to keep records each day. I averaged 60 hours a month building my faith during the next several months. I never missed a day. It's too far back to remember, but apparently things started to go well for me. In my third year as a Christian, I started cutting back. My records clearly show the complacency I developed. Perhaps keeping these records sounds legalistic to you, but I'm glad I did. I can look back on them many years later and learn from them.

I had another experience of having my faith tested by a severe crisis that took place eleven years after I became a Christian. I also failed that test! At that time, I had taught more than 500 Bible classes. I had written several Christian books. Nevertheless, I thought my faith was much stronger than it really was and I paid a severe price as a result.

I pray I've learned my lesson. It took me awhile to get back on my feet spiritually, but I've been quite consistent for some time now building my faith each and every day. The Word of God is our spiritual food. It tells us that our Father wants us to be "...ever nourishing your own self on the truths of the faith..." (I Timothy 4:6).

We all required faith to become Christians. We'll all need faith now and in the future. We must stay close to the Lord at all times. "As you have therefore received Christ, [even] Jesus the Lord, [so] walk (regulate your lives and conduct yourselves) in union with and conformity to Him. Have the roots [of your being] firmly and deeply planted [in Him, fixed and founded in Him], being continually built up in Him, becoming increasingly more confirmed and established in the faith, just as you were taught, and abounding and overflowing in it with thanksgiving" (Colossians 2:6-7).

Strong faith can only be developed by living "in union with and conformity to" Jesus Christ. If our lives are centered around Him at all times and if we always do our best to conform to the instructions in His Word, our roots will be firmly and deeply planted in Him.

We won't be able to survive in the difficult days ahead unless we're deeply rooted in a

personal relationship with Jesus Christ. We're told that we should be "continually built up in Him, becoming increasingly more confirmed and established in the faith." We can see the emphasis on consistency. Our faith must be nurtured and strengthened daily. We can't skip days and expect to be strong in the Lord.

Some of us become so sophisticated spiritually that we get away from the fundamentals. We must not fall into this trap. The promises in the Word of God depend on our faith. They're only as good as our faith in them. The more we get into the Word of God and the more it gets into us, the more we'll dare to trust our Father. It's amazing what happens after we pay the price of building our faith consistently over a long period of time.

Jesus must become more real to us than anything else in our lives. We should hunger and thirst to learn more from the Word of God. We should communicate with the Holy Spirit each day, listening carefully for His voice and continually asking Him for guidance and wisdom.

We must build up our spiritual momentum during these last days before Jesus returns. Now is the time to get ourselves headed in the right direction in the area of building our faith. Then, we must keep moving steadily in that direction. I believe with all my heart that, before too many years go by, our lives will depend on our faith in the Lord. We must develop our faith and keep it strong!

Conclusion

This book is filled with hundreds of specific instructions from the Word of God telling us how to increase our faith. Our Father has many blessings for His children who are faithful. "A faithful man shall abound with blessings..." (Proverbs 28:20).

If we want to see the glory of God in our lives, we must trust Him and rely on Him completely. Jesus said, "...Did I not tell you and promise you that if you would believe and rely on Me, you would see the glory of God?" (John 11:40).

I pray that many people will receive blessings and see the glory of God as a result of the principles explained in this book. Any reader who carefully follows these principles will find that his or her faith will grow. This won't happen automatically. We must be willing to pay the price. I've done some of the preliminary work for you. I've looked up hundreds of Scripture references and categorized them. The outline is here for you to follow.

Are you willing to pay the price and put in many long, hard hours building your faith? As we all know, it's easy to make resolutions, but it's usually difficult to carry them out. We must have a strong awareness of the absolute necessity to develop deep faith in the Lord. We must sense the urgency of doing this now.

This is a book to be studied. Please take the following quiz to see how much you've learned. I believe most readers will be surprised at how much they still have to learn. I pray this will cause you to go back and study this book carefully. It is filled with spiritual food from the Word of God. It can't be digested in one sitting.

Please go back to the beginning of the book. Take a pen or a highlighter and study the principles from the Word of God. Follow the detailed "step by step" instructions contained in this book. They explain exactly how to develop a strong faith and how to keep it strong.

Underline or highlight the portions of this book that make sense to you. Outline some chapters. Learn these principles carefully. Put them into practice each and every day. God has done His part. Will you do your part? Will you diligently follow these instructions? I pray that you will.

What Did You Learn from this Book?

1. If someone asks you why God allows Christians to go through severe adversity, how would you respond?
2. The psalmist David went through a great deal of adversity in his life. What blessings came to him as a result of the adversity he went through?
3. Sometimes we need to go through problems that actually hurt us because they're so difficult. What does the Word of God say about blows that wound?
4. Although it doesn't seem to make much sense, the Word of God says sorrow is better than laughter. Why is this?
5. Some people experience grief as a result of severe problems, but receive no benefits from their grief. If we allow God to direct us through grief, what promises does He give us?
6. The holy Scriptures compare the discipline we receive from our earthly parents to the discipline we receive from our heavenly Father. What benefits are available from this divine discipline?

7. Our heavenly Father often requires us to suffer for a certain period of time. If we learn what He wants us to learn during this season of adversity, what will He do to bless us?
8. We shouldn't despise or reject the correction of our heavenly Father. What should our attitude be when He corrects us?
9. Job went through many difficult times in his life. What advice did he give us to help us get through seasons of adversity?
10. Some people try to stay away from pressure, affliction and hardship. What desirable qualities can be produced from following the instructions in the Word of God as we go through these difficult times?
11. When we go through a season of severe adversity and we don't have the energy to keep going, how can we receive the stimulation we need to persevere?
12. II Timothy 3:1 is the "theme Scripture" of this book. What does it tell us about the last days before Jesus Christ returns?
13. Jesus was asked for signs of His return. He gave seven signs. What are they?
14. II Timothy 3 gives additional signs of the last days. What are they?
15. What should we do when these signs begin to occur?
16. What problems will many people who trust in external sources of security experience during the last days? Why is it unwise to place trust in any form of external security at any time?
17. Why is it so important for Christians to have internal security? How will Christians with divine security react during times of severe adversity?
18. If worldly problems become so bad that it seems as if the entire world is falling apart, how does the Word of God tell us to react?
19. Why can we still depend upon the promises in the Word of God if worldly sources of security disappear?
20. When everything seems to be falling apart, Christians can take solace in the authority and power of Jesus Christ. How much authority and power does He have?
21. The Word of God prophesies what people will do in the last days when worldly system that worked very well for many years won't work any more. What alternative paths will large numbers of people take?
22. The Word of God says it is impossible to please our Father if we don't have faith in Him.

Why is this true?

23. There are no limits to what God can and will do for us except those we set. What four qualifying words did Jesus give as a condition to receiving the unlimited blessings our Father has available for His children?
24. The Word of God places a high priority on strong faith. What precious worldly commodity is compared with faith that has been tested and purified?
25. When we go through severe tribulations in the last days before Jesus returns, what two things are we instructed to do to receive God's mercy?
26. The Word of God tells us what Jesus wants Christians to be like when He returns. What qualities should we strive to develop to be prepared for His return?
27. How often does our Father want us to pray to Him?
28. What did Jesus say about “mechanical” prayers that repeat the same words over and over?
29. Why is it important to pray to our heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ?
30. What does Jesus do on our behalf when we pray to our Father in the name of Jesus Christ?
31. What does the Bible say about the power of earnest prayers that come from our hearts?
32. Does God listen to prayers from sinners?
33. Can we be certain our heavenly Father hears every prayer request made according to His will?
34. If we pray according to the will of God, can we be certain our Father will answer all of our prayers?
35. Our Father has told us in His Word what He will do when we pray. However, we must do our part. What three things should we do if we sincerely want our prayers to be answered?
36. George Mueller kept a notebook listing every one of his prayers. How many of his prayers were answered in his lifetime?
37. Some people try to study the Bible before they become Christians and aren’t able to understand it. Why does this happen?
38. Can Christians be absolutely assured that God Himself gave them a desire to ask Jesus Christ to be their Saviour?

39. There is a veil between the natural realm and the spiritual realm. What is required for this veil to be removed?
40. Do Christians have a guarantee that God will reveal the secrets and mysteries of His kingdom?
41. When we're saved, what does our Father put into our minds and hearts to enable us to understand the Bible?
42. Most of us know Christians with extremely strong faith. Did God give them an additional amount of faith when they were saved?
43. When our Father repeats something on four different occasions in His Word, we can be certain He does this for emphasis. What instruction did He give us on four occasions to tell us how He wants to live our lives?
44. If we fail to live a life of faith and allow doubt and unbelief to get inside of us, is this a sin?
45. Ten different degrees of faith are mentioned in the Bible. Where do you think your faith is at this time?
46. Why did Jesus use the mustard seed as a comparison to faith in God? How does the mustard seed compare with the measure of faith all Christians are given before they are saved?
47. Does every word in the Bible come from God?
48. How can we be certain the promises in the Bible are true and dependable?
49. If we're faced with problems so severe that our hearts are overwhelmed, where does the Bible tell us to turn?
50. How can we be certain the Bible is the Word of God and not just the word of men?
51. The apostle Paul wrote a large portion of the New Testament. What did Paul say about the source of every word he wrote?
52. The name of God is very powerful. What comparison does the Bible make between the name of God and the Word of God?
53. What two Scripture references tell us the Word of God is supernaturally alive?
54. The Word of God is compared with a sword that is much sharper than the sharpest sword ever created by human beings. How does this spiritual sword help us understand what we're really like deep down inside of ourselves?

55. What amazing statement does the Bible make about the relationship between the universe and the Word of God?
56. How does the power of the Word of God compare with nuclear power?
57. We live in a world filled with moral decay. What can Christians do to escape this decadence?
58. Satan tries to get into our minds. How are we able to cast out the thoughts he tries to give us?
59. How do we know that all people who are not Christians are influenced by Satan?
60. If Christians want to turn away from the external, superficial customs of the world to live a life that is acceptable to God, what must be done on a regular and continuing basis?
61. The Bible tells us how to change from the life style we followed before we became Christians. What is required to have a fresh mental and spiritual attitude?
62. If we want God to approve of the way we live, what does His Word tell us to do?
63. Christians are instructed to correctly analyze and accurately divide the holy Scriptures. What does this mean? How can we do this?
64. What is a topical Bible? How can it be used to help us to learn about different topics?
65. Satan tries to get at us through discouragement and fear when we're tired. He also attacks older people. What does the Bible tell us to do to offset the aging process and to fight off weariness, fear and discouragement?
66. There are more than 500,000 words in the Bible. The word "success" is only used once. Where is this word found? What is the meaning of the Hebrew word translated as "success"?
67. The Bible emphasizes the importance of meditating on the Word of God. What is the difference between Christian meditation and the meditation of Eastern religions?
68. What does it mean to meditate on the Word of God? What exactly should Christians do if they sincerely want to meditate?
69. The Word of God tells us to meditate day and night upon the holy Scriptures. Is this practical? Are most people too busy to do this?
70. The Word of God is our spiritual food. How do we eat spiritual food? How do we digest this food?
71. In addition to meditating on promises from God, it's often helpful to meditate on

instances in the Bible where God brought people through very difficult situations. Can you give any examples of this?

72. The Bible says that people who delight in God's laws and meditate on them day and night will be like trees planted next to a stream of water. How does this example apply to severe problems the world will experience in the last days before Jesus returns?
73. When the Bible speaks of our hearts, it doesn't refer to the physical organ that pumps blood through our body. What does it refer to?
74. Why is it vitally important for Christians to work diligently and constantly on what they believe in their hearts?
75. Our Father has created a home for His Word here on earth. Where is this home located?
76. On the final night before He was betrayed, what did Jesus say about the troubles of life, fear, agitation and intimidation?
77. Jesus said, "...ask whatsoever you will and it shall be done for you." There are two conditions for this promise. What are they?
78. The Word of God tells us how to build ourselves up spiritually. What should we do if we want to build great faith in our hearts?
79. In this book, our hearts are compared to bank accounts. What correlation exists between our hearts and bank accounts?
80. The Bible says it is possible to enjoy a continual feast regardless of circumstances. What is required to stop the circumstances of life from pulling us down?
81. All human beings have an innate desire to "store up." Instead of storing up worldly goods, what does our Father want us to store up?
82. The Bible tells us we are "victorious over the wicked one." What one condition is essential to bring the victory Jesus Christ won over Satan into manifestation in our lives?
83. What does the Word of God instruct us to do so our hearts will sing with joy regardless of the circumstances in our lives?
84. The Bible says, "the human tongue can be tamed by no man." Is there any way we can control the words that come out of our mouths when we're under severe pressure?
85. What do the words "logos" and "rhema" mean? Why is "rhema" absolutely essential to increase our faith?
86. What does the Bible say about the sermons of pastors in regard to increasing our faith?

87. Why is it important to hear the Word of God seven days a week and not just on Sunday? What other sources can be used to hear the Word of God each and every day?
88. There is a definite relationship between hearing the Word of God and the growth of faith. However, there is one source of the spoken Word of God that will cause our faith to increase more than any other. What is it?
89. It is possible to have the same spirit of faith that human authors received many years ago when they wrote the inspired Word of God. What two conditions are necessary to receive this?
90. The Bible tells us how to avoid the “violent paths of the destroyer.” What provision did God make to enable us to stop Satan from getting a stronghold in our lives?
91. Our Father has given us several defensive weapons to protect ourselves. He has also given us a sword to use offensively. What is this sword? How do we use it in spiritual warfare?
92. We’re surrounded by angelic forces. What does the Word of God tell us to do to put angels to work for us?
93. The Bible tells us how important it is for the Word of God to live in our minds, our hearts, and our mouths? What is the next step after this has been accomplished?
94. Sometimes we want to wait until conditions are favorable before starting a difficult undertaking. The Bible warns against this. What penalties could be paid if we make this mistake?
95. Is there a relationship between habitual obedience to the instructions in the Word of God and receiving answers to prayers?
96. Jesus taught in a parable comparing two different men who heard the Word of God. One man built a solid foundation that stood up against the storms of life. The other man didn't build a strong foundation. What was the difference between the two?
97. Satan’s only hope is his ability to deceive Christians. He wants us to betray ourselves through reasoning contrary to the truth of the Word of God. How do we fall into this trap?
98. What three words does the Bible use to describe the effectiveness of faith that isn’t backed up with action?
99. Many Christians believe they love God. What does the Bible tell us to do to show our

true love for Him?

100. Satan wants us to be engulfed in darkness. Our heavenly Father wants us to walk in light. What requirement is necessary to come out of Satan's darkness into the light of God?
101. All Christians would like to be guided by divine wisdom. All of us would like to prosper in every area of our lives. What does the Word of God tell us to do to receive wisdom and prosperity?
102. What human condition is required for the strength and power of the Lord to be perfected in our lives?
103. What does the Word of God say about the reliance Jesus Christ placed upon His own strength and ability during His earthly ministry?
104. What two words are used to describe the relationship we should have with Jesus in order to appropriate His power?
105. What does the Bible say will happen to human beings who rely on human ability?
106. Should human beings with a great deal of natural ability who are at the prime of their lives rely on their human ability?
107. We don't want Almighty God to oppose us. However, some of us cause Him to do this. What condition in us will cause God to oppose us? If we want to receive His grace, what conditions should prevail in our lives?
108. The Bible tells us to give our problems to the Lord and leave them with Him. This isn't easy. In addition to faith, what other quality is necessary to give our problems to the Lord without taking them back?
109. The Lord wants to show himself strong on behalf of His children? His eyes search the entire earth for a desired condition, which, if present, will enable Him to release His strength on our behalf. What is this condition?
110. Most Christians believe strong faith is highly desirable. However, the Word of God says strong faith is useless unless one other condition prevails in our lives. What is this condition?
111. The Bible compares faith, hope, and love. Which of these three qualities is the greatest?
112. Does God love atheists who deny His existence? Does He love sinners who do horrible things? How did He show His love for the world?
113. It's easy to understand why our heavenly Father has a great love for Jesus Christ. How

does His love for us compare with His love for His Son?

114. How should our Father's willingness to give up His only Son for every one on earth help us when we're going through severe problems in our lives?
115. The Bible says we are more than conquerors in every problem we face. What one word describes the victory Jesus gave us over every problem in our lives?
116. Jesus Christ has a permanent home here on earth. Where is it?
117. How can we deepen our faith through knowledge of Jesus Christ's love for us? What are we instructed to do to rest in His love?
118. We all know people who are difficult to love. What provisions has our heavenly Father made to enable us to love these people?
119. Our Father wants His love to be perfected in us. What does He ask us to do which, if accomplished, will bring His love to perfection in us?
120. When we're faced with severe problems, it's very easy to be afraid. What spiritual quality is required to cast fear completely out of our lives?
121. What relationship exists between people who are proud, self-centered and critical and the ability of fear to come into their lives?
122. Faith can't be understood by human logic and reason. Can you give several examples from the Bible that must be believed by faith because they make no sense at all to human logic and reason?
123. Why do the ways of God seem like meaningless nonsense to many people who haven't been reborn spiritually?
124. What one word is used on several different occasions in the Bible to describe the inadequacy of human logic and reason to deal with spiritual problems?
125. The Word of God has tremendous supernatural power. However, we have the ability to make this ineffective in our lives. What one quality causes this to happen? How can we be set free from this?
126. The Bible tells us we shouldn't rely on human insight and understanding. When we're faced with problems that can't be solved with our limited human understanding, what does the Word of God tell us to do?
127. When we're faced with severe problems, some of us tend to tighten up and lose control of our emotions. What specific instructions does the Bible give to show us how to keep our

nerves under control when we're faced with a stressful situation?

128. What does it mean to be "uncompromisingly righteous?" How does this condition relate to strong faith?
129. Jesus spoke of Christians who are only able to "endure for a little while." What spiritual quality is required to endure hardship for a long period of time?
130. Christians are able to sow seeds that will produce a spiritual harvest of thirty, sixty, and sometimes even a hundred times as much as the seeds that are planted. Jesus said that "good soil" is required for such an abundant harvest. Where is this "good soil" found? What seeds must be planted to produce this abundant harvest?
131. Our Father has promised to guard each of us and keep us in perfect peace at all times. What are we required to do to receive these blessings?
132. What one requirement is necessary to be single-minded and walk continually in the light of the Lord?
133. It's important for Christians to be single-minded. What warning does the Word of God give about the penalty of being double-minded?
134. When God created us, He gave each of us the power of choice. What specific warning does the Word of God give concerning this God-given ability?
135. The psalmist David experienced many difficult problems. What did he do to cause the Lord to lift him out of Satan's grasp and put him safely back on his feet?
136. Isaiah said he set his face "like a flint" when he was faced with severe problems. What does this mean? How does this apply to us today?
137. We all admire people who are able to maintain a calm, cool spirit in the face of severe adversity. What spiritual quality is required to do this?
138. The Word of God says we are able to live long, full lives that will be completely calm and tranquil at all times. What are we instructed to do to receive these blessings?
139. When we're in a crisis situation, what two spiritual qualities are required to activate the Lord's strength on our behalf?
140. Our Father has given each of His children the ability to rest in the midst of the problems of life. What do we have to do to enter into this rest?
141. When we have heavy burdens, the Lord promises to sustain us and stop us from falling. What does His Word instruct us to do in order to receive these blessings?

142. Just before Jesus left His disciples to go to the cross, He said it would be advantageous if He left them. This was difficult for them to understand. Why was it beneficial for Jesus to depart from them?
143. Where is the kingdom of Satan located? Where is the kingdom of God located?
144. The power of the Holy Spirit that raised Jesus Christ from the dead is available to every Christian. How can we bring this great spiritual power into manifestation in our lives?
145. The Holy Spirit speaks to every Christian twenty-four hours a day. Some Christians never hear His voice. Others don't hear Him clearly. How can we learn to "tune in" to His voice more effectively?
146. When Joshua took over for Moses, this young man was faced with a tremendous responsibility. What did God tell Joshua so he wouldn't be afraid or dismayed?
147. The Holy Spirit is very powerful, but we're actually able to block His supernatural power. How do we do this?
148. Some people feel hopeless when they look at the uncertainty of the future. Why do many unsaved people feel there is no hope? Why shouldn't Christians feel this way?
149. Boats need an anchor to secure them as they float in the water. What quality is available to Christians to act as an anchor to our souls?
150. No matter how difficult the problems in our lives might seem to be, the Word of God says it is possible to "abound and be overflowing" with hope. What is the source of this great hope?
151. The Bible tells us how to forget our misery when we're going through difficult times. What enables us to do this?
152. It's important for Christians to realize that Jesus Christ has given a total, absolute and complete victory. What Scripture references do you know that assure you will always triumph in the Lord?
153. What quality does the Word of God say we need to sustain ourselves when we're in bodily pain or trouble?
154. Many people react to the problems in their lives. Instead of doing this, what does our Father want us to react to?
155. The Bible actually says we can laugh at destruction and famine. If we're faced with these or other problems in the last days before Jesus returns, why will we be able to laugh at

them?

156. We should never be frightened or intimidated by Satan. If we refuse to be discouraged by the attacks of Satan and his evil spirits, what does this indicate to them?
157. When Satan fires “flaming missiles” at us, we can stop every one. What is required to do this?
158. Jesus Christ has given us the power to trample over Satan and his evil spirits. What does this mean? How can we be certain Satan has no power over us?
159. The Bible says Christians should never complain. If we do, who are we complaining against?
160. When we complain, what spiritual effect does this have on us?
161. When we feel like complaining, what does the Lord want us to do instead?
162. What reaction can we expect from Satan and his evil spirits if we boldly praise the Lord whenever we’re faced with adversity? What effect does this attitude of praise and thanksgiving have upon us?
163. When we praise the Lord continually, we are brought into the safest place in the universe. What is the place?
164. What does Satan do when we praise the Lord continually? Why does he do this?
165. What can we learn from the example of Paul and Silas when they were imprisoned in a dungeon with their feet fastened into stocks?
166. What takes place deep down inside of us if we praise the Lord continually in the face of severe problems?
167. Great spiritual results often come from praising the Lord in song. Why is this?
168. The Bible emphasizes the importance of being filled with the Holy Spirit. What is required to experience the infilling of the Holy Spirit?
169. Some Christians believe they can be very effective spiritually without attending church on a regular basis. Why does the Bible say it is important to assemble regularly with other Christian believers?
170. There is a very definite relationship between a strong faith and our personal relationship with Jesus Christ. In order to survive in the difficult times ahead of us, what exactly does the Word of God instruct us to do in regard to our relationship with the Lord?

Appendix

Have You Entered into the Kingdom of God?

You have just read a complete set of instructions for developing a strong faith. These instructions are given to God's children – those human beings who have entered into His kingdom. I ask each reader of this book, "Have you entered into the kingdom of God?"

We don't enter into the kingdom of God by church attendance, baptism, confirmation, teaching Sunday school or living a good life. Jesus Christ paid the price for each and every one of us to enter this kingdom. He said, "...I assure you, most solemnly I tell you, that unless a person is born again (anew, from above), he cannot ever see (know, be acquainted with, and experience) the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

Some people are so caught up with their own religious denomination or their personal beliefs that they completely miss God's instructions on how to enter His kingdom. We must be reborn spiritually! This starts by admitting that we're sinners. Then we must repent of these sins. "...unless you repent (change your mind for the better and heartily amend your ways, with abhorrence of your past sins) you will all likewise perish and be lost eternally" (Luke 13:5).

Many people miss out on eternal life in heaven because they are trusting in the goodness of their own lives to get them to heaven. This is a tragic mistake! With the exception of Jesus Christ, every person who has ever lived has been a sinner. "...None is righteous, just and truthful and upright and conscientious, no, not one" (Romans 3:10).

We are all sinners! "...all have sinned and are falling short of the honor and glory which God bestows and receives" (Romans 3:23). God doesn't have degrees of sin. If we have committed one sin, we're just as guilty as someone who has committed many sins! "For whosoever keeps the Law [as a] whole but stumbles and offends in one [single instance] has become guilty of [breaking] all of it" (James 2:10).

In addition to acknowledging our sins and repenting of them, there is one additional step we must take. "...if you acknowledge and confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and in your heart believe (adhere to, trust in and rely on the truth) that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart a person believes (adheres to, trusts in, and relies on Christ) and so is justified (declared righteous, acceptable to God), and with the mouth he confesses (declares openly and speaks out freely his faith) and confirms [his] salvation" (Romans 10:9-10).

We must do more than pay mental assent to trust Jesus for eternal salvation. We must also believe this deep in our hearts. All of our hope for eternal life in heaven must be based on deep faith that Jesus paid the price for our sins.

If we really believe this truth in our hearts, we'll open our mouths and tell others. We should tell other people that we're Christians and that we trust completely in Jesus Christ for our eternal salvation. We aren't saved until we believe this in our hearts and confess it with our mouths!

All of us were born naturally on the day our mothers gave birth. In order to be reborn spiritually, we must have a second birth. "You have been regenerated (born again), not from a mortal origin (seed, sperm), but from one that is immortal by the ever living and lasting Word of God" (I Peter 1:23).

God wants us to come to Him as little children. He doesn't reveal Himself to us through our intellects. He reveals Himself through our hearts. We may be adults in the natural world, but we need to start all over again in the spiritual realm. We must have childlike faith. "...unless you repent (change, turn about) and become like little children [trusting, lowly, loving, forgiving], you can never enter the kingdom of heaven [at all]" (Matthew 18:3).

The following prayer will result in your spiritual rebirth if you truly believe these truths in your heart and also tell others what you believe:

"Father God, I come to You in the name of Jesus Christ. I admit I am a sinner. I know there is no way I can enter into Your kingdom based upon the sinful life I've led. I'm genuinely sorry for my sins and I ask for Your mercy. I believe in my heart that Jesus Christ is Your Son. I believe He was born of a virgin and that He died on the cross to pay for my sins. I believe You raised Him from the dead and He is alive today. I trust completely in Him as my only way of entering Your kingdom. Thank You, Father. Amen."

If you pray this prayer from your heart and tell this exciting news to other people, you have been reborn spiritually. You have a fresh, new start. "...if any person is [ingrafted] in Christ (the Messiah) he is a new creation (a new creature altogether); the old [previous moral and spiritual condition] has passed away. Behold, the fresh and new has come!" (II Corinthians 5:17).

Welcome into the family of God!

A Few Words about Lamplight Ministries

Lamplight Ministries, Inc. originally began in 1983 as Lamplight Publications. After ten years as a publishing firm with a goal of selling Christian books Lamplight Ministries was founded in 1993. Jack and Judy Hartman founded Lamplight Ministries with a mission of continuing to sell their publications and also to give large numbers of these publications free of charge to needy people all over the world.

Lamplight Ministries was created to allow people who have been blessed by our publications to share in financing the translation, printing and distribution of our books into other languages and also to distribute our publications free of charge to jails and prisons. Over the years many partners of Lamplight Ministries have shared Jack and Judy's vision. As the years have gone by Lamplight Ministries' giving has increased with each passing year. Thousands of people in jails and prisons and in Third World countries have received our publications free of charge.

Our books and Scripture Meditation Cards have been translated into eleven foreign languages – Armenian, Danish, Greek, Hebrew, German, Korean, Norwegian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and the Tamil dialect in India. The translations in these languages are not available from Lamplight Ministries in the United States. These translations can only be obtained in the countries where they have been printed.

The pastors of many churches in Third World countries have written to say that they consistently preach sermons in their churches based on the scriptural contents of our publications. We believe that people in several churches in many different countries consistently hear sermons that are based on the scriptural contents of our publications. Praise the Lord!

Jack Hartman was the sole author of twelve Christian books. After co-authoring one book with Judy, Jack and Judy co-authored ten sets of Scripture Meditation Cards. Judy's contributions to *God's Wisdom Is Available To You*, *Exchange Your Worries for God's Perfect Peace*, *Unshakable Faith in Almighty God*, *Receive Healing from the Lord*, *What Does God Say?*, *Victory over Adversity* and *God's Joy Regardless of Circumstances* were so significant that she is the co-author of these books. Jack and Judy currently are working on other books that they believe the Lord is leading them to write as co-authors.

We invite you to request our newsletters to stay in touch with us, to learn of our latest publications and to read comments from people all over the world. Please write, fax, call or

email us. You are very special to us. We love you and thank God for you. Our heart is to take the gospel to the world and for our books to be available in every known language. Hallelujah!

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When we receive a letter containing comments on any of our books, cassette tapes or Scripture Meditation Cards, we prayerfully take out excerpts from these letters. These selected excerpts are included in our newsletters and occasionally in our advertising and promotional materials.

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