

MARCH 2017

TOWARD SUPERB  
MENTAL HEALTH

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# think

CURRENT ISSUES FROM A DISTINCTLY CHRISTIAN VIEW

## DEPRESSION



A close-up photograph of a vibrant yellow water lily flower with numerous petals, floating on a green lily pad in a pond. The background consists of more lily pads and water, creating a serene and natural setting.

*"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you;  
not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not  
your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."*

John 14:27

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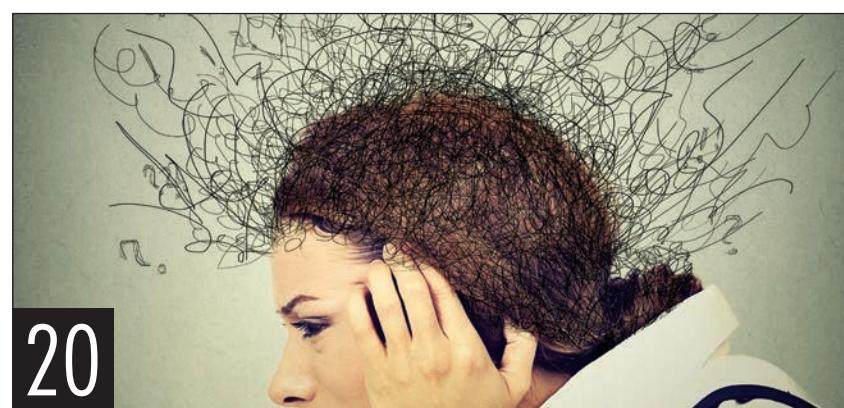
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## From The Editors

*Brad Harrub, Dan Cottrell, Billy Davis, Jerry Groves, Steve Hale,  
Keith Parker, Jack Wilkie, Savannah Cottrell, and Lance Benson*

# LOVING GOD WITH OUR MINDS



BRAD HARRUB



DAN COTTRELL



BILLY DAVIS



KEITH PARKER



STEVE HALE



JERRY GROVES



JACK WILKIE



SAVANNAH COTTRELL



LANCE BENSON

On one occasion someone asked Jesus about the greatest command in the Law. Listen to His response: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment" (Matthew 22:27-38). In other words, we're to love God with everything that we have ... including our minds or intellect.

God has always been concerned about our mental health. The psalmist identified God as the "righteous God who searches minds and hearts" (Psalm 7:9). David encouraged his son Solomon to serve God with "a willing mind, for the Lord searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts" (1 Chronicles 28:9). Just like we want our children to be healthy physically, emotionally, spiritually, and mentally, God wants His children to be strong physically, emotionally, spiritually, and mentally.

How can we love God with our minds? How can we be mentally strong? How can we avoid the dark holes of depression and soar to the hills of happiness? First, pray. Pray about anything and everything. Pray about the things that make you happy and pray about the things that make you sad. Paul put it in these words in Philippians 4:4-7: "Rejoice in the Lord always, I will say it again: Rejoice ... Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Remember the song, "Tell It To Jesus Alone"? One of the verses says, "Are you weary, are you heavy hearted? Tell it to Jesus, tell it to Jesus. Are you grieving over joys departed? Tell it to Jesus alone."

Second, ponder the positive. Count your blessings. Focus on the good in your life. Perhaps your relationship with family or friends. Perhaps something good that happened at work or church. Perhaps a memory of the past that brought you lots of joy and excitement. Paul's words in Philippians 4:8 are helpful: "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things."

Third, praise others. When we're thinking about the good in the lives of others, we have less time to think about the bad in our own lives. Listen to Paul's praise for the Christians in Philippi: "I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me" (Philippians 4:10). He goes on to add, "Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account. I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent." Paul was proud of the Philippians. He loved them and bragged on them. He lifted them with his words. It's hard to take someone by the hand and lead him to the top of the mountain without getting to the top myself. You want a lift? Lift others.

Paul said about the enemies of Jesus: "Their mind is on earthly things" (Philippians 3:19). Want a heavenly mind? Want a healthy mind? Want a happy mind? Pray. Ponder. Praise. And, as always, we hope you will *Think* on these things! ▲

# • Feedback

## Beth M.

Thank you so much for making *Think* available in electronic form. My job requires that I travel a great deal and I love being able to read it on my tablet. Thanks for all the faithful material you produce.

## Mr. & Mrs. Lawrence D.

Enclosed is a donation that we hope will be used in the new textbook project. We wish we could give more. (I told my husband I wish we could fund the entire project.) This is so needed today. I pray every day for my grandchildren and all the temptations they face. It didn't use to be this way. I fear the direction our country is going. Thank you again for writing this textbook.

## Clyde F.

I loved the issue on thinking BIG. I have been saying for 20 years that the church needs to think bigger. It seems like we are always 15-20 years behind some of the big denominations when we should be leading the way. Thanks for planting visionary seeds.

## Lisa G.

Just a quick "thank you" for your weekly Facebook posts. I know you get beat up a lot by people who don't agree with you. But please know there are lots of us out here who do agree and who appreciate your strong stance for the Truth. At a time when so many people are compromising or turning toward secular ways of doing things Focus Press continues to demonstrate a passion to point everyone toward a Biblical worldview! I love it. Please don't be discouraged.

## C.

My name is C. and I attended your seminar on origins and the science of the Bible when you came to the Belton Church of Christ. I just wanted to tell you how much your seminars changed my perspective and helped me see that God really is the creator of everything. Before I listened to you, I was still skeptical and I believed that Darwin, Wallace, Lamarck, and other evolutionists had to be correct in their thinking. I'm a sophomore in high school and in my biology class we're talking about *The Origin of Species* and other theories of evolution. And while I listen to those theories (so that I can get a good grade on my tests), I am confident when I say that I know God is the reason for everything I'm learning about.

## Special Editors' Note:

This month we say a special "thank you" and bid Godspeed to Jay Lockhart. About two months ago he indicated his elders were excited about the growth in their local work and that he would be needing to dedicate more time to the congregation there in Whitehouse. Jay has been a valuable team member for five years and we hate to see him go! His wisdom and wit were a beautiful compliment to the work at Focus Press. So we say thank you Jay for a job well done, and we wish you well brother! ▲

## FROM THE ROAD

How well are you training the next generation? I'm not talking referring to Bible class. I'm talking about personal qualities that they need to learn. Are older ladies admonishing "the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed." Are we training our young ladies to strive toward being godly deacons' wives: "Likewise, their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things" (1 Timothy 3:11)? Do you have young men in training right now to be elders in the future? Are we embracing programs that teach them to be "the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous" (1 Timothy 3:2-3). Isn't it time we stop using a strategy of "hoping" we have men qualified to be elders in the future, and instead train them for that purpose? What is your congregation doing to raise up future deacons, elders, and godly wives? BH ▲

# think

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# JUDGMENT

## AND THE CHRISTIAN MILLENNIAL

"Don't judge me, but . . ."

"I like this show. Don't judge me."

"I won't judge you for liking that food."

Why in the world is my age bracket so concerned about judgment?

Maybe it's because it's something we want to avoid. We'd prefer to have our own interests and we'd definitely prefer that others are okay with them. And ultimately, we feel more secure when others approve of our choices, whether big or small.

Maybe it's because it's something we do too often, even without realizing. We scroll through Snapchat, or Facebook, or Twitter, or Instagram, or any other platform, and we make judgments . . . or misjudgments, because after all, social media is mainly used to present the best sides of us. There's almost no room for real-life struggles amidst bright filters and selfies.

We've all been in these boats, myself included. But, as Christians, the way we view judgment should be drastically different than our peers in the world. We shouldn't be so hung up on it that it rules our lives and actions. We're called to be different.

So, how should we as Christian Millennials handle judgment? Let's take a look at this in three ways.

### **"Judge not, that you be not judged."**

Matthew 7:1 is one that often comes to mind first whenever we think of judgment. But, like all Scripture, there is truth in it. Look at the following verse: "For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you" (Matthew 7:2). The tone of this verse may sound familiar to you based on this one that's actually just a few verses later: "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 7:12).

So how can we employ this truth in our lives? Consider this: whenever someone you know has sinned, do you judge them? How harshly? And have you been afraid that someone you know would judge you for your sins?

Listen: It starts with you. You control your actions, but you also control your judgment. It's important to note that you're called to speak the truth in love when necessary if you're confronting someone or being confronted (Ephesians 4:14-15). However, if you don't judge harshly, you're fulfilling your end of this commandment outlined in Matthew 7:1-2.

You also control how you react to judgment. Know when to speak the truth in love and when to be silent (Proverbs 15:2). Your reaction

to someone judging you verbally—especially if it's unnecessary or even mean-spirited—can speak volumes and can even reflect Christ to those around you.

### **Speck vs. Plank**

Matthew 7:3-5 reads: "And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

I think the message is pretty clear: make corrections in your life before addressing someone about their problems. Have you ever started an argument with someone only because you're angry about another argument with someone else, or addressed why someone has one sin that seems so huge to you while you yourself also have sinned?

It's better if you examine your own life before getting into the lives of others. Doing so will give you the perspective necessary to offer advice and help those who are going through different situations, similar or otherwise.

### **God Is Our Only True Judge**

Have you ever heard the expression "only God can judge me?" Often, it's used flippantly; it's a way to tell others that you don't care what they think. But not only is that misguided, but also it is taking His name in vain.

Imagine this: God is seated in Heaven, and He is at His judgment seat (Matthew 12:36; Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10). How would He respond to you? Also, imagine this: you have the ultimate Attorney, Jesus Christ, who is able to acquit any and all of the "charges" of sin.

Readers, this is how salvation—and, in turn, Jesus' intercession—works. When you obey the Gospel, God sees only the sacrifice Jesus made for you.

So, yes, God will judge us—and judgment day is a real thing—but as Christians, we have the free gift of salvation, mercy, and ultimate love from His Son that lets us be with Him for eternity.

At the end of all of this, judgment is a huge deal. We need to remember the implications of not only judging someone, but also the judgment we will receive when Jesus comes again. But dear readers, we shouldn't fear: with God on our side, we can have freedom and live faithfully, regardless of what this world thinks of us. ▲

A shiny gold Oscar statuette is the central focus, positioned on the right side of the frame. It is highly reflective, mirroring the surrounding environment. The background is a soft-focus, out-of-focus scene filled with numerous small, glowing circular lights in shades of yellow, orange, and blue, creating a bokeh effect.

Soul Food

Billy R. Davis, Ph.D. USAF Ret.

THE  
ENVELOPE,  
PLEASE ...

The 89th Academy Awards ceremony, presented by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences that took place on February 26, 2017, will forever be remembered as the program that made the largest blunder in the history of the ceremony. How was it possible for the distinguished accountants of Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC) to hand the **wrong envelope** to Warren Beatty & Faye Dunaway to announce Best Picture? Impossible you say? Never happen in a million years, right? WRONG! The live telecast and ensuing replays show a painful but gallant effort to push through the madness and bring the program to a merciful conclusion. The post-mortem revealed a lack of discipline and attention to detail that cost two accountants the special privilege of ever working the OSCARS again. I am sure the lessons learned and recommitment to “see the job through to completion” will be at the forefront of future assignments!

I am sure that this was an eye-opening experience for the actors who thought they won, but didn’t, as well as the ones who *thought* they lost, but won. The spiritual implications cannot be overstated nor ignored:

- There will be some Judgement Day surprises when many “religious people” who professed to know Jesus and may even have called Him Lord are going to be eternally disappointed. Unfortunately, their professions will not align with Jesus’ expectations. Jesus clearly states in Matthew 7:21-23:

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’” (NASB)

It is almost as if these religious individuals will be headed to the spiritual stage to receive their reward from Jesus—but no reward will be forthcoming! We must make a sincere effort to do the will of the Father in heaven if we want to see Jesus’s face in peace.

- Jesus will have a **special blessing** for the sheep (those who have obeyed the will of the Father in heaven) who have brought glory and honor to God. These individuals will be pleasantly surprised because their lives were clothed by the doctrine of Christ—which caused them to be blessed in a special way. Hear the words of Jesus in Matthew 25:31-40:

“But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.

“Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.’ **Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ The King will answer and say**

**to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me’** (emp. added).

- Likewise, Jesus’s words to the goats, (those on His left who failed to obey the gospel of Christ) will be firm, unapologetic, and eternal. They will go away into everlasting punishment because they failed to live according to the dictates of Scripture. Here is what Jesus says in Matthew 25:41-46:

“Then He will also say to those on His left, **‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;** for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.’ **Then they themselves also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?’** Then He will answer them, **‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life”** (emp. added).

- The focus for all those who love Jesus is to keep His commandments, John 14:15; John 15:14. We must strive to live a life of holiness so that our names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. In Hebrews 12:22-24 we find these words:

“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, **to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven,** and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel” (emp added).

- Finally, the apostle John really put things in perspective as he attempted to paint a picture of what heaven would be in Revelation 21:22-27:

“I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illuminated it, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, **but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life”** (emp. added).

The truth of the matter is that God will not make any mistakes on the last day. There will be no mistakes with envelopes nor with separating the sheep from the goats. This should give all of us great pause to make our calling and election sure. If you haven’t obeyed the gospel of Christ, please don’t play “Russian Roulette” with your soul. Don’t allow yourself and your loved ones to be embarrassed on the last day because you failed to do things God’s way. I can assure you, His accounting is light-years better than any firm on this planet. And when the books are opened on that day, and another book, which is the Book of Life, let’s live, love, serve, and obey our Heavenly Father so that our names will be written there! ▲

**Bon appétit!**

# GOD CARES FOR US

What was called the "Epidemic of the 80s" remains, according to some health specialists, America's number one health problem. That problem is stress and the accompanying symptoms of anxiety and depression. In one poll, 75% of the people involved said they felt great stress. It has been reported that 75% to 80% of all visits to doctors are stress related. Many serious health issues such as hypertension, strokes, heart attacks, and others have a psychological component in addition to the physical symptoms.

Stress-related issues are now being seen in more children, teens, and college-age young people. Older people feel stress because of societal problems, crime, and injury to themselves, in addition to health problems, feelings of abandonment, and isolation. Job related stress is a major problem for business and industry. Stress, depression, or anxiety accounted for 8.8 million work loss days in 2016. The average number of days off for those suffering from these problems was twenty-four days. Dr. Jay Winner, the author of *Take The Stress Out Of Your Life*, wrote, "Stress doesn't only make us feel awful emotionally but it can exacerbate just about any health problem you have."

Among other suggested causes of stress and its related problems is the erosion of family, religious values, and other social support. A growing body of studies in this area conclude that an active religious life and prayer are among the best ways of coping with the stresses of life. In one study of 126,000 people, it was found that people who were frequent attenders of religious services increased their chances of living longer by 29%.

Dr. Roberta Lee, author of *The Super Stress Solution*, wrote, "Research shows that people who are more religious or spiritual use their spirituality to cope with life. They are better able to cope with stress, they heal faster from illnesses, and they experience increased benefits to their health and wellbeing." While it is true that prayer and an active spiritual life will help deal with the stresses of life, we should not conclude, however, that Christians are immune to these health problems.

One thing we must never be guilty of is equating all mental illness to one living an ungodly life. Some of God's great servants suffered from depression. Job was obviously depressed when his friends, who I choose to call his "miserable comforters," came and insisted if he had not been such a bad sinner, he would not be suffering as he was. Job insisted that was not true. He was right, and they were wrong (Job 42:7). Good, godly people do struggle with mental issues like depression. Elijah, one of God's greatest prophets, certainly did (1 Kings 19:4-5). Even Jesus, who though divine, became one of us and was "in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15b), showed the signs of depression in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:38; Mark 14:33-14; Luke 22:44). It is important to notice that though He manifested the symptoms of depression, He did not sin. Depression, nor any other mental illness, is not sin.

It is evident from both the Old and New Testaments that God was aware of the potential of fallen humans suffering mental issues, and included within His word are relevant helps for those kinds of health related problems. The writer of Proverbs wrote, "A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance, but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken," and "that A merry heart does good like medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones" (15:13; 17:22 NKJV). The psalmist wrote, "Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance" (42:5 NKJV).

Jesus knew the dangerous consequences of anxiety and worry and urged his followers, "Do not worry about your life . . ." (Matthew 6:23 NKJV). He added that worry really changes nothing (v. 27). If we are trusting in God and sincerely believe that He will provide the essentials of life for us even as He does for the birds of the air and for the grass of the field, then as long as we do our part, we have no need to worry. Our part is essentially to earnestly "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," and He promised that the necessities of life will be provided (6:33).

Paul produced the main ingredients for coping with anxiety when he wrote, "Be anxious for nothing (don't worry about anything; SSC), but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be known to God; and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7 NKJV). The formula is relatively simple and two words sum it up: "nothing" and "everything." How is it possible to worry about nothing? Paul's answer is to "pray about everything."

Paul adds that two other ingredients are necessary to maintaining inner peace. One is right thinking. Isaiah wrote, "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you" (26:3 NKJV). Right thinking involves holding on to what is true. Much of our anxiety can be traced to things that are not true. It also involves concentrating on things that are "honorable" or "worthy." He added to think only on pure thoughts and lovely things. In a world with so much trivia, cheap and shallow, down and dirty, we must "bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5 NKJV). He concluded these thoughts by urging Christians to think on things of good report. When we do this, the base, false, low, and little will be eliminated. It takes more than thinking. It takes doing these things and then "the God of peace will be with you" (Philippians 4:9b).

The apostle Peter informs us on how to live a care-less life when he wrote, "casting all of your care upon Him for He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7 NKJV). If we accept God's gracious concern and His offer of inner peace, "casting all of care upon Him," there will be none left for us. However, this is not a one-time injection of eternal peace. We need daily boosters of earnest prayer (James 5:16; 1 John 5:14-15). We must be careful not to lay our burdens down at His feet and then pick them up again as we leave. When we leave them with Him, the causes of our concern may remain, but the pain will not. ▲

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States. With those concerns, many turn to heart-healthy diets. Did you know that while heart disease is the number one physical killer, it is also the number one spiritual killer?

The heart is the thinking part of man: the mind. It is what understands, reasons, and directs the course of one's spiritual destiny. Where the heart leads, the body follows. For that reason, scripture often addresses matters of the heart, both good and bad.

Jesus wanted to be the focus of one's life. He said, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21). He was warning about the danger of letting cares, pleasures, and accumulated possessions rule one's life. Jesus also said spiritual diseases are born in the heart: "Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander" (Matthew 7:29).

James said bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in the heart produce disorder and every evil practice (3:14-16). Peter spoke of ungodly people whose hearts were trained in greed (2 Peter 2:14). Paul described those who had spiraled deeply into sin as brutal, abusive, and *heartless* (2 Timothy 3:2-3).

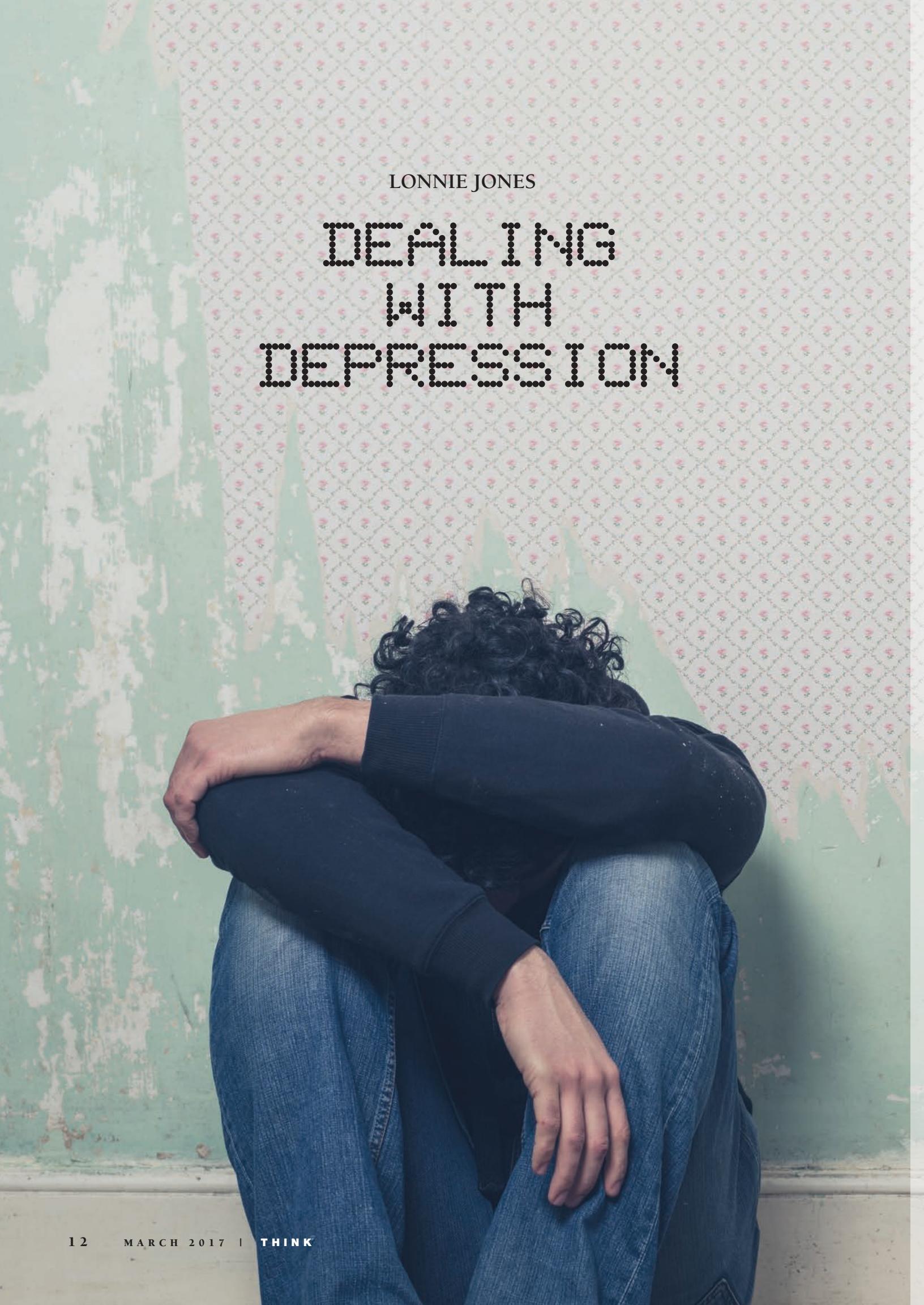
What other scriptures give us insight about the heart?

- Let your heart therefore be loyal to the Lord our God, to walk in His statutes and keep His commandments, as at this day (1 Kings 8:61).
- Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer (Psalm 19:14).
- Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life (Proverbs 4:23).
- Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; (Proverbs 3:5).
- Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God (Matthew 5:8).

What is a heart-healthy spiritual diet? First, it is feasting on God's word. Jesus said, "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). Our journey continues with heartfelt obedience to His word (Romans 6:4, 17). We then develop a heart that is driven purposefully, out of love for the Lord, to do His will. This produces a thankful heart, compassionate, glad, and generous. It is a sincere heart giving God the glory and honor in all things! ▲

**Today's Verses:** "Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, who seek Him with the whole heart!" (Psalm 119:2). "Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You." (Psalm 119:11). "I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, and I will glorify Your name forevermore" (Psalm 86:12).

## NUMBER ONE KILLER

A photograph of a person with dark curly hair, wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans, sitting with their head down and arms wrapped around their knees. They are positioned in front of a wall that has peeling green paint and a patterned wallpaper with small red flowers.

LONNIE JONES

# DEALING WITH DEPRESSION

It is not a sin to be depressed.

As a therapist, I deal with two major manifestations of depression. One is Indigenous Depression or Organic Depression. This is a disease. It is a function of the brain and its chemistry. Because the brain is an organ, this manifestation of depression is a disease. It can and should be treated with medicine. One cannot pray enough or simply choose to feel better to make the symptomology go away. There are interventions which deal with this and have nothing to do with character, strength, faith, or one's Christianity. This type of depression is beyond the scope of this article.

The most common type of depression I see is a product of **stress, loss, or guilt** and the interpretation or misinterpretation of these situations. We call this Cognitive Distortion and it leads to Cognitive Depression. It is easy to fall victim to a number of cognitive distortions or interpretation errors and thus come away with a pervasive mood of sadness, lethargy, helplessness, and hopelessness.

Look at the case study of Elijah. Following a phenomenal victory on Mt. Carmel and the direct intervention of God sending both fire and rain in answer to Elijah's request, Elijah manifests the classic symptoms of a crisis caused by depression. Elijah receives a message from Jezebel threatening his life. This precipitating event is the catalyst for one of the darkest episodes in Scripture. The interpretation errors are classic. He allows the words of Jezebel to have more power than the Word of God. He allows what she says she is going to do to be more powerful than what God has already done (i.e. Mt. Carmel). He focuses on the actions of Israel—"They have torn down your altar, forsaken your covenant, killed your prophets and they are trying to kill me ..." Trying to be responsible or worrying about things you cannot control is a source of **stress and guilt**. Because of these errors in interpretation, Elijah is afraid. In an attempt to insulate himself, he isolates himself by going a day's journey into the wilderness without his servant. He then complains that he is alone. "I am the only one left and they are trying to kill me." He becomes isolated and inactive. Elijah's perception of what he thought was happening and what was actually happening is worthy of note. God's anointed men would be putting people to the sword but 7,000

people in Israel had never bowed the knee to Baal nor kissed toward him. Although not spelled out in God's response to Elijah, he not only does not get killed, but he does not even die!

Depression is not a bad word. If there are actual circumstances of stress, loss, and guilt then sadness, or a period of adjustment, is not only normal but probably healthy. Loss can be defined as, "Anytime life doesn't meet my expectations, I suffer loss" and humans grieve all losses. The grieving process (Accept the Reality, Express/Experience the Emotions, Adjust to the New Norm and Reinvest in the Future) is a process that brings people through the process of loss. When our emotions are used properly, they bring us into balance and harmony. In contrast, when and if our emotions produce distress, destruction, or

cognitive component, the symptomology can be reduced and help people come back to a functional level, even when there is some organic depression present.

Often, clients will encounter a medically based depression, and it is helpful to simply recognize it for what it is. The brain is sending false signals that affect one's mood, motivation and outlook. Some folks are able to master the art of "acting better than they feel." This is not about being false, fake, or pretending to be happy, but rather, choosing to not let the mood dictate one's actions or responses. If we wait until we quit getting out of breath to start jogging we will never start. Often those suffering from indigenous depression are waiting for the feeling to change before they allow their behavior to change. Take it away from depression and consider chronic

## Those suffering from depression are waiting for the feeling to change.

dysfunction, then the depression is of clinical concern. One intervention that seems to be effective is to challenge the meanings (interpretations) that we assign to various events. I like to challenge people to compare feelings with facts. Ask the following questions: What happened? This is the **event**. Based on my perceptions what **meaning** have I assigned to this? Based on this **meaning** we get our resultant **emotions**. The **event, meaning, emotion** process can be used to challenge and rewrite the interpretations that come from the cognitive distortions.

Another case study is Jacob. His sons show him a coat covered with blood. He concludes that: Joseph is dead, Joseph is torn/eaten by a wild animal; therefore Jacob will not accept comfort and declares that he will go to his grave mourning, i.e. "I will never be happy again." Is the **meaning** he assigned to the **event** (torn, bloody coat) valid? Of course not! Joseph is not dead, was not attacked by an animal, and at some point, Jacob has a reunion with son and meets grandchildren he did not know he had.

Often depression can be a combination of the two types. In my practice, I have often found that by addressing the

pain. Will I hurt more or less by getting out today? I will hurt today no matter what I do. Then what good does it do to stay inside, not visit my friends, not shop, etc. Not asking folks to ignore pain or pretend it isn't there; just reframing the idea that, "Because I feel this way I shouldn't or I can't ..."

I would like to recommend the one resource I use more than any other in my practice when dealing with depression. This tool is good for those who may be depressed or for those who may be living with or helping a person who struggles with depression. This tool is a book by David Burns, *Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy*. This book will explain cognitive distortions, interpretation errors, and negative self-talk. It also has a depression checklist, the Dysfunctional Attitude Scale, and a good discussion of the pros and cons of pharmaceutical intervention and when it is most and least effective. ▲

*Lonnie Jones is a Licensed Professional Counselor who has been in private practice for 19 years. He does seminars for churches on this and a variety of topics. See lonnijeones.org*

# wee THiNK

ANNIE WILKINSON

GOOD THINGS COME TO THOSE WHO WAIT



Have you ever wanted something a whole lot, but you had to wait to get it? What's the longest you've ever had to wait? Was it an hour, a day, a week, or maybe even a whole year? Waiting can be frustrating or exciting, can't it? But the key to all waiting is having patience.

"But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing" (James 1:4).

What is patience? It is the ability to be content or happy while waiting for something and not getting upset or angry.

Do you ever get angry when your food doesn't come fast enough? Do you ever get upset when your birthday is just so far away and you have to wait a super long time to open up your presents? Do you ever get sad when you realize how long it's going to take for something to come in the mail? How about when school is almost over for the day, but you still have one more project to finish before you can go outside and play? It can be very hard to wait, can't it?

Can you think of someone in the Bible who had a hard time waiting for something? The one lady I have in mind is Sarah. She had to wait 90 years to have a baby! That is a very long time! Sarah wasn't perfect; even she got impatient. She tried to change God's plan and made a big mistake. When we get impatient, do we ever cause problems? Does being impatient ever cause us to sin? I would say, absolutely!

When we are impatient, we sometimes do things we know we shouldn't. Sometimes we lose our temper and get mad, or sometimes we throw a fit and disobey our parents. Sometimes we try to do things our way, like Sarah, and not the way God would want us to.

Sarah did things the hard way at first, but eventually, all of the waiting paid off and God gave her the baby He had promised. If we wait for God, in the end, He will bless us in ways better than we could ever imagine!

"The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him" (Lamentations 3:25).

What does the Bible say about people who wait for God's timing?

"Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city" (Proverbs 16:32).

This verse also talks about controlling one's temper. Sometimes we aren't just impatient about things we want to happen, but we get impatient with people too. Sometimes there are people who make us mad or who hurt our feelings. These are people we have to learn to be patient with and be especially kind to. Sometimes we may want to say mean words to them, but the Bible says we need to say nice things instead.

"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Proverbs 15:1).

Let's work on patience together, always trying our best to be patient with others and waiting on the Lord like He would want us to.

"Yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary" (Isaiah 40:31).

## Question of the Month

When was the last time you prayed about something and God answered that prayer?

## Challenge of the Month

Next time someone makes you mad, control your temper and be kind to them instead of lashing back.

# WORD SEARCH

COMPLETE

CONTROL

KINDNESS

PLAN

PRAYER

PROMISE

PROVERBS

SARAH

TEMPER

WAIT

S	L	E	B	P	I	A	K	A	I	T	I	H	P	V
R	P	Y	T	P	R	O	M	I	S	E	K	N	T	O
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W	A	R	T	Z	V	X	J	T	L	N	J	I	K	P
S	A	P	W	X	J	K	K	M	O	P	X	A	B	E
G	T	F	K	W	G	E	O	C	Q	R	A	A	M	R

# SADNESS IS OKAY



Sadness isn't something we like to feel, but it's a part of life. God gave us emotions, and sadness is just one of many. We feel sad when we experience disappointment, we feel sad when our feelings are hurt somehow, or we feel sad when we lose someone we love. And that's just to name a few.

Being sad is certainly not a bad thing. Everyone feels sad from time to time; in fact, plenty of people in the Bible experienced sadness in one way or another.

First, Jesus was sad—and showed it—when Lazarus, one of His best friends, had died. The Bible specifically says He wept (John 11:35), and others took notice (John 11:36). He wept because He truly cared about His friend, even when, moments later, He would be raising His friend from the dead. God gave us the ability to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep, so it's okay to feel sad yourself or to feel sad for someone else when they're going through a hard time. Sometimes, even when you don't cry with them, just being there for someone can help more than you know. And don't forget to pray for them, too.

Speaking of prayer, let's talk about our second person: Hannah. Hannah was a woman who, in the Old Testament, was unable to have a child of her own. Her husband's other wife was able to have children, and she made fun of Hannah for it. While her husband comforted her, she still was sad over not having a baby. So, what did she do? Did she feel sorry for herself? No . . . she prayed.

She went to the temple of Jerusalem and prayed her hardest, and God honored her by giving her a son named Samuel. Hannah honored God right back by giving her son to the Lord, dedicating his life in service to Him. Her gift was worth it, because her son became one of God's prophets, and he was instrumental in anointing the king who would continue a family line all the way to God's Son, Jesus Christ.

What can we learn from Jesus, and what can we learn from Hannah? We can learn two things: we can lean on God and others when we're sad, and God will love us through the sadness we face.

Before I close, please remember this: **God loves at all times**, when we're happy, or when we're sad, no matter how we act. Be patient with yourself when you're sad, because God is patient with you no matter how you feel. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

And finally, remember to love others in the same way when they are in need: "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God" (1 John 4:7).

# THIS MONTH'S HASHTAG

## #GodLovesAtAllTimes

This month, we challenge you to post this hashtag as a status update on your social media. You can say how #GodLovesAtAllTimes in the world around you, in your life, or even just the hashtag.

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

When was the last time you felt sad?

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What can you do the next time you feel sad?

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How can you comfort a friend or family member who is sad?

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# SERVANTS OF GOD AND DEPRESSION

JEFF JENKINS

Some of God's greatest servants struggled mightily with issues ranging from loneliness, to loss of loved ones, loss of possessions, physical illnesses, dejection, defeat, despair, and even depression.

Adam and Eve lived with the horror of one of their children taking the life of another child (Genesis 4:1-10). Not a great start for mankind regarding personal struggles.

Noah preached that men should turn to God, but multitudes refused to listen and seemingly no one's life was changed by his work. This preacher of righteousness who walked faithfully with God spent much of his time in his ministry alone (Genesis 6-7).

Job lost ten children, all his possessions, and even the support of his wife. He also endured a great deal of physical pain. (Job 1-2).

David feared for his own life. He lived with the insecurity of knowing there were people who wanted him dead. He suffered tremendous grief when he lost his son (1 Samuel 21-23; 2 Samuel 19; Psalm 42-43).

Elijah convinced himself that he was alone in serving God. He dealt with fatigue, a sense of failure, fear, and even futility. He believed that everyone had forsaken him, and that he was doing God's work all alone (1 Kings 18-19).

Paul struggled with some type of physical pain and asked God on numerous occasions to take it away from him, but it was not to be so. He was also haunted by the knowledge of his own imperfections (2 Corinthians 12; Romans 7). Our beloved brother spoke of what had happened to him in his life, as well as his concern—or we might say burden—for the church that weighed heavily upon him daily in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28, "Are they servants of Christ?—I speak as if insane—I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches."

Even our Savior agonized as He thought about His impending death; asking God if there was any other way to fulfill His plan that would keep Him from death. "And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and began to pray, saying, 'Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.' Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground" (Luke 22:41-44).

History is littered with great political leaders, wonderful men and women of God, as well as outstanding servants who have gone about their work in quietness with deep pain in their heart. Over time ministry can take a

significant toll on our lives. The work we love can drain us emotionally, spiritually, relationally, and physically. Burnout is a real problem in our world, and people who help people are not immune to it.

Perhaps there are any number of people who will read this article and say, "Yes, that describes me." We would say, take heart, you are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses, both past and present, who understand your feelings. There are steps we can take that will help our situation. Please consider just a few of these.

**Take care of your health.** Take a nap. Shut down for a few minutes. Our body and soul live together. Our emotional condition is often impacted by our physical condition. Getting enough of the right kind of food, enough sleep, and sufficient exercise—while no guarantee against depression, may help to prevent it and will certainly keep the body in a better state to deal with it.

There will be occasions when we will need a physical and an emotional break. Get away from the office. Take a short nap. Shut down your mind for a few minutes. These seem to help renew and restore.

**Get advice from a medical doctor.** Often depression is caused by chemical problems, and medication may be needed to help. If you are depressed, first get a good physical check-up; have a medical examination to see if there is anything physically or chemically wrong with you.

**Find a hobby or something you enjoy doing.** It may be a physical hobby. It could be as simple as a day on the golf course, a nice long walk, a trip out to the lake for fishing or boating. It could be something like taking in a movie or a relaxing evening at home.

One of my personal favorites is reading a book that is unrelated to my work. I love history and particularly Civil War books. Choose something that works for you. Every person is unique, and we all enjoy different diversions.

**Spend a lot of time in prayer.** Prayer is one of God's greatest gifts to His people. Jesus understood the value of getting away from it all and enjoying personal communion with His Father. He prayed before crucial decisions, and He prayed intently before His death. If Jesus saw the need for prayer, then those of us who are helping others certainly have that need. It is no wonder the writer of Hebrews reminds us, "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our

confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore, let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:14-16).

**Bring some people into your life who bring you joy.** If we spend all our time around people who are struggling, we will find ourselves struggling as well. We need some people around us who bring us a lot of joy. We need some people around us who we feel comfortable with to such a degree that we can let our hair down.

**Focus on the right perspective.** We should ask ourselves regularly why we are helping others. If it is so that we can be glorified or looked upon by others with favor, we have the wrong motivation. The correct perspective in our life is first to do everything we do so that God might be glorified. Another great motivation is to help others find joy in our Savior in this life and eternal rest in the life to come.

**Share your story.** One of my mentors often says, "Everybody has a story." Those of us in ministry spend much of our life listening to people around us tell their story. Their stories are often filled with pain, heartache, heartbreak, loss, defeat, and depression.

We need someone in our life who is willing to listen to our story. While we cannot divulge much of what we hear from others, and we must remember that we cannot share from the pulpit what others have told us in confidence, we need someone who will listen to us when we are in pain. It should be first, our spouse, maybe a counselor if needed, a co-worker, another leader, or a trusted confidant.

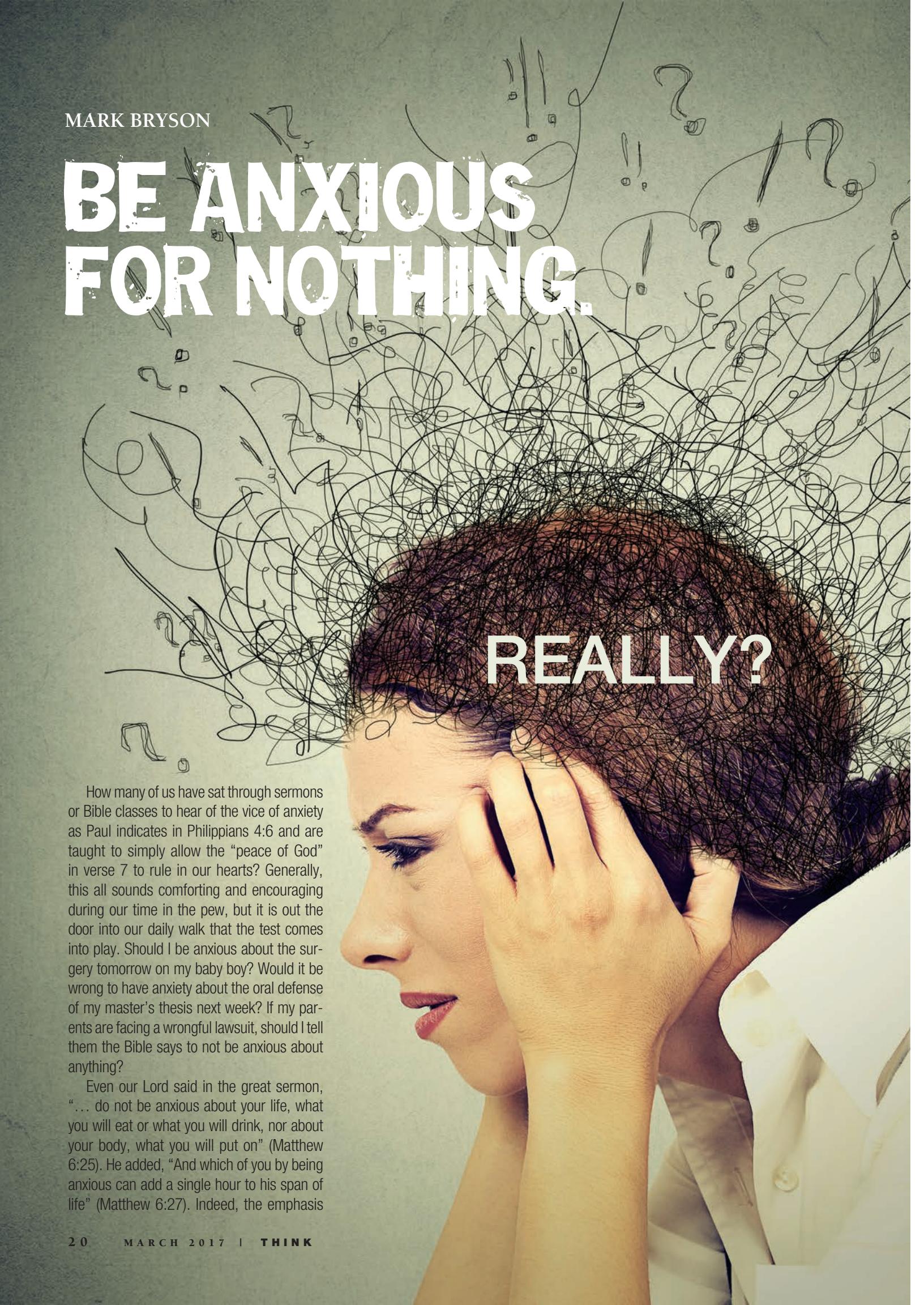
**Don't give up.** Remember that you are needed for the long haul. If we find ourselves in a vulnerable position when it comes to our physical or mental health, we might need to take a long break. It may help to spend some time away from the daily grind. We should never forget that our loving Father is with us, and He will never forsake us. He has given us His Word to strengthen us when we struggle. We should continually lean on Him for the strength we need to do our work.

Thank you for giving your life to others. Thank you for helping those who are hurting. Thank you for your desire to make life better for the struggling. May God continue to bless you with good days and a good life in His service. ▲

MARK BRYSON

# BE ANXIOUS FOR NOTHING.

REALLY?



How many of us have sat through sermons or Bible classes to hear of the vice of anxiety as Paul indicates in Philippians 4:6 and are taught to simply allow the “peace of God” in verse 7 to rule in our hearts? Generally, this all sounds comforting and encouraging during our time in the pew, but it is out the door into our daily walk that the test comes into play. Should I be anxious about the surgery tomorrow on my baby boy? Would it be wrong to have anxiety about the oral defense of my master’s thesis next week? If my parents are facing a wrongful lawsuit, should I tell them the Bible says to not be anxious about anything?

Even our Lord said in the great sermon, “... do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on” (Matthew 6:25). He added, “And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life” (Matthew 6:27). Indeed, the emphasis

both by the Son of God and the apostle Paul is that the life that is given us in Christ should provide a different approach and perspective to the trials and difficulties that come our way. Even though anxiety is a mental health condition, we can find that it ranges to everything from simply everyday worry all the way to such things as debilitating agoraphobia (an inability to leave home). Certainly, when Jesus says in Matthew 6:34, "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself," one should see this admonition can make a huge difference in our daily walk if one can indeed internalize this and then make application to life's ups and downs.

What about when one's difficulty with anxiety is not just getting over general worry and concerns, but is actually something that needs professional help? You may have heard someone admit that they deal with an "anxiety disorder." This can be manifested in various ways and have many different descriptions. For instance, there is a generalized anxiety disorder, also panic disorder and panic attacks, agoraphobia, social anxiety disorder, selective mutism (the inability to speak or communicate) and separation anxiety. These

We may often overlook the worry that can be taking place in the life of a child. Children are not adults. They may not manage worries well and seek out support as needed. They may be struggling to communicate their feelings. How can one recognize the mediums that a child may use to express worries and anxiety? Anxiety in the life of a child becomes troublesome when they are not seeking out support, and it begins to interfere with everyday tasks such as focus at school or at home. Because everyone is different, a child's symptoms are tough to identify and some signs might be that the worry or anxiety is disproportionate to the actual/perceived risk. Parents might observe in their child trouble sleeping, tiring easily, impaired concentration, and irritability. Professional counselors indicate that, both in adults and children, the physical symptoms that can become manifest through anxiety can include excessive and overwhelming worry, chronic sleep problems, muscle tension and body aches, chronic indigestion, and even self-doubt.

Because anxiety comes in so many different forms, the distinction between an official diagnosis and "normal" anxiety is not always clear. On the other hand, when one has hap-

things I can choose to be anxious about will never go away. A person on limited income may always be in that situation. My desire for an unfaithful child or spouse to change may never make it happen. High anxiety results from not only experiencing or anticipating difficulties, but it also rests in an inner feeling that "I have to fix this" or even that "I am responsible for this." This false conclusion is what Paul is saying a Christian should not have to carry forward after submitting to the cross of Christ. Instead of anxiety, Paul says "... in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." A Christian turns the worries and troubles of his life over to someone else. Will circumstances change? Perhaps. Perhaps not. At least God says it is no longer our worry.

What greater satisfaction is there than knowing in spite of difficulty, someone else is taking care of things? Did the three young men in Daniel 3 express high anxiety upon being tossed into a fiery furnace by the king? They said "... he (God) will rescue us from your hand, O king. *But even if He does not ... we will not serve your god ...*" They seemed to not be worried at all! Their anxiety level was not based on what they needed or desired to happen. We too will not be anxious about "anything" when we believe that regardless of what tomorrow, next week, or next year has troubling us, it has now been given to God to work out. Remember what the "Great Invitation" all about? Jesus is saying in Matthew 11:28-30 that He wants everyone with troubles to come to Him and he will let you rest from them. It is an invitation to get rid of your worries.

Yes, there is a level of anxiety that comes about by mental illness. I need to try to bear someone's burden as they deal with this. We need not be uninformed of how to help and understand those who deal with these pressures and in no way minimize or discard their situation. However, there is another type of anxiety that God does want us to put away. It is the Christian who walks as though he is alone. It is us believing in scriptures and the promises of God with only our head and not with our heart. Instead of this, the anxiety-free Christian stands before the biting flames that surround him and says, "God has got this". The flames may not go away, but they are not ours to put out. Be anxious for nothing. Really? Yes, really! ▲

## Anxiety presents itself differently with each person.

types of anxieties can also create physical health issues. Many emergency room visits from fear of a heart attack turn out to be anxiety "on steroids," called panic attacks. Difficulty breathing, tightness in the neck, and pressure on the chest often occur during a panic attack. When our anxiety reaches this level, our endocrine system kicks into gear, and our body increases endorphins and other hormones. These panic (anxiety) attacks that put us into the fight or flight syndrome are an internal reaction to a perceived harmful event, attack, or threat to survival. Blood pressure can increase, heart rate may increase, sleep can be impacted, headaches may be experienced, and a compromised immune system can occur because of the physiological changes in the body.

What we must admit is that sometimes a brother or sister in Christ, in spite of having the same "one Spirit" as us, will struggle with life and be overcome with anxiety to the point of needing treatment or professional counseling. This becomes even more difficult when these emotional illnesses are present in children. Anxiety presents itself differently with each person but especially with children.

pily reached a pinnacle of putting their worries and life's trials into a proper "workable" perspective, can they be guilty of looking down on those who have a real problem with anxiety? My calling in Christ is indeed to know that God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit living within me want to take away my worldly perspective of worry, fretting, hand-wringing, and anxiety over things I cannot control. I am unable to change tomorrow's outcome. Jesus came to give me an abundant and full life. What greater example is there than witnessing a Christian in the midst of life's storm, calmly weathering rough seas and testifying that it is all in the hands of God? But God also calls me to love and bear the burdens of those who are not at "my level" of Christian maturity as they deal with their own problems and worries.

Then how should one apply and interpret this passage that tells me to "not be anxious about anything"? It is a mistake when converting someone to Christ to leave the impression that all of life's troubles and trials are over when you become a Christian. Jesus did not take away the difficulties of life. We follow him because it is the right thing to do, not necessarily the easy thing to do. Many of the



DALE JENKINS

## TOWARD SUPERB MENTAL HEALTH



I'm probably going to be guilty of oversimplification, but I fear in our desire to be compassionate, empathetic and to not minimize the hurt of some, we have overcomplicated this concept of the Christian and mental health for most of us. Yes, there are those who have neuroses and phobias that are in need of deep counseling. There are those who deal with clinical depression and bipolar disorders to the point that medication is necessary. I, hopefully with you, feel deeply for that small percentage of our fellow travelers around the sun.

But what about the rest of us?

For the rest of us there are a few things that actually are simple in the understanding but challenging in the practice that would lead to superb mental health that we should consider.

1. A life in Christ centered by His Truth will bring an unexplainable peace into the life of the person pursuing it. "You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you" (Isaiah 26:3, c.f. Philippians 4:6-7). God's Word is filled with instructions on its place in guiding us from the familiar, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105) and, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6). To the obscure, "The steps of a man are established by the Lord, when he delights in his way; though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the Lord upholds his hand" (Psalms 37:23-24). Even the most accomplished of minds without the Word of God guiding it is only a shell of what it could be with His Wisdom at the helm. The psalmist said it best: "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers" (Psalms 1:1-3).

2. Life equals stress. Whether that stress comes from sin, situations, or Satan's strikes you will not stop stresses from coming your way. And Christ never promised earthly immunity to these problems. In fact, on the contrary, He assures us "... In the world you will have tribulation ..." (John 16:33). But even that verse is rooted in a victorious promise. So the key here to superb mental health is the acceptance, no, the very expectation of difficulties and stresses. If we know them to be coming, then when they arrive, we may not be ready to welcome them, but we will be equipped to face them.

3. The first two on this list will set you up for superb mental health, but over and over in the text there is one thing that simply stands in strong relief among the key listed here. Whether it's "the renewing of you mind" of Romans 12, "guarding your heart" in Proverbs, the new attitude of Ephesians, or the setting of your mind of Colossians it is all about an outlook that comes from a decision to think on the right stuff and not dwell on the wrong stuff. It may sound simplistic, but it is not simple. Proverbs 23 teaches that what we think about makes us what we are. But nowhere is this truth stated more powerfully than in Philippians 4, "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you" (vs 8-9).

A while back, I talked to two brothers about a year apart in age in the same week. One talked about all the people who had wronged him, from his parents, to the educational system, to the church. The other lived in the same house, had the same parents, attended the same schools and the same church—he spoke with extreme gratitude for all that had been done for him. I bet you can't guess which was more satisfied, had more healthy relationships, and had the more growing spiritual life! What was the difference—it was which list they determined to focus on. Long observation has proven that there is not much difference between the person who has had every opportunity and the person who has had to struggle for every victory. I've known people on both sides of that equation who were living rich, full, joy-filled, godly lives and others on both sides whose lives are hollow, empty, and bitter. It is what you determine to think, feed, and focus on.

4. The person with superb mental health will have at least one more element on his side. He or she will have an array of God-seekers with whom they consult. Any mentally healthy individual will seek to surround himself with others who have either been where he is and have navigated well or who are his contemporaries and will help him understand the time they live in. "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety" (Proverbs 11:14). "Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed" (15:22). Only a fool would believe they can figure everything out on their own. We all have blind spots, find times when we do not know what is wisest, find ourselves not having confidence that we're heading in the right direction. Fortunately for Christians, God gave us the church. It does not just exist for worship and evangelism, but to provide a community of people of all ages with a common goal who will support and help each other through this life (Hebrews 3:12). We are all familiar with the "not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together" of Hebrews 10, but are you aware that that verse that has been used as a bat to prove it's a sin to skip worship is actually an "encouragement sandwich?" Read it with my emphasis "... let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another ..." (10:24-25 emp. added).

Before we close these thoughts let me be very clear: This is not an à la carte list, not a buffet that you can take one without the other and expect a level of success. Any one left off will short-circuit the whole system. For instance, one can possess a great level of Bible knowledge but only treat that knowledge as an academic endeavor, can read portions of the text for the sole purpose of winning religious arguments, or have the goal of "reading through the Bible annually" for the purpose of saying "I read through the Bible in 2017." Or as the old preacher said: "You can have a head full of scripture and a heart full of sin." ▲

Dale's newest book, *The Preacher as Counselor* can be purchased at [TheJenkinsInstitute.com/shop](http://TheJenkinsInstitute.com/shop).



STEVE HALE

# CALEB

## MIGHTY IN GOD, LONG IN YEARS

(JOSHUA 14:10-12)

Our mental well-being is directly connected with our outlook on life. That is so obvious, it is just axiomatic (self-evident). Douglas MacArthur, a great and respected general of World War II and the Korean conflict, said:

"Youth is not a time of life, it is a state of mind. You are as young as your faith, as old as your doubts, as young as your self-confidence, as old as your fear, as young as your hope, as old as your despair."

As the leader of thousands and thousands of troops, and no doubt dealing with soldiers' fears and anxieties, General MacArthur knew what a healthy mental approach meant to his army. He knew they were only as strong as their mental constitution!

This is very much unlike this little poem, which is the all too common approach to life:

"I get up each morning,  
dust off my wits,  
Pick up the paper and  
read the obits.  
If my name is missing,  
I know I'm not dead,  
So I eat a good breakfast  
and go back to bed."

So instead of making life happen, many just rock along and let it float them out into the sea of despair. Trying to put some humor into this, several have written lists as to what it means when someone grows older. Here are a few from different sources:

1. You know you are getting older when all the names in your little black book end with "M.D."

2. You know you are getting older when your pacemaker makes the garage door open whenever a pretty girl walks by.

3. You know you are getting older when you spend more time shaving your ears and your nose than you do your face.

4. You know you are getting older when you sink your teeth into a steak and they stay there.

5. You know you are getting older when a pretty girl walks up to you and says: "Hi Dad."

One of the Bible's great men, Caleb, didn't let life happen to him, but rather, by the help of Almighty God, he made life happen! Caleb was mighty in God and long in years because he was: (1) **Reliable** (Numbers 13:30); (2) **Relentless** (Joshua 14:10-12); (3) **Rock Solid** (John 15:8).

First, Caleb was mighty in God and long in years because he was reliable. The faithless Israelites were convinced by the ten negative spies that they could not conquer the promised land, completely forgetting the Almighty had already brought them out of Egypt. In contrast, Caleb said: "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it" (Numbers 13:30). The faithless spies stirred up the people as they decided to choose a captain from among them and return to Egypt (Numbers 13:31-14:4). Only Caleb, Joshua, Moses, and Aaron lamented this heresy (Numbers 14:5-10). When Caleb and Joshua spoke to the people, they encouraged them to obey the LORD. They pointed out that if the LORD was with them and delighted in them, they would be successful. Caleb and Joshua begged them not to rebel against the LORD, nor to fear the inhabitants of the promised land (Numbers 14:9). The people responded by wanting to kill them (Numbers 14:10). They probably would have killed them had not the LORD Himself interceded! They would rather have killed them than to have heeded their exhortations. How often we hurt ourselves because we do not copy Caleb by reacting to adversity with great faith! If we would copy his reliability, God would delight in helping us (Matthew 17:20-21)! This is the kind of reliability Paul kept, even as time approached for his death (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

Second, Caleb was mighty in God and

long in years because Caleb was relentless! Joshua recorded this about Caleb when he was eighty-five years old. Caleb said:

"And now, behold the LORD has kept me alive, as He said, these eighty-five years, ever since the LORD spoke this word to Moses while Israel wandered in the wilderness, and now, here I am this day, eighty-five years old. As yet I am as strong this day as on the day that Moses sent me; as my strength was then, so is my strength now, for war, both for going out and for coming in. Now therefore, give me this mountain of which the LORD spoke in that day how the Anakim were there, and that the cities were great and fortified. It may be that the LORD will be with me, and I shall be able to drive them out as the LORD said" (Joshua 14:10-12).

This was a most formidable task for anyone, but especially so for an eighty-five-year-old man! The Anakim were also called "sons of Anak." The spies compared them to the giants in Genesis 6:4. They were reckoned among the Rephaim (Deuteronomy 2:11). Three chiefs among the Anakim dwelt in Hebron from the time of the spies until Caleb took it (Joshua 15:13-15). Caleb didn't complain like the faithless spies, but trusted God to keep His word, and relentlessly pressed forward for the promise through the age of eighty-five! Moses noted that God declared: "But my servant Caleb, because he has a dif-

word of God (Romans 12:1-2)! Our character and personality changes as we grow spiritually from "babes in Christ" (1 Peter 2:1-3) to those mature enough to consume "solid food" (Hebrews 5:12-14). Our relationships, like Caleb's, are changing from the worldly (1 John 2:15-17) to those of like precious faith (1 Corinthians 15:33; 1 John 2:15-17).

Like Caleb, we need to remain rock solid, and grow, grow, grow! Young Jesus, at the age of twelve, is said to have "... grown in stature and wisdom, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52). Spiritually, as we graduate from the works of the flesh to the fruit of the Spirit, our commitment and character deepens (Galatians 5:16-23). From a physical standpoint, we generally grow slowly to about the age of 25. At the age of 60, healthy people have only diminished slightly from their younger years. After 60, our physical abilities do decline, but people still do incredible things after 60.

The late Tillit Sidney Teddlie died at the age of 102 in 1987. He taught singing schools for 61 years, and remained active well into the shadow of his years. He wrote 130 songs, 14 song books, and began his morning by quoting Bible verses ... for two hours! On brother Teddlie's tombstone is the title of one of his favorite songs: "Heaven Holds All To Me." Keep growing like brother Teddlie, even into those "Golden Years." The psalmist said: "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree ... They shall bear fruit in old age" (Psalms 92:12, 14). Remember, there are cycles of our rate of spiritual growth. A palm tree has seasons of flourishing and seasons it just tries to keep its leaves from withering. Keep growing, like Caleb, even into those late years!

Our modern society needs the wisdom and vitality of those older and wiser. We certainly need it in the church. But to glean this blessing, some of us need to prepare ourselves to be wise leaders, like Caleb. Like him, let us be reliable, relentless, and rock solid. Then may each of us be blessed by the younger: "Rise in the presence of the aged. Show respect for the elderly (Leviticus 19:32). ▲

## Let us be reliable, relentless, and rock solid.

ferent spirit in him and has followed me fully, I will bring into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it" (Numbers 14:24).

As we age, Caleb is a great model to follow! He was loyal to His Lord start to finish, and in fact, increased his service in his later years! Like Caleb, let us have a "different spirit" from those who have a casual faith! This can't help but improve our outlook on life, our attitudes, and our mental well-being!

Third, Caleb was mighty in God and long in years because he was rock solid! As many of his acquaintances and friends were consumed in the wilderness, he had to forge new friendships and relationships. Not only did he hang in there, he excelled! Winners in life are always learning, growing, and changing. Our values deepen and sharpen, always being transformed by the wonderful

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# • Sanctified for Life

• Mechelle Bishop

## READ

The shelves at the local book store are lined with both fiction and nonfiction books. Mystery, romance, self-help, history, religion, politics, and many other types can be found there. I feel at home there. In the middle of the store sit two very comfortable chairs with a table between them. Music plays in the background as I open a book and read. Of course, it helps that I enjoy reading. My interests have changed over the course of time. There are moments when just looking at a book cover compels me to pick it up and read a few pages before purchasing it. There are people who do not enjoy reading. I used to be one of them. Now, I feel like I need to catch up, as if that were possible.

The Bible, by far, is my favorite book. I have a friend who refers to his Bible as his sword, reflecting on Ephesians 6:17. How exciting it is that we can carry with us the Word of God everywhere we go, reading from it when we need encouragement, hope, or instruction.

Can you see the first century Christians gathering just to hear the reading of a letter from Paul? How about the Israelites as they gathered to hear the law of Moses read to them by Ezra when they returned from being in exile, to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem? Are we eager to hear and understand the words of Paul's letters? Are we as remorseful to hear and understand that we have sinned against our God?

Jesus expected His followers to have read from the law of Moses. He repeatedly asked if the Pharisees had as they tried numerous times to catch Him or His followers doing something wrong. Matthew 12:1-8 is just one occurrence of this. In this passage, Jesus and His apostles were walking through a grain field on the Sabbath and His apostles ate. The Pharisees told Him His apostles were doing wrong. Jesus answered by saying, "Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and his companions; how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those with him, but from the priests alone? Or, have you not read in the law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent? But I say something greater than the temple is here. But if you had known what this means, "I desire

compassion and not sacrifice." You would not have condemned the innocent. If He expected His accusers to have read scripture, He must expect that and more from us.

Second Timothy 2:15 says, "Study to show thyself approved." Studying requires reading. Reading requires a desire to want to learn more about our God who created us. Those who do not read, yet practice religion, have only an idea of who God is. The northern tribes of Israel were guilty in this respect. Hosea 8:2 says, "My God, we of Israel know Thee!" and goes on in verse 12, "Though I wrote for him 10,000 precepts of My law, they are regarded as a strange thing."

There is no difference today. I have had conversations with people who do not know why they take the Lord's Supper only once a month —just that someone higher up tells them to. There is much to be said about the Bereans who daily read from the scriptures to see if what they were taught was true.

Paul encouraged the early Christians to read or have his letters read in Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae, Thessalonica, and Laodicea. He knew they needed encouragement and instruction. To Timothy he wrote, "You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them; and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:14-15).

The Bible has a little bit of everything found at the book store. The shelf for romance may reach as high as it is long while the Bible can be considered God's love letter to His bride, the church. History books are filled with battles, treaties, heroes and heroines. Just reading from the Old Testament books of Joshua—2 Chronicles can tickle the fancy of any history buff. Looking for self-help? Read Jesus' sermon on the mount. You get the picture!

The Bible is the greatest book ever written. Even when a movie is made from it, the producers leave something out. Make sure you know what! ▲



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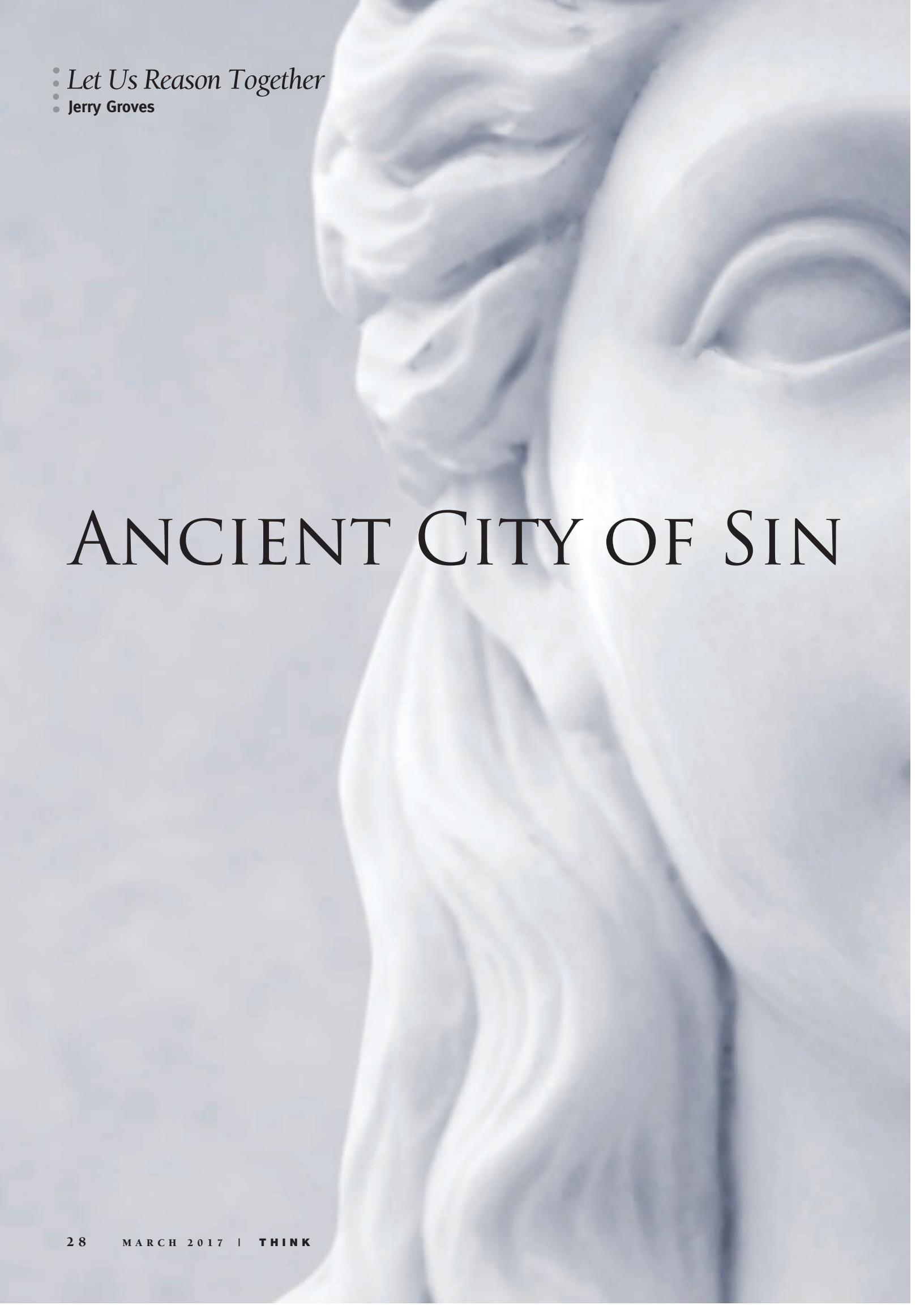
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• *Let Us Reason Together*  
• Jerry Groves

# ANCIENT CITY OF SIN

"Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God " (1 Corinthians 6:9-11 NASB).

Corinth was a city that legalized and celebrated sin. Many of the pagan temples within the city encouraged worship of their pagan "gods" with drunkenness and sexual sin. The infamous temple of Aphrodite (Venus) for instance had 1000 cult prostitutes, male and female, with whom the "worshippers" would have intercourse with in order to worship. To be called a Corinthian girl was akin to being called a prostitute. Corinth was a city whose promiscuous reputation preceded it.

"The city became a melting pot for the approximately 500,000 people who lived there at the time of Paul's arrival. Merchants and sailors, anxious to work the docks, migrated to Corinth. Professional gamblers and athletes, betting on the Isthmian games, took up residence ... And prostitutes (both male and female) were abundant (Nelson 251).

It was within this context that Paul wrote his admonition to the church in Corinth, a city that celebrated sin. Paul had to remind the church who they were, and it was not who they used to be. Those who worshipped Dionysus (god of wine) with drunken orgies and Aphrodite with lewd sex would not be saved. And they were not these people anymore. They were now redeemed by the blood of the Lamb and regenerated and renewed by the Holy Spirit of God (Ephesians 1:7; Titus 3:5).

A culture that legalizes, glamorizes and celebrates sin is doomed to fail. America has fallen, in many cases but not all, into this trap of unbridled sexual desire with an abandonment of godly morals. This should not be a total surprise to us, for when you leave God and His way, the flesh and its desires become paramount, as our moral compass has lost its true north (God's word).

But the church must not fall into the depravity and degradation of the world around us. Paul had warned the Christians in Corinth, thus the church in America and around the world must be warned as well. We are not to be infected by the sin and vice of the world and we are not to tolerate willful, rebellious, obstinate, unrepentant sin within our fellowship. Paul said, "I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one" (1 Corinthians 5:9-11).

The church of Christ must not allow the world to infect her with the disease of sin nor be poisoned by the sickness of subjective and relative thinking, which will bring about certain death (Romans 6:23).

We must not allow the temple of God to be stained by worldly thinking nor the holiness of Christ's church in which the Holy Spirit dwells to be shamed by unbridled sexual sin. "Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are" (1 Corinthians 3:16-18).

But rather the church of our Lord Jesus Christ must seek to affect the world with the love of God and with the biblical morality given from our Heavenly Father and modeled by our Lord Jesus Christ. We must march with the banner of truth and love of God's word which offers healing from sin that obedience to the Bible brings (John 17:17). We must teach and practice that we are to be clean, we are to separate, and we are to be holy. If we are to be saved the Holy scripture warns "Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said,

'I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM;

AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.'

"Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE," says the Lord.

'AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN;

And I will welcome you.'

'And I will be a father to you,

And you shall be sons and daughters to Me '

Says the Lord Almighty" (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

Ancient Corinth was partially destroyed by an earthquake in A.D. 521 and then totally destroyed by another in 1858. Modern Corinth, with its ruins of a bygone era has no church of Christ meeting there today, sadly.

Though we may not be able to save America from the onslaught of sexual lewdness that plagues her, we must continue to endeavor to maintain purity within the church and in our personal lives: The church for which Christ died, cleansed, purchased (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:27. The church in which dwells the Holy Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 3:16). The church that is the inheritance of God the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24). Therefore the church must remain a holy place Amen—and let it be so. ▲

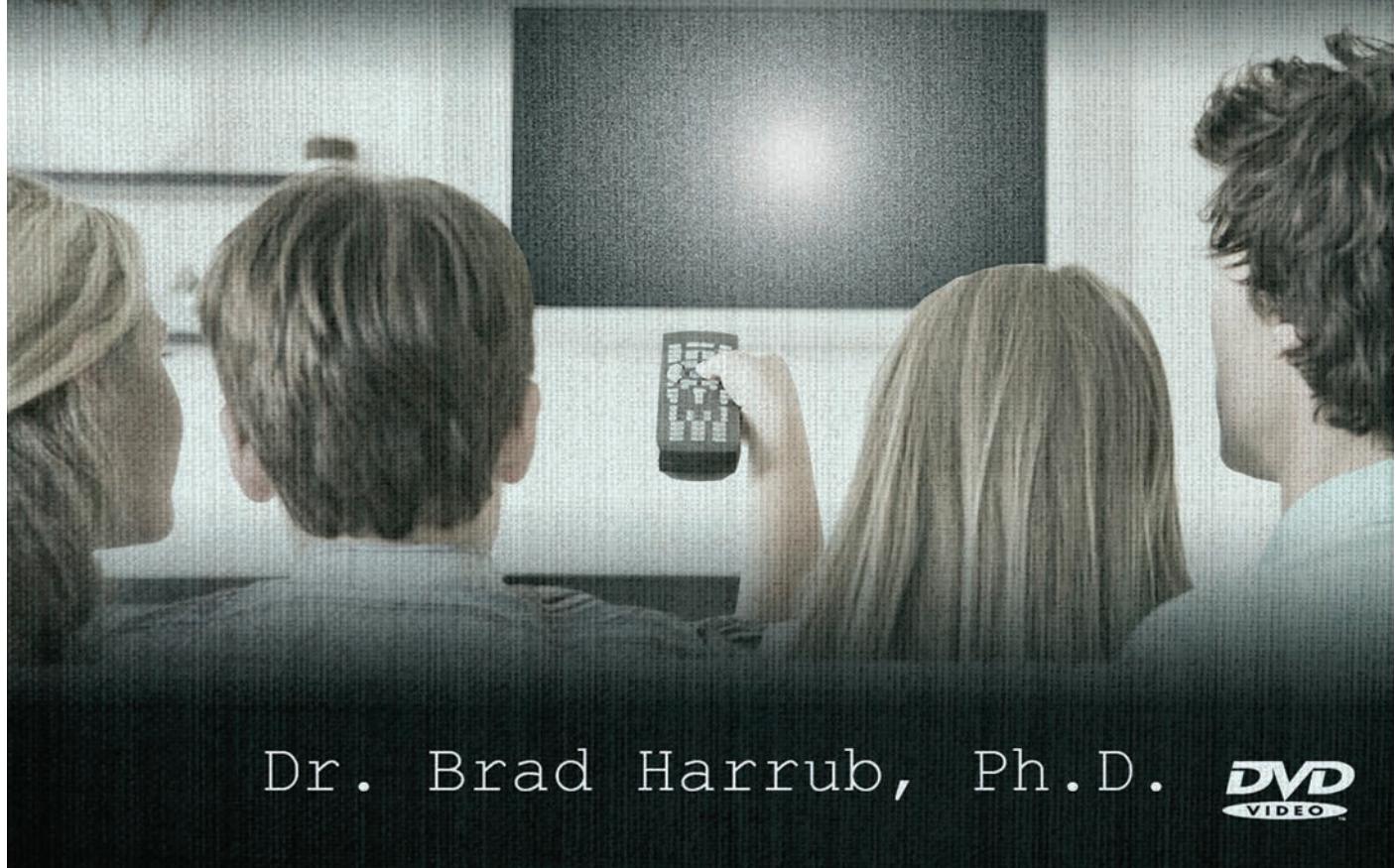
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# BOLDNESS

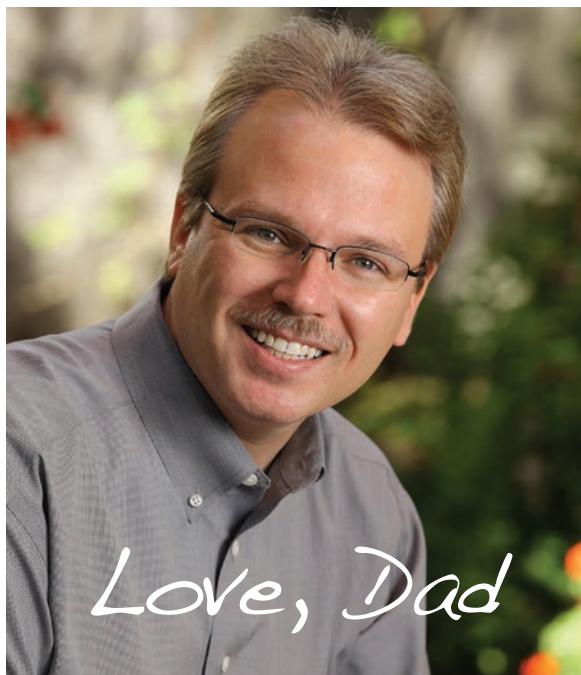
*Having looked into the tearful eyes of parents whose children have abandoned the Faith, I have learned there are a million miles between our children “going through the motions” in reference to their spiritual lives versus our children possessing hearts that dictate their actions. In this column, I plan to share with you what I hope to instill in the hearts of my own children and those whom I love.*

For many children, it is a weekly observation—they hear Mom and Dad profess a love and allegiance to God, but that love is rarely expressed outside the home or church building. Seldom do we talk to non-Christians about our faith or love of Christ. Rarely do we confront sin or share with strangers the “Good News.” Yes, we say we are Christians, but often our actions display a group of people who has grown apathetic and timid.

Rare is the pulpit that will stir Christians’ hearts toward getting out among the lost. Oh sure, we talk about it in general terms—but we don’t mention street names in our neighborhoods. Instead of risking disfavor and encouraging Christians to get out of their “comfort zones,” preachers and elders will often play it safe and feed this fearful mindset with undemanding messages. As a result, Christians today grow lethargic, and the Gospel is rarely shared.

## **Here’s what I intend to teach my children about being bold.**

There are going to be times you find yourself feeling uncomfortable. There may even be people who slam a door, hang up a phone, or block you on social media. But, as your mom often says: “They can’t



take away your birthday or salvation!” Just remember that whatever you endure pales in comparison to what Christ went through. Instead of walking away sad or embarrassed, remember the words of James: “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience” (James 1:2-3).

In His famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus declared, “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matthew 5:11-12).

My prayer is that you will be bold for Him! It has gotten so common for people not to talk openly about their faith or salvation that it almost feels weird when someone does it. Let me encourage you—be weird! Talk to people about Jesus Christ. Ask people questions about their salvation or their belief in God. Yes, you may occasionally find individuals who are turned off by it—but you will also be amazed by the number of people who want to talk about their faith or have questions about God! You will never find these individuals if you do not have the courage to speak up.

I love the picture painted for us in the early chapters of Acts. Peter was boldly preaching that the people needed to repent and be converted (Acts 3:19). Because of their boldness, Peter and John were arrested (Acts 4:3). When they were brought before the rulers and elders, Peter again pointed out that they had crucified Jesus Christ (Acts 4:10) and that “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). The response? The rulers and elders severely threatened them that they should not speak the name of Jesus. “So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus” (Acts 4:18).

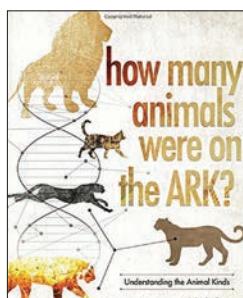
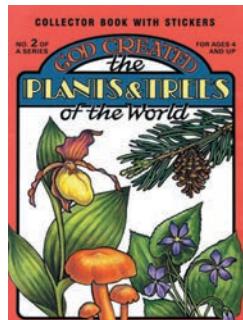
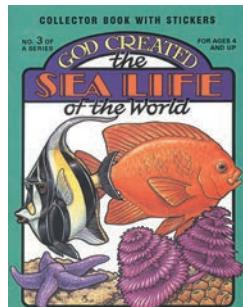
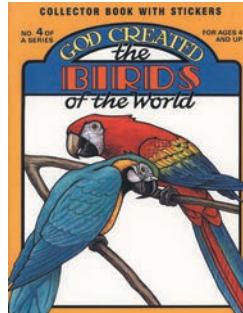
Peter and John continued to preach. In fact, rather than cowering down and becoming comfortable these men prayed, “Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word” (Acts 4:29). In Acts 5:17-18, we find the Apostles being put in prison once again. An angel of the Lord comes to them that night and commands them to go back out and speak the “words of this life” (Acts 5:20).

So, by this point, these men have been threatened (repeatedly) and imprisoned. Yet what did they do? Early the next morning, they were teaching again in the temple (Acts 5:21). My prayer is that you will have this kind of boldness during your lifetime. Be like those bopping punching bags we had when I was little—get knocked down and just pop right back up! Yes, you may occasionally find yourself tired or discouraged, but never forget why you are doing what you are doing—and don’t forget who you serve. “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9). ▲

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