

12 STEPS TOGETHER



A Fresh Start... Today is another new day, a day that you want to begin in the right way. Go ahead and start your day off right now by thanking God for your new life, and turning your attention toward Jesus Christ.

Give it All... Now that you're focusing on Christ, try to make every part of your day today, a moment that will glorify Him.

Proverbs 4:20-25

Brother Craig

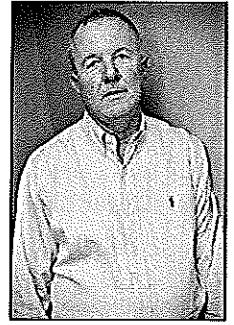
In this day and age we are surrounded by technology that is ever increasing. The latest inventions will be revised soon and a newer product will take its place. The average person now has access to at least two computers every day. The days of mobility are here as we are now able to link wirelessly from almost anywhere. The one thing we do not have yet is computers that will create themselves. A computer will only do what it is programmed to do. Any smart technology which claims to think for itself is really running the program installed and responds with possible scenarios for the situation. So, what is "put in" is all you're going to "get out" of it.

The same concept applies to our lives as Christians. What you put in will come out and that's the bottom line. When will we realize that in order for us to get better we are going to have to do a better job of investing in the things that will help us change? In this passage the wise father gives advice to the son and tells he to listen to what he is saying by turning his ear toward him. He also says turn your eye this way as well and look, analyze, what I am telling you. The writer says the things I am telling you are very important because they are issues of the heart. Guard your heart because from your heart flow the important issues of life. Your heart was known as the central intelligence of your affections, or emotions, passion, commitments. It is an important part of the way we live because whatever our heart is for will be what we live for. The writer says here for us to guard our heart because there are a lot of things out there that will to attract you. Just remember that what you put in your life will come out and your only living the way you do because that is what's in your heart.

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John 1:40-42

Brother Rick

If you were to travel to Uganda, you would notice that family and friends are very important. When we enter a village with the Gospel, it is very common for those who accept the Lord to invite us to share with their family members or friends. Sometimes this means we might have to walk a great distance or maybe even arrange a time to come back when they might be at home. These new believers in Christ understand that the "Good News" of the Gospel must be shared with all who will listen.

Albert McMakin was a new Christian who understood how important it was for his friends and family to know the Lord. When revival services were being held in his town, he would drive around in his old pickup truck giving friends rides to the services.

One of those friends was a young man named Billy Graham who accepted the Lord that week.

We must be intentional when it comes to evangelism. This means having a prayer list for lost family and friends. This also means we should do the work of an evangelist sharing at every opportunity given. The only thing we can take to heaven with us will be family, friends, and those we win to the Lord while here on earth.

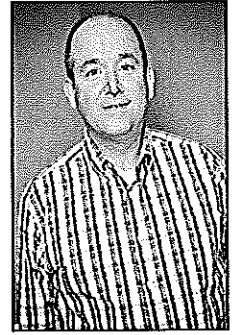
The Gospel isn't something we come to church to hear; it's something we go from church to tell.

Vance Havner

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Brother Tim

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Proverbs 11:3

Scientists now say that a series of slits, not a giant gash, sank the *Titanic*.

The luxurious, 900 foot cruise ship sank in 1912 on its first voyage from England to New York. Fifteen hundred people died in the worst maritime disaster of the time.

The most widely held theory is that the ship hit an iceberg, which opened a huge gash in the side of the liner. But an international team of divers and scientists recently used sound waves to probe through the wreckage, buried in mud two-and-a-half miles deep. Their discovery? The damage was surprisingly small. Instead of the huge gash, they found six relatively narrow slits across the six watertight holds. "Everything that could go wrong did," said William Garzke Jr., a naval architect who helped the team with their analysis.

Small damage, below the waterline and invisible to most, can sink a huge ship. In the same way, small compromises, unseen to others, can ultimately sink a person's character. The problem with the *Titanic* was with the design. The people who designed the ship thought that it could not be sunk. It has been said that someone with the cruise line company said "even God could not sink it".

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Tracy Wills

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Proverbs 27:21

Praise...to admire, commend, honor, applaud, acclaim, glorify, adore, exalt, worship! I love the way this verse compares praise to a fining pot for silver & a furnace for gold. The pot & the furnace are tools that are used to create something beautiful. God desires our praise just as we desire the praise of man. The right kind of praise can turn a person into something as grand as gold & silver! Praise can mend relationships that are in trouble! Praise can change the course of a person's life- especially a child's! Through praise you are afforded to the opportunity to encourage another person to be almost anything that you would like for them to be.

Where do your spouse, children, and friends obtain praise from? A child that is praised on the football field will strive to be a great player. The girl that is praised for banging chop sticks on the piano wants to better her piano skills. The woman that is praised for her cooking will want to cook for family. The man that is praised for providing will not mind the work load as much. It is important to remember that we all want to be praised in some form. We will migrate towards people & things that praise us. Who will your spouse, children, and family members be attracted to? Practice giving the gift of praise with those that you are around. Praise of Godly character produces jewels. If someone else is giving them praise of sinful nature and bad choices what will be produced? Give the GIFT of praise everyday!

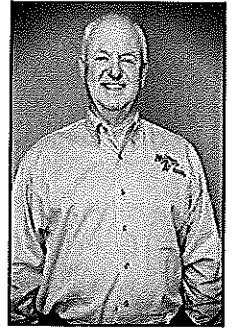
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Brother Garry

Luke 15: 22-24

I love the story of the prodigal son. I connect with the story of the prodigal son. We all do because we have all either been a prodigal at some point or raised a prodigal at some point.

What a beautiful picture of the mercy and grace of God. Grace and mercy are two different things that we enjoy as God's children. Mercy allowed the prodigal to come home and grace gave him a feast after he was home. Remember, grace gives us what we don't deserve and mercy keeps us from getting what we deserve.

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Matthew 24:44

Jackie Connell shared a story at the S.O.M. conference that I absolutely loved! He said he was at a conference and there was a lady sitting in front of him that took notes and listened intently the entire time. When the conference came to a break, he approached her and asked her why she was there? She told him that she was the Senior Adult bible study teacher at her church. He then asked her how old she was and she replied "83"!

He shared with her how he had been watching her the entire conference taking notes and soaking up every bit of information given. She looked at him and said "son, I have a huge responsibility as the teacher of the senior adult class. I am their last stop before they meet Jesus so I have to do all that I can to make sure they are ready!"

You know we all have that responsibility. None of us are promised tomorrow. We all need to be sharing Jesus and teaching His truths to the people that surround us each day. When is the last time you shared God's love with someone?

What about you, are you ready?

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Julie Russell

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Proverbs 11:20

Proverbs 11:20 translated in the Message Bible states, "God can't stand deceivers, but oh how he relishes integrity." God delights in his children displaying integrity in their lives. As a parent, integrity has been discussed in our home on more than one occasion. Often it is used interchangeably with the word *honesty*. Although these words are very closely related they are not defined the same. The word *honesty* means "telling the truth." *Integrity* defined is, "possession of firm principles: the quality of possessing and steadfastly adhering to high moral principles or professional standards." In other words, integrity means, "living out the truth." Can you have one without the other? A person can be an honest person but still not display integrity in their lives. However, a life of integrity cannot be void of honesty.

Integrity encompasses much more than honesty. Integrity is living a life seeking to do what is right in the sight of the Lord. God's word tells us in 1 Chronicles 29:17 that integrity pleases God, "I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity." Because we are all sinners, and we will often fail, we must commit daily to live a life of integrity and allow it to guide us in every decision and action we make.

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Psalm 73:11

Brother Kenny

Knowledge is something you gain over time. Some people gain knowledge from books they've read or people they've talked to. My dad has been a huge source of knowledge in my life. He has taught me things that have helped me throughout my life. How do you think our elders gain so much knowledge? Is it because they have been around longer and have had more experiences? In this scripture it asks, "How can God know? Does the Most High have knowledge? Revelation gives us the answer, God said, "I am the Alpha and the Omega. The beginning and the end." Today if you need some advice, go to your Heavenly Father. He has all the knowledge you will ever need.

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Proverbs 8:27-36

Brother Craig

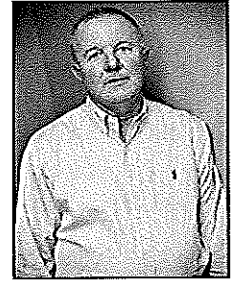
Take a moment and think about creation as much as you can imagine. Think of all the beautiful plants, flowers, animals, mountains, oceans, lakes and rivers. Imagine all the birds in the sky, the deer, the ant, and the lama. The lama was a little random but anyway it was part of creation. Now that you have stretched your imagination out to its limit I want you to consider your place in creation. You are part of the Lord's wonderful creation and you pleased the Lord when He created you. With that great thought on our mind look back at verse 34 and read what He would like for us to do and where He would like for us to be.

In our lives we are constantly being moved around. Every day I must align myself with the Lord because there are things that will pull me away from His presence if I am not careful. Are you sitting at the gate of Jesus? Are you daily standing near your savior? Once again we are engulfed by the incredible love of Christ as we see that He wants you and me to enjoy a relationship with Him.

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Give it All... Now that you're focusing on Christ, try to make every part of your day

Daniel 6:3-4

Daniel had spent the best years of his life in captivity in a foreign land. Despite having to serve pagan kings, Daniel served with distinction knowing he was actually serving his God rather than man. Daniel was careful not to allow himself to be influenced by his surroundings while serving each king with integrity.

I believe to display workplace integrity means we should be people who are always on time for our job, while displaying a good work ethic each day. Many businesses today employ senior citizens because they bring skill, maturity, and dependability to the workforce. Daniel had that type testimony! The Bible says in Daniel 6:4, "They could find no ground of accusation or evidence of corruption, inasmuch he was faithful." Daniel brought honor to the name of his God by not taking for himself what did not belong to him, and by following the workplace rules without compromising his faith. I believe Daniel did not work hard in order to be recognized by man, but rather for man to recognize his God. As we prepare for our day, let's remember for whom we really work.

1 Corinthians 10:31 "Whether, then you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

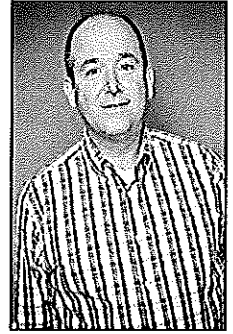
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Brother Tim

Acts 8:40

Philip was preaching in Samaria when the Spirit of God began to do many great works. In the midst God told Philip to leave Samaria to go to a desert road that led from Jerusalem to Gaza. Along the way Philip met an Ethiopian eunuch who wanted to have the scriptures explained to him. Philip did so and the eunuch invited Jesus into his heart to be his Lord and Savior. The eunuch was then baptized.

Philip's name means "lover of horses" so it was likely Philip was in the transportation business before he was called to ministry. In those days vocational ministry was non-existent. Philip most likely still had to provide for himself so he was a workplace minister. Do not allow the duties and responsibilities of your work to disqualify you for whatever ministry God has called you to. At the same time don't be slack in your workplace responsibilities. God has placed you where you are to do ministry. Bloom where you are planted.

After Philip led the eunuch to the Lord, God redeemed the time for Philip by supernaturally transporting him to Azotus where he preached again. When we are faithful, God can make up whatever loss we may have incurred. He can supply us with time, finances and resources that come to us supernaturally when we are obedient in every area of our life. Don't shortchange your employer for when you do, you shortchange your Savior.

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Psalms 142:1-7

This is a prayer from David written as he is alone and hiding in a cave. If you read any of the Psalms, then you will see that there was nothing phony about David's relationship with the Lord. He didn't try to hide his fears, failures, dreams, or disappointments. Why do we think we can hide any of that from Him anyways? He is all knowing! I am quick to share my troubles with myself and anyone that will listen. When we do this it does us no service other than to temporarily get it off of our chests. A REAL relationship with God gives us a place to go to because He already knows it all. There is nothing that we have to hide from him. I would say we've all had at least one circumstance in our lives that we have silently battled with. Maybe it was a thought, act, or situation that we would be devastated if anyone else knew about. **With a relationship with God there is NO fear except the fear that we ourselves create.** Since He already knows...it is our choice to be silent with Him or to let our relationship with Him come to our rescue!

The Bible tells us that David was able to experience God's power, blessing, favor, grace, and forgiveness because of the relationship they had. Even when he fell into sin with Bathsheba he was forgiven. He is called a man after God's own heart. He was far from perfect. BUT he had a true relationship with the Lord. How do you know God? Is He only a name...or like a distant relative that you know but do not have a relationship with? Or do you have a REAL relationship with Him?

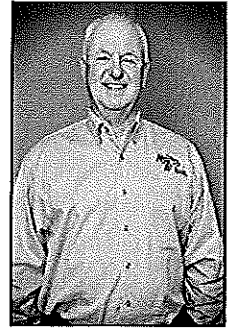
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Brother Garry

II Corinthians 5: 17

What is the fascination on TV with extreme makeovers? Whether it is someone's face or house it seems to be the popular thing today. First, they show the person with bad hair, no make-up, and clothes that are non flattering to say the least, then the new you comes out on stage. People cry and shout, an amazing radical change has definitely taken place.

You do know that Extreme Makeover was not invented by Oprah or Maury. Paul told us about it years ago in a letter to the church at Corinth. When Jesus comes in and takes charge we make a radical, amazing change. By the way, others still notice and cry and I have seen some even shout as old things are passed away and a new creature in Christ takes place.

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Genesis 1:16

In this passage we are learning how God created the sun and the moon but the last part of this verse is what I want to focus on today. "He also made the stars." According to a CNN article that I read, there are 70 sextillion stars in the universe. That is 70 followed by 22 zero's. This is ten times as many stars as grains of sand on all of the earth's beaches and deserts.

If you go on to read verse 17, it tells us that God created the stars to give light on earth and to separate light from darkness. Should we ask Christians not be like the brightest shining stars in this world full of darkness? We should have such a glow about us that when others come in contact with us they are almost blinded by the brightness of Jesus shining through us.

According to scientific facts, on a typical night you can expect to see a falling star every ten to fifteen minutes. Don't be a fallen star. Be a shining star for those around you.

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Philippians 4:13

Julie Russell

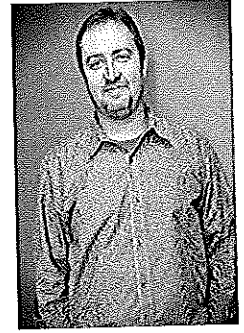
When Kenton was 4 years old, I remember walking into our living room, seeing him standing on the back of couch with his hands against the wall. As I looked at the wall, I saw imprints of his small little hand. I then inquired as to what he was doing and what it was on his hands. He informed me that he was attempting to be Spiderman and climb the walls, with the help from a glue stick. I left the handprints on the wall for several weeks just because I loved the ingenuity of my son. Kenton was sure that he could climb the walls, unfortunately the glue stick was not quite strong enough to make it happen, but that did not keep him from trying.

Why as adults can we not have the same child-like confidence that Kenton so easily displayed on this day. He had no doubt he could conquer the wall that was before him. It was just a matter of doing it. Too many times, we don't allow ourselves to even try things that we feel might be too difficult or take too much effort to complete. We find ourselves stuck at a wall unable to climb over it, or break it down. Christ tells us that we can do all things in His strength (Philippians 4:13). When you are faced with an obstacle too large to overcome in your own strength, allow God to help you and trust that with Him all things are possible.

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Brother Kenny

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John 4:13-14

I sit here amazed at the rain that is falling this morning. God knows exactly when we need it and uses it to wash everything clean. The summer can dry out our lawns and flower beds making everything look brown and brittle. Often times we have to drag out the garden hose to keep our lawns looking healthy and green, but no amount of tap water can replenish the soil quite like a good rain can.

We need water to survive as well, but plain old tap water won't supplies our needs either. We must turn to the Father, The Living Water, who created life. His water is pure and washes us white as snow. When you're thirsty or feel buried under life's pressures, turn to the living water. He'll provide for your every need.

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Proverbs 21:5

Brother Craig

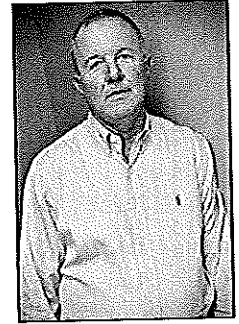
Coach John Wooden has been an example of commitment to players and coaches for many years. He passed away in June of 2010, but his legacy continues to inspire and encourage many today. He was most often referred to as simply, Coach, and when he spoke people really listened. In His book, "Pyramid of Success", Coach talks about his life at the age of 94. He says he has always tried to do his best at everything. For years he would strive to be in better condition than anyone else, but later changed his view to trying to be the best he could possibly be. At 94 he could not stand as long as he used to, he did not read as much as he used to, but he still kept up with a speaking schedule. He would still reply to every letter he received and meet with people on a weekly basis. He was still trying to do his best with what he had. Coach Wooden said this, "The only competition I have is with myself", and the only way he would overcome himself was by hard work. Coach says most people slack off when they think no one is looking, but it is in that time when we have to work the hardest to be our best.

If you want to be successful you will have to work very hard to accomplish your goals. Being a Christian is no different as we want to be the most pleasing to our Lord. I do believe the battle Coach had is the same for us, ourselves. Turn in your bible to Ephesians 6:7 and consider what Paul said about how we should work and who we should work for. It's another day in my life when I must admit, it's not about me and it's all about Him.

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Brother Rick

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Genesis 37:3-4

The life of Jacob's son, Joseph covers 14 chapters in the book of Genesis. Jacob loved Joseph because "he was the son of his old age." (Gen. 37:3) After Joseph shares a dream with his brothers, they mistakenly interpret the dream to mean he intends to lord over them. Joseph's brothers sell him into slavery only to be sold again to an Egyptian officer of Pharaoh. Now serving in Potiphar's house, Joseph quickly finds favor with his master only to be imprisoned again after being falsely accused by Potiphar's wife. While in prison, Joseph is called upon to interpret Pharaoh's dream, and in turn Joseph is promoted to second in command only to Pharaoh. Joseph was now in the position that the Lord had intended from the very beginning. Joseph would be used to save his family during the famine that was to come.

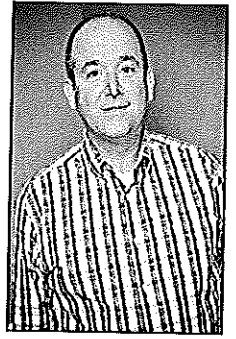
We know this life is filled with adversity. At times we may not see the hand of the Lord working in the mist of our present circumstances, yet we can rest assured knowing that He has a plan for our lives. Sometimes this plan may include trials and tribulations that are intended to train or equip us for some task God might have for us in the future. We must remember that God often turns "Adversity" into a "University" teaching us to trust Him for this day, while preparing us for tomorrow.

Prayer for today: Lord teach me today, that I might serve You better tomorrow.

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James 3:13-18

Alfred Nobel had his obituary mistakenly printed in the newspaper. The obituary was supposed to be for his brother. His claim to fame was that he was credited for inventing dynamite. As he read the obituary it dawned on him that he would be remembered for being the man that brought death to many people.

Many intelligent people have used knowledge to accomplish many great feats but it is wisdom that applies knowledge for God's purposes. True wisdom is found in meekness and humility. It does not covet, slander or seek recognition. Godly wisdom is considerate of others, selfless and puts others first.

Nobel then took much of his money, some accounts say 9 million dollars, and established the Nobel peace prize that is awarded to people each year for their contribution to making the world a better place. Nobel, even though by most accounts was not a saint of God, was wise enough to know that he did not want his legacy to be one of death and destruction.

What will you do today to demonstrate Godly wisdom? Apply God's wisdom to the events in your life today and watch Him be lifted up.

Personal Notes:

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12 STEPS TOGETHER



Tracy Wills

A Fresh Start... Today is another new day, a day that you want to begin in the right way. Go ahead and start you day off right now by thanking God for your new life, and turning your attention toward Jesus Christ.

Give it All... Now that you're focusing on Christ, try to make every part of your day today, a moment that will glorify Him.

Genesis 22:1-19

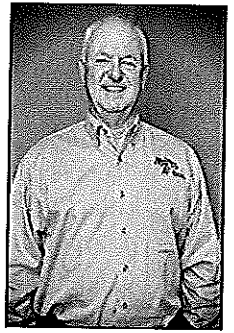
This chapter has always been so disturbing to me. It makes me queasy when I read it. I've struggled when teaching it to the kids at church. I just can't comprehend all the emotions & the obedience that surrounds Abram in this chapter. After reading "Whispers of Hope" by Beth Moore, I began to understand the reason behind the request of God. He is the reconciler of the totally irreconcilable! In her poetic view she writes, "Do you trust me, Abraham with your gravest fear? Will you pry your fingers loose and bring your Isaac here?...Perhaps I'll send him down the mount to walk right by your side. No longer in your iron grasp but safer still in mine" WOW! How do you answer when asked to hand over the people that are most important to you? I am afraid I would fail miserably in this case.

We know the end of the story & it turned out beautifully! God did not mislead Abram by making him think he was going to do something that He was not. Abram DID in fact sacrifice his only legitimate heir that day on the altar. He offered a LIVING sacrifice. Living sacrifices are not easy. Moore states that, "Sometimes releasing our grip on the person that remains with us can be a more painful test than releasing our grip on the person taken from our reach". We too are presented with ongoing tests to offer our precious loved ones to the One who loves them most. We are often asked to surrender our hold, ownership, and even our worship of them. Abram was faced with releasing his grasp on Isaac and was told that he would have offspring that would number the stars all at once. Who or what is your Isaac? Do you trust God with your Isaac today?

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12 STEPS TOGETHER



Brother Garry

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Genesis 16: 1-2

The birth of Ishmael was a lack of faith by Abraham and Sara: Instead of trusting and waiting on God they came up with their own plans with a hand maid named Hagar. To this day there are consequences for that mistake. Because not only was their strife in Abraham's day between Abraham's son Isaac, who was later born, but that strife is seen on the news everyday in our time between the Arabs - (Ishmael) and Jews - (Isaac).

Someone has well said the problem with birthing Ishmaels is you have to raise them after they're born. Be careful this day with trusting and waiting on God. Try not to birth any Ishmaels that might have consequences for years to come.

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12 STEPS TOGETHER



Amanda Cobb

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Philippians 1:6

If you are reading this devotion today then God is not finished with you here on this earth. You are still here for a reason.

I am so thankful that we have a God who never gives up on us, no matter what.

Throughout life, we all make mistakes but no matter what mistakes are in our past, God is still walking along beside us. He wants to use you for His glory if you will surrender to Him. We don't have to go through life hoping that God still loves us and can use us.

God tells us in this passage that we are to be confident in this. There are people in this world who might give up on you, but how comforting to know that God will never give up on you.

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12 STEPS TOGETHER



Julie Russell

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Psalm 143:8

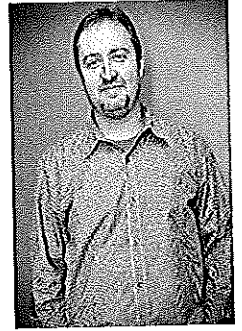
Sometimes we find that our lives do not always go as we plan. Life happens with some bumps along the way. Events happen that create a delay or sometimes even a detour to our nicely planned life. A death of a loved one, a rebellious teenager, disease or injury, a loss of a job, a divorce and many other unplanned and often undesired events can change the whole course of our life.

In Samuel, we read of young David's victorious military career. What could be better than being victorious in your first military battle, coming home and being celebrated by all the people, and being promoted by the king to a rank of high prestige? Life couldn't be better for young David. That is until King Saul's jealousy sends him into a rage, giving him the desire to kill David. I am sure this is not what David planned! Psalm 143 was written in the midst of David's hopelessness and depression. Despite all that was going on in his life, he didn't throw up his hands and give up. He cried out to God about everything in his past, his present and his future. David's desire was to continue to trust God and to do the will of the Lord. Trust in God today and follow his ways even when the road of life sends you on a detour and the new course seems too difficult to travel. God's unfailing love will be with you all the way. *Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I put my trust in you.* Psalm 143:8

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12 STEPS TOGETHER



Brother Kenny

A Fresh Start... Today is another new day, a day that you want to begin in the right way. Go ahead and start you day off right now by thanking God for your new life, and turning your attention toward Jesus Christ.

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1Timothy 3:4

The NIV translation says, "He must manage his own family well." The word manage means to take care of. My goal as a father is to manage my children in a way that makes them feel loved and protected so that they become responsible, God fearing adults. As I get older, I realize that time is fleeting quickly and that my children are getting older too. I only have a few more years to "manage" them well! We don't have time to take our families for granted! Be sure your children know how much they are loved because tomorrow they will be managing families of their own!

Have a blessed day.

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Brother Craig

Romans 5:12-21

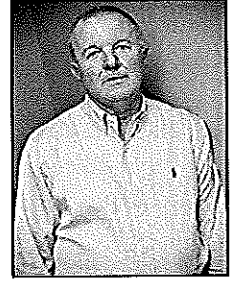
In 2010 a movie came out called "Unstoppable". It was a good film and received several nominations for awards. What many people do not know was that it was based on a true story known as the Crazy Eights. The runaway train was thought to have been in coast mode and the driver got out the train to align a switch on the track. Well he was unable to get back on and the train ran unmanned for over two hours at speeds up to 51 mph, busting through derailment tactics one after another. The major problem was its cargo as it was carrying thousands of gallons of molten phenol, a highly toxic and flammable liquid. Finally they were able to get another train on the track in front of the runaway train and slow it down so a man could board it and stop it.

Wow! It was a true story; it was very real and very serious because if it had crashed it would have possibly taken thousands of lives. You know for you and I today there is an Unstoppable problem we all must face at some point. From the day you were born you began to die. At the very onset of your life you have begun to head for the end of it. Death is the result of sin and it was passed on to every person. But thanks to God grace reigns and we can have eternal life in Jesus Christ. Stop the runaway train of sin and death by trusting in Jesus Christ who forgives sin and offers abundant life.

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12 STEPS TOGETHER



Brother Rick

A Fresh Start... Today is another new day, a day that you want to begin in the right way. Go ahead and start your day off right now by thanking God for your new life, and turning your attention toward Jesus Christ.

Give it All... Now that you're focusing on Christ, try to make every part of your day

1 Corinthians 1:18

I heard a story about a little boy that was found wandering alone in a large city. He had gotten lost and could not find his way home. The boy was taken to a local police station, but because of his age he did not know his address. After unsuccessful attempts by the police to find where the boy lived he now offered an important clue. The lad said that he lived by a church that had a large cross on its steeple, and that if the police could get him close to that cross he could find his way home from there.

Today many people wear a cross for "decoration," but for those who know Christ, it is a "declaration" of the work that Jesus has done in our lives. Some people scoff at the notion of the cross, while others are looking for direction. Let's be careful today to look for those who are lost, and help them by pointing them to the cross.

"I must needs go home by the way of the cross,
There's no other way but this;
I shall ne'er get sight of the gates of light,
If the way of the cross I miss.
The way of the cross leads home, the way of the cross leads home;
It is sweet to know as I onward go, the way of the cross leads home."
Jessie Pounds
Public Domain

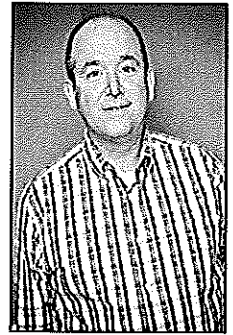
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Brother Tim

Matthew 17:20

A fifth grade class was given an assignment to go home and count the stars in the sky as part of their Sunday school lesson. They all came back the next week with varied numbers. Some said they counted one hundred, some said one thousand and one said one million. One little boy was very quiet so the teacher asked him "how many did you count"? He answered "I counted three".

The teacher asked "how is it that you only counted three"? He replied "I guess we just have a small backyard".

The little boy equated the entire universe to his little backyard. Sometimes our faith is small like the little boy's backyard. The mustard seed parable shows us that if we have just a little faith God will reward it but we are not to remain that way. The mustard seed is known for growth and when it is grown becomes a tree the birds can light on.

Faith is a muscle that grows with exercise. Are you working yours? If not, just like our muscles, your faith will shrink and become very weak. Let me encourage you to begin a regimen of spiritual fitness today.

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Tracy Wills

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Genesis 22:1-19

When we looking at Genesis 22 and Mount Moriah... Can you see yourself in this chapter? I once focused on the incomprehensible task that was at hand for Abram. The details of it all consumed me that I missed the total picture. God used this test of Abram and Isaac to teach others about Himself. When reading this passage, there have been times that I would dwell on what I would have done in those circumstances. Now when I revisit Genesis 22, I look at it as a reminder that my life is like the dramatic events that took place that day. Think about it...Abram had been given the ultimate test! He had made the journey while listening to the questions from his son. He talked to himself and the Lord along the way. Isaac was now on the altar about to be sacrificed...a substitutionary offering was caught by its horns in the thicket and was there to take his place. What a beautiful picture of the gospel! The cross of Calvary and Mount Moriah are a great comparison of what Jesus did for us!

"We all have been tied to the altar of death and then presented a chance to be loosed for eternal life by the perfect Lamb, One whose head was torn by thorns and was willing to take our place." (Beth Moore, "Whispers of Hope) I am so thankful for the day that THE spotless lamb was sent to take my place. There are so many that are still living on Mount Moriah. The majority do not even realize that they are on an altar and time is running out. There is a substitutionary offering in the thicket waiting to take their place. It is our job to be the Abram and lead them to the One that will set them free and take their place. I am thankful for the day that I was saved ...for my sacrificial Lamb... and the Grace that took me from the altar I was on.

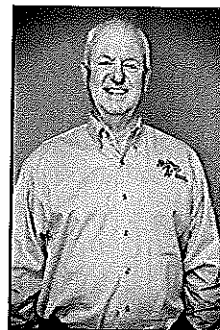
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Brother Garry

Revelation 12: 11

Today's bible reading has a little different approach, if you will allow me a little liberty. I assure you the preacher part of me wants to take this verse and illustrate it with three P's, (the power, the personal, the proof) and exegete the text. However, the pastor part of me wants to offer a different challenge today.

You see, Revelation 12:11 is my life's verse! I selected it years ago, memorized it years ago, and claimed it years ago, as the most special verse in all of God's word for my life and ministry. So here is today's challenge. Do you have a life verse? If not, start your search today. Find a verse that speaks clearly to you and commit to memorize that verse. If you have your life's verse already, great; I ask you to help me challenge others in our church family to find them one as well.

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Psalm 56:3

Amanda Cobb

What are you afraid of? I am a big "scaredy cat". I can remember when my husband worked night shifts, locking all of the doors, setting the security system and crawling into my bed only to hear every sound inside and out. As a little girl, I remember vividly being afraid one night and my daddy asking me if I had prayed about my feelings. My answer was "yes sir, but I am still afraid." He then explained to me that if I had given something to God but I was still worrying about it, then I was not trusting Him.

Over the years, I have grown to love Psalm 56:3. I have repeated it over and over when going through difficult circumstances. Maybe you are afraid of what the doctor is going to tell you as you wait for test results. Maybe you are afraid because you have just been told you are going to lose your job. **WHATEVER** your fear is, trust in the Almighty, Powerful God to see you through.

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Julie Russell

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Psalm 145:18

Our precious son, Payton, never fails to call me if I am not home before it is his bedtime. His first question is always, "Where are you?" Following that question, there is the routine conversation of "When are you going to be home?" Once he knows I am near home, or that I will be home at a certain hour, he goes to bed without delay. He just wants that security of knowing that I will be home. If his father is gone, the same routine takes place with him as well.

Just as Payton desires to have the security that his parents are near, so we as Christians desire that same security of knowing that our Heavenly Father is near. God's word tells us that "The Lord is near to all who call on him in truth" (Psalm 145:18). So when there are times when we are lonely, discouraged, and insecure take refuge in knowing that our God can give you the peace and protection you need. You can sleep in peace. "I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; for You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." Psalm 4:8

Call Him in the morning', in the afternoon time
Late in the evening' He'll be there
When your heart is broken,
And you feel discouraged,
You can just remember that He said
He'll be there.

When I Call On Jesus, Nicole C. Mullins

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