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Faith, Family, & Friends in Northern California and Southern Oregon



IN A RELATIONSHIP BOOK my wife and I read earlier this year there was an entire chapter dedicated to the subject of self-talk. Whether we want to admit it or not, we are easily influenced. This is a consequence of being human. The way others act toward us and the words they say to and about us can have great impact on us – positive and negative. And there is no one who says more about us than us. We are the biggest influencers on ourselves.

Most of our talking about ourselves comes in the form of our thoughts. We think about ourselves all day and at any given time are currently holding a view or opinion about ourselves. Though we may never vocalize the majority of it, how often do we have internal thoughts along the line of, that was stupid, why did I say that? That didn't work, you are such a moron, or they probably didn't speak to me because they don't like me?

We would not put up with others saying such things yet we allow ourselves to take cheap shots at ourselves and call ourselves names all throughout the day. If a couple times

Joyful Living Magazine

We are excited to bring to you the 3rd edition of the Joyful Living Magazine.

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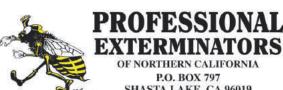
a day we are telling ourselves you're not smart enough, you're not good enough, or you could never do that, it should be no mystery as to why we doubt ourselves and are in a place to easily accept the negative things others say about us. We are beating ourselves up in our mind. And whether you want to accept this or not, that internal dialogue takes a toll on your soul.

Part of being emotionally and relationally healthy is monitoring our own self-talk. If you are married it's also important to be careful of the things you allow yourself to think about your spouse. You may never say it to them, but continual thoughts such as he will probably forget, she is so clumsy, and they just don't care about me can create distance and barriers in your marriage. You've heard it said that if you hear something enough you begin to believe it. Well that is partially true. You at least begin to accept it, expect it, or even look for it. So even if what you are hearing is coming from your own thoughts, you will put yourself in a negative disposition toward yourself or someone you love by constantly dwelling on your (or their) bad habits, negative traits, or character flaws.

This is the power of negative thinking. Ultimately it is your view of yourself that determines how valuable you think you are. If you are married, your spouse's opinion of you is the second most important. Don't allow this unspoken talk to put you at a disadvantage in your relationship before you even begin to speak.

Aaron M. Marcelli is the author of the book Repentance and Recovery and lives in Dalton, Georgia with his wife Katy. His website is www.AaronMarcelli.org

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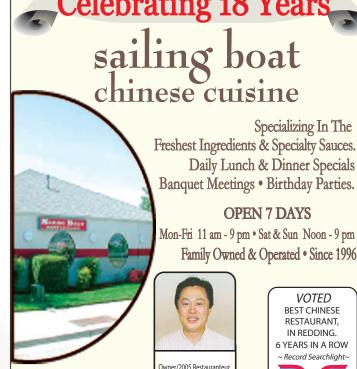


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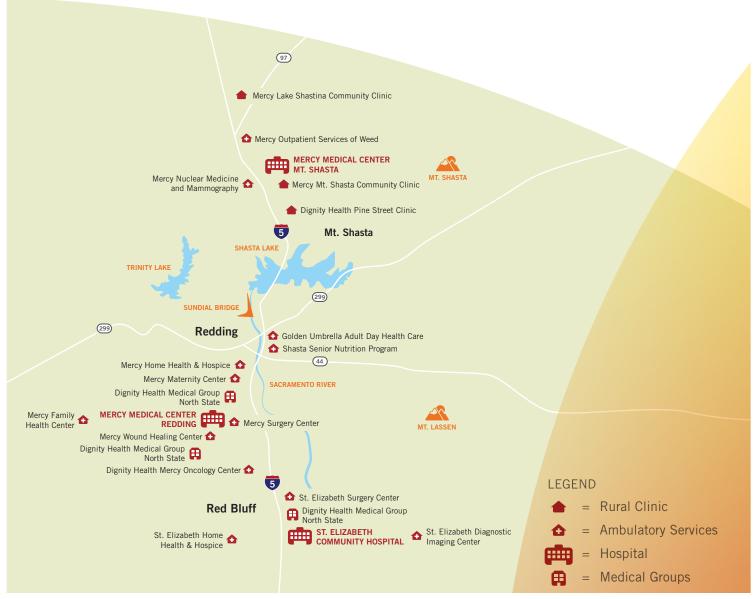
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~Pamela DeOliviera

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There's A Tool for That





"THERE'S A TOOL FOR THAT."

I can't tell you how many times I heard my Dad say that. And in the oddity of life, no matter what task we had to do there was a tool for it; not just some tool but a specific tool. Someone, somewhere, at some time had faced whatever challenge we were facing and had designed a tool to get it done with a fair amount of ease and a significantly reduced amount of frustration and stress.

For a kid, I didn't really want to take the time to look for a specific tool. It seemed much more expedient to simply grab something a whole lot more common, like a wrench or a hammer or a screwdriver or a saw and force it to work. I also found out that there's nothing like power tools because they can rip and tear and screw and unscrew faster than you can imagine. You use that kind of power and you don't

really need that specific tool because that stuff will blow through the job one way or another. And we all know where that's likely to end up. The fact that "there's a tool for that" can be wonderful if you find it and use it, or it can be completely frustrating if you ignore it and blow through a job to the destruction of the job.

THE TOOLS IN THE TOOLBOX:

The Tool of Recognizing There's a

First, we need to recognize that whatever we come up against, "there's a tool for that." Sometimes we don't think there is any tool to deal with whatever's facing us. We think that it's really all about pulling together our assorted array of mismatched tools and figuring out how to apply them to something that none of them are really designed for. But, there is a tool for that.

The Tool of Creativity

At times, circumstances will leave us with monumental challenges and only a handful of the most primitive tools to deal with them. We all have events transpire that are immeasurably bigger than the pile of sordid and banged up tools we've got laving around. In these instances we take the tool of creativity and we use it to take the limitations of the tools that we have at our disposal, and we creatively expand those tools beyond their limitations.

The Tool of Determination

Harriett Beecher Stowe wrote, "When you get into a tight place and everything goes against you, till it seems as though you could not hold on a minute longer, never give up then, for that is just the place and time that the tide will turn." The tool of determination recognizes that persistence is the not exercise of futility, but an understanding that additional pressure rightly exerted can move what seems to be immovable.

The Tool of Faith

Patrick Overton wrote that when pushed to the brink, "faith is knowing one of two things will happen: there will be something solid to stand on or you will be taught to fly." Faith states that we can rest in the fact that our challenges are not bound by whatever limits them or whatever limits us. The tool of faith recognizes that the tools that we have can do far more than we ever realized

The Tool of Wisdom

Wisdom is often defined as the application of knowledge. Many people have knowledge, but they're not knowledgeable in the application of it. We can be book-smart and street-smart and just plain smart, yet we can be stupid in the application of our smartness. Wisdom is the manner in which we astutely discern the challenges before us and then wisely draw from our knowledge base to solve them.

So Many Tools

There are so many tools at our disposal. Somewhere inside of us "there's a tool for that" or there's a tool to create a tool. We come marvelously equipped with the ability to be equipped in a way that there will always "be a tool for that." And so, you may want to take a tool inventory and see what's inside of you. You'll likely be guite surprised. As Dad always said, "there's a tool for that."

Craig D. Lounsbrough, M.Div. Licensed Professional Counselor Certified Professional Life Coach www.craiglpc.com





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WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF LAZINESS?

Fred Schafer, MS, CFT Fully Alive Performance Systems

MOST OF US KNOW A FEW LAZY PEOPLE.

People who would rather spend the day planted on their couch than anywhere else.

People who choose take-out over home cooked, every night of the week.

People who would rather have a root canal than go do a workout.

Sure, I know that we all have our occasional lazy day on the couch, but lately it seems that more and more people are turning laziness into a career.

What about you? Check if the following de-

- You are habitually inactive.
- You'd rather be a passive observer than an

active participant

- You're a master excuse-maker.
- You find shortcuts in order to avoid the long

If that's you, don't get down on yourself. There are many legitimate causes of laziness. Here are just a few...

- 1. **Sleep Deprivation**: When you're short on sleep it's easy to become unmotivated, which quickly turns into laziness. Get a minimum of eight hours of sleep each night in order to maintain enough energy to get you through the day. Some experts even say that ten hours of sleep each night is what you need to function at your best.
- 2. Caffeine Abuse: Starting your day with a jolt of java may help with your initial alertness, but the dip in energy that takes place a few hours later could be the reason that you become lazy later in the day. Avoid the rush and crash of caffeine and instead rely on your

steady supply of natural energy.

- 3. Bad Habit: At some point being lazy simply becomes a habit. If every night after work you head straight to the couch, it soon becomes automatic and not a conscious decision. Breaking the habit of laziness is actually quite easy. Simply take yourself off of autopilot and make the conscious decision to do something productive instead - like heading to the gym rather than the couch.
- 4. **Inactivity**: If your job keeps you in a chair for hours at a time, and you don't exercise when off the clock, then your body is just accustomed to inactivity. It's time to wake up your under-used muscles and to reacquaint yourself with the joy of motion. A simple way to get back into the swing of things is to start swinging a kettlebell for 10-15 minutes after work three alternating days per week and go for a 10-15 minute walk on the other three days. Take Sundays off to rest if you like, although once you feel how good it feels to feel good, you'll probably prefer to keep moving!

Laziness begins when you ignore that little nagging voice in your head. You know, the one that reminds you when you should take action on something rather than sit by and let the opportunity slip away.

Is today the day that you will kick laziness to the curb?

Is today the day that you will take action toward achieving your goals?

Is today the day that you will listen to that little voice of reason?

If you would like a workout tool that will make your laziness shudder and run for the hills, take up kettlebells that I mentioned above. You

can find them online or at any more progressive sporting goods store!

They are truly the ticket to getting a rock'em sock'em body. If used correctly and consistently, your posture will improve and you will feel your butt, lower back, abs, upper back, shoulders and arms tightening up, becoming more flexible and powerful. Your confidence in everyday living will get a positive jolt!

As someone who has been working out consistently for nearly 37 years, I can attest to their effectiveness. I truly believe that if more people would train with this incredible tool, they would insure themselves a more successful. power and energy filled future and insure that they are on the true path to high performance living.





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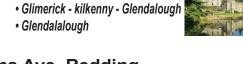
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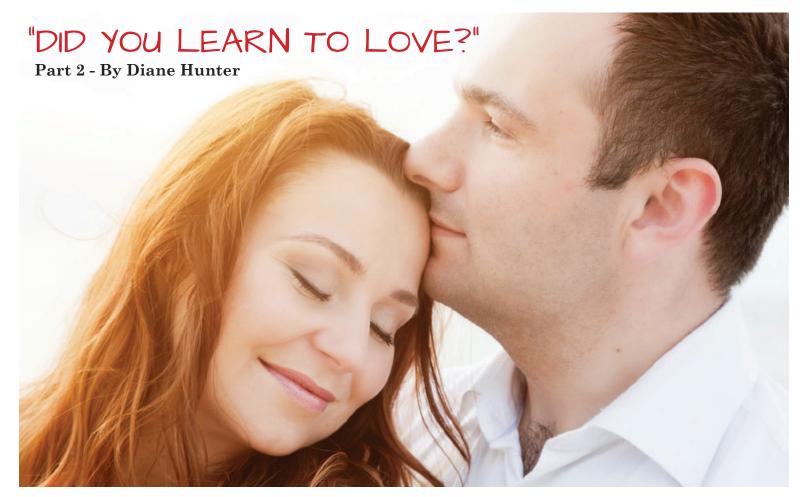
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AS I CONTINUE the 'Did you learn to love?' series, I will begin writing about sexual purity. This topic is one that needs to continue to be addressed because so many people get ensnared by the enemy, feel shame, and then try to hide it all—which creates more pain and damage—keeping them from truly being able to love.

I want to begin by sharing a bit of background so that when I discuss how sexual purity affects how we love, you know that I am sharing from both ends of the spectrum—from purity to promiscuity—and back. My husband Roger and I have had our own roller-coaster journey with sexual purity.

I met God at a very young age and knew that I wanted honor Him by staying pure. I also knew that I wanted to get married, so I began to pray for my future husband's purity, along with mine. I went to school, got a job, and lived my life... but didn't meet the one who would become my husband for a very long time...

When I met Roger at church. He caught my eye and I felt amazingly comfortable around him. He was so easy to talk to and I loved his embracing smile and countenance. He had so many qualities that I valued in a husband. We had a fun, sweet time together and I thought he might be the one. That's why it hit me like a ton of bricks when he told me he that had previously lived with his ex-fiancé... I was heartbroken. I really liked Roger but I had been praying for over 25 years for the man I was going to marry, and his purity—as I maintained mine. I was 37 years and a virgin when we married. Both of our processes brought us humbled before the LORD.

He wrestled with disappointment as he wished he could go back and

make different choices. Of course he could not change his past, but he had received Christ's redemption years before I met him and was completely forgiven. I understood that spiritually; it was settled. I knew God had forgiven him—as He always does when people repent. I knew that Isaiah 1:18 said that he was "whiter than snow." But I too, wrestled with disappointment. I had to work through my questions with the LORD and learn how to love and forgive from my heart/emotions. Our restoration, in this area, is proof that God absolutely forgives, redeems, and heals *everything* that we submit to Him. (You can find the details of how we processed though our journey in our upcoming book, *Purity by design*).

So, how do love and sexual purity connect? God's love, true love—described in 1 Corinthians 13—is really the only thing that will override a person's desire to have sex. It is vital to understand that it is only through God's powerful love that it is possible to successfully commit to purity. Roger explains this brilliantly in our book as he gives very practical examples about how he moved from sexual bondage to a lifestyle of purity. And, purity, as we will see, teaches us how to love.

Purity teaches us **HOW TO LOVE GOD**. Every time we deny gratifying our own sexual desires (outside of marriage), we build depth and grow in our love with God. We pull on His strength and fullness to maintain our purity. Our desire is supposed to bring us to Him—who is our fulfillment.

Purity also teaches us **HOW TO LOVE OTHERS**—instead of seeking our own satisfaction in a selfish way. When we refrain from being sexual until we are married, we develop patience, and prefer-

ence for others. Love is always about what is best for other people's well-being. When you engage in sex outside of marriage you choose to surrender your purity as well as participating in another person losing theirs. This simply is not love. Love protects. Love honors. Love waits. Love gives—and it never partakes at another's expense. Loving like this before you marry is the thing that prepares you to be a good spouse in the future.

Purity teaches us **HOW TO LOVE OURSELVES**. It is the one area we all have in common that God sets a boundary around. Honoring this standard builds character, a sense of value, and self-respect in us.

No matter where you've come from there is overwhelming grace to both stay pure, and become pure if you are struggling. (If you have any questions or comments, feel free to contact us at my blog site at deyscribe.wordpress.com. Another great resource is moral-revolution.com). We bless your journey!

¹Please go back and read God's definition of love; 1 Corinthians 4-13.





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What Am I Doing? By Christa DeMercurio

The routine things we do day-in and day-out may seem so small and trivial, but it's the little things that add up to what we truly value and care about. Our mindset and physical stamina can be deeply affected by the steps we take throughout the day, ultimately bringing either stress or peace. So, right now I want to do a simple little exercise with you, evaluating some of your everyday actions, thinking about how they impact your day and beyond.

First, go grab a nice big clean sheet of paper and a pencil. Right now, don't wait.

Got it? OK, let's go.

- 1. Please, write down three headings of HEALTH, MONEY and RELATIONSHIPS across the top.
- 2. Then, for each heading, think of 3-4 things you do consistent ly that have an effect on your health, money and relation ships. They could be good things. They could be bad things.
- 3. Now identify what would be a better choice that you could do

instead to positively impact that area of your life.

Below is my example to help get you started. The point is to get you thinking about the little choices we make throughout each day that can either build us up or chip away at our health, finances and the amount of quality time spent with those we care about.

So I challenge you, pick a few things to tackle, write them down



for accountability and, at the end of the day, do a quick check. Be honest with yourself, today did my choices go toward improving my health or did I lose ground? Did I save for my financial future or spend against it? Did I invest in my relationships or did I take time away from them?

Last step in the whole process is to share this with somebody. Someone who can support you, encourage you and ask you with love, "What have you been doing in your daily life?"







"Whether you think you can or whether you think you can't, you're right!" - Henry Ford

"How we think shows through in how we act. Attitudes are mirrors of the mind. They reflect thinking." - David J. Schwartz

"Minds are like parachutes, they only function when they are open." - Thomas Robert Dewar

"Our attitude toward life determines life's attitude toward us." - Earl Nightingale

"Adopting the right attitude can convert a negative stress into a positive one." - Hans Selye

"Your attitude determines your altitude." - Unknown

"You create your own universe as you go along." - Winston Churchill

"Start off everyday with a simple smile and get it over with." - W. C. Fields

"If you can't change your fate, change your attitude." - Amy Tan

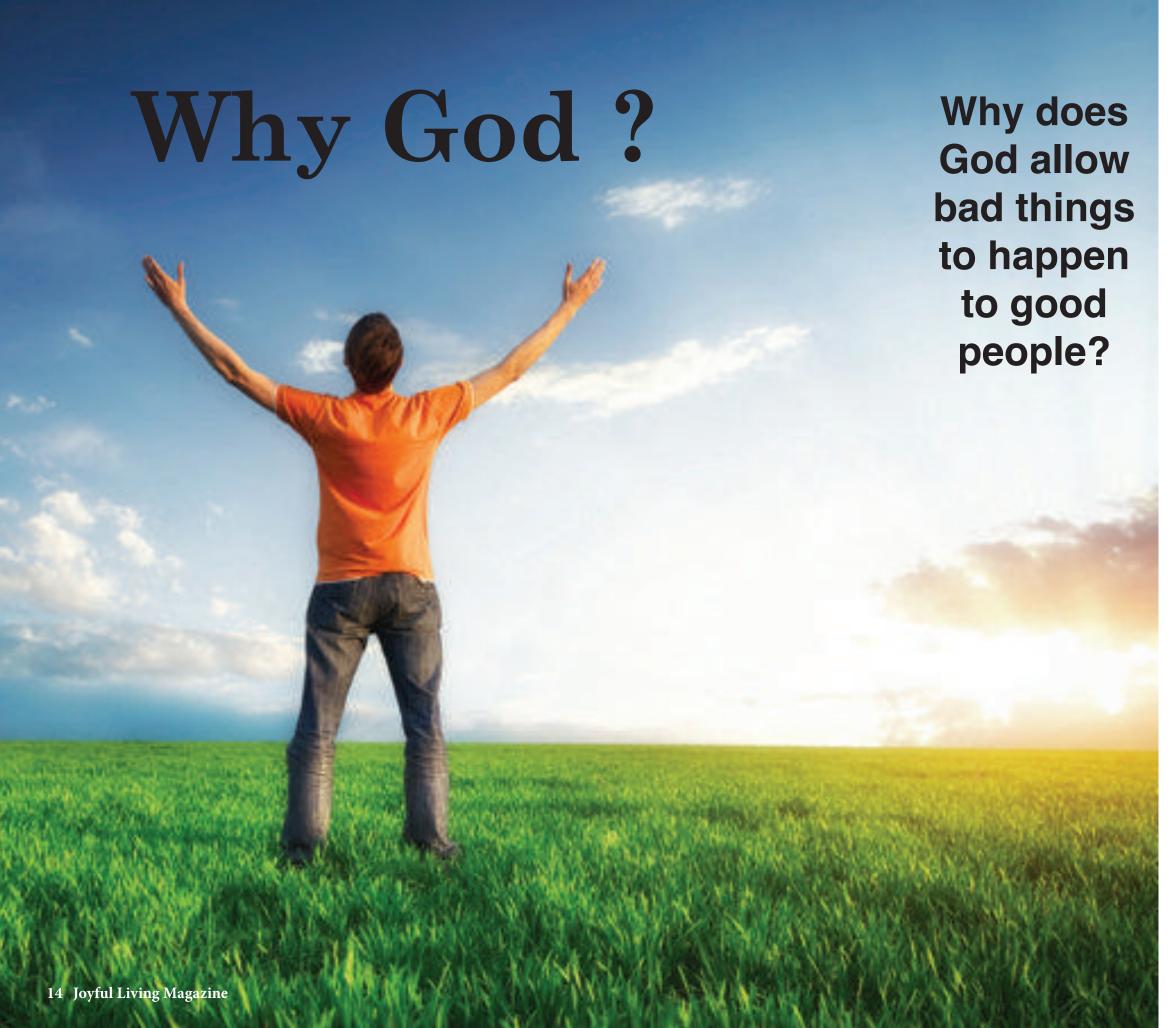
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By Gene Burroughs, Servant of God Navarre, FL

THIS QUESTION IS ONE I HAVE **HEARD MORE TIMES THAN I**

CARE TO REMEMBER, and yet it is also one that I, myself, have sought the Lord to answer on every occasion. This past week, I have spent much time pondering this question. Not for any particular reason, but rather that, when asked, I can help others to come to a greater understanding of the truth–this truth that I have lived a life attempting to understand and have now become able to comprehend.

The most memorable time of asking this question of God was with the sickness and passing of my first wife of thirty-one years. She was a good person, and we served the Lord together. She was a good mother who gave herself for many, and truly the Lord was blessed by her time on earth. Yet He allowed her to succumb to cancer. The widespread disappointment that followed was accompanied by this same question in various forms: "Why God?" In the depth of my despair, in the darkness of night, I sought the Lord for answers. I challenged Him. became angry with Him, and, yes, I even yelled at Him! May I just say that it is OK to be real with God; He can handle your yelling and frustration.

As I walked through the valley of the shadow of death, it truly was easy to not fear evil, for, you see, the first thing we must all conclude is that our God is sovereign. To be sovereign means to possess supreme or ultimate power, and that is our God; there is none greater than He. If He is sovereign, then He allows all things that happen to happen for His purposes and to our benefit. Therefore, fearing the trial I am going through, or fearing evil, means I need to work on my belief of God's sovereignty in my

He is also a loving God who desires that we

love and obev Him unconditionally. He created the perfect life for all mankind in the beginning. The Garden of Eden was not a place filled with disease, dangers, or even death. It was man, by his own choosing, who stepped out of God's will and brought the

curse upon mankind. You see, God's heart was never to destroy man, but rather to bless him. And since God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, He did not stop loving mankind because of the fall. No, but what He did do was provide a way through sacrifice, through Jesus, for man to be reconciled to Him. Somehow this does not sound like a mean God who is looking to kill babies and cause suffering on His people.

We must remember that satan, by his deception of man, is the ruler of this world. He is a liar, a murderer, and a deceiver who seeks to destroy all of mankind, if possible. There is no good in him. He creates drug addicts, diseases, sickness, pain, suffering, greed, poverty, and more; he is pure unadulterated evil! Yet knowing this, so many have not just fallen for his traps but have jumped in with desire and passion. It is far too often that they are the ones who spend their life participating in satisfying the desires of the flesh and also the first to blame God when things go wrong. No surprise here-isn't that what the devil would have us do?

So, what do we do when we are faced with trials, disappointments, fears, doubts, disease, death, and more? As simple as it may sound, my friend, trust me when I say, "We lean on Jesus; we kneel at the feet of the Lord; we wait upon the Holy **Spirit."** There are no problems in this world bigger than God, and there is no one who will ever love you more than He. He will never leave nor forsake you, and nothing can ever separate us from His love. (Romans 8:38-39)

Before, during, and after Dawn's death, I have become even more convinced that the Lord cares about every detail of His children's lives. Those who leave this world with Christ are in heaven-no more suffering-they are better off than we. So, let us learn to be happy for those who have gone before us and live a life that is worthwhile and honoring to their memory by trusting God in all things!

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AWHILE BACK, I GOT SOME

NEWS from someone close to me about their health. It was potentially bad news. After I got the news, I noticed I really did not feel anything inside about it, and I should have. As I sought the Lord about my heart response to this news, He showed me a place inside my heart I had hardened. I was surprised at this discovery. How could it be there? I have spent hours forgiving this person.

The Lord showed me there was a place within my heart that was holding out the last place of forgiving until this person took responsibility for all the hurts they had caused me while I was growing up. I was not totally aware of this place, but as He showed me, I realized it was there. I was holding on to this last bit of forgiving until they took responsibility.

As I looked at it with the Lord, He said to me, "What if you never get what you are wanting? What if you never hear them take responsibility for what they have done? Will you forgive them for Me?" I thought about what He was saying. He explained that forgiving for Him was honoring them and Him. This was shaking up all of my thoughts, feelings, and emotions. I finally was able to tell the Lord yes. I

would forgive them for Him, not for them, but for Him. So, I forgave them in that moment and let that little place, where I had stood my ground in my heart, go. I want my relationship with Him over being right or having the last word. I felt it release.

Then, He began to show me person after person I had done this very thing with. I was shocked. He showed me people that had broken my trust and I had set up a place in my heart where I was no longer going to trust them. He explained He is not asking me to trust them, but to trust Him with them and the outcome of what happened. I need to trust Him with the responsibility of what happened. I forgave them for Him. As He brought each person by name to me, I looked at what I had done with their hurt, and choose to forgive them for Him. Some of these were deep and I had been holding onto them for many years. I forgave them all for Him, one by one. I felt the control and protecting let go and I trusted Him.

I realized I was holding onto this last place and I did not trust Him. It was a bit of pride and entitlement mixed together and holding on very tight. We may not be completely aware of this choice we make, but we do it.

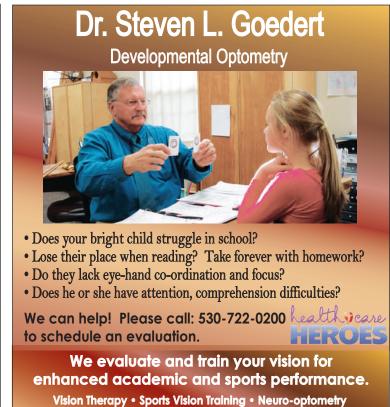
This is not an easy thing to face. I would encourage you to take some time and sit with the Lord and ask Him if there are people in your life you, too, are holding on to unforgiveness until they take responsibility. Then wait for Him to show you. Be brave. Be real with Him. I have had many discussions with the Lord about why I think I have a right to hold onto this or that. He always comes to the same conclusion. Forgiveness is about me and my relationship with Him and not the other person at all. The enemy loves for us to think it is about them. The enemy loves for us to hold onto this hurt or wrong that has been done against us. He knows when we hold onto it, relationships remain broken and our heart gets a little more hardened toward the ways of God each time. The enemy makes it about the other person and the Lord makes it about us and our heart. Do we want to hold onto our right not to forgive at the price of holding back a place from God? I did not. He asks you, "Will you forgive them for Me?"

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T n the previous two articles ■ I addressed how amazing I believe our adolescents to be and what some of the warning signs they might be in trouble. In part three of the series, I'd like to explore reaching out to a teenager who has no healthy role model. What is realistic in our ability to help change their life? We can all look back on one person who believed in us and made a difference in our life. We are a community struggling with high crime rates. It is time to invest in the One!

Your family is important. Make sure you do not neglect your own children to help someone else. It can be important and an awesome experience for whole the family. Teach value and identity as a family and explore ways to share it with others. Many times it is another teenager who can effectively reach them and offer guidance.

I interviewed Sara a 17 year old, saved on her high school campus were they experiencing revival. She stated she thought intimacy meant sex. When people talked about having an intimate relationship with the Lord, she didn't understand. She did however see a difference in her peers. They shared their beliefs and told her about Jesus. She lis-

tened to podcasts on intimacy, surrender and the desires of the heart. She accepted the Lord, heard about YWAM and at 19 went on a mission trip to Africa. She currently is an intern for a political figure in Sacramento. She prays for her family every day to accept the Lord. Imagine the impact she has and will continue to have in our society.

Another young man said he was partying and headed down the wrong path. His friend got in trouble with his parents for staying out late. The parents sat all the boys down and made a commitment to their potential. They told them they

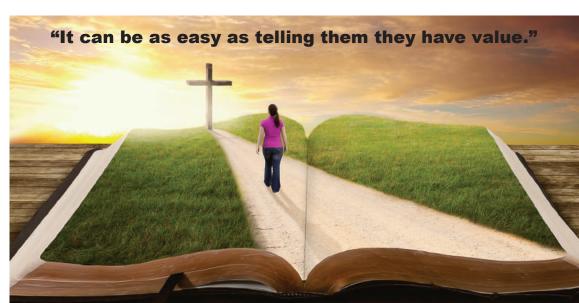
would continue to call out the good in them. They told they believed in them and their future and they would not give up. This so impacted his belief and love that he chose to change his life. He currently is in full time ministry and at 23 travels all over the world. He reaches out to other youth and offers them Hope and Future. All because one person took the time to reach out.

When God highlights individuals He has a purpose. If there is a young person you know who is struggling, please reach out. It can be as easy as telling them they have value. You may be the first person in

their life that genuinely cares and wants nothing in return. Being supportive and encouraging it could be the catalyst for them to have hope for a future.

Offer to be available, have healthy boundaries and communicate clearly the time you have available. It is vital that you do not do for them what they can do themselves. Teach them to process and work through their own possible solutions to life challenges. Learning choices and decision-making skills will benefit them for life.

Avoid making judgments about their parents. No matter



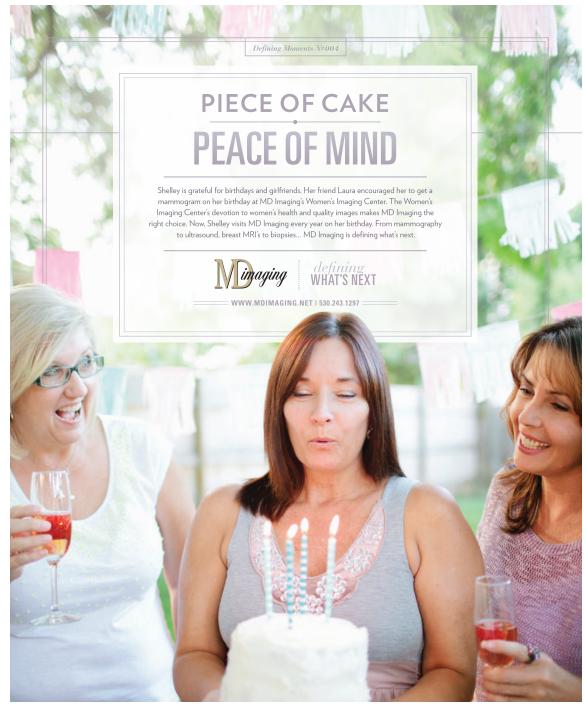
how much they may complain, it is still their mom or dad. Show them love, when they look to the Father it will be easier for them to except His unconditional love. Being consistent and honest in your communication is important. Don't make promises you can't keep. Remember, keeping your word is imperative.

Like our own kids, they are establishing their own identities while just trying to survive. Help them explore their dreams and destiny. Our society sends many mixed messages about morality. Help them find respect for themselves and those around them. We do this by modeling it to them in relationship. Let them talk about problems without judgment, be a good listener.

I raised 3 children and took a young man into my home when he was 15. I won't say it was easy; it did come with a cost. He brought me back to the Lord at a time in my life when I felt lost. He would say I saved his life. I say God brought him to our family by divine appointment. He is 32 now, has graduated from L.A. Film School, has a little boy, and is serving the Lord.

If you are considering mentoring/helping an adolescent discuss it with your family. Talk about the practical side of what that would look like. It could be taking them into your home or meeting with them once a week. However you chose to reach out I guarantee you will be changed forever.

Laura Burwick is a certified Drug and Alcohol Counselor on staff at Bethel Church, Transformation Center and educational instructor for CARE-EDU, providing professional education for drug and alcohol counselors. For more information or an appointment, email laurab@bethelsozo.com



GOD HAS A POSITIVE ANSWER: YOU SAY **GOD SAYS BIBLE VERSES** You say: It's impossible God says: All things are possible Luke 18:27 You say: I'm too tired God says: I will give you rest Matthew 11:28-30 You say: Nobody really loves me God says: I love you John 3:16 & John 3:34 God says: My grace is sufficient You say: I can't go on II Corinthians 12:9 & Psalm 91:15 God says: I will direct your steps Proverbs 3:5- 6 You say: I can't figure things out God says: You can do all things You say: I can't do it Philippians 4:13 II Corinthians 9:8 You say: I'm not able God says: I am able



Hope Deferred, Hope Restored

My On-Line Christian Dating Journey - By Joy Fry

n the day I planned to mail our wedding invitations, my engagement ended. After a four-year relationship, the man I loved, broke the news abruptly with a few words and then disappeared. I felt abandoned. I can still remember the sting from tears running



down my face. He wouldn't return my phone calls or emails. The planned wedding date came and went - like any other day. I knew it was time to move on and consider the possibility of dating again. I wanted to get past the pain and have a new scripture running through my mind besides "hope deferred makes the heart sick" (Proverbs 13:12, NIV).

I went on-line and paid for a multimonth subscription to several internet dating sites. The sites were Christian Café, Christian Mingle, and eHarmony. I decided three things would be my focus during the on-line dating experience: faith, hope and love. (1) I would seek men of faith (2) I would hold on to the hope that God had a plan for my desire to be married (3) I would show Christian love in my communications and dates with matches.

I carefully read the profiles from each dating site with a primary focus on determining if these were men of faith who also had a sincere interest in dating.

After two years of patience and perseverance with on-line dating, I received a match on eHarmony that caught my attention. Chris was a senior pastor and missionary whose late wife had died in a tragic car accident while they were missionaries in Rwanda. It had been over a year since he became a widower. I knew I must be careful to guard both our hearts.

We communicated by email on several week days. Then, the following Saturday morning, I sent him my phone number and asked if he wanted to chat by phone later that afternoon. His response confirmed my assessment that he was a man of faith. He wrote: "I look forward to talking with you but need to use Saturday to stay focused on the sermon I will preach on Sunday. Could we chat on Sunday evening instead?"

Our first phone conversation went well and we met the following evening for coffee at Starbucks. After several dates, we decided to end our on-line dating subscriptions. It had been less than a week since we met. Since I was the first on-line match that Chris had met face-to-face I wanted to give him the time he needed. He said he wanted to begin dating exclusively. Over the next twelve months, Chris and I grew closer. We became engaged on the anniversary of our first Starbucks

We recently celebrated our one-year anniversary. Frequently, my single Christian friends inquire about my dating experiences and the secrets to successful online Christian dating. I am always filled with joy and thankful to share my personal story. Telling others about my journey reminds me the Lord can provide us with the desires of our heart (I Tim 6:17 NIV) when we wait upon Him.









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YES INDEED. this has been an interesting week/ month/year! I am encouraged

that all the bugs are beginning

to come out, the hidden lies

and ties that bind are being uncovered. In my world, for myself, for those I pray for, the Lord has been ever so intentional about lancing the boils

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and releasing all the trapped emotions buried deep. Trauma is being released,

bit by excruciating bit! Slowly it seems, because we have not learned to let go of the pain and to allow our bodies to detox of trauma and its effects. I will not go into all my side stories here but for me this year has been about dealing with trapped emotions, thru various means.

The biggest lie is that if you stuff your emotions, especially the negative ones, then they will die. I have found out the hard way this is an unhealthy fable. They just live and grow even the emotions you want to feel. If this too is an issue for you, then I would encourage you to ask the Lord what He wants you to step fully into freedom. Ask Him what your personal tools are to get the gunk out, once and for all. For me, this has been a huge key into freedom. It is a master lock or a sort of central piece in a huge puzzle that unlocks my heart. I am seeing and sensing the freeing of many sections of my heart that I have not been able to allow the Lord into before. The result is that there is more room for that overflowing JOY He keeps promising me!

and start to wall you off from

I am so encouraged as I read the posts of others, voices also declaring the intent to keep going, to keep trusting. We all have stepped up to the plate to share the bits we have gleaned on our own. Collectively dragging ourselves up from the pit thru the Lord's grace and strength.

As I think about lessons I have learned this year, I like what Graham Cooke says, that WHY is an invalid question and makes an invalid of you. Asking why is akin to putting ourselves into the nut house, into captivity of all sorts. It is much more important to ask the Who and How. Who are vou showing Yourself to be in my life Lord and How do I partner with you on this training/transition season I am on.

I believe that I hear the Father say to me, I am teaching you to walk on water and as vou are walking, vou are laving "planks" under your feet that create a path for others to folbreakthrough is on the way. yielding, in those who need to be released from the trauma of the past, the trapped emotions purged and the body, mind, will and emotions all detoxed!

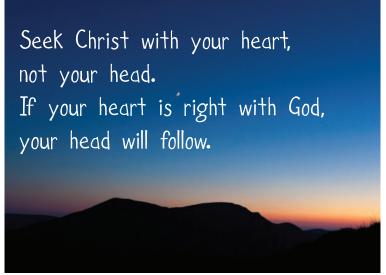




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low. For all of us, I believe that It is waiting for a breaking, a

The Day **SUPERMOM** Took the Day Off

SINGLE PARENTING - PART ONE OF A 3 PART SERIES



Busting myths, garnering resources and asking for help when it is needed

Have you ever felt that as long as you kept going in cadence with even a crazy pace that you were going to make it? It feels akin to treading water (effort without results) but hey, at least you're in the pool? I have, the funny thing is that had I just stopped long enough to breathe I might have realized that it wasn't necessary for me to do "everything" myself. So what does "healthy" look like in this regard? A good indicator of being close to burn-out, which is long past the time to ask for help, is that you feel like you are doing multiple things but none of them well. In this state we often get no pats on the back not even from ourselves because that too would interrupt the break neck speed required to save the world! Are you ready to retire your cape? Okay good then with some of the resources and strategies I am going to share with you, you can not only save yourself time and money you can also return to enjoying your family and taking care of yourself (Part 2 and 3 of my 3 part series)

Myth #1: I am invincible....really? Yes you...you must be believing this lie too or you wouldn't let pride get in the way of meeting your families' needs and desires. You might ask, "What can I do about this?" My answer after 35 years of single parenting experience would be to take a break, retreat, then after regrouping, ask for help. Who can you ask? This is a very good question because the world we live in is not "Leave it to Beaver" anymore and Eddie Haskell isn't just trying to pass the blame on. There are real child abductors and molesters out there and it is our job to keep our children safe. I recommend checking out any potential baby sitters on a web site called "Megan's Law". On this free site you can access people's names and addresses that have unsavory backgrounds regarding breaking laws with children. I also recommend looking for assistance through your local church. Don't think that this is 100% safe either, but if you ask any of the Sunday school teachers who might be willing to help with childcare you will get trusted people.

Myth #2: it's my job exclusively, to care for my children. I say again, really? God entrusted us yes to care for his kids but not if it means hurting ourselves and in turn them by not availing opportunities that are out there just waiting to be used. One such opportunity that I would like to share is "vacation bible schools and camps at local churches. This is a great way to get quality time off while your children learn about God. This time can give you a chance to meet a friend for coffee, to use coupons while shopping and save money and a host of other pursuits that get put on the back burner.

Myth #3: If I "let go" I will drop everything! Now this one could actually be true for a time! I remember when a friend of mine stepped in to give me a break from my four children one day and insisted that I use the time to go get a massage. I obeyed her command but when I returned to deal with my tribe

dren one day and insisted that I use the time to go get a massage I obeyed her command but when I returned to deal with my trib after the deep relaxation I felt very inadequate! I was so relaxed that all I could think about was sleeping. So in part two, I will discuss options for relaxation for short verses longer periods of time but for now with limited time it might be better to pamper yourself with a manicure or pedicure or maybe get your hair done, if money is an issue how about taking a nice scenic walk with a friend then getting a cold drink after?

I hope with all my heart that my sharing these thoughts with you will help you in your journey with raising children as a single parent. My goals for you are that you not only do it more ef-

fectively but that you also find real enjoyment and fulfillment in your role. In conclusion I would like to share this scripture with you in Proverbs 31:28 of the NIV Bible it says:

"Her children arise and call her blessed" God's Love and unlimited blessings, Maggie Fair







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Sark Says and Their Lessons WRITTEN BY MY GRANDMOTHER CATHERINE MILLER IN 1901

As we think back over the year that is so quickly passing we know that not all the days were bright. Some of the days were dark and gloomy. The rain has interfered with some of our plans. Yet how essential to the growth and development of vegetation were these days. Just so in our own lives dark days come to all at one time or another. It is the common lot of man. None are exempt! Yet it is these very trials and crosses that molds and gives shape to our character. We stand by the sculpture [sculptor]. He is fashioning a figure from a block of marble Why does he chip this or that particular piece away? Why would not another have done just as well? It is a mystery to us, yet in the mind of the sculptor the figure he wishes to make is clearly defined. Little by little, he chips pieces away until the figure is complete. Just so with God. He has a great plan to be worked out. We do not understand why He lets this or that affliction come to us. Yet later in life when we can

look back over the past we will better understand. We will not regret the past if we have been faithful. We will better understand the things that were once mysteries. We will then be thankful that things happened as they did. Sometimes these dark days do for us what no day of brightness can do. They drive us nearer to God. They purify our character as nothing else would do. They lessen our hold on earthly things and fit us to sympathize with and help others in distress. One writer says, "Sorrow is as necessary for the soul as medicine is for the body."

We admire the sturdy oak on the hill side. But in its youth it passed through many a storm that almost twisted it from its roots. Yet tossed and torn about by many a storm it survived them all and we see it a gigantic tree grown sturdy and strong. So we are to be strong and better for having passed through the storms of adversity.





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Q. How can I trust I won't get hurt in a relationship again?

If someone you are in relationship with hurts you, it means that the other person was not who you thought they were because they didn't behave as you believed they would. It actually could be a good thing that you experienced this so you didn't invest any more time. Risking trust is huge. Do you retreat to your protective castle with a controlled environment or to venture out and open your heart to someone again. If you risk loving someone and the relationship failed, it shows you something about you and it shows you something about them. If you retreat to the castle, you will not learn the lesson at hand.

Q. What can you suggest for a couple who argues constantly?

Dear Yvonne

Dear Yvonne is a ministry to those needing help resolving issues of conflict. Questions may be confidentially emailed to vvonnem@ibethel.org

> The Joyful Living Magazine editorial staff reserves the right to select questions for publication.

Arguing can be an inability to remain emotionally present and connected in intimate relationship during conflict. Why do couples fight all the time? They can't agree! Yes, it's true that agreement isn't always possible, but understanding is. Understanding takes knowing a person's heart. If we don't understand their heart, we may misunderstand their motives. We may not "agree" on everything but when we understand another person's heart we can understand why they may want or need something a certain way. It takes one person in the relationship to catch the ball in game of dispute, set it aside, and offer to start over by asking questions, having real conversation, in attempt to understand the other person's needs for the decision to sway their way.

Q. Is adrenal fatigue caused by stress?

That is a great question. I have ministered

to many people with adrenal fatigue who have a history of unresolved trauma. Spiritually speaking, I see stress as an "alarm" that signals someone to remain hyper-vigilant to stay on guard. When someone isn't safe, hyper-vigilance is needed because it keeps you alert to danger. However, when danger is no longer an issue and the alarm keeps sending signals, I ask my clients to ask God if they are safe. If they feel they are safe, then I'll direct them to speak peace to their mind and body. Often the "alarm" silences, reducing the anxiety.

Yvonne Martinez has nearly 30 years of experience ministering God's power, healing and freedom. She is an ordained minister and serves as director, pastoral counselor and addictions specialist, in the Transformation Center at Bethel Church in Redding, CA. Yvonne is the author of 14 books and educational director of CARE-EDU, a CAADAC approved drug and alcohol certification program, www.care-edu.com. For a personal ministry appointment with Yvonne, call Transformation Center (530)229-7909.





[By John W. Nichols]

HIKING UPHILL



y father loved to share a favorite story from his childhood. Perhaps you've heard the one about walking uphill to school in deep snow, both ways? As a child I was impressed with the hardships Dad overcame in gaining his education. In my teens, I grew tired of the story and rolled my eyes when the subject arose. Looking back from adulthood, though, I realize there's truth to be gleaned from Dad's old varn.

I love to hike and find that uphill work is part of nearly every excursion. Looking upward from the base of a steep hill can be intimidating. I expect a spectacular view at the top, even as I wonder if I have what it takes to conquer. I anticipate the sense of accomplishment, if I can keep my heart from pounding out of my chest until

I reach the summit.

Each climb begins the same. At some point I end my deliberations, draw a deep breath, and take the first step. That step is followed by a second, then a third, and before I realize it, I am making progress toward my goal. There are no shortcuts to overcoming the challenge.

On a recent climb I paused at the halfway point for a breather and considered that many of life's experiences seem like I'm ascending mountains. Think about these examples as you add your own to the list.

- Overcoming a bad habit
- Buying a home
- Saving sufficient funds for retirement
- Funding my child's college education
- Living in harmony with

certain difficult people

• Conquering a chronic health

Life throws down the gauntlet, and we need a strategy for conquering. How can we survive? I find it helps to look at each obstacle as an uphill hike and proceed accordingly. Consider this plan:

- Start slowly. Take time to ac climate and find a rhythm.
- Set a reasonable pace. Consider that life is more of a marathon than a sprint.
- Rest often. A break allows time for my heart and breathing to return to normal. The brief respite will energize me for the next push.
- Occasionally look backward to review progress. Noting how far I have traveled moti vates me to move ahead. I can overcome this hill.

- Fix my eyes on the goal.

 The top may seem far away
 at the start of the climb, but
 each step brings it closer.
- Keep stepping. The urge to quit will be strong. Recall the words of Jim Valvano, former North Carolina State University basketball coach, who urged us, "Don't give up...don't ever give up!"
 Break a journey into its

smallest parts, and we will find a series of single steps. I sat in solitude on the mountain top and allowed my eyes to trace the path back to the base. Whew! That was a tough walk, but climbing made me stronger. I'm ready for the next hill.

Before he served as King of Israel, David was a shepherd. He lived life outdoors and walked many miles in his sandals. David's message offers encouragement to us as we journey.



Back to School

BY SARA CORMANY

As I sleepily plant my feet on the floor this morning, I am flooded with the overwhelming need to pray.

For me. For you. For all of us.

We mamas who are launching our babies into the throes of the school year.

Some big. Some small. Some in-between.

So here it goes with even a little bit of sleepy...

Bless all the mamas, Jesus.

Who homeschool or public school or private school.

Hold us gently in the moments that we question if it is worth sacrifice it demands. Give us confidence to forge our own path. Allow us the grace to fall and fail and flex.

Remind us that we are brave.

Every time we admit we don't know the answer...

Every time we shut the car door and leave a piece of our heart behind...

Every time we wipe tears and listen to hurts and answer the really tough questions...

Remind us that we are needed.

For encouragement and growth and important life skills, like our top three...

"Knock off the nose-picking." "Flush...always." And the ever popular favorite, "Don't bite your friends."

Remind us that we are sisters.

Who hurt and fear and fail, who laugh and cry and shout, who try and try and try again...

But Jesus, most of all, help us.

Help us fall-on-our-faces remember we aren't meant to be a perfect everything.

Remind us that only You are.

For You love more, adore more and care more about little hands and hearts and minds than we ever could.

Remind us that we need You.

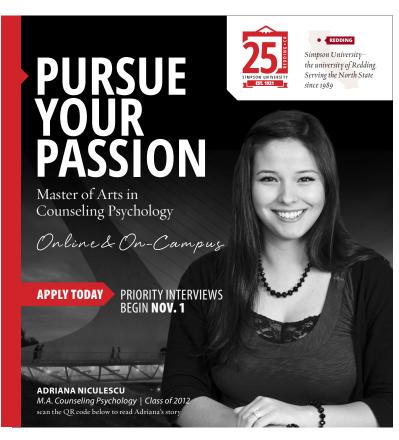
Every moment. Every hour. Every plastic folder.

Every math problem. Every heartache. Every triumph.

Sweet Jesus, how we need You.

Now and always.

Amen.





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David R. Nicholas, M.S., Th.D - Shasta Bible College

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