



BETH MOORE

BELIEVING GOD

DAY BY DAY

GROWING YOUR FAITH
ALL YEAR LONG



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NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

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Believing God: Day by Day
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DEDICATION

To my beloved church family at Houston's First Baptist Church—I am nearly overcome with emotion as I attempt to find words to express my gratitude and love for you. You have been everything that constitutes a true church “home” to me for more than twenty years. You have loved and supported me and given me a safe place to make mistakes so I could grow. You have been my constant during a time of such change in my ministry life. A place of normalcy and stability, you have been my harbor.

With deepest affection I dedicate this particular book to you because you are a church that has an undeniable history of believing God. We have seen some miracles together, haven't we? Not bad for a bunch of Baptists. God is good ... and patient. I wouldn't trade you for the world. Thanks for everything.

“You are My witnesses”—the LORD’S
declaration—“and My servant whom I have
chosen, so that you may know and believe
Me and understand that I am He.”

Isaiah 43:10



INTRODUCTION

God thrust the Sword of the Spirit in my feeble hands some twenty years ago when He sent me into a young adult Sunday school class as the teacher. Apply that last word loosely. Actually, I was an idiot.

I got a brand new Bible for the journey and I meant to keep it that way. I neglected it. Fumbled it. Dropped it. Opened it. Yawned over it. Whined over it. Cried over it. Begged God to help me with it.

Then slowly but surely, one discovery at a time, I fell head over heels in love with it and with its brilliant Author. I dug my fingernails into it and vowed never to let go. I may have a whole junkyard of broken vows somewhere but, to the glory of God, that one is not in the heap.

While strengthening my grip on the Sword of the Spirit, God began wedging the Shield of Faith in my other hand so that I'd learn to use them the way He intended: in tandem. Mind you, I thought I had plenty of faith. After all, how much faith does a church going, church-serving soul need?

I would soon learn the answer: a whole lot more than I had. As forcefully as God has ever spoken to my heart, He said, "You believe *in* Me, Beth. Now I want you to believe Me." The words "believe Me" arose out of Isaiah 43:10 like a dead man leaping to his feet. "You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me" (NIV).

Believe me. Believe me. BELIEVE ME. Those two words have echoed unceasingly in my mind ever since.

For reasons known only to a forgiving God, I've spilled quarts of ink through books and Bible studies in attempts to share a passion to love God and know Him. I will continue to express these holy obsessions in one way or another as long as God wills. The book you hold in your hand is my attempt to articulate my own personal journey toward obedience in believing God, while encouraging you to join me in the blessed experience.

I am convinced that Christ is always the initiator of matters concerning faith. So if I'm on target, you've neither stumbled onto this book nor accidentally found it in your hands. Christ is initiating a fresh anointing of faith in your life, Dear One. He wants to put a fresh belief in our systems! We have been assigned to this world during vital days on the kingdom calendar. Yet too often we have dropped our shield, making us more vulnerable to defeat. God is calling His church to draw the Sword of the Spirit (the Word of God) and lift high the Shield of Faith.

Do it, Dear One. No more business as usual. From here to eternity, stay a verb and wake a few nouns. Live by faith. Live out loud. And never stop believing God—day by day.

With much love,
Beth

JANUARY



JANUARY 1

In every situation take the
shield of faith ... and the sword
of the Spirit, which is God's word.

Ephesians 6:16–17



This book is about developing an action verb faith. It's about getting out there where we can feel the wind of God's Spirit blowing in our faces. It's about learning that we don't have to put down the Sword of the Spirit (the Word of God) to raise up the Shield of Faith.

The way I see it, that's why God gave us two hands. If we want to live abundantly, we must pick up both. To pick up the Sword of the Spirit without the Shield of Faith is to shrivel and dry up in the desert of legalism. To pick up the Shield of Faith without the Sword of the Spirit is to try walking on quicksand.

JANUARY 2

This book of instruction must not
depart from your mouth ... for then you will
prosper and succeed in whatever you do.

Joshua 1:8



Is it working? Your belief system? Is it really working? God's intention all along has been for His children to succeed. So I ask you, is your Christian life feeling successful? Are you achieving and experiencing what Scripture says you would?

God stated unapologetically that conditions exist under which "you will prosper and succeed in whatever you do." But the only way we are going to impact our generation is to prove that our faith in Christ is real and that it works.

For countless Christians, I'm convinced it's real. My concern is whether or not we have the fruit to suggest it works.

JANUARY 3

Watch out, brothers, so that there won't be
in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart that
departs from the living God.

Hebrews 3:12



Why isn't our present practice of Christianity working? Why don't we see more of God's promises fulfilled?

It's the same reason why the practices of the Israelites in the wilderness didn't work and why they never reached the land they'd been promised. Like them, we can be dramatically delivered from bondage, leave our Egypts, and yet never make it to our Promised Lands. We, too, can find ourselves lodged in a desolate wilderness between the two. Scripture supplies the one-word explanation: "So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief" (Heb. 3:19).

JANUARY 4

The doubter is like the surging sea, driven
and tossed by the wind. That person should
not expect to receive anything from the Lord.

James 1:6-7



Firsts have great importance in Scripture. Do you know the first recorded words that ever came from the serpent's mouth? "Did God really say ..." (Gen. 3:1). He used the spade of deceit to sow doubt.

Satan, posing as the serpent, couldn't keep Eve from believing in God, so he did the next best thing. He baited her, tempting Eve not to believe God or trust His motives. Her walk was crippled, her doubt was contagious, and the couple lost the land that God had placed under their feet. When Eve dropped her shield of faith, every other piece of her spiritual armor became vulnerable.

JANUARY 5

He did not commit sin, and no deceit
was found in His mouth.... [He] committed
Himself to the One who judges justly.

1 Peter 2:22–23



Over and over in Scripture, when God was about to move in the lives of His people or instruct them to reposition themselves, He began with a reminder of who He was. A thumbs-up of sorts.

God knew that the most powerful driving force the children of Israel would have—the power that would press them toward their earthly destiny—was their certainty that the One who went before them was who He said He was.

It's true: God is who He says He is. In fact, He is either everything He says He is or He's a liar—unworthy of any faith at all.

JANUARY 6

LORD, I have heard the report about You;

LORD, I stand in awe of Your deeds.

Revive Your work in these years.

Habakkuk 3:2



I'm convinced that most of us more readily accept the fact that God is who He says He is than we believe He can do what He says He can do. We less quickly assume that God is able—or perhaps more pointedly, that He is willing—to do what He says.

Ironically, however, God can do what He says He can do precisely because He is who He says He is. His many titles describe His ability. As Savior, He saves; as Deliverer, He delivers; as Redeemer, He redeems; as Master, He assumes authority; as Bread of Life, He provides; and as Almighty, He exerts divine strength.

JANUARY 7

Not to us, LORD, not to us, but to Your name
give glory because of Your faithful love,
because of Your truth.

Psalm 115:1



I want my children to love God. I want them to love His Word and discover the life, healing, and power within it. I want them to love people and treat them with compassion and kindness.

But more than anything on earth— tears fill my eyes as I write this—I want glory to come to God through them.

I want a thousand things for my children, and I ask without hesitation, but I want nothing more than that God would be glorified. Life is just a breath. All that will matter forever in our heavenly state is the glory that came to God through their lives and ours.

JANUARY 8

The one who draws near to Him
must believe that He exists and
rewards those who seek Him.

Hebrews 11:6



I am who God says I am. This truth unearths emotion in me every time I say it because I am reminded of the journey I've had to take to believe it. More than any other faith challenge I face, believing that I am who God says I am necessitates choosing what God says over what I feel.

I want so much to be a woman of faith. In fact, I'd give just about anything to be a woman God would characterize by her faith, since nothing pleases Him more (Heb. 11:6). But if I'm really serious about believing God, I also have to believe what God says about me. No small challenge. How about you?

JANUARY 9

Whether well-fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need ... I am able to do all things through Him who strengthens me.

Philippians 4:12–13



You really can do it, you know. Whatever the harrowing path that's before you, you really can walk it victoriously. God will give you every place you step your feet for the glory of His name if you let Him.

How do I know this? For starters, the verse above claims that a servant of God can do all things—*all* things—through Christ who gives him strength.

This “all things” includes even those things that are otherwise impossible. And it leads us to a statement of faith that isn't just a cheer or a feel-good memory verse. It is sound theology yearning to become our reality.

JANUARY 10

I will shake the house of Israel among all
the nations, as one shakes a sieve, but not a
pebble will fall to the ground.

Amos 9:9



The first ten years I spent in the Word, I believed that every doctrinal view I held was absolutely right and all others were unquestionably wrong. I was an aerobics teacher at our church gym, for crying out loud. I worked out all morning and studied Scripture all afternoon.

But one way God widened my world was by pitching me out of the gym and into the heat of a spiritual war. I spent the next several years in intensive care with God as He began rebuilding me from the inside out so I could teach harder lessons but with a softer spirit. Don't be surprised if He does the same for you.

JANUARY 11

The word of God is living and effective and sharper than any two-edged sword... It is a judge of the ideas and thoughts of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12



Sometimes I actually feel the Holy Spirit within me quickening to the Word of God as I study it, mix it with faith, and pray to absorb it. But even when I don't feel anything, I count on supernatural fireworks within.

See, God says His Word is alive and powerful, and I believe Him. He also says His Word is powerful when it's in me. Yes, me—a bundle of faults, fears, and insecurities. Just think! My weakness is not strong enough to wound God's Word. Neither is yours. God does His job. He speaks to accomplish. We don't have to make Him. We just need to let Him.

JANUARY 12

From the fruit of his mouth
a man's stomach is satisfied; he is filled
with the product of his lips.
Proverbs 18:20



Mankind possesses complete uniqueness among all creatures because we are created in the image of God. Our unique ability to communicate through words is one of the most obvious evidences of the image we bear.

The element of divine communication being transmitted to the inhabitants of the earth is so critical, so paramount, that Christ Himself is called the Word that “became flesh and took up residence among us” (John 1:14). And by virtue of our creation in His image, our words— like His—possess an element of accomplishing and achieving power.

JANUARY 13

“We can’t go up against the people because they are stronger than we are!” So they gave a negative report to the Israelites.

Numbers 13:31–32



A vital part of learning the *walk* of faith in our journey to and through the Promised Land is learning the *talk* of faith. The account in Numbers 13–14 of the Israelite spies being sent to explore the land clearly reveals the power of words.

Not only did the bad report of a few turn into the grumbling of the masses, it also led to vain imaginations. By the time the faithless words rolled around in their heads a while, the men had already pictured themselves dead and their wives and children taken as plunder. It’s true that our minds feed our mouths, but our mouths also feed our minds.

JANUARY 14

... so that you won't become lazy,
but imitators of those who inherit the
promises through faith and perseverance.

Hebrews 6:12



The middle of any challenging journey can be the most critical point. Many of us may not be where we were, but we're not yet where we want to go. Perhaps the terrible bondage of Egypt is behind us, but the land of promise seems remote.

The longer we wander in the wilderness between Egypt and the Promised Land, the greater the chance that we'll return to captivity. The pull of familiar comforts and habits can feel overpowering, particularly against the uncertainty of Canaan's unknowns. But as we persevere, God is faithful to continually give us the extra push of motivation to press on.

JANUARY 15

Be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

Romans 12:2



Every believer needs the hope of second chances. Some of us need lots of them. God is fully aware of this. He looks upon our hearts and knows whether we have any authentic desire to be different or if we're all talk.

And when lasting change finally does come, few things are as healing as the evidence that the cycle is breaking. We may have the same old struggles, but we're making some new decisions. We know we're coming full circle with God when we stand at a similar crossroad where we made such a mess of life before, but this time we take a different road.

JANUARY 16

“Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.

” And Joshua did so.

Joshua 5:15



God promises to always be with us, but every now and then He reveals His presence a little more vividly than we were expecting. That's exactly what God did with Joshua just outside Jericho, when “the commander of the LORD’S army” appeared, audibly speaking to him.

God determined that if His servant was going to step into a holy moment, he'd better do it with bare feet. “And Joshua did so.” If I could get a clue about the greatness of God, I'd be mortified by all the times He told me to do something and the record showed, “Beth did not do so.” Help me, Lord.

JANUARY 17

May you be strengthened with all power,
according to His glorious might, for all
endurance and patience, with joy.

Colossians 1:11



You've probably noticed that what God requires from us to live in victory can differ greatly from season to season. In some seasons, for example, He demands everything we've got—times when we feel like our life depends on it, times when we can't even think about tomorrow because we don't know how on earth we're going to live through today.

I'd like to suggest that some of the most adventurous endeavors you'll have with God may be too difficult at the time to enjoy. And by the time the party comes, you may smell too bad to go. Ah, but after a shower and good look back ...

JANUARY 18

In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor
uncircumcision accomplishes anything; what
matters is faith working through love.

Galatians 5:6



Faith is God's favorite invitation to make the impossible possible. He is greatly glorified when we are each enabled to do what we're unable to do. And I can think of few things further beyond our capabilities than loving those we don't want to love and loving those we don't even like.

But if we will place 2 Corinthians 5:7 (which tells us to live by faith) next to the verse above from Galatians 5, I believe we can come up with two life challenges that, if accepted, catapult us onto a path infinitely higher than this world's self-centered interstate of mediocrity: "We live by faith. We love by faith."

JANUARY 19

My Father is glorified by this:
that you produce much fruit and
prove to be My disciples.

John 15:8



Certainly those of us who have accepted Christ as our Savior have received the automatic and glorious result of eternal salvation. However, the primary reason why God left us on earth after our salvation was for our Christianity to “succeed” right here on this turf.

Sure, we’re getting by, but getting by was never our destiny. We were meant to be profoundly effective. Why have we accepted average? Are the few effects most of us see and experience all that Christianity has to offer, all we can expect? If so, someone needs to feel sorry for us. I’d volunteer, except that I no longer buy it.

JANUARY 20

The report of your
obedience has reached everyone.
Therefore I rejoice over you.
Romans 16:19



God's willingness and unwavering desire to bless His people is one of the most repetitive concepts in both testaments of His Word. He is the Giver of all good gifts and greatly exults when a child co-operates enough to receive some.

Just as the Promised Land was a place of assured blessing to the children of God who followed His precepts in the Old Testament, New Testament believers were also promised blessing for their obedience. When you and I find our places in Christ where God can freely fulfill His promises to us, we too will experience immeasurable blessing.

JANUARY 21

With whom was He “provoked for 40 years”? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert?

Hebrews 3:17



You and I can be safely tucked in the family of God and have the full assurance of a heavenly inheritance without ever occupying the land of God’s fulfilled promises on earth. Like the children of Israel, our carcasses can fall in the wilderness.

Traveling in Africa, my husband and I once came upon the sight of a cow’s entire carcass polished to the bone by a lion. It reminded me how many times Satan— that “roaring lion”—had tried to destroy my life, witness, and fruitfulness. Will we let him have the satisfaction of cleaning our carcasses because we let them drop in a desert of defeat? God forbid.

JANUARY 22

This is why you must take up
the full armor of God, so that you may
be able to resist in the evil day.

Ephesians 6:13



Just like the children of Israel, we will always have an enemy that wants to keep us out of our Promised Lands. If we're going to win our battles, however, we need to wise up to some of Satan's schemes and prepare in advance for victory.

Our warfare is complicated by opposition that is much harder to identify than Hittites, Perizzites, and Amorites. In Ephesians 6:12, Paul tells us that "our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens." This requires the full armor.

JANUARY 23

Acknowledge that the LORD
is God. He made us, and we are His—
His people, the sheep of His pasture.
Psalm 100:3



You and I have got to know, not just hope or think, that the One who cut covenant with us through the torn flesh of Jesus Christ—Elohiym, the God over all creation—is the same One who sits upon the universe's throne, having spoken the worlds into existence.

Surrounded by a society that spouts many gods but at best nobly agrees to equate them, you and I can know that the Lord is God. Hoping we're on the right track will never dig a deep enough path to follow to our Promised Lands. We're not going anywhere of profound eternal significance until we know.

JANUARY 24

I am doing a work in your days,
a work that you will never believe,
even if someone were to explain it to you.

Acts 13:41



Before God insisted on calling me to fresh faith several years ago, I certainly believed He was who He said He was, but I was much less sure that He still works miracles in our day. I had been taught that God does not work many miracles today because we live in a different time period on the kingdom calendar.

Not only did God prove me wrong, I think He had a fairly good time turning my neatly compartmentalized belief system upside down. He seems to like saying, “Oh, yes I will” to the “Oh, no He won’ts,” proving His own people wrong to prove His Word right.

JANUARY 25

He fell facedown and prayed, “My Father!
If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.
Yet not as I will, but as You will.”

Matthew 26:39



God and I have this deal. I know He has endless resources and that I will never ask more than He can supply, so I feel free to ask for anything I desire, then I try to jump up and down with a grateful heart for all He grants.

At the same time, God knows my absolute priorities—my A list of prayer requests. Therefore, if something on my A list temporarily or even permanently (ouch!) might have to cancel out something on my B list, so be it. I'll bend the knee, however painfully, because I am most desperate to know and experience the truest of all riches.

JANUARY 26

Moses asked God, “Who am I that
I should go to Pharaoh and that I should
bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”

Exodus 3:11



Let's just say I haven't been a low maintenance project for God. I have definitely been the problem. Goodness knows, God has done His part. I once told my staff with much laughter that if I die suddenly, my gravestone might appropriately offer this insight into my departure: “God got tired.” I just require lots of work.

That's why I have a little hang-up saying that I am who God says I am. I tend to want to rewrite it: “I *strive* to be who God says I am.” But that's not what the Word says. Nope, it says I am already who God says I am. If you have received Jesus as your Savior, so are you.

JANUARY 27

We observed His glory, the glory as the
One and Only Son from the Father,
full of grace and truth.
John 1:14



No matter how mighty the servants of God like Moses and Joshua were, the “One and Only” shoes tend to run large and slap around awkwardly on a walk. But when Christ came to earth, He stepped His feet into those “One and Only” shoes and, for the first time in all of human history, they were a perfect fit.

Wriggle your bare toes and celebrate that He’s been wearing them ever since. No need to try them on. His plan hence-forth was not to use just one person but many: a corporate body of believers for each generation, each bringing their gifts to the mix. He’s the only One and Only.

JANUARY 28

So faith comes from what is heard,
and what is heard comes through
the message about Christ.

Romans 10:17



I grow more convinced all the time that an ongoing relationship with God through His Word is essential to the Christian's consistent victory. We can't presently and actively believe God in our day-to-day challenges if we are not presently and actively in His Word.

For example, God's direction for my life will escape me without the Word being "a lamp for my feet and a light on my path" (Ps. 119:105). Liberty in Christ only becomes a reality in life through knowing and applying the truth of God's Word, not just taking our Bibles to church or keeping them on our nightstands.

JANUARY 29

Life and death are in the
power of the tongue, and those
who love it will eat its fruit.

Proverbs 18:21



With the exception of kings, judges, and dictators, the application of the above verse from Proverbs is primarily figurative. But make no mistake: it is far from diminutive.

We possess no small power in our tongues. Most of us can testify that the human tongue owns the power to kill all sorts of things. Relationships, lifelong dreams, and self-confidence are only a few of the common fatalities. Thankfully, however, perhaps as many of us have also experienced life-giving words of encouragement, instruction, and exhortation. We need His Word on our lips.

JANUARY 30

For by your words you will
be acquitted, and by your words
you will be condemned.

Matthew 12:37



If you and I want to abide and flourish in our Promised Lands, we're going to have to get rid of some bad reporting, faithless talking, and negative grumbling. Words wield power. Our words are not omnipotent, but they are still potent.

We can tear down with our words or build up with our words. We can speak living words, or we can speak killing words. We can encourage, or we can discourage. The question is not whether our words affect; the question is how. Even if you're a quiet person, you still communicate often through words, and just as often through affecting words.

JANUARY 31

As soon as ... their feet touched the water
at its edge, the water flowing downstream
stood still, rising up in a mass.

Joshua 3:15-16



Every now and then a friend teases me about being a drama queen. I don't deny it, but I also don't mind saying that God is the ultimate drama King. He didn't have to make biblical scenes exciting, like this miraculous crossing of the Jordan River in Joshua's day. He could have achieved His will just as completely by compulsory, methodical order.

I'd like to suggest that God Himself enjoys the drama. Everything about the Israelites' Promised Land adventure was electrifying, even when it was terrifying. Yours is liable to be similar. God's pathways to promise are anything but boring.

FEBRUARY



FEBRUARY 1

It has been given to you on
Christ's behalf not only to believe in
Him, but also to suffer for Him.

Philippians 1:29



Have you lived much of your life in a repetitive cycle? Ultimately, how the cycle continues is based on one of two things: prevailing belief or prevailing unbelief.

Keith and I often say that we failed and flopped our way to faith, but somehow through the grace of God, we kept falling forward. As long as we wear these cumbersome suits of flesh, we are not going to be supermen flying high in the sky of faith. We are called to something far more elementary: to walk by faith. God most often looks for what prevails in our lives. If unbelief prevails, we find ourselves repeating cycles of defeat.

FEBRUARY 2

After the seventh time, the priests blew
the trumpets, and Joshua said to the people,
“Shout! For the LORD has given you the city.”

Joshua 6:16



The number seven in Scripture is believed by many scholars to be the number of completion. The creation seems to be the paradigm. The seven days and seven repetitions God required of the Israelites before He'd give them Jericho was a literal time frame for them, but it presents a figurative application for us.

During certain stretches of life, God requires us to follow a fair amount of repetition for a considerable amount of time until He deems a season complete. Then all of a sudden He seems to do something profound or miraculous, and we can't figure out what changed.

FEBRUARY 3

Jacob, why do you say, and Israel, why do you
assert: “My way is hidden from the LORD,
and my claim is ignored by my God”?

Isaiah 40:27



I wonder if you've ever fought a fiercely demanding battle you didn't cause. An illness? A layoff? The untimely death of a loved one? A house fire? Suddenly worthless stocks?

Any number of situations can arise that you or I didn't directly cause, yet we're thrown into long-term overdrive to deal with them.

It's true that some of the most difficult and demanding seasons of our lives will seem grossly unfair. But we can expend so much energy whining about the unfairness of our situation that we have nothing left to invest in the real fight.

FEBRUARY 4

We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers. The one who does not love remains in death.

1 John 3:14



We may go on for years, expending untold hours of self-sacrifice (if not the rest of our lives) trying to love certain people in certain situations—all without seeing any apparent fruit.

Yet God has called us to love even when we don't want to, when we don't feel like it, when we get nothing in return, when they don't deserve it, when they're not worth it, when they don't even know it—when it makes no difference. If we're not confronted by God to love someone in this season of our lives who brings out many of these same feelings in us, we're probably not getting out enough.

FEBRUARY 5

Jesus said, "Because you have seen Me,
you have believed. Those who believe
without seeing are blessed."

John 20:29



The church, comprised of all believers in Jesus Christ, is generally pretending she's cloaked with kingdom power and effectiveness when in reality she has exposed herself in powerlessness to the ridicule of the world.

We can't blame the devil. It's just that for the most part, we've dumbed-down New Testament Christianity and accepted our reality as theology rather than biblical theology as our reality. We've reversed the standard, walking by sight and not by faith. We want to be the best of what we see, but frankly what we see is far removed from God's best.

FEBRUARY 6

None of the good promises the LORD
had made to the house of Israel failed.

Everything was fulfilled.

Joshua 21:45



I don't want to be counted among the faithless who never claimed the land God promised them. All that will matter about our earthly lives when we receive our heavenly inheritance is whether we fulfilled our callings and allowed God to fulfill His promises.

I know that I'm going to make it to heaven because I've trusted Christ as my Savior, but I want to make it to my Canaan on the way. I want to finish my race in the Promised Land, not in the wilderness. You too? Then we need to cash in our fear and complacency and spend all we have on the only ticket out —*belief!*

FEBRUARY 7

We must be sober and put the armor
of faith and love on our chests, and put on
a helmet of the hope of salvation.

1 Thessalonians 5:8



Above all, you and I need to learn to take up our shield of faith or we will fall. And when we fall, we'll fall hard. I definitely know the feeling. Don't you?

We also desperately need to know the Word of God and to wield the Sword of the Spirit so that when the enemy slyly suggests, "Did God really say ...?" as he said to Eve, we can know the answer emphatically. When we respond to attacks of doubt, distortion, and deceit with the truth of God's Word, the fiery dart is extinguished and the enemy takes another hit. Heaven knows I owe him a few. You too? Then let's take our faith seriously.

FEBRUARY 8

The fool says in his heart, “
God does not exist.” They are corrupt;
their actions are revolting.

Psalm 14:1



The opinions of our culture span the entire spectrum from the belief that God does not exist all the way to the belief that God is who an inspired text says He is. In my estimation, atheism demands far more faith than theism, so I have never been significantly tempted to dis-believe in the existence of God.

The evidence in His favor is simply overwhelming. I wouldn't have enough energy for the endless rationalizations demanded to explain existence without Him. Those who believe in a godless universe can't even find a beginning to base their belief system on.

FEBRUARY 9

Jesus Christ, who was preached among you
by us ... did not become “Yes and no.” ... For
every one of God’s promises is “Yes” in Him.

2 Corinthians 1:19–20



Christ gave His life so God could say yes to the fulfillment of His promises in the lives of believing mortals. Therefore I am utterly convinced that any “no” an earnestly seeking child of God receives from the Throne is for the sake of a greater “yes,” whether the fulfillment is realized on earth or in heaven.

A present-active-participle believer in God will see miracles, all right. But note this: the greater miracle doesn’t need to be spectacular to be just as certain and special—like abundant life, redemption, ministry, and exceeding harvest after a “no” we felt we wouldn’t survive.

FEBRUARY 10

How much more will your
Father in heaven give good things
to those who ask Him!

Matthew 7:11



If we have priorities concerning what we believe to be the best that life has to offer our children, would we be surprised to think that God does too? Ours is a God of priorities. Might He have an A and a B list? I wouldn't be surprised if He has a list for each of us stretching all the way from *alpha* to *omega*.

After all, "How great is Your goodness that You have stored up for those who fear You" (Ps. 31:19). Scripture is replete with God's bountiful desires for us, but He also clearly knows what He desires most to accomplish, not only in each believer but in each generation.

FEBRUARY 11

These were the names of the men
Moses sent to scout out the land, and Moses
renamed Hoshea son of Nun, Joshua.

Numbers 13:16



We may not know exactly when Joshua received his new name from Moses, but we don't have to be biblical scholars to reason why he might have needed one. In essence, his original name Hoshea means "deliverer," while his new name Joshua (or Jehoshua) means "Jehovah delivers."

If I were flesh and blood chosen by God to lead a grasshopper people into a land of giant opposition, I'd want to know He was the true Deliverer, not me.

I'd like to suggest that Joshua not only needed to know who he was, he needed to know who he wasn't. He wasn't God. Not a bad lesson for any of us to learn.

FEBRUARY 12

On the contrary, all the more,
those parts of the body that seem
to be weaker are necessary.

1 Corinthians 12:22



Let's refute the mistaken mentality that God mightily uses a few chosen people in each generation to fulfill His kingdom agenda and that everyone else is basically insignificant. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul stressed the importance of the whole body of believers working together.

Simply put, Christ left us too much to do to leave it up to a few. You are an honored part of the body of Christ, and your contributions add up. Remember, God's New Testament math specializes in addition and multiplication, not subtraction and division.

FEBRUARY 13

Therefore, observe the words of this
covenant and follow them, so that you will
succeed in everything you do.

Deuteronomy 29:9



I've been saying it a lot in this book, but only because it's of utmost importance: We have to learn how to use the Word of God if we want to be a powerful force for the kingdom and against the darkness. We'll never abide in our Promised Lands unless God's promises abide in us.

God set the standard with Joshua when He told him to keep the Word continually on his tongue, meditate on it day and night, and live by its commands. "For then you will prosper and succeed in whatever you do" (Josh. 1:8). With all my heart I believe living on and by God's Word is still the key to true success.

FEBRUARY 14

A man will be satisfied with good
by the words of his mouth, and the work
of a man's hands will reward him.

Proverbs 12:14



In both my junior and senior years, I was blessed to study high school English under a graciously demanding teacher. She was the first person who ever suggested that I had a writer buried somewhere within me.

I fell into much sin, hypocrisy, and despair after those days and was certain that whatever promise I may have possessed at one time, I probably forfeited to my foolishness. After many books and Bible studies, I still don't see myself as a writer, but every now and then I think, "Mrs. Fanett did." Never underestimate the power of words.

FEBRUARY 15

The message is very near you,
in your mouth and in your heart,
so that you may follow it.

Deuteronomy 30:14



You and I want to function in the full throttle of power that God desires to give us. And a significant portion of that power involves our mouths. Ideally, our faith can become voice, and our voice can become the right kind of power, when we're operating in the will of God.

Every conversation does not have to be blatantly spiritual for God to make it positively effectual. Sometimes God gives us favor with people who are touched or impressed with how we express ourselves because God empowered our words even though the listener couldn't distinguish the difference.

FEBRUARY 16

Then they believed His promises and sang
His praise. They soon forgot His works and
would not wait for His counsel.

Psalm 106:12–13



God never forgets His promises to us. In turn, He intends for us as His children never to forget His faithfulness to fulfill them—every single one of them.

Over and over in Scripture, God's people are told to actively remember all He has done on their behalf. In fact, the practice of remembering is so important to the children of God, He often diagnosed their seasons of rebellion as being serious cases of forgetfulness.

One of the most powerful motivations for believing God in our present is intentionally remembering how He's worked in our past.

FEBRUARY 17

You delivered me from death,
even my feet from stumbling, to walk
before God in the light of life.

Psalm 56:13



Perhaps many of us have experienced a deliverance of some kind. Certainly those who are believers in Christ have been delivered from a general and otherwise hopeless bondage to sin. But Christians can also unfortunately experience areas of captivity long after conversion.

My personal history of deliverance began when I accepted Christ as Savior. But since that time, He has also delivered me from tremendous insecurity, much fear, very defeated thinking, and self-destructive patterns of sin. You've likely experienced deliverance of one kind or another, too. Thank Him for that.

FEBRUARY 18

As for you, continue in what you have
learned and firmly believed, knowing
those from whom you learned.

2 Timothy 3:14



One of the most important messages to learn in your Christian life is that, yes, you can believe God for something dramatic and miraculous. But in between dramatic revelations, what's a believer to do? The day-in, day-out fundamentals, that's what.

Prayer. A daily time in God's Word. Praise and worship. Attending church. Serving a church body. Giving. These are the fundamentals, and they'll never change. We can make all the excuses in the world for not practicing this one or that, but they nonetheless represent the backbone of obedience.

FEBRUARY 19

Save me, God, for the water has risen
to my neck. I have sunk in deep mud,
and there is no footing.

Psalm 69:1-2



Have you ever had someone to blame, and that “someone” was *you*? Have you ever smacked yourself on the head for something stupid you’ve done? How often do we lose the battle to our own bitterness rather than to our opposition?

Make no mistake: Satan’s specialty is psychological warfare. If he can turn us on God (“It’s not fair!”), or turn us on others (“It’s their fault!”), or turn us on ourselves (“I’m so stupid!”), we won’t turn on him. If we keep fighting within ourselves and losing our own inner battles, we’ll never have the strength to stand up and fight our true enemy.

FEBRUARY 20

Each person should examine his own work ... not in respect to someone else. For each person will have to carry his own load.

Galatians 6:4-5



The very nature of love is sacrificial. In fact, if we're not presently feeling the squeeze and sacrifice of loving someone, we're probably exercising a preferential, highly selective, and self-centered human substitute.

But mind you, loving another person sacrificially does not equal subjecting ourselves to untold abuses. God doesn't call us to sacrifice our sanity; He calls us to sacrifice our selfishness. When those lines are vague or unclear, I can give you no more important advice than to seek sound, godly counsel, just as I have done before at various times.

FEBRUARY 21

He showed me the river of living water,
sparkling like crystal, flowing from the
throne of God and of the Lamb.

Revelation 22:1



I was taking my usual route on my morning walk when I happened upon a simple scene with telling application. Four ducks were splashing in a mud puddle in the sidewalk while a large, pristine pond was just over a small hill.

I stopped in my tracks and stared, as though God were saying to me, “Beth, that’s like my church, splashing in a mud puddle with a sea of living waters within her reach, just on the other side.”

No one has been covered with more mud from puddles-settled-for than I. If God can move me from the puddle to the pond, I assure you He can move you.

FEBRUARY 22

The Lord's message rang out from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place that your faith in God has gone out.

1 Thessalonians 1:8



The reason most of our present belief systems aren't working is because they are big on systems and small on belief. What you and I need is a fresh belief in our systems. Faith is the only thing that will close the gap between our theology and our reality.

We'd be hard pressed to find a more consistent priority God places before His people in either testament. Yes, love is His greatest commandment, but any of us who have accepted the mammoth challenge of biblical love in difficult circumstances can testify how much faith was required for obedience.

FEBRUARY 23

These will serve as tassels for you to look at,
so that you may remember all the LORD'S
commands and obey them.

Numbers 15:39



I believe there are certain things we can do that invite the pleasure and power of God. I am by no means suggesting we play “Let’s Make a Deal” with God or try manipulating Him for miracles. God is not a paid performer and would not be shy to show His disapproval over an inappropriate approach.

Let’s be careful, though, that we don’t err in the opposite extreme of faithless caution. A big difference exists between trying to manipulate God to give us what we want and cooperating with God so He can give us what ***He*** wants. The latter is our goal.

FEBRUARY 24

It would have been better for them not to
have known the way of righteousness than,
after knowing it, to turn back.

2 Peter 2:21



The most dangerously influential opinions are those held by intellectuals and scholars who profess Christianity but deny the veracity and the present power of the Bible. The obvious brilliance of these scholars supported by a convincing list of degrees tempts those who want to believe God's Word to feel gullible and ignorant. The unspoken indictment is, "How could you be stupid enough to believe that?"

Like Eve, we want to feel smart, so we end up making the stupidest decision of our lives. Nothing is more ignorant than choosing man's intelligence over God's.

FEBRUARY 25

When He entered the house, the blind men
approached Him, and Jesus said to them, “
Do you believe that I can do this?”

Matthew 9:28



We can always hope and pray diligently for a miracle. If in God's sovereignty He chooses to accomplish His purposes another way, let it not be that we “have not” because we “ask not” (James 4:2) or because we believe not.

If you dare to believe and yet don't get your miracle, God has a greater one planned. If what you desperately need or deeply desire is founded in the Word of God, don't let anyone tell you that God can't or that He undoubtedly won't. Remove the wonders from God, and you can no longer call Him wonderful. Has He ceased to be wonderful to you?

FEBRUARY 26

As a result, they were all astounded
and gave glory to God, saying, “We have
never seen anything like this!”

Mark 2:12



With all my heart, I believe God is willing to perform outstanding miracles in our generation as we increase our faith. I have and will continue to ask God to perform wonders on behalf of my loved ones and those whom I serve.

At the same time, I also believe that the greatest miracle of all is glory coming to the Father through mortal creatures. If God can gain glory through the miracle I've requested, hallelujah! If I don't get my miracle but God gets greater glory, I believe I received the greater miracle with the most eternal dividends. We are most blessed when God is most glorified.

FEBRUARY 27

Why am I so depressed? Why this turmoil
within me? Put your hope in God, for I will
still praise Him, my Savior and my God.

Psalm 42:5



At times, the psalmist addressed his own soul as if to get through to his stubborn will. How often you and I could use this same approach! Speak these words from Ephesians 1:3–8 aloud to your own soul as many times as it takes to start believing them: “In love I am blessed, chosen, adopted, favored, redeemed, and forgiven.”

Your soul is not the only one that needs to hear them. Keep these truths handy so that you can spit them at the accuser the next time he condemns you. He knows you’ll be too handicapped to live in consistent victory until you believe who and what God says you are.

FEBRUARY 28

They conquered him by the
blood of the Lamb and by the
word of their testimony. Revelation 12:11



I'm talking to you, not to your preacher or your Bible study teacher. Your legacy can still be having an impact in a dozen generations if Christ tarries. You don't have to look a certain way, receive a certain gift, attend a certain church, practice a certain kind of ministry, or establish a nonprofit organization.

All you need for being mighty in your generation is faith and the Word of God. Through Jesus Christ you can absolutely, unequivocally do anything God places before you. This includes (among other things) getting that stinkin' enemy off your Promised Land!

FEBRUARY 29

You welcomed it not as a human message,
but as it truly is, the message of God, which
also works effectively in you believers.

1 Thessalonians 2:13



Unlike any other text, the Word of God has supernatural effects for those who receive it by faith. When we receive it by reading it, meditating on it, believing it, and applying it, the life of the Word becomes lively in us.

The power of God's Word becomes powerful in us. The activity of the Word becomes active in us. The operations of the Word become operative in us. The energy of the Word becomes energizing in us. The effectiveness of the Word becomes effective in us. It invades every part of our being, even the marrow of our bones and the motives of our hearts.

MARCH



MARCH 1

When we put bits into the
mouths of horses to make them obey us,
we also guide the whole animal.

James 3:3



A vital element in learning to walk by faith and obedience is learning to *talk* by faith and obedience. We might think of it like this: God's words are *omnipotent*. Our words are *potent*.

Both the Bible and our own personal experience teach us that human words possess a great deal of power. James 3:4 compares the tongue to a small rudder with the power to steer a large ship. James 3:6 compares the tongue to a fire that can corrupt and set aflame the whole person. Our words are potent no matter how we use them, but what would happen if we allowed God to take hold of them?

MARCH 2

Your speech should always be gracious,
seasoned with salt, so that you may know
how you should answer each person.

Colossians 4:6



For months I had small-talked with a beautiful Indian woman, a Muslim, who works at my neighborhood dry cleaners. One day she leaned over the counter with surprising warmth and asked, “Mrs. Moore, what do you do for a living?” To my delight, she was very touched when I told her. I believe she wasn’t turned off because the timing was right.

God had intrigued this precious woman through simple small talk and graciously gave me favor with her. You also have countless occasions for God to turn what seems to be meaningless chatter into powerful, affecting expression.

MARCH 3

The God before whom my fathers Abraham
and Isaac walked, the God who has been my
shepherd all my life to this day.

Genesis 48:15



I have made a lot of memories with my family—memories that seem engraved on my mind forever. My relationship with God, however, preceded my present family and proceeded long after my mother died. In other words, my longest and most effectual history with anyone has been with God Himself.

So I have loved Him longer, known Him better, and experienced life with Him more intimately than with anyone else. God and I have made some memories together. Hard ones. Good ones. As-tounding ones. You don't have to know God long to make memories with Him.

MARCH 4

The LORD your God dried up the waters of
the Jordan before you ... just as the LORD
your God did to the Red Sea.

Joshua 4:23



Yes, the Israelites had been in a situation like this before. After observing their first Passover, the Red Sea stood between them and freedom. God parted those waters and the people passed through on dry ground, only to fall into a wilderness drought of unbelief.

At the Jordan they received a doover—a new opportunity to walk through parted waters. They could remain in the wilderness or proceed to their Promised Land by faith. Choosing to believe, they made the right decision. The old cycle was broken, and a new cycle ushered them into their destiny—by faith.

MARCH 5

He said to them, “If anyone wants
to be My follower, he must deny himself,
take up his cross, and follow Me.”

Mark 8:34



Sometimes the greatest proof of God’s miraculous power is when an attention-deficit seeker of instant gratification denies himself, takes up his cross, and follows Christ ... for the long haul.

When we look back at our lives, our favorite parts are those stones of remembrance—major places where God did something big or where we acted in bold faith. But *God’s* favorite parts are the lines in between where we chose to walk faithfully without answers and visible evidences. This is what fans the flame of God’s desire to show us His glory. Faithfulness invests in the future.

MARCH 6

The LORD threw them into
confusion before Israel. He defeated them
in a great slaughter at Gibeon.
Joshua 10:10



Dear One, God doesn't just want us to defend ourselves in fierce seasons of battle. He wants us to wound the kingdom of darkness.

I remember **Keith** and I watching one of the early ***Rocky*** sequels. We stared at the screen while Apollo Creed pummeled Rocky's poor face without getting a single return punch. Keith leaned over to me and said, "That's the old 'let 'em hit you in the face till they're tired' trick."

Some of us think that if we just stand there and let Satan hit us long enough, he'll get tired. He's not getting tired! **Hit** him back, for crying out loud!

MARCH 7

Above all, keep your love for
one another at full strength, since love
covers a multitude of sins.

1 Peter 4:8



You might be relieved to know that we can love others without feeling all warm and fuzzy. One of the distinctions of *agape*, the Greek word most commonly translated “love” in the New Testament, is the active participation of the will.

In other words, *agape* is a love that’s not only exercised when we feel like it. It is exercised when we choose to extend God’s love as an act of our will—often a sacrificial act of our will. Sometimes our only motivation for doing so is obedience to God. But when we’re willing, we’re succinctly told in 1 Corinthians 13:8 that “love never fails.”

MARCH 8

If you do not stand
firm in your faith, then you
will not stand at all.

Isaiah 7:9



God seems to work in themes with me. I wonder if you've experienced something similar. "Love Me" seemed to be His theme for my twenties; "Love Me and Know Me" for my thirties; "Love Me, Know Me, and Believe Me" became His mouthful for my forties.

"Believe Me." These two words now echo unceasingly in my mind.

Faith is the way believers jump on board with God and participate in countless wonderful things He has a mind to do. And faith is what happens when believers *believe*—not just here and there in crises but as a lifestyle. "Believe Me."

MARCH 9

He has given us very great and
precious promises, so that through them
you may share in the divine nature.

2 Peter 1:4



Beloved, God has made us many wonderful promises. Real ones. Numerous ones. Promises of things like all-surpassing power, productivity, peace, and joy, even while occupying these jars of clay. Few of us will argue the theory, but why aren't more of us living the reality? Would we know His blessing if we saw it?

Blessing is defined by neither ease nor worldly possessions nor pain-free existence nor stock-market successes. Blessing is bowing down to receive the expressions of divine favor that in the inner recesses of the human heart make life worth the bother.

MARCH 10

They all ate the same spiritual food, and all
drank the same spiritual drink.... But God
was not pleased with most of them.

1 Corinthians 10:3–5



Unbelief. That was the problem with the children of Israel after the exodus from Egypt. Oh, they believed in God. Their oversight was that they didn't believe the God they believed in. They talked a good talk, but their walk did nothing but tread sandal tracks in the desert.

God promised His chosen people land, blessing, productivity, victory. But the masses never saw their theology become reality. The question raised in the wilderness was not whether Israel belonged to God or where they would spend eternity. The question was where they would spend their earthly existence.

MARCH 11

Don't go near it, so that you can
see the way to go, for you haven't
traveled this way before.

Joshua 3:4



When the children of Israel were gathered on the banks of the Jordan with the Promised Land in sight, God gave Joshua instructions for their departure from the wilderness. They were to follow the ones carrying the ark of the covenant, “for you haven’t traveled this way before.”

Even those who practice a highly active belief in God haven’t already arrived at every God-scheduled destination. If they had, He would have already swept them up to heaven, where our faith walk ends. Like the Israelites, we’ve still got places to go with God. And we’ve never been this way before.

MARCH 12

Among all the wise people of the
nations and among all their kingdoms,
there is no one like You.

Jeremiah 10:7



I don't think the biggest threat to our theology is humanism or the host of world religions. Our biggest threat is cut-and-paste Christianity. If man places his faith in a god he has recreated in his own image, has he placed his faith in God at all?

On the other hand, a man or woman can believe enough of Scripture to accept Christ as Savior but refuse to accept who He additionally says He is. I am Keith's wife, but what if he didn't accept the fact that I was also the mother of his children? With a broken heart, I would wonder how he could say he knows me at all.

MARCH 13

Keep asking, and it will be given to you.
Keep searching, and you will find. Keep
knocking, and the door will be opened.

Matthew 7:7



One reason why we witness fewer miracles and wonders today is because we are a dreadfully unbelieving generation, particularly in the prosperous West. Reports of miracles come out of Third World countries where all they have is faith.

The reason I can spot unbelieving believers pretty readily is because it takes one to know one. I was at the front of the line for many years. But we are caught in a tragic cycle. We believe little because we see little, so we see little and continue to believe little. It's time we dropped this wobbling cycle for a form of transportation that really gets us somewhere.

MARCH 14

Let us lay aside every weight and the sin that
so easily ensnares us ... keeping our eyes on
Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith.

Hebrews 12:1–2



Though I know that wonders haven't ceased because I've seen and experienced them myself, I won't argue that according to His sovereignty, God may have greater purpose and higher priorities for widespread miracles in some generations and geographies than others.

But my argument is that we could use some profound works of God in our here and now, and He may just be waiting for us to muster up some corporate belief and start asking Him. Why can't the day of miracles be now? Why must it wait? Could God even now be waiting for a fresh revival of faith?

MARCH 15

Jesus said to her, “Didn’t I tell you
that if you believed you would
see the glory of God?”
John 11:40



Don't lose heart and think you already see the handwriting on the wall: "I may as well accept that God will be most glorified by my not getting the miracle I so desperately want or think I need." Check out Scripture! God was often glorified through the miracle that blessed only temporally.

To Martha, who was grieving the death of her brother, Christ revealed His glory by raising Lazarus from the dead. Don't assume to know how God will be most glorified. Ask for the miracle, and let our sovereign, wise, and long-range planning God measure the glory.

MARCH 16

You did not receive a spirit of
slavery to fall back into fear, but you
received the Spirit of adoption.

Romans 8:15



If our stubborn minds would absorb that we are accepted by God because of Jesus Christ, our choices and subsequent behaviors would be profoundly affected.

Think about the impact of this for a moment. What is a bigger contributor to consistent defeat than insecurity? How many foolish decisions does it motivate? I made some of my worst choices in an attempt to be accepted.

In our search for the root of our self-destructive tendencies, all we have to do is follow the stem of insecurities. But no matter how long we've been in bondage to it, we don't have to stay that way.

MARCH 17

Put on the full armor of God
so that you can stand against
the tactics of the Devil.

Ephesians 6:11



I remember when one of my dear friend's sons tried out for the football team. He was so thin the pads just made him look normal. And his first game was against a team who obviously ate their Wheaties.

The first time a large player ran toward him, he steeled himself for the hit. But in the split second before collision, a survival reflex seemed to take over. He stepped aside and motioned as if to say, "By all means, go right ahead."

Don't think for a moment that Satan is going to slow down when he sees you in the way. Prepare yourself in advance so you won't be caught off guard.

MARCH 18

My word that comes from My mouth
will not return to Me empty, but it will
accomplish what I please.

Isaiah 55:11



God doesn't speak just to hear the sound of His own voice. Neither does He speak to be heard by others. He speaks in order to accomplish.

It's a fact. God's Word possesses accomplishing power and achieving power. But I want it to have accomplishing and achieving power in me, in us. Thankfully, so does God. One of the most prominent changes we can make in our approach to God is becoming very intentional about thanking Him for the quickening power of His Word, claiming and believing that He is energizing it to achieve His desires, even at the moment we receive it.

MARCH 19

If anyone does not stumble in
what he says, he is a mature man who is
also able to control his whole body.

James 3:2



I'd like to suggest to you that we have no greater built-in vessel for the external expression of divine power than our mouths. Perhaps that's why Satan will do anything he can to set the tongue aflame with the fire of hell (James 3:6). He knows that whoever holds the tongue can often hold the whole man.

The tongues of God's people are meant to be set ablaze by the holy fire of heaven, achieving that which glorifies God. But a sanctified mouth is too unnatural to ever be coincidental. If we want it, we need to pursue it regularly and cooperate with God to receive it.

MARCH 20

In accordance with what is written, “
I believed, therefore I spoke,” we also
believe, and therefore speak.

2 Corinthians 4:13



Communication is the essence of relationship, and words are its clearest means. Imagine what could happen if we allowed God to take authority of our mouths and infuse our words with His power. Think about the positive impact we could have on our circumstances, our mates, our children, our neighbors, co-workers, friends, and those we serve.

Scripture tells us that if Christ's words are dwelling in us, the Holy Spirit will often effect powerful results when we pray and speak what we believe. Yes, power is applied when we speak in His name with faith.

MARCH 21

Come, you who are blessed by My Father,
inherit the kingdom prepared for you from
the foundation of the world.

Matthew 25:34



If you got deeply involved with Christ when you came to know Him—not just dabbling around or practicing your faith in halfhearted fashion—then you have a memorable history with Him no matter how brief your relationship with Christ has been.

The more you look back, however, the more you will see that He was also at work in you long before you accepted His Son as your Savior. He has undoubtedly been faithful to you, and your active remembrance of His faithfulness yesterday will greatly increase your willingness to trust Him today.

MARCH 22

The LORD your God is testing you to know
whether you love the LORD your God with
all your heart and all your soul.

Deuteronomy 13:3



Everyone who has been delivered from some area of bondage has also experienced times of testing. Whether or not we will forget God's faithfulness is definitely among the tests we're sure to face.

But whatever the course exam, the pop quizzes preparing us for it may include both successes and failures. Few Christians operate entirely at the extreme of no belief or unwavering belief. I believe God continues to test us in every area until we pass. Sometimes He even insists on an A. But He doesn't sit upon His throne with a fly swatter waiting to smack us at the first hint of doubt.

MARCH 23

Affliction produces endurance,
endurance produces proven character, and
proven character produces hope.

Romans 5:3–4



Sometimes we lay a crucial request before God, perhaps a life-and-death matter, and we want something fast and spectacular. Instead, God often directs us to keep walking around that Jericho day after day, repeating the same fundamental steps while nothing seems to happen.

Oh, it will. We must never stop believing it will. But in the meantime, we've got to keep walking and keep circling no matter how many times we've done it before and no matter how many times we're yet to do it. We may want a constant dose of dramatics, but God enjoys seeing the perseverance of simple, daily devotion.

MARCH 24

The great dragon was thrown out—
the ancient serpent ... the Devil and Satan,
the one who deceives the whole world.

Revelation 12:9



We've got a battle to fight if we're going to experience the victory God has prepared for us, and He wants us to dent the very gates of hell along the way.

There's no doubt, though, that fighting the good fight of faith takes energy! But then so do selfpity, anger, unforgiveness, and self-loathing. Each of us must decide where we're going to put our energy when the battle grows fierce.

Satan knows that "the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). He just hopes you don't know it, that he can distract you from painting the bull's-eye on him.

MARCH 25

It always protects, always trusts,
always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails.

1 Corinthians 13:7–8 (NIV)



I used to think this verse meant that love wouldn't fail to bring about the exact results I wanted. But “fail” actually portrays something that drops to the ground, thereby having no effect.

So with a better grasp on the concept these days, I can make you a bold, biblical promise: When you really love—difficultly and sacrificially—it never falls to the ground. Never. Not once. Not ever. God catches it even if no one else does. According His Word, we are incapable of loving in Jesus' name and for the sake of His sacrificial legacy for nothing. Love absolutely cannot fail.

MARCH 26

Indeed, we have all
received grace after grace
from His fullness.

John 1:16



Learning to practice action-verb faith in the midst of terribly difficult circumstances has been the most exhilarating adventure I've ever had. In words truer to my sanguine nature, it's been a blast. Not the trials, mind you, but the invitation to believe God for victory—and even favor—in the middle of them.

Oh yes, I've seen miracles. Some of them have been huge. But God's daily interventions have been what awed me the most and left me shaking my head that the God of the universe would be so attentive to my trivial challenges. Try Him and see if your experience is the same.

MARCH 27

Dear friends, do not believe
every spirit, but test the spirits to
determine if they are from God.

1 John 4:1



Wise you are if you want to “test” the spirit and proceed with caution on subject matter such as “Believing God.” I am as reluctant to pick up books on faith as anyone could possibly be. We live in a religious culture where faith practices have been distorted and twisted to serve man rather than God.

Our dilemma is whether or not we will allow the misuse of the topic to keep us from appropriate practices of faith. Bear in mind that most heresies are merely truths that have been twisted. Trust the Word to unravel it for you and to see it put into powerful practice.

MARCH 28

Therefore, while the promise remains
of entering His rest, let us fear so that
none of you should miss it.

Hebrews 4:1



Like the children of Israel, I believe many of us are wandering in the wilderness with the Promised Land just on the other side of the river. I'd like to suggest that God not only approves of New Testament believers applying the concept of a Promised Land, He insists on it. Our Promised Land and Sabbath rest may culminate in heaven, but an earthly Promised Land exists for you and me.

Your Promised Land is the place where God's personalized promises over your life become a living reality rather than a theological theory. He is inviting you to move there and to flourish.

MARCH 29

Now you, man of God, run from these things; but pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness.

1 Timothy 6:11



God places a huge premium on living, breathing faith. In fact, the more you search the Scriptures, the more you discover that nothing is more important to God than our faith.

But God is not the only one who puts a high priority on this issue of our faith. Satan also has no greater focus in a single one of our lives. Though he is no match for God, he is a powerful and dangerous foe of believing man and woman.

Not coincidentally, then—because the stakes are so high—both God and the devil are targeting our faith. They know faith works. We need to know it too.

MARCH 30

Fight the good fight for the faith; take hold of eternal life, to which you were called and have made a good confession.

1 Timothy 6:12



The shield is the armor's armor. The ancient warrior hoped the fiery dart never reached the helmet or the breastplate. A direct hit on any of the other defensive covers could still stun and bruise even if it didn't wound. His goal was to extinguish any oncoming dart with his shield in order to diffuse potential damage.

The same is true in *our* warfare. The toughest battles in our lives will invariably concern matters of faith—times when we're tempted to think God's Word and His ways won't work for us, that He has abandoned us or failed to come through for us. Lift high your shield of faith.

MARCH 31

You have done these things, and I kept silent;
you thought I was just like you. But I will
rebuke you and lay out the case before you.

Psalm 50:21



I believe one reason why we default to a lesser-God theology is our arrogant determination to define God differently than He defines Himself. All human attempts to define God cannot help but minimize Him.

We somehow want to neatly package God and make everything about Him explainable. We then decide that what's not explainable is not plausible. We try to make Him fit into our textbooks. We want Him to calm down, not be so ... God-ish. We decide we will only believe what we can humanly reconcile. And as a result, we abandon the way of faith.

APRIL



APRIL 1

Trust in the LORD with all
your heart, and do not rely on
your own understanding.

Proverbs 3:5



I have a friend who has struggled with extreme highs and lows, a malady finally diagnosed as bipolar disorder. From what she described, I'm not sure today's church couldn't be diagnosed with a spiritual case of something similar.

Two diametrically opposed teachings exist on the subject of faith and miracles, making us one body with a divided mind. The magnetic power pulling Christians to one extreme or the other is overwhelming. But so is man's insecure desire to be doctrinally black and white. We find great security in *always* and *never*; hence, our bipolar existence.

APRIL 2

The LORD said to Gideon, "I will deliver
you with the 300 men who lapped...
But everyone else is to go home."

Judges 7:7



We are certainly not the first generation missing widespread wonders. Gideon's generation found itself under terrible enemy oppression. They hid in strongholds and fell into an ineffectiveness far removed from their promised position. Impoverished, the Israelites cried out to the Lord for help. The rest is history.

But the precedent that God set in Gideon's generation offers me no small encouragement for today. Even if the masses do not welcome God to pour out a fresh anointing of faith upon His church, He can still perform wonders through a small army.

APRIL 3

Our momentary light affliction
is producing for us an absolutely
incomparable eternal weight of glory.

2 Corinthians 4:17



My friend Jennifer Rothschild is a singer and musician who writes, teaches Bible studies on video, and is the essence of grace and beauty. She has it all ... except for one thing. Jennifer is blind.

She would very much like to have her sight. She makes no bones about it. The complications of blindness are endless as she raises two boys she can't see. Yet in eternity, we'll have plenty of chances to ask Jennifer if she would have traded in her blindness for a life of mediocrity and greater independence from God. I think we can expect her to say no. She cooperated with God and got a greater yes.

APRIL 4

He put a new song in my mouth,
a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see
and fear, and put their trust in the LORD.

Psalm 40:3



I have a pretty messy conglomeration of early childhood victimization and a long-term history of defeat to thank for my deep insecurity and uncertainty. Actually, “self-torment” would be a better word for it. I suppose it’s the residual of a formerly self-destructive nature. Whatever it is, it waves like a red flag to the enemy: “Hit her right here! This is where she’s weakest! Aim here!”

God has to be omnipotent to have kept me out of the ditch for as long as He has, but just as surely, He was also omnipotent through my tumbles. Every time we fall, He is able to help us up.

APRIL 5

Do not be afraid or discouraged,
for the LORD your God is with
you wherever you go.
Joshua 1:9



God warned Joshua in the verse above not to fall for two of the most effective deterrents to a Promised Land existence: fear and discouragement.

Fear is the very factor that keeps many of us from fleshing out the biblical reality that we can “do all things through Christ” (Phil 4:13). We *can* do all things through Christ who strengthens us, but frankly we *won't* if we're too afraid to try.

Satan will do anything he can to scare us away from our God-ordained destinies. We must be on guard against the arsenal of psychological weapons he uses to keep our feet off promised ground.

APRIL 6

He replied to them, “My mother
and My brothers are those who hear
and do the word of God.

”Luke 8:21



As I sit before God on my back porch every morning, placing that day's schedule and petitions before Him in prayer, I receive my daily Bible reading like an athlete might eat an energy bar. I often read that day's portion aloud and actively participate in receiving it into my belief system. I take a moment to meditate on it, asking God to sow these words deep into my otherwise deceptive heart and even into my subconscious mind.

I count on those morning Scriptures to become active, energizing, and powerful in me that day. And they do. Because that's what they were meant to do.

APRIL 7

The revealed things belong to us
and our children forever, so that we may
follow all the words of this law.

Deuteronomy 29:29



One of the primary ways God sanctifies our tongues is to put His Word on it. As we've already seen, the first strategy God gave Joshua for living victoriously and successfully in the Promised Land was the command not to let the book of the Law "depart from [his] mouth" (Josh. 1:8). God wanted His Word to be on the tip of Joshua's tongue!

The Old Testament idea of meditation did not involve the thought life alone but also the mouth, repeating a precept of Scripture, talking it over while reflecting and thinking on it. May His Word be continually on our lips, as well.

APRIL 8

Do not despise the LORD'S instruction ...
for the LORD disciplines the one He loves,
just as a father, the son he delights in.

Proverbs 3:11–12



When we're actively trying to do what God says we can, yet we're consistently not getting the results His Word says we can expect, we are wise to consider possible obstacles. If our words continue to bear little fruit, the hindrance could be an unsanctified tongue.

As you consider the potential power blockage, keep in mind that your goal is to identify and remove hindrances to practicing the powerful voice God's Word tells us we can have. Feeling guilty or defeated is not the goal. His purposes are always redemptive, even when He is leading us to confront hard truth.

APRIL 9

A book of remembrance was written
before Him for those who feared Yahweh
and had high regard for His name.
Malachi 3:16



In order to strengthen our faith muscles, we should exert a little energy reflecting upon and memorializing times when God has openly demonstrated His faithfulness to us.

Think of the Israelites' path through the Jordan River as the step-by-step process through which God led His people to the Promised Land. See where you can retrace God's goodness to you.

Perhaps you've never forgotten many of His faithful acts, but have you ever actually recorded them? Will your children and descendants have any kind of written record of their heritage of faith?

APRIL 10

Carefully consider the path
for your feet, and all your ways
will be established.

Proverbs 4:26



I lived much of my life in a continuous cycle of defeat. Sin would always bring heartbreak. I'd confess and repent with all the energy I had. Then sooner or later, I'd cycle back into another pit.

But belief finally prevailed and the old cycle broke. He retested me in some past areas of defeat, and *finally* I began passing more than failing, believing more than disbelieving. Prevailing belief led me to a far more consistent state of abiding.

The same will be true of you on your own timetable with God. If you have not yet experienced this, I pray you will not rest until God takes you there.

APRIL 11

You are to labor six days and do
all your work, but the seventh day is a
Sabbath to the LORD your God.

Exodus 20:9–10



G. K. Chesterton wrote of a God who “is strong enough to exult in monotony. It is possible that God says every morning, ‘Do it again’ to the sun; and every evening, ‘Do it again’ to the moon.... It may be that God makes every daisy separately, but has never got tired of making them.”

Ours is a God who delights in a perfect concoction of creativity and order. Though He could have thought the entire cosmos into existence in a millisecond, He brought it about with great patience in six distinct increments. Then rested on the seventh. Then later insisted that His children do the same.

APRIL 12

See to it that no one falls short of the grace
of God and that no root of bitterness springs
up, causing trouble and by it, defiling many.

Hebrews 12:15



God alone can give us the daily dose of grace not to grow bitter in a long-term battle. But Satan will do everything he can to try keeping us from receiving the grace God extends.

One of his usual approaches is trying to convince us that God withholds His help after the fact if we didn't ask for it before. He wants us to believe that God is sitting on His throne huffing, "You got yourself into this mess; you can get yourself out." Beloved, I assure you that some of the most awesome things God has ever done for me have come out of the most awful things I'd done to myself.

APRIL 13

I have labored in vain, I have spent my
strength for nothing and futility; yet my
vindication is with the LORD.

Isaiah 49:4



Every effort we make to love sacrificially never fails to get the priority attention of God, to ultimately and undoubtedly be rewarded, and to have a profound effect either in the person we are trying to love or in the circumstance. Or in us.

And maybe even in God. Have you ever considered that when He took the chance of loving us, He also took the risk of being affected by us? Tears still sting my eyes when I think about situations where loving didn't yield the results I wanted. But my soul's consolation is knowing that none of the work fell to the ground. It's in God's hands. So is yours.

APRIL 14

If you remain in Me and My words
remain in you, ask whatever you want
and it will be done for you.

John 15:7



I finally came to a point in my Christian walk where I grew bone weary of inconsistency being my only constant in life. Occasional wisps of authentic spiritual living only multiplied my frustrations. I knew a place of fullness and effectiveness in Christ existed, but at best I was only a drop-in.

My soul needed a place it could live. I longed for my defeats to be infrequent visitations, not my victories. Beloved, our personalized lands of earthly promise are places we're invited by God to dwell in Christ. It's high time we stopped dropping in and started taking up residency.

APRIL 15

You have created all things,
and because of Your will they
exist and were created.

Revelation 4:11



We may as well accept faith challenges as a fact of life and not be shocked or feel picked on when they come. God brings them to build our faith, prove us genuine, and afford Himself endless excuses to reward us. He delights in nothing more than our choice to believe Him over what we see and feel.

The verse above adds an important dimension to our understanding of why God derives pleasure in our exercise of faith. Our ultimate purpose for existence is to please Him; therefore, if we don't exercise faith, we will never fulfill our reason for being.

APRIL 16

Joshua told the people, “Consecrate yourselves, because the LORD will do wonders among you tomorrow.

” Joshua 3:5



I love the definition of the Hebrew word *pala*, translated “wonders” in this verse from Joshua 3. In effect, God was saying to the Israelites, “If you set yourself apart to Me, I will distinguish Myself to you in ways more wonderful and miraculous than you have ever imagined.”

I want to behold and experience any wonder God is willing to reveal to me. I not only want to have faith enough for God to grant me my Promised Land, I want to see amazing exploits of God while I’m there. If so, then, my life needs to be consecrated through an active pursuit of increasing personal holiness.

APRIL 17

God, be exalted above
the heavens; let Your glory
be above the whole earth.

Psalm 57:5



Our pride and desperation to feel smart can make us unwilling to answer theological questions with the only human answer that exists to some of them: “I don’t know. But I know that what He says is true even when I can’t explain it or reconcile it with what has happened.”

All attempts at taking away the mystery and wonder that surround God leave Him something He is not. We cannot tame the Lion of Judah. There is a mystery, a wonder, and, yes, even a wildness about God we cannot take away from Him. Nor would we want to if we could somehow grasp the adventure of Him.

APRIL 18

We speak God's hidden wisdom
in a mystery, which God predestined
before the ages for our glory.

1 Corinthians 2:7



The Bible describes a God who is a thousand things to His children, even though some of these are beyond our ability to understand. So when people insist on humanly reasonable theologies to satisfy their need to believe, the lesser god they're buying is not the God of Scripture. We must beware of recreating an image of God that makes us feel better.

Of this I'm certain: If in our pursuit of greater knowledge God seems to have gotten smaller, we have been deceived, no matter how intelligent the deceiver seems or how well-meaning and sincere his or her doctrine.

APRIL 19

We don't see any signs for us.
There is no longer a prophet...
Why do You hold back Your hand?
Psalm 74:9, 11



God's people have long searched for missing miracles. The psalmists, who had heard with their ears but desperately wanted to see with their eyes, intimated that when God withheld wonders, His thinking people assumed something was wrong, and the wise rightly searched for the disconnection.

If in reality we are seeing fewer wonders of God in the midst of His people and through His people, shouldn't we as well inquire why? Are we not equally desperate? Is God no longer willing to intervene miraculously and wondrously in our behalf?

APRIL 20

We have this treasure in clay jars,
so that this extraordinary power may
be from God and not from us.

2 Corinthians 4:7



The ministry of the new covenant is the ministry of the Holy Spirit not just around, upon, and with believers but also inside believers. Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit to His disciples when He said, “He remains with you and will be in you” (John 14:17).

Meditate on the difference between “with” and “in.” The difference turned a band of fumbling scaredy-cats in the Gospel records into unparalleled powerhouses in the book of Acts and beyond. And the same work of the Spirit applies to us. The new covenant is an inward work with glorious manifestations.

APRIL 21

Those He predestined, He also called;
and those He called, He also justified; and
those He justified, He also glorified.

Romans 8:30



All of us who are believers in Christ have a calling. I am convinced God assigns our callings for a host of reasons, many of which serve a purpose in *us*, not just in those we will serve. God is the master of multitasking.

I don't think He'd be offended if I said that He purposely picks on something until He can get it to the surface. For example, God knew that what He called me to do would force me to deal with the deeply embedded thorns of my past. Therefore, our callings can be at stake if we are not willing to allow Him to deal with our insecurities.

APRIL 22

Moses responded to the people, “Don’t be afraid, for God has come to test you, so that you will fear Him and will not sin.”

Exodus 20:20



I have wrestled with a stronghold of fear much of my life. Like you, the combination of life’s challenges and a long list of loved ones provide the enemy no few opportunities to prey on my fears.

I have often heard the statistic that 90 percent of what we fear never comes to pass. Those statistics have certainly proved true in my experience, but God has taught me as much from the 10 percent as the 90. In fact, one of the ways God has cured my fears is by allowing a few of them to come to fruition. After the crisis came and went, He seemed to ask, “Beth, did you live through it?”

APRIL 23

Let the hearts of those who seek the
LORD rejoice. Search for the LORD and for
His strength; seek His face always.
1 Chronicles 16:10–11



I have loved God's Word for a long time, but my approach and expectation have changed dramatically as my confidence in Him has grown. In the old days, I used to expect a little direction and the increase of a little knowledge from my daily Bible reading. Therefore, those were the dividends I was most aware of receiving.

But I now add to those expectations things like liveliness, energy, and empowerment from the Word, counting on its effectiveness in advance. As I go through my day, meeting inevitable challenges and self-doubts, I depend on and expect Him to be strong in me. And He is.

APRIL 24

“Is not My word like fire”—
the LORD’S declaration—“and like
a sledgehammer that pulverizes rock?”
Jeremiah 23:29



Having God’s Word ready on the tip of our tongues has numerous advantages, one of which my husband, Keith, vividly illustrated the day he shot the head off a rattlesnake who had slithered across our path while we walked in the country.

As long as we’re armed, we can walk along leisurely and peacefully, because at a moment’s notice we are ready to shoot the head off that “ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan” (Rev. 12:9). Yes, having God’s Word on our hearts and on our lips is like having a loaded gun with us on our walks to and through our Promised Lands.

APRIL 25

Jesus told him, “Go away, Satan!
For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your
God, and serve only Him.’”
Matthew 4:10



Looking back to the rattlesnake story I mentioned yesterday, think of the head of the snake as representing authority. A stronghold is any way the devil tries to presume authority in our lives. If we belong to Christ, he has no right to exercise authority over us, but he hopes we're too ignorant regarding Scripture to know it. He hopes our gun isn't loaded.

In the wilderness of temptation, Christ set the best example of responding with the Word of God when under satanic assault. Knowing and claiming God's Word when attacked blows the head off enemy forces.

APRIL 26

Out of the same mouth come
blessing and cursing. My brothers, these
things should not be this way.

James 3:10



When Christ empowered His disciples to speak under His authority and to effect certain results, He treated the tongue as an instrument. The muscle itself has no spiritual power, of course. The understanding is that the Holy Spirit infuses power through it.

God can use our tongues to bring about stunning results, whether immediately or over time. He is not, however, likely to regularly infuse an instrument that is also employed for opposing purposes. In other words, the wrong use of the instrument can dramatically hinder its effectiveness with the right use.

APRIL 27

I will remember the LORD'S works;
yes, I will remember Your ancient wonders.

I will reflect on all You have done.

Psalm 77:11-12



I'd like to ask you to join me in personalizing the psalmist's words and apply his historical reference to "ancient wonders" to your own personal "long ago."

Try glancing back to see what treasures you can find, sometimes even in the midst of rubble. Like detectives at a scene, start looking for any visible fingerprints of your invisible God interspersed throughout your life.

He has been there all along, Beloved, even before you acknowledged Him as Savior. He is the living, infinite, eternal, omnipresent God who woos to His heart those who will draw near.

APRIL 28

If we live by the Spirit, we must also follow
the Spirit. We must not become conceited,
provoking one another,
envying one another. Galatians 5:25–26



No cycle—either of victory or defeat—is necessarily permanent as long as we dwell on this earth. Our patterns or cycles can change and spiral up ... or revert and spiral down. Unfortunately, the Israelites did not abide in the freedom and prosperity of their Promised Land indefinitely. The idolatry and disobedience that later led to Assyrian and Babylonian captivity grew from roots of prevailing unbelief.

You and I don't have to follow suit. The Spirit of the living Christ abides in us, bearing faithfulness as fruit. We won't walk in *perfect* faith for the rest of our lives, but we can walk in prevailing faith.

APRIL 29

At daybreak, LORD, You hear
my voice; at daybreak I plead my case
to You and watch expectantly.

Psalm 5:3



I have lived too much of my life in defeat to risk living in a gray zone. Certain disciplines are a part of my life, and to do otherwise—no matter how I'd label it— is disobedience. But though my morning almost always begins at the same table and chair, the sunrise surrounding me could be any number of colors. There is creativity even in sameness.

So sometimes I jump up and down; sometimes I go prostrate to the ground. Sometimes I pray Scripture. Other times I pray moans and groans. But pray, I must. It's God's will even when I can't tell if it's changing a thing.

APRIL 30

This is the confidence we have
before Him: whenever we ask anything
according to His will, He hears us.

1 John 5:14



Whether the circumstances that led to our fiercest battles are someone else's fault, our own fault, or the fruit of life's unfairness, having God as our Father grants us this hope: a perfect setup for catastrophic defeat is also the perfect setup for miraculous victory. No matter how we got into this mess, we just have to keep believing.

Those who decide to be preoccupied with believing God over all their negative emotions and other feelings to the contrary will sooner or later discover that God delights in answered prayer, no matter how big those prayers become.

MAY



MAY 1

Hope does not disappoint, because God's
love has been poured out in our hearts
through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Romans 5:5



Love is not a spiritual gift. Otherwise we'd all conveniently claim not to possess that particular anointing. Rather, love is a supreme and priority calling: the fruit of the Spirit of Christ within us that surfaces when we are filled by Him, yielded to His authority.

The chief reason we find loving so painful, aggravating, and fruitless is because we keep trying to love with the pitifully small resources of our own emotional tank. The only way to love others—our spouses, our enemies, our inlaws, our betrayers, our parents—is by faith, not by feeling. We love by faith!

MAY 2

The LORD your God is bringing you into a good land ... where you will eat food without shortage, where you will lack nothing Deuteronomy 8:7, 9



As much as any other characteristic of the Promised Land, God said it would be fruitful. Many of us have heard it characterized as a land of “milk and honey,” but additional Scriptures (like Deuteronomy 8:7–9) are far more descriptive.

This is not a description of *some* fruit but of *much* fruit, as is the description from John 15:8 about our bearing fruit as Jesus’ disciples. Yes, your Father wants to show His glory by bearing tremendous fruit through you. Your personalized Promised Land is the abiding place where you get to see God keep the promise of a great harvest through your life.

MAY 3

Keep the LORD'S commands
and statutes I am giving you today,
for your own good.
Deuteronomy 10:13



Especially if you haven't yet developed a trust relationship with God, the concept of living your entire life to please Him may unnerve or even offend you. Believe me, I understand.

I, too, have battled tremendous trust issues in every relational dimension. I have not always found man (nor myself) to be trustworthy, but I can say that God has never failed to live up to His Word in our relationship. I believe you will find Him trustworthy, too.

God is for us, Dear One. Even His commands (as Deuteronomy 10:13 says) are for our safety, liberty, and blessing.

MAY 4

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea
Philippi, He asked His disciples, “Who do
people say that the Son of Man is?”

Matthew 16:13



I can't count the mothers who have told me they were looking for a Christian school where their children could get “a good education and learn a little something about God.” Be careful that your children are not learning that God is a “little something.”

There is no such thing as a flawless church or a flawless Christian school or university, because they are full of flawed people just like me. But we don't have to accept a lesser-God theology just because it's prevalent. We can make our own life's pursuit the God of Scripture, not just who man says He is.

MAY 5

Will You prolong Your anger for all
generations? Will You not revive us again
so that Your people may rejoice in You?

Psalm 85:5–6



We are surrounded by a dying, depraved world, mounting violence, the threat of mass destruction, and a surging fury of satanic assault and seduction. We are told churches are in terrible decline. Many pastors and leaders are depressed.

We are desperate for the wonders and miracles of God. We need Him to show His mighty arm and tell the world that He is alive, active, and very much with us. We need more than the best programs and planning can accomplish. Oh, that we would fall on our faces and cry out to God for more than we may even have the courage or imagination to ask.

MAY 6

Let us be glad, rejoice, and give Him glory,
because the marriage of the Lamb has come,
and His wife has prepared herself.

Revelation 19:7



I believe God's greatest priorities in the age between the establishment of the New Testament church and the latter days are internal ones. Therefore, one of the chief responsibilities of the bride of Christ in this age is to make herself ready for Jesus, her Bridegroom.

Christ will return for a pure bride, a state of being that necessitates deep, internal works. God's eyes are fastened with eternal intentions on the inner man. That's why sometimes God may prioritize performing a miracle on our hearts and minds over a miracle concerning our circumstances.

MAY 7

The LORD will strike Egypt, striking and
healing. Then they will return to the LORD
and He will hear their prayers.

Isaiah 19:22



If God wanted to force me to face my insecurities head-on, He certainly chose an effective calling for me. Trust me on this: if you're insecure, you don't want to stand up in front of an audience and speak. Nor do you want to turn in a manuscript to editors. What I've been called to do exposes me constantly to criticism—both constructive and otherwise.

But His reason for surfacing the destructive parts of us is so we will face them and cooperate as He uproots and heals our wounds. God will put you in a position to wrestle with your identity and choose whom you believe: Him or you.

MAY 8

Therefore, I will most gladly boast
all the more about my weaknesses, so that
Christ's power may reside in me.
2 Corinthians 12:9



Every now and then I ask those gathered in an audience how many have gotten through something that they believed beforehand they couldn't bear. Hands never fail to raise all over the auditorium.

Living through something we were sure we couldn't endure gives us a small glimpse of our inner man's immortality and is clear evidence that the "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" promise works for us, too. None of us particularly like the face-it-until-you-get-over-it approach to fear banishment, but it can certainly be effective. Yes, you can make it, God and you.

MAY 9

Pay attention to my words; listen closely to my sayings... For they are life to those who find them, and health to one's whole body.

Proverbs 4:20, 22



When I study God's Word, I often ask that He'll make me a healthier person in any way He sees fit as a direct result. I ask the same thing for my children and my husband. Likewise, I ask God to send forth His healing words to those who participate in the Bible studies He has given me.

I will joyfully receive any application of that precept He desires, whether it is a work toward spiritual, emotional, mental, or physical wholeness. I continually count on God's Word accomplishing greater wholeness in every true hearer, no matter what form it takes.

MAY 10

All Scripture is inspired by God and
is profitable for teaching, for
rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness.

2 Timothy 3:16



We can read the Scripture for hours, but if we don't receive it by faith, it doesn't abide in us, bringing its vitality, energy, and effectiveness. We may be encouraged by it, but we are neither empowered nor changed.

But if we do receive it by faith— thereby accepting it into our belief system—we might think of the practice like inhaling a breath of faith, like receiving spiritual CPR. Then when we choose to speak what we believe, we might think of ourselves as exhaling that same breath into speech, speaking it over our specific circumstances.

MAY 11

I will meditate on Your precepts and
think about Your ways. I will delight in Your
statutes; I will not forget Your word.

Psalm 119:15–16



It's true that making a reasonable, livable lifestyle of believing and speaking God's Word is like living on the CPR of the Holy Spirit. Don't try to make something mystical out of this. Actually, nothing is more practical. The idea is that the more we believe the Word and then take the opportunity to speak that same Word, concept, or application, the more we actively live and breath faith.

This practice can take place through reading Scripture aloud, memorizing it, meditating on it, or seizing opportunities to discuss it with others. Try some of these yourself today.

MAY 12

Rid yourselves of all
wickedness, all deceit, hypocrisy,
envy, and all slander.

1 Peter 2:1



You and I want to be people to whom God can entrust a spiritually powerful voice. Let's allow the Holy Spirit to alert us to some misuses of the tongue that can greatly diffuse its spiritual effectiveness:

Gossip. Lying. Profanity. Perversity. Unkindness. Complaining. Disrespect. Negativism. Criticism. Breaking a confidence. Using inappropriate humor. De-meaning others. Misuse of God's name— not just taking His name in vain but using it loosely, casually. We can only imagine how reluctant God might be to infuse our prayers with power when we use our tongues for inappropriate purposes.

MAY 13

But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit ...
will teach you all things and remind you
of everything I have told you.

John 14:26



Imagine all the spiritual implications of an active memory in our walk with God. Without a doubt, memory is a vital part of the learning process and is also a vital part of the faith-building process.

Perhaps you're already trying to think back over your past, recalling specific evidences of God's activity. Though you may be convinced He's been there for you all along, you may be drawing a mental blank on many precise instances.

But you can enlist the Holy Spirit's help in remembering acts of God's faithfulness—the kind of positive memory retrieval that edifies rather than terrifies.

MAY 14

The LORD then said to Joshua, “
Today I have rolled away the
disgrace of Egypt from you.”
Joshua 5:9



God wants to roll away all your disgrace and reproach. But don't miss the fact that God rolled away Israel's reproach after reconfirming the rite of covenantal circumcision (Josh. 5:2) and observing their obedience to His command.

Yes, a wounding of sorts took place before the Israelites were released to live fruitfully in their land of promise. Uhhuh, been there. So have many others. I don't know a single person who truly seems to bear the mark of God's presence and power in his or her life who hasn't been asked by God to be obedient in a way that was dramatically painful.

MAY 15

You took off your former way of life, the old man that is corrupted by deceitful desires ...
being renewed in the spirit of your minds.

Ephesians 4:22–23



Think of our reproach as the vestiges of what we still insisted on wearing from our old wardrobe, whether these telltale actions occurred before or after our salvation. At the risk of being a bit graphic, it was that which Christ circumcised but we tried to keep as a cover.

This wardrobe problem of ours (our unwillingness to take off some things) is a mental issue, really. Though we were totally changed on the inside when we were made new creatures in Christ, our minds often take time to be renewed. We're far more likely to *act* like the old man of sin when we still *feel* like him.

MAY 16

Satisfy us in the morning with
Your faithful love so that we may shout
with joy and be glad all our days.
Psalm 90:14



A long time ago I had to quit giving myself the option of whether or not to rise in the morning for prayer and spend time in the Word that day. These fundamentals are a part of my life. Though I may practice these disciplines in different ways, I do them virtually every day.

Why so? Because God seems to like them. Picture God nudging you and me awake before dawn because He can hardly wait to be with us. Then as we make our sleepy way to the usual meeting place, imagine Him saying something rather like G. K. Chesterton suggested: “Do it again, child!”

MAY 17

The sun stood still and the
moon stopped, until the nation took
vengeance on its enemies.

Joshua 10:13



Somewhere in the process of facing five-to-one odds against the Canaanite armies, Joshua received a word from God that He was going to give them victory. But don't think for a moment the Israelites could stand back and watch.

This wasn't a "be still" moment. Nor was it a "stand still" moment. Certainly it was a "wield your sword" moment, but the relentless demand threw it into a "100 percent/all you've got" moment. God gave them an awesome victory, but He required every ounce of energy and cooperation they had in the process. He does that sometimes.

MAY 18

Now these three remain:
faith, hope, and love. But the
greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13:13



Living *agape* is a daily commitment of the will to vacate the premises of the heart with its own preferential affections, and to make its chambers a fleshy canteen for the liquid love of God.

Yes, it's still a challenge, but it's no longer the impossible dream. We live by faith. We love by faith. Faith and love are inseparable housemates that offer hospitality to hope. When we lose our faith to love, we lose the energy to love. Then we lose our hope.

Beloved, when all is said and done, living is for loving. This is our daily hope: faith expressing itself through love.

MAY 19

A land of wheat, barley, vines,
figs, and pomegranates; a land
of olive oil and honey.

Deuteronomy 8:8



God has far more in mind than bringing forth one kind of fruit from your life. The harvest God desires to produce has the potential of abounding variety.

You and I weren't called to become machines of mass-but-monotonous production. Just when we decide our lives are all about figs, God starts mixing in some pomegranates.

Have you too quickly decided that what you've done or what you're doing is all you'll ever do? Ah, God's far too creative for that. May He use your present journey of life to shake up some soil and show you what all can grow there.

MAY 20

The fruit of the light results in all
goodness, righteousness, and truth—
discerning what is pleasing to the Lord.

Ephesians 5:9–10



God calls us to surrender our own agendas on the altar of His will, knowing that His will for us is good, pleasing, and perfectly suited. When all is said and done, the biggest sacrifices of our lives will be the times when we chose our own way and forfeited God's pleasing will for us.

The last thing Satan wants, however, is for God to be pleased. Satan's ultimate gripe is with God. His chief goal is to get back at God for not putting up with his arrogance and his desire to be "like the Most High" (Isa. 14:14). He cannot touch God, so he does everything he can to get to His heart by getting to His children.

MAY 21

He touched their eyes,
saying, "Let it be done for you
according to your faith!"

Matthew 9:29



The pleasure of God is not the only premium at stake in our exercise of faith. Both God and Satan know that faith works. Its God-ordained dividends are astronomical. Unfortunately, so are the costs of its absence.

Biblically speaking, faith is without equal in its effects upon the human life, precisely because God is without equal and because faith is the normative invitation that He answers with proof. Christ can operate any way He desires in our lives, but His usual mode of operation regarding His followers is "according to your faith."

MAY 22

Even if we have known Christ
in a purely human way, yet now we
no longer know Him like that.

2 Corinthians 5:16



Great wisdom is found in having the courage to take an inventory of how we have developed our present perceptions of God and how biblically accurate they are. Many people and factors can influence who we've come to believe God is: our parents, our teachers, our friends, our enemies, our experiences, our health, our hardships. Many more come into play.

Have these factors led us to believe that God is who He says He is? Someone less? Or someone simply different? As we ask ourselves hard questions, keep in mind that faith unchallenged ordinarily remains unchanged.

MAY 23

LORD, Your name endures
forever, Your reputation, LORD,
through all generations.
Psalm 135:13



God has the power and authority to grant anything on our list, A–Z. All the resources of heaven belong to Him. Even if something I've asked for necessitates a miracle, without hesitation I believe my God can accomplish it.

When I'm in heaven, however, I am certain I will esteem the greatest miracle of all to be godly offspring who brought Him glory from such formerly sinful and enslaved parents. God has performed miracles in my behalf—even physical healing—but Keith and I consider the greatest miracle to be the way He is transforming our family line. How about you?

MAY 24

For we also are weak in Him,
yet toward you we will live with
Him by God's power.
2 Corinthians 13:4



Perhaps like some of you, I remake the decision almost every single day to believe I am who God says I am. The fact that I have not refused this public vocation or quit when the going got tough is a testimony to the pure tenacity of God to demand that I believe Him.

I share this with you because I have a feeling some of you can relate. Has God placed you in a position that seems to stir up every insecurity you have? Take it personally, Dear One. He's stirring it up to scoop it out—often one spoonful at a time. This is the path He often takes on the way to our God-ordained destiny.

MAY 25

Since it was out of ignorance that I
had acted in unbelief, I received mercy,
and the grace of our Lord overflowed.

1 Timothy 1:13–14



I often associate certain songs with certain seasons of my life. One morning I insisted to God that I could not bear a set of circumstances that appeared inevitable in front of me. A song came to my mind with the following lyric: “You’re not as strong as you think you are.” Only this time, one word was different: “You’re not as *weak* as you think you are.”

Our insistence that “I could never survive if that happened to me” is not only an insult to the people who have already survived something similar. It’s an insult to a wonderful thing called grace. Where need abounds, grace more abounds.

MAY 26

Your words were found, and I ate them.

Your words became a delight to me
and the joy of my heart.

Jeremiah 15:16



If your expectation of God's Word in your life has been small, I ask you to consider giving it far more credit. Second Timothy 3:16 (NIV) says, "All Scripture is God-breathed," so don't just read it like any other inspirational or instructional text. Inhale it!

Try Jeremiah's approach while you're at it. Don't just *read* God's words. Receive them like a famished man at a feast. Ask God to cause it to abide in you and to bring its properties of effervescent life, power, and effectiveness with it. How about something moving into your life with some *positive* baggage for a change?

MAY 27

One generation will declare Your works to
the next and will proclaim Your mighty acts.

I will speak of ...Your wonderful works.

Psalm 145:4–5



How does inhaling (through believing) and exhaling a fresh breath of faith (through speaking) work? I'm not suggesting berating people with Scripture. In terms of our analogy, we might call that “bad breath.” A fresh word comes out of our mouths with fresh breath.

Remember: the Spirit of truth plus the Word of truth equals internal combustion. We take the passion and life of what is happening within us and externalize it through speech—not just for the sake of being heard but for the ultimate purpose of accomplishing and achieving in the image of our Creator.

MAY 28

Christ has liberated us into freedom.
Therefore stand firm and don't submit
again to a yoke of slavery.
Galatians 5:1



In various ways, all of us have blessed with one breath and cursed with the next. We've all been tempted to talk one way in our spiritual relationships and another way in our worldly relationships. Inconsistency may be common, but it is also costly. We pay the price with powerlessness more often than we know.

But living with less regret over our hastily spoken words is freedom indeed! Imagine the liberty of not needing to worry about someone discovering we broke a confidence or talked unkindly behind her back. God's way is always the path to freedom—powerful freedom.

MAY 29

It is foolish to spread a net where any bird
can see it, but they set an ambush to kill
themselves; they attack their own lives.

Proverbs 1:17–18



No sin, no matter how momentarily pleasurable, comforting, or habitual is worth missing what God has for us. Sin can undoubtedly cost us our earthly destinies—yes, even the sin of our mouths. No matter how stubborn the tongue or how habitual our problem, God can make it a vessel of honor and power.

But lasting change demands prayer and attentive determination, because bad habits are not easily broken. The dividends, however, are huge. Daily dependency on God develops unmatched intimacy, and a clean mouth unplugs a primary pipe of divine power.

MAY 30

When the Spirit of truth comes, He will
guide you into all the truth... He will
also declare to you what is to come.

John 16:13



When you and I received Christ, the Spirit of God took up immediate residency inside of us as our able Counselor and our blessed Reminder—not to provoke deeply embedded, traumatic memories but to quicken the memory of God's faithful provision and His revealed presence along the way.

So ask the Holy Spirit to remind you of the works of Jesus throughout your life: His presence, His activity, and many of the things He has taught and revealed to you. Like a river spilling into the sea, actively remembering God in our past spills into believing God for our future.

MAY 31

Clean out the old yeast so that you may be
a new batch, since you are unleavened. For
Christ our Passover has been sacrificed.

1 Corinthians 5:7



Many of you remember *The Scarlet Letter*, the novel that wardrobeed its protagonist in a stigma or sign of reproach. But “A” is not the only letter a person can feel she is wearing. Some of us have looked like we spilled alphabet soup on our sweaters.

Beloved, if you are wearing any kind of reproach from your past—especially if victimization has placed a letter there that never belonged on you—may God remind you of the cross of Christ and memorialize the victory it brought you. Let Him cut that old piece of fabric from your life, roll it in the blood of Jesus, and cast it away forever.

JUNE



JUNE 1

His mercies never end.
They are new every morning;
great is Your faithfulness!

Lamentations 3:22–23



God likes order. He likes repetition. A God of fundamentals, He brings up the sun every morning and the moon every evening. Still, I sometimes feel like the phrases I habitually use in prayer and the topics I'm most burdened to teach are surely getting old to God.

In reality, as long as He sees a genuine heart, He never gets tired of some of the same old words and practices that flow from it. God's mercies have existed throughout all of eternity, yet Scripture tells us they are new every morning. A new day with all its fresh challenges gives an old practice new life.

JUNE 2

The LORD answered Moses,
“I will do this very thing you have asked,
for you have found favor in My sight.”

Exodus 33:17



Moses' encounter with God in this scene from Exodus 33 is unmatched in Scripture. Moses placed his request before God, “Please let me see Your glory,” and the Lord said, “I will cause all My goodness to pass in front of you” (verses 18–19). Moses became an eyewitness to the glory of God!

But why did he get to experience such a thing? Maybe because he had guts enough to ask. God glories in big prayers from people who have a big God. If, like Moses, our chief desire is for God to show His glory, God may delight in giving us our own special glimpse in the process.

JUNE 3

Don't do that! I am a fellow slave
with you and your brothers who have the
testimony about Jesus. Worship God.

Revelation 19:10



If you become a person who makes a life-style of believing God, you will become bolder in your love for others and what you're willing to believe God for in their lives. Your fruit is going to start showing, and so is the power of your prayer life.

But along the way, people around you are liable to start holding you responsible for God's actions. Trust me, I've been there. Scripture has a good name for what some people try to make of those who live with active faith: false christs. People are so desperate to find Christ, they willingly manufacture Him out of a mortal with any vague resemblance. Be wary.

JUNE 4

We are His creation—created in Christ
Jesus for good works, which God prepared
ahead of time that we should walk in them.

Ephesians 2:10



If you can't imagine God ever delivering you from the corruption of your evil desires and bringing forth a great harvest through your life, you've bought into the lie that God's promises don't apply to you. Beloved, they do!

God knew you before you were formed in your mother's womb and planned good works for you that would bring forth much fruit. According to Acts 17:26, He even determined the times and places set for you to live on planet Earth most conducive to your personalized harvests. You don't have to cooperate, but God's power is there when you do.

JUNE 5

I pray that the eyes of your heart
may be enlightened so you may know
what is the hope of His calling.

Ephesians 1:18



Our glorious inheritance in Christ is not meant for heaven alone. The primary context of Ephesians 1 is the impact of our heavenly inheritance on our earthly existence.

But don't miss the word "hope" in the verse above. Nothing about your calling or mine is compulsory. God is going to accomplish His agenda regarding heaven and earth no matter what you and I do, but we get to decide whether we're going to be part of His process in our generation. Our callings remain a hope until we allow the eyes of our hearts to be enlightened and choose to accept them.

JUNE 6

Show me your faith
without works, and I will show
you faith from my works.

James 2:18



When I use the phrase “believing God,” you can think of it interchangeably with having faith in God. I prefer the former expression because it has a far stronger implication of action. Faith is not just something you have. Faith is something you do. It can turn a noun into a verb quicker than you can say, “See Spot run.”

Picture the page from an old first-grade primer. Spot wasn’t *about* to run, future tense. Nor was he in a past-tense heap of exhaustion by his water bowl. “See Spot run” inferred he could presently be caught in the act of running. We want a present-tense faith!

JUNE 7

I also say to you that you are Peter, and on
this rock I will build My church, and the
forces of Hades will not overpower it.

Matthew 16:18



Just a few verses after Jesus proclaimed Peter's future place of authority by saying, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (verse 19), Peter rebuked Him for having the audacity to suggest that He would "suffer many things from the elders, chief priests, and scribes" (verse 21). Had Peter had his way, he would have bound the cross and unknowingly loosed the world from any hope of salvation.

God doesn't sit upon His throne saying, "Oops, I wouldn't have done that, but now that you have, I guess I'll go with it." Remember, God doesn't work for us; we work for God.

JUNE 8

Whatever you bind on earth is already
bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on
earth is already loosed in heaven.

Matthew 16:19



God has invited us to participate in kingdom affairs and, yes, even in kingdom authority under the rule of His righteous will. He extends staggering power to those willing to think with the mind of Christ rather than the mind of man. God would also empower His children to bind untold evils and strongholds if we'd believe Him and cooperate with Him. Talk about abundant life!

God is looking for stewards who are willing to bind their own unbelief in the mighty name of Jesus and loose a fresh anointing of faith onto the topsoil of earth. Are you game?

JUNE 9

It is necessary to pass
through many troubles on our way
into the kingdom of God.

Acts 14:22



Many of the miracles we seek are toward the further avoidance of difficulty, pain, or suffering. Nothing is wrong with that. We have a blessed biblical precedent to ask repeatedly for thorns to be removed before we accept them as God's sovereign appointment for a greater work.

But we always need to remember: Suffering has an undeniable role in the New Testament and under the new covenant. Recognizing the role of suffering helps us understand a little more readily why God is able to perform a miracle He may not choose to perform. It's a matter of His priorities.

JUNE 10

What does the Scripture say? “
Abraham believed God, and it was
credited to him for righteousness.”
Romans 4:3



The fourth chapter of Romans frames one of my favorite revelations in all of Scripture—the fact that every time we believe God, He credits it to our account as righteousness.

The most obvious assumption is that God would credit our *righteous* acts as righteousness, but the prophet Isaiah penned the disclaimer that “all our righteous acts are like filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6 niv).

So it’s clear that nothing good can come from our good works. God insists in Scripture that believing Him is what He credits to our account as righteousness. And He gets to make the rules.

JUNE 11

He said to them, “
Why are you fearful?
Do you still have no faith?”
Mark 4:40



A friend and I had been driving through Yellowstone National Park for some time when she looked anxiously ahead and asked, “How much longer till we see Old Yeller?” I laughed until I nearly ran off the road into a buffalo herd. “Old *Yeller*? You mean Old *Faithful*?”

Where I come from, you see, “yeller” means “cowardly.” So her *faux pax* made a perfect application in my head for what believing God really means. When all is said and done, you and I will be either Old Faithful or Old Yeller, but we will never be both. One will always elbow out the other.

JUNE 12

My servant Jacob, do not be afraid, and
do not be discouraged, Israel, for without
fail I will save you from far away.

Jeremiah 46:27



Though I couldn't have articulated it at the time, for years my deepest fear was that I was a weakling, powerless to temptation, and that I—the victim—would break under pressure every time.

I was a victim, all right—a victim to my own erroneous belief system. Satan quickly detected my fears and preyed on them, doing everything he could to confirm what I believed.

Once again we see a huge reason why we must believe we are who God says we are and that we can do all things through Christ. Satan will always discourage and demoralize us if we don't.

JUNE 13

Take your sandals off your
feet, for the place where you are
standing is holy ground.

Exodus 3:5



Faith is never the denial of reality; it is belief in a greater reality. In other words, the truth may be that you are presently surrounded by terrifying or terribly discouraging circumstances. But the reason why you don't have to buckle to fear and discouragement is the presence of God in the middle of your circumstances.

So call upon Him to step His One and Only shoes onto your territory. This place—this circumstance—is now holy because God stands on it with you. You don't have to fill His shoes, Dear One. Take off your sandals and walk barefoot in His wake.

JUNE 14

The LORD says ... “Do not fear,
for I have redeemed you; I have called
you by your name; you are Mine.”

Isaiah 43:1



Failure takes all sorts of forms and hits all sorts of unsuspecting, sincere followers of Jesus Christ. We don't have to sin grievously to feel like we've failed. Sometimes all it takes is feeling like we've proved ineffective and untalented too many times to try again.

What about you? Do you feel you've failed God in some way? Are you too scared or discouraged to try serving God again? Have you allowed Satan to demoralize you by preying on your fear that you are nothing but a failure? Then hear these words: God will not fail you! Grab onto Him with everything you have.

JUNE 15

The Lord God has given Me the tongue
of those who are instructed to know how
to sustain the weary with a word.

Isaiah 50:4



Having God's Word upon our tongues certainly means more than just quoting Bible verses. It doesn't always externalize through exact Scripture recitation. It often takes the form of simple godly conversation.

Encouragement, instruction, exhortation, counsel, and yes, even at times the issue of an appropriate rebuke are a few ways God's Word upon our tongues can accomplish and achieve.

Oh, the positive power of having an instructed tongue! How many weary people do we encounter day after day who could use a sustaining word.

JUNE 16

A ruler can be persuaded
through patience, and a gentle
tongue can break a bone.

Proverbs 25:15



You may wonder, “Aren’t actions more powerful than words?” Without a doubt, we externalize the internal works of the Spirit through action as well. Speech without action is all talk and no walk.

But I’m talking about a different practice and purpose: the specific power that is released when we “believe and therefore speak” (2 Cor. 4:13).

Being created in the image of our omnipotent God, our spoken words are potent. Speaking what we believe—even from ourselves to ourselves—is like inviting our souls to a pep rally. Vocalized words stir enthusiasm.

JUNE 17

The reflections of the heart
belong to man, but the answer of
the tongue is from the LORD.

Proverbs 16:1



We can't talk about the God-endorsed power of words without specifying the words of prayer. Every time we make a petition to God, we are using words that have elements of accomplishing and achieving power, even if we pray silently.

I have found, however, that I sense more power in prayer when I speak them out loud. Please understand, the difference rests in me rather than God. He hears and receives petitions of any kind that are prayed in Jesus' name. But I tend to be a lot gutsier in my vocalized prayers because hearing them with my own ears ignites my heart and mind all the more.

JUNE 18

A good man produces good things from
his storeroom of good, and an evil man pro-
duces evil things from his storeroom of evil.

Matthew 12:35



The tongue's potential to wreak havoc is staggering, yet so is the potential to reap the stuff of heaven on the stuff of earth. Therefore, we can rest assured God and Satan are both vying for authority over our mouths.

Nothing is a greater threat to the enemy than a believer with the Word of God living and active upon her tongue, readily applied to any situation, speaking what she knows to be true.

If no part of the body is harder to submit to godly authority than the tongue, what could possess more power to reap benefit than one He controls?

JUNE 19

We must not get tired of doing
good, for we will reap at the proper
time if we don't give up.

Galatians 6:9



Beloved, God is not tired. Nor is God tired of you. He delights in your attentions even when you practice them much like you did yesterday. He waits for you to awaken each morning, and He anticipates His time with you.

Somehow in the Lord's self-existent essence and omniscience, His foreknowledge does not cheat Him of reactive emotion. He laughs when you delight Him. He listens when you speak to Him. He honors you when you persevere with Him. In all the changes He is making within you and me, He rejoices in the few things that call for blessed sameness.

JUNE 20

At the beginning of your petitions
an answer went out, and I have come to
give it, for you are treasured by God.

Daniel 9:23



God can delight in our courage to pray big prayers without necessarily giving us what we ask. Said another way, God can say yes to the *heart* of our prayer without saying yes to the request of our prayer. He will approve of the petitioner even when, for whatever reason, He can't approve the petition.

I'm convinced God is more pleased when we believe Him enough to ask for a hundred huge things (though they may be granted in part) than to believe Him for a few and get everything we asked. We all err in many ways. Let us err on the side of faith.

JUNE 21

No, in all these things
we are more than victorious
through Him who loved us.
Romans 8:37



One way we can measure our belief system's effectiveness is to examine how consistently our biblical position as "more than conquerors" is fleshed out in our reality.

The children of Israel showed they were God's conquerors on earth by conquering. Victory assumes a counterpart defeat. We will never take our places as "more than overcomers" with nothing to overcome. We will never be victors without opponents. God gave the Israelites the Promised Land but told them they'd have to take what was theirs in fierce battle. We should expect no less today.

JUNE 22

I am sure of this, that He who started a good
work in you will carry it on to completion
until the day of Christ Jesus.

Philippians 1:6



Our glorious walk with God began with an act of faith that brought us into relationship with Jesus Christ as our Savior, but it doesn't end there. ***Having believed*** in Christ, we've been called to continue believing all that He came to do and say.

Quite tragically, some who have believed *in* Christ have believed little *of* Him since. But He who began a good work in us has far more He wants to accomplish. God is calling you and me to leave the life of passivity bred by a past-tense view of faith and get caught in the act of present-active-participle believing. Nothing in life could be more exhilarating.

JUNE 23

How great is Your goodness that You
have stored up for those who fear You and
accomplished in the sight of everyone.

Psalm 31:19



Why in the world would God give *carte blanche* permission to human flesh and blood to bind and loose whatever he (the believer) interpreted was wrong or right? If God had given me my way, I would have bound and loosed three or four husbands by the time I was twenty-five. His desire is to see believers bind and loose what He wants for them.

God has made so much available to us. He foreordained a perfect plan for each of our lives and has stored up immeasurable blessing that He longs for His children to loose by faith. It's time we did so by discovering more of who He is.

JUNE 24

Now to Him who is able to do above and
beyond all that we ask or think ... to Him be
glory in the church and in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 3:20–21



New Testament Scripture stacks up far too much evidence for us to claim that suffering is never within the plan of our sovereign God, whether through His perfect or permissive will.

Does this discourage me from asking and believing God for miracles? Hardly! And I'll tell you why. Knowing the truth about God, His unceasing ability to perform miracles, and the truth about the undeniable role of suffering only frees me up to believe Him more. I used to treat a miracle as a last hope. But now, if I don't receive it, I assume God has a more inward agenda.

JUNE 25

There is no one like You,
and there is no God besides You,
as all we have heard confirms.

2 Samuel 7:22



One of the things that keeps us from getting out there and believing God is being scared half to death that He won't come through for us, won't dignify us with a yes, and ultimately won't prove faithful in the end. Or that we'll prove to be failures at having enough belief for Him to bless with a miracle.

If I'm convinced that God really loves me and has certain priorities for me that may take precedence at times, then I am "safe" to walk by faith. I am freed to know that my God is huge and my God is able and that if I don't get what I asked, if I'll cooperate, I'll get something bigger.

JUNE 26

I am like a flourishing olive tree
in the house of God; I trust in God's
faithful love forever and ever.

Psalm 52:8



I believe God can do anything His Word says He can. So if He chooses not to, I don't have to assume He doesn't like me, doesn't answer my prayers, hardly knows I'm alive, isn't willing to do it, or is still punishing me for that sin in my past—or that I don't have enough faith and am just making a fool of myself. Instead, I get to know that a greater yes is in progress, and I can count on the bigger miracle.

Beloved, we are safe with God—free to believe He is who He says He is and can do what He says He can. Neither His dignity nor ours is at stake. We are safe with Him because we *are* His priority.

JUNE 27

What should we say then?
Should we continue in sin in order
that grace may multiply?
Romans 6:1



To many, the fact that God has declared us holy and righteous before Him by means of Christ's substitutionary death gives us license to sin. But we would be severely mistaken to rationalize God's grace and forgiveness into permission to act like pagans.

Those who presently and actively believe God are prompted to make wiser and healthier decisions. Authentic faith cannot help but act. If we really believe what the Word says about God and about us, our decisions and behaviors will reflect it. How we behave overwhelmingly flows from what we deeply believe.

JUNE 28

How happy those whose lawless acts are
forgiven! ... How happy the man whom the
Lord will never charge with sin!
Romans 4:7-8



These verses must have meant as much to Paul with his sinful past as they mean to me. I suppose all of us with histories of heinous sin cling to any affirmation that God really can forgive and use those with terrible pasts.

In the Greek, the word translated “never” is a double negative. So we might read the passage like this: “How happy the man whom the Lord will ‘no, never’ charge with sin.” The word “charge” is an accounting term, the same word used in Romans 4:3. All that time I thought God was counting my sins, and He was counting my faith as righteousness instead.

JUNE 29

She said to herself, “
If I can just touch His robe,
I’ll be made well!”
Matthew 9:21



Perhaps like me, you have grievously failed God in the past. Perhaps like me, your prior confidence was unknowingly in your own ability and determination to stay on track.

Then cast yourself today entirely upon **His** ability to succeed and not yours. Blind yourself to all ambition except to please Him. Walk in the shadow of the Almighty. Grab onto the hem of His garment and find the healing and grace to go where He leads. In that place you will be equipped to do the impossible. There you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you.

JUNE 30

Shout to God with a jubilant cry.
For the LORD Most High is awe-inspiring,
a great King over all the earth.
Psalm 47:1–2



God has so much for you, Dear One. And yes, seasons will come when He requires so much from you that you feel like you can't bear it.

You do have a choice. You don't have to do it His way. You can choose bitterness, resentment, carnality, or mediocrity. Or you can go for it—with everything you've got. You can experience the unmatched exhilaration of partnering in divine triumph.

The stakes are high. The cost is steep. But I'll promise you this: there is no high like the Most High. Don't you dare miss it for the world.

JULY



JULY 1

Pray to your Father who is
in secret. And your Father who sees
in secret will reward you.

Matthew 6:6



Anytime you put forth the time and attention that a book like this requires— and you exercise the faith to apply what you learn—you will be rewarded. God is the giver of all good gifts. He wants us to be men and women He can bless.

God's pleasure is the end; our faith is the means. We are invited to believe in God. The eye-opening news may be that we can also believe Him for reward, as long as our desire for reward doesn't exceed our desire for Him personally. Sooner or later, your God-seeking faith will be rewarded. You will never out-spend God.

JULY 2

If we know that He hears whatever
we ask, we know that we have what
we have asked Him for.

1 John 5:15



Don't get discouraged if you don't have or don't presently practice everything God desires of you. Pray for what you lack! When you pray God's will, you will receive what you ask!

Pray for a heart and mind that diligently seeks Him. Then begin walking in faith, as one who already possesses what she has asked. Start seeking God through His Word and spending time in prayer, at the same time asking Him for a hunger and thirst to seek Him diligently. He will develop in you what you are seeking. He will give you everything you need for living in faith and belief!

JULY 3

How long will you hesitate between
two opinions? If Yahweh is God, follow
Him. But if Baal, follow him.

1 Kings 18:21



Sometimes our problem with God is that we don't like the rules. I can remember trying to hang on to both God and my idols. As my grandmother would say, I wanted to have my cake and eat it too. Have you tried that approach?

I felt as if God spoke to my heart and said, "Child, My precepts are from everlasting to everlasting. You're not going to be the one for whom the rules change. Repent of your arrogance and lay those idols down." The requirement of faith before we see certain acts of God is one way He forces our engagement with Him in an active relationship.

JULY 4

Jesus replied to her, “
Woman, your faith is great.
Let it be done for you as you want.”
Matthew 15:28



Why do you think God is sometimes willing to reveal Himself dramatically even when we're not actively believing Him? Though God may have countless reasons, the most probable cause is to encourage belief. He graciously reminds us that He can ... and still does.

But if we persist in our stubborn unbelief after such merciful revelation, we can probably expect to see less and less activity of God. He certainly makes exceptions, but He primarily wants our faith. That means the more we believe God, the more we are likely to see and experience His intervening power.

JULY 5

Because of laziness the roof
caves in, and because of negligent
hands the house leaks.

Ecclesiastes 10:18



Our resistance to faith is most commonly caused by spiritual laziness and lethargy. Believing God can really be hard work at times! But even when external evidences scream to the contrary, we have to be able to exert volitional muscle. Deciding to believe God's Word over our circumstances can be a tremendous exercise of the will.

Let me just go ahead and say it: the great adventure of faith is not for the languid. But if He can raise the dead, He can surely enliven the lazy! We have been called to a present-active-participle walk of faith, not a park 'n' ride.

JULY 6

I have promised you in marriage
to one husband—to present
a pure virgin to Christ.
2 Corinthians 11:2



For much of my life I was a habitual sinner, cycling in and out of defeat. I hated myself and the choices I continued to make, but I was powerless to stop.

To the praise, glory, and honor of my wonderful God, I have been free from this cycle of defeat for years. Do you know how? I chose to believe God. He said I was forgiven. That I was beautiful to Him. That He had a purpose for my life. That I was a new woman—a virgin, no less. I chose to believe Him one day at a time, and that's how God broke the cycle. We have no hope of authentic righteousness without it.

JULY 7

The Spirit is the One who gives life. The flesh doesn't help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

John 6:63



I'm pretty convinced at this point that I want to live my life believing God. Too much is at stake, and too much adventure stands to be missed. If faith pleases God and invites such incomparable divine intervention in my life, I want to exercise it lavishly, don't you?

But like much of what God asks from us, we have to receive it from Him before we can offer it back. Even our initial faith to believe Christ for salvation came through the work and conviction of the Holy Spirit. We can't just manufacture faith from what the Scripture calls our "natural man." Faith is ours from God.

JULY 8

When the Counselor comes ...
the Spirit of truth who proceeds from
the Father—He will testify about Me.

John 15:26



As New Testament believers, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in us when we receive Christ as our personal Savior, and He brings His personality with Him. When we are deliberately yielded to the Holy Spirit's authority, His personality fills us and eclipses our own.

You see, the more we are filled with the Spirit, the more faith we can possess. Because the Holy Spirit is one with the Father and the Son, He always believes God. So when He fills us, our fleshly faithlessness yields to His belief system, and we get to possess and exercise it as our own.

JULY 9

You see that faith was active
together with his works, and by
works, faith was perfected.

James 2:22



I used to think of faith as believing God, while I tended to imagine faithfulness as obediently serving God and keeping His commands. Though faith certainly encompasses serving and obeying God, I am opening my spiritual eyes to the fact that faith is the root of all faithfulness to God.

In fact, we might say that ultimately, faithfulness—serving and obeying God— is the outward expression of an inward fullness of faith. With a little different twist on the meaning, we can say it the way we've said it before: *faith works*. It lives itself out in our faithful behavior.

JULY 10

He would feed Israel with
the best wheat. "I would satisfy you
with honey from the rock."

Psalm 81:16



Thank goodness, our faith in God keeps developing, maturing and growing as we continue to walk with Him. I believe the more we practice faith, the more faith we'll have to practice. Those who continually feed on God's faithfulness are far more likely to have a ready supply when the challenge arises, because it abides in them.

I love the idea of feeding on God's faithfulness. Might we say, in fact, that the more we feed on God's faithfulness, the fatter of faith we become? How's that for a diet reversal? I'm thrilled to know we can binge on God without guilt.

JULY 11

Endurance must do its complete
work, so that you may be mature and
complete, lacking nothing.

James 1:4



Faith unchallenged is faith stifled. How could we ever grow in our faith and get a fresh belief in our systems if we were smugly unconvinced that we could use some alteration? We must be willing to have our faith challenged if we want to give it a little fresh air to grow in.

Some of our belief systems haven't changed in so long, they have cobwebs. Believers who know what they want to believe and refuse to be challenged may have a *stand* of faith, but they may not have a *walk* of faith. You and I don't want to get stagnant on our journey of belief. We want to keep moving with our God!

JULY 12

They welcomed the message with
eagerness and examined the Scriptures
daily to see if these things were so.

Acts 17:11



If we are going to believe God, our plumb line for measuring the accuracy of biblical concepts must be the Bible itself, not what we've seen or heard. We must also be willing for God to broaden our biblical concepts of who He is and what He can do.

Our human tendency is to affirm and reaffirm spiritually and biblically what we already believe rather than to search and consider the whole counsel of the Word. But wherever our trained belief systems lack biblical support, we must have enough courage to believe what God says over what people say.

JULY 13

This extraordinary knowledge
is beyond me. It is lofty;
I am unable to reach it.
Psalm 139:6



Some of our favorite teachers may have helped us package our faith in neat little boxes and even handed us the wrapping paper and bows, as if we need not know another thing. We think we've got God in those boxes, but we don't. God doesn't fit in boxes.

However high, wide, long, or deep your faith may grow through the years, always leave an ellipsis at every point of your spiritual compass. Anything attainable by human understanding is a mere shadow of the reality. Every time you grasp a new concept about God, try thinking, "He's this ... and more."

JULY 14

They will not labor without success or
bear children destined for disaster, for they
will be a people blessed by the LORD.

Isaiah 65:23



The last thing I'm trying to encourage a thinking person to do is to surrender to a life of nothing but stark, blind faith. The reason I don't believe that aliens live on Mars is that we've never seen evidence to suggest they do. If I had evidence, I'd be far more inclined to believe, even if I never saw them with my own eyes.

Much more importantly, I wouldn't encourage anyone to believe in a God of heaven if we had no evidence to support that He exists as the Bible says He does. The reason I teach belief in God is that, again and again, I have found Him to be astoundingly believable.

JULY 15

Let no one deceive you with empty arguments, for because of these things God's wrath is coming on the disobedient.

Ephesians 5:6



To be sure, believers should seek to be well educated about current events and intellectual trends, but we need not feel quite so responsible to defend God. While the waves of godless intellectualism rise and fall and the trends set the tides, you and I are better off watching from the nearest solid Rock.

I have a tremendous respect for theological apologists. Their arguments strengthen my faith. But most of us are not called to prove unbelievers intellectually wrong. God will tend to that, all in a matter of time. He knows the defiant will end up making fools of themselves.

JULY 16

He forgives all your sin;
He heals all your diseases.
He redeems your life from the Pit.
Psalm 103:3–4



One definition of the word “heals” in the verse above is “to mend by stitching.” I love the thought expressed in that. A seamstress cannot mend a fabric that she doesn’t hold in her hands. Likewise, God cradles us in His careful hands as He stitches our broken pieces back together again, forming a new and far more beautiful garment.

The word picture of stitching also suggests “process” to me. Almost all the healing works God has accomplished in my life have been processes, stitch-by-stitch, so that I would learn to appreciate being continually in His hands.

JULY 17

I will bring you health and will heal you
of your wounds ... for they call you The
Outcast, the Zion no one cares about.
Jeremiah 30:17



I wonder whether the way God heals may vary according to His objective. If the primary objective is to show His supremacy, for example, perhaps He might choose to heal instantaneously. If His primary objective is to teach sufficiency in Him or to mature and build faith, I wonder whether He heals through the stitch-by-stitch method.

Remember, God is far more interested in our knowing the Healer than He is in the healing. God can be vastly glorified through either objective, whether in showing His supremacy or showing His sufficiency.

JULY 18

Pray for one another, so that you
may be healed. The intense prayer of
the righteous is very powerful.

James 5:16



Dear One, we can't let our fear that God may not affirmatively answer our every prayer keep us from praying! Great men like Moses and Elijah were tremendously used by God, but neither got everything he asked. You will be hard pressed to find anyone in Scripture who did—including Christ! Check out what happened in the garden of Gethsemane.

What if these men of God hadn't asked for anything because they couldn't have everything? Can you imagine the loss? As we faithfully and fervently pray, we will experience many astounding and affirmative answers. Pray on, Beloved!

JULY 19

John heard in prison what the
Messiah was doing ... and asked Him,
“Are You the One who is to come?”
Matthew 11:2–3



Imagine John's predicament. If he had been wrong about Jesus, he had either sacrificed all for nothing or missed the real Messiah. And if he had been right? Then Jesus had the power to free him from prison and death and simply wasn't using it. Have you ever had a time when none of your obvious multiple-choice answers were good options?

All of us called to faith will have this knife-sharp experience at some point. Few of us will escape a painful opportunity to be offended with Christ. It is part of the believer's life test, but be sure our Teacher gives no accidental exams.

JULY 20

My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength of my heart,
my portion forever.

Psalm 73:26



At times we'll be tempted to think, "If Christ is who He says He is, and can do what He says He can do, and I am His beloved, why isn't He coming through for me?" Is it our insignificance? Is He too busy to notice? Is the situation simply not critical to the overall plan?

I'd go so far as to say that the deeper we have loved God, the deeper the potential for devastation when He doesn't intervene as we know He can. But He knows our hearts and understands our confusion. Blessed are we when we could easily be offended yet choose with every shred of tattered faith not to be.

JULY 21

He is the image of the invisible God, the
firstborn over all
creation... He is before all things, and by Him all things hold together.
Colossians 1:15, 17



Not only is Christ responsible for creating the heavens and the earth, but the fact that each still operates with its environment is His doing as well. He also created the human body, more “fearfully and wonderfully” than any other work.

When you calculate the thousands of functions simultaneously occurring within the human body, the wonder that any of us are well far exceeds the perplexity that any of us are ill. Therefore, it is likely that each one of us has experienced God’s miraculous healing any number of times without knowing it—every day that our fragile tents of flesh hold together.

JULY 22

If you do right, won't you be
accepted? But if you do not do right,
sin is crouching at the door.

Genesis 4:7



Don't miss God's intimation in this verse that Cain knew what was right; he simply didn't do it. Cain's offering represents every time a believer knows what God wants but refuses to give it. We often give Him other things, as if He won't notice. We give more in other areas but we doggedly withhold the one thing we know He wants. And sin crouches at our door.

What made Abel's offering more acceptable? I have a feeling he didn't know the answer himself. God had obviously made clear to both Cain and Abel that He wanted a sacrificial offering, and Abel just presented it ... by faith.

JULY 23

Enoch was taken away so that he
did not experience death... . He was
approved, having pleased God.

Hebrews 11:5



I'd like to suggest that God's testimony on the life of Enoch represents the ultimate commendation. Short and sweet: he "pleased God."

You and I know that the entire purpose of our existence is to please God. Therefore, Enoch crossed the finish line, not with a perfect life, but with a perfect testimony.

Not bad. In fact, I wouldn't mind the same one, would you? We don't have to be covetous to want it, because we don't have to take away from another soul's testimony to have it. Each of us has our own opportunity to please God.

JULY 24

What no eye has seen and
no ear has heard ... is what God has
prepared for those who love Him.

1 Corinthians 2:9



Our perceptions have been so distorted by our world system, we fear that God's path may be smooth and respectable but it's sure to be boring. Does that sound anything at all like the life described for us in 1 Corinthians 2:9?

The only way we will have an earthly experience with God that is more than eyes have seen, ears have heard, and minds have ever imagined is to walk with Him. When we choose to walk with Him rather than off the path for handfuls of other options, we find His perfect will for our lives. Instead of finding Less-Than Land, we find our Promised Land.

JULY 25

Wisdom is the focus of the
perceptive, but a fool's eyes roam
to the ends of the earth.

Proverbs 17:24



I have discovered that if Satan can't get to me with destruction, he will try distraction. Each of us could name a dozen different things we'd really like to do with our lives ... sometimes all in the same day.

We have only one turn on this green earth. We will never get to do this again. We cannot do a hundred things to the glory of God, but we can certainly do a few. What you and I need to do is focus. Day in and day out. Eyes on the goal. We are desperate for simplicity in our frenzied lives. We need those hundred things to narrow down to one.

JULY 26

I make every effort to take
hold of it because I also have been
taken hold of by Christ Jesus.
Philippians 3:12



God created us. He knows what satisfies our souls and fulfills us. He could grant us victory and maturity without an ounce of participation, but He created us to be most satisfied by apprehending through diligent pursuit.

Our salvation is a free gift of grace that demanded the work of Jesus alone. God made sure, however, that much of our fulfillment would involve the glorious pursuit of God and His goals so our souls would be filled and thrilled in the constant discoveries. God is sovereign, Dear One. And when all is said and done, He knows what will thrill us the most.

JULY 27

First, be aware of this:
scoffers will come in the last days to
scoff, following their own lusts.
2 Peter 3:3



It is merely a fact of life that those who actively believe God in every generation are liable to be scoffed at. So we may as well be prepared in advance for others— sometimes other Christians—to ridicule us or think we are uneducated and unsophisticated to believe that God's Word applies to us today. Sometimes we may even be tempted to wonder whether we're wrong ourselves.

But, Beloved, God is right. And you can rest assured that He will prove it once again, sooner or later. Peer pressure is a powerful faith deterrent. Don't let it cheat you of your promised land.

JULY 28

So those who have faith
are blessed with Abraham,
who had faith.
Galatians 3:9



The fact that God esteemed Abraham so highly and spoke of him so often encourages me beyond words, because not only does Abraham have a history of faith, but his record also bears the marks of some serious bouts with doubt and remarkably foolish decisions. So does mine.

Each of us sitting here today are alive and kicking. And no matter what our track record of doubt and foolishness has been in the past, we can still give God the opportunity to testify to our faith. We still have today to believe God. Let's not put it off until tomorrow. Failure isn't terminal, Dear One. Faithlessness is.

JULY 29

Yes, LORD, we wait for You in the
path of Your judgments. Our desire
is for Your name and renown.

Isaiah 26:8



Time can test almost anything and un-doubtedly anyone. Sometimes when we obey God and go where we believe He is sending us, we're not altogether certain what we expected, but after a while we ascertain, "This certainly can't be it." In fact, obeying God can initially seem to get us into a bigger mess than we left.

It can make you think, "I must be an alien here." But actually, that may be your first indication you're in the right place. We can be in the bull's-eye of God's will for our lives even when things make utterly no sense. Sometimes we just to wait on that ugly, five-letter word: "later."

JULY 30

He was looking forward to the city
that has foundations, whose architect
and builder is God.

Hebrews 11:10



Time by itself does nothing but grow us old. It's what we *do* with time that makes all the difference. We often say, "Time heals," yet I've known just as many that time embittered. Only God heals. Only God restores. Only God effectively prepares, teaches, equips, and matures. But you can count on Him to use the test tube of time in which to accomplish it.

We tend to argue, "God, why are You waiting so long? I don't have much time here!" We forget that God sees the big picture, and that His primary objective for us on earth is to prepare us for a city of which He is architect and builder.

JULY 31

Instead, he is under
guardians and stewards until
the time set by his father.

Galatians 4:2



Sometimes God waits until we have a little maturity before He places more important trusts in our hands. Beloved, the world will not stop and our true God-ordained ministries will not end when we take the time to let God make us healthier and better equipped.

When the height of a ministry out-grows its depth, it will inevitably come tumbling down. So we are wise when we focus on the depth alone and leave the length, breadth, and height to Him. As long as the latter dimensions are what matter most to us, we are not ready to build what lasts.

AUGUST



AUGUST 1

What a wretched man I am!
Who will rescue me from
this body of death?

Romans 7:24



I am so glad God didn't limit Holy Writ to high and lofty subjects. From the birth of family life, He revealed how entangled and awry our human natures can grow in relationship to one another.

In fact, I have yet to find the story of a fully healthy and functional family in the Word of God. He graciously made sure we'd know that in things pertaining to the sons of earth, abnormal is more normal than normal. That doesn't mean we should surrender to dysfunction. It just means we don't have to hang our heads as we surrender and let Him sort out our tangled mess.

AUGUST 2

We have sworn an oath to them
by the LORD, the God of Israel,
and now we cannot touch them.

Joshua 9:19



If an ancient Hebrew invoked the name of the Lord God in a vow, he believed God alone had the power to break it. Because the Israelites understood Him to be a covenant God and knew that He was faithful, they more readily assumed that the vow was utterly binding.

I am convicted by how thoughtlessly I often petition something “in the name of Jesus” without really seeking the heart and will of God in the matter. We need to be careful what we pray. Sometimes our hasty, popcorn prayers reveal a lack of conviction in the true power of the name of Jesus.

AUGUST 3

Isaac answered Esau: "Look,
I have made him a master over you...
What then can I do for you, my son?"
Genesis 27:37



When Isaac grew old and the time came to pass on the family blessing, he chose to respect God's sovereignty even though he'd been deceived. I believe Isaac knew God well enough to discern when more might be at work than met the eye.

We view faith primarily from the standpoint of action. We believe, therefore we act. But Isaac, Esau, and Jacob's experience teaches us a harder dimension: what to do when faith requires us to do nothing while our human nature screams to interfere. In these cases, we believe, therefore we do *not* act. Wisdom knows the difference between the two.

AUGUST 4

Peter and John answered them, “Whether it’s right in the sight of God for us to listen to you rather than to God, you decide.”

Acts 4:19



Misunderstandings can often result as we exercise enough faith to do what we’re convinced is God’s will. Sometimes those misunderstandings can involve people whose opinions are very important to us. But if we are convinced that God has willed the action, let’s go the extra faith mile and believe that God will handle the consequences.

Years ago He taught me a principle I’ve never forgotten: the consequences of our humble obedience are His problem, not ours. We don’t want to *make* anyone want to withhold blessing, but we must obey God either with it or without it.

AUGUST 5

The LORD then said to Moses,
“Write this down on a scroll as a reminder
and recite it to Joshua.
”Exodus 17:14



At the time, young Joshua had no idea that before he was born, God had chosen him to lead the conquest of Canaan. He also had no idea that he was already in training. He was both a warrior and a worshiper long before he led the Israelites into the Promised Land.

But none of his training was wasted. Nor is ours, Dear One. If we try to skip our training and jump to the thrill of leveling the walls of Jericho, all the huffing and puffing in the world won't even blow the dust off our boots. We'll end up shouting, all right—but more than likely at one another.

AUGUST 6

By faith the walls of
Jericho fell down after being
encircled for seven days.

Hebrews 11:30



Imagine standing next to God as, with His outstretched arm, His index finger pointed out your own personal Jerichos. Hear Him say to you, “Child, would you please see this the way I do—not through your eyes, but through the eyes of faith?”

Today, pinpoint what this particular Jericho may be for you. Don’t quickly assume. Keep in mind that we sometimes misdiagnose our own problems and fight the wrong foes. Ask God to give you insight into any Jericho that stands between you and your promised land. Then ask Him for the grace to follow Him there in triumphal procession.

AUGUST 7

By faith Rahab the prostitute
received the spies in peace and didn't
perish with those who disobeyed.

Hebrews 11:31



Any given day of the week, I think I love something different about God best of all. Today I love best of all what He's willing to do for a damsel in distress like Rahab. I am a hopeless romantic, and I fall in love with Him all over again every time I see this Prince Charming side of Him.

You won't find a fairy godmother in a single scene of the biblical account of Rahab the harlot. Her Cinderella story is not only PG-13 but also maybe a little farfetched. Of course, maybe that's what I love best of all about God. We've never gone so far that we can't be fetched.

AUGUST 8

Lying lips are detestable
to the LORD, but faithful people
are His delight.
Proverbs 12:22



Lies come in many forms, ranging from slight exaggerations and likely excuses to complete fabrications. Their primary motivations are self-protection and self-exaltation. Unfortunately, the tendency of the natural man toward deception is as deep and pulsing as the heart within us.

Because the mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart, an untreated heart will easily give way to a lying tongue. Each of us could regularly use a fresh work of healing and purification at the very source of our deception problem. The Lord desires “integrity in the inner self” (Ps. 51:6). We should too.

AUGUST 9

Do not let the oppressed
turn away in shame; let the poor
and needy praise Your name.

Psalm 74:21



If you struggle with an extremely habit-forming practice like profanity, please know that you can be extremely honest with God about it. I'd hate for you to know the habits God has empowered me to break. But openly dialoguing with Him about my strongholds and telling Him in advance when I felt that old, familiar setup for failure are the most vital practices God ever taught me.

I still don't hesitate to tell Him when I'm feeling weak or vulnerable to attack. I know I can talk to God without shame, expecting Him to come to my aid. You can too! He will never turn you away.

AUGUST 10

Then I said: “Woe is me, for I am ruined,
because I am a man of unclean lips
and live among a people of unclean lips.”
Isaiah 6:5



God wants to send us into our world in His name. And our tongue is the instrument of His greatest potential use. Think of how many of Christ's New Testament commands involve our mouths.

We've been called to share Jesus with the lost and give our testimonies anytime we have the opportunity to tell another person of our hope. We've been called to pray. We've been called to disciple others, teaching God's Word and ways. We've been called to resist the devil as Christ did, with the spoken Word of God. We've even been called to speak to some mountains and tell them to move!

AUGUST 11

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord
Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every
spiritual blessing in the heavens, in Christ.

Ephesians 1:3



I want you to understand and celebrate today, Dear One, that God has used His powerful mouth to call you by name and speak blessing over you. Absorb this: God has been talking about you and over you. That's right. Behind your back.

Thank goodness, I have those who bless me with pure encouragement, as well as those who offer their gracious, loving correction. All of us could use a few others to speak good words over us. You and I can also become people who speak good words over others. If we do, can you even imagine how God will talk behind our backs then?

AUGUST 12

Be compassionate and humble, not paying
back evil for evil or insult for insult but,
on the contrary, giving a blessing.

1 Peter 3:8–9



Let's employ the day ahead as an opportunity for using our mouths to bless God. Let's also ask Him to bring to our minds anyone He wants us to bless.

Perhaps someone could even use the blessing of our apology, especially if we have used our words to wound them. I'm not meaning to fill your heart with condemnation, but we want the day cleared to start using our mouths with power and blessing. Humbling ourselves and apologizing to someone we may have hurt is a small price to pay. So if God brings anyone to mind, go forward in obedience, knowing the harvest is ahead!

AUGUST 13

If anyone is in Christ, there is a
new creation; old things have passed away,
and look, new things have come.

2 Corinthians 5:17



The more thoroughly convinced we become that we are who God says we are, the more we will begin to *act* like who He says we are. Our daily lives demonstrate what we really believe about ourselves.

Most of us have bought a whole lot more of what others have said than we'd like to admit. Dear One, the time has come to believe God. The time has come for us to renounce the words others have spoken over us that don't line up with the truth of God's Word. And while we're at it, let's give others the same privilege we want for ourselves. They get to be who God says they are, too.

AUGUST 14

Just as the Lord has forgiven you,
so also you must forgive. Above all,
put on love—the perfect bond of unity.

Colossians 3:13–14



Perhaps the coming day would be a good time for you to find a private place where you can pray aloud. No matter how much the process temporarily stings, verbalize every statement contrary to God's Word that has wielded significant power over you. Tell God how the words hurt. And in Jesus' name, renounce every statement one by one. Then believe God to completely release you.

Thank Him that none of these injurious statements have further authority over you. And ask Him to empower you to forgive those who said them, in the same way He has forgiven you.

AUGUST 15

Can a woman forget her nursing child, or
lack compassion for the child of her womb?
Even if these forget, yet I will not forget you.
Isaiah 49:15



If God never forgets His children, what does He mean when He says He remembers us? I'd like to suggest to you that for God, "remembered" isn't the opposite of "forget." The vast majority of references to God's remembering also record a sub-sequent action or promise of action.

Beloved, we can be sure that God never forgets His people. Almost every time we see God "remembering" in the Scripture, it means that He is about to stretch forth His mighty arm and swing into action. And when He stands, His enemies are certain to scatter! God acts on what He remembers.

AUGUST 16

I continually remember them and
have become depressed. Yet I call this
to mind, and therefore I have hope.

Lamentations 3:20–21



We may not be able to throw away our difficult memories, but we can reframe them against the backdrop of God's attributes. We can also call on His ability to change the course of our future, no matter the pattern of our past. He breaks the strongholds of our negative meditations when we reframe our old memories with God in the picture.

Anytime we agree to see God accurately in any portrait, all else is dwarfed by and bows down in His presence. The difficulty soon becomes little more than a measuring stick by which we estimate the size of a huge God.

AUGUST 17

I am deeply depressed;
therefore I remember You from the land
of Jordan and the peaks of Hermon.

Psalm 42:6



Beloved, both freedom and faith emerge from deliberate acts of the will to shift our focus from all that begs to differ to the great and glorious truth of the living God. Neither freedom nor faith is ever accidental. As we refocus on the God of our past and remember His goodness, we are far more inclined to believe Him in our present and future.

So be deliberate, Dear One, because God has been faithful to us. He cannot be otherwise. Let's shift our focus to the memory of His overriding faithfulness, then begin acting on that. How about an "upcast" soul for a change?

AUGUST 18

Keep yourselves in the love of God,
expecting the mercy of our Lord
Jesus Christ for eternal life.

Jude 21



Every now and then, someone says to me, “Beth, I wish I had an exciting story like yours. Mine has been so boring.” Beloved, listen up. If you know Jesus Christ, you have embarked on an amazing adventure. He is never boring.

The only difference between you and me is perhaps that I have been forced to analyze and articulate my journey with Him. When you do the same, you will also wake up to the realization that you have been on a wild ride all along. Maybe you’ve just been napping through part of it. It’s time to wake up and feel the wind in your face!

AUGUST 19

When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at
Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me,
because I'm a sinful man, Lord!"

Luke 5:8



If you and I would really start believing God, we will undoubtedly see His mighty acts as never before. At times God has been so palpable that He's nearly scared me to death.

I've spent most of my life pursuing God, and if I believe anything at all, I believe that He exists and that He is who He says He is. But every now and then— for just a moment—He does something that removes all doubt, and I find myself in near physical pain, wanting to cry out, "Woe is me!" I almost can't handle the exposure. May we never grow too casual to forget what we have seen.

AUGUST 20

Jesus, knowing in Himself that
His disciples were complaining about this,
asked them, “Does this offend you?”

John 6:61



When God appoints us to wait on Him in an important matter, God forbid that we'd return to our whining and complaining that God never does anything for us. If we receive surpassing revelations from Him and don't prove grateful, I don't think we'd be off base to imagine that we could end up in a future bondage exceeding any past bondage we have experienced.

Praise God, He will never break His covenant with us, and He will still hear us every time we cry, but the meantime could be painful. Lest we ever forget, responsibility accompanies revelation.

AUGUST 21

No one can come to Me unless the
Father who sent Me draws him, and
I will raise him up on the last day.

John 6:44



By believing God was there all along— wooing us, planning for us, loving us, and contending with those who contended with us—we are getting to infuse our pasts with present-active-participle faith. Who said we can't change the past?

When we allow God to change the way we *see* our past, the power of our past changes dramatically. In a wonderful way, we get to go back to situations in which we feel we've been unfaithful to God and fill them with retroactive faith: belief that God can do miraculous good even with terrible failure. We get to step over the confines of time ... backwards.

AUGUST 22

He adds: "I will never again
remember their sins and
their lawless acts."

Hebrews 10:17



How does God's apparent ability to drop something out of His mind like dirty clothes through a laundry chute fit into His omniscience, His infinite ability to know all things? I believe that if God's primary way of remembering is to act on behalf of what He remembers, His primary way of remembering no more is to no longer act on that memory.

God remembers our sins no more because the work of the cross already has. No further sacrifice remains for sin because the work has already been accomplished. Therefore, God need never act again on their behalf.

AUGUST 23

Forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also
forgive everyone in debt to us. And do not
bring us into temptation.

Luke 11:4



Try telling a victim of childhood abuse that forgetting is the heart of forgiving. Try telling a husband or wife whose spouse committed adultery that forgetting is the heart of forgiving. Try telling the mother of a victim of drunk driving that forgetting is the heart of forgiving. They'll never forget.

I'll never forget that I was victimized as a child, but to the glory of my healing God, I can tell you that I never act on it anymore. And because the memories get so little behavioral cooperation anymore, they come to the surface less and less. To me, that's what I call forgetting.

AUGUST 24

You love Him, though you have
not seen Him. And though not seeing
Him now, you believe in Him.

1 Peter 1:8



Though we have much in common with Christ's first motley crew of followers, our experiences also vary. You and I haven't seen the Lord face-to-face as the first disciples did. Yes, their faith was gigantic, but it was also fueled by sight.

At first glance, you and I and all who have composed the church of Jesus Christ through the centuries may seem to be at a decided advantage. But Christ has promised blessing to those of us who have not seen with our own eyes and yet believe. If He honored the tenacious faith of the disciples who had seen Him in person, how much more will He honor ours.

AUGUST 25

He said to them all, “If anyone wants to
come with Me, he must deny himself,
take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”

Luke 9:23



Two parts of a compound word leap from this verse from the Gospel of Luke: *any* and *one*. The first part—*any*—speaks to me about Christ’s ready willingness to lead whoever will follow. We don’t have to be particularly gifted, educated, or experienced. The second half—*one*—reminds me that Christ still extends His invitation to individuals.

In ways our finite minds can hardly comprehend, Christ died for millions of ones. Yes, One died for all, but all come as one. Though His sacrifice was made for the many, our relationship with Him is one that is intensely personal.

AUGUST 26

The one who sows to his flesh will reap
corruption from the flesh, but the one who
sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life.

Galatians 6:8



When we seek God, we will find Him. And when we find Him, we will ultimately find our callings. When we find our callings, let's persist in them, not attempting to do a thousand things well but fanning our gifts into a flame and pursuing excellence in a few. If we do, we will reap!

The harvest may not become obvious in our lifetime, but it will surely come. So thank Him in advance every time you sow. Tirelessly plant the things of the Spirit in the soil of earth. Let nothing make you quit. Though the harvest tarry, it will surely come.

AUGUST 27

My God will supply all
your needs according to His riches
in glory in Christ Jesus.
Philippians 4:19



Many of us have a bad taste in our mouths about the subject of faith and money, because we've seen so many abuses through the media. What a tragedy, however, to let the abuses keep us from practicing believing prayer for the right uses of our finances.

When money is not a god to us and we have a need or godly desire, our heavenly Father welcomes our petitions and our acknowledgment that He is the giver of all good things. May He hear our hearts and heal any skewed thinking we may have about Him and money, inviting us to trust Him for our full supply.

AUGUST 28

Jesus said, “You of little faith!
Why are you discussing among yourselves
that you do not have bread?”
Matthew 16:8



Anyone can be a mighty warrior in the kingdom of God, and goodness knows we are occupying planet Earth during a time of great spiritual war. But examine any great story of the heroes of church history, and you'll see the same keys that lead to explosively powerful lives: learn how to wield the sword of the Spirit, raise the shield of faith, and pray, pray, pray!

Let's admit our weaknesses, cease our cheap imitations, follow good examples, and position ourselves for the miracles of God. And never forget that the greatest miracle of all occurs each time a human heart is wholly offered to Jesus.

AUGUST 29

You who occupy the mountain summit,
though you elevate your nest like the eagle,
even from there I will bring you down.

Jeremiah 49:16



When God knew I had gone as far as I could go without my taking an in-depth look at my own pitiful flesh, He shattered my pride and confidence like a sledge-hammer through a looking glass.

I would give almost anything to save someone else the humiliation I endured. I have no words to express my gratitude for the work He ultimately accomplished, but for years I was haunted by the torturous question, “Couldn’t there have been an easier way?” Finally I accepted the answer: apparently not. My God loves me too much not to have chosen another way if it would have sufficed.

AUGUST 30

All His works are true and
His ways are just. And He is able to
humble those who walk in pride.

Daniel 4:37



God wants to bear much fruit in every one of our lives. He wants to infuse our prayer lives with inconceivable power. He wants to stun us with affirmative answers. He wants to leave the marks of the cross we carry in His name on our Promised Lands and our surrounding spheres of influence.

God longs to do all these things and more in any life who will let Him, but He will not tolerate any of our attempts—however subtle or falsely modest—to share His glory. His Word tells us that we can either humble ourselves or He can humble us.

AUGUST 31

Humble yourselves therefore
under the mighty hand of God, so that
He may exalt you in due time.
1 Peter 5:6



Unless you physically cannot, I urge you to make a practice of literally getting on the floor, facedown and prostrate before God on a regular basis. Every time you have a smug sense of self-righteousness, buckle your knees before God buckles them for you.

I have often said what some have not wanted to hear—that we, the children of God, can either bend our knees or eventually He will break our legs ... in one form or another. He is Lord. He is Lord! But He is also a Lord who loves nothing more than to raise up the humble and astonish them with His wonderful works.

SEPTEMBER



SEPTEMBER 1

The weapons of our warfare are not
fleshly, but are powerful through God for
the demolition of strongholds.

2 Corinthians 10:4



From the moment God first issued the promise of land to Abram, He described its occupants as quickly as its perimeters: “the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaim, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites” (Gen. 15:19–21).

One of the reasons why God made the Israelites fight some tall opposition for the Promised Land (rather than just deeding it to them) was so they’d develop the strength to keep it once they’d conquered it. Surely another was to let them experience the thrill of victory that only a hard-fought battle can bring.

SEPTEMBER 2

Ask about the ancient paths:
Which is the way to what is good?
Then take it and find rest for yourselves.
Jeremiah 6:16



Like the Israelites, you and I have been promised spiritual ground for great and abiding victory on a turf where our enemy stands in defiance. If you're not presently occupying your Promised Land, rest assured the devil is. Are you going to stand by and let him get away with that?

God has given you land, Beloved, but He's calling you to go forth and take it. Your enemy is standing on your God-given ground, just daring you to take possession of it. Are you going to let him have it? Or are you going to claim your inheritance? Possession is the law of the Promised Land. Red Rover, go over.

SEPTEMBER 3

The LORD commanded me to teach you
statutes and ordinances for you to follow in
the land you are about to cross into.
Deuteronomy 4:14



The Creator of heaven and earth—the One who has the entire universe and its riches at His very disposal—knows you by name, has planned a Promised Land for you, and longs to bless you. But He wisely reserves the right to require your cooperation.

Many promises of God are unconditional, but His promises of full-throttle blessing, abiding, fruit-bearing, and conquering are not. Promised Land theology becomes an earthbound reality only to those who cash in their fear and complacency for the one ticket out of their long-inhabited wilderness.

SEPTEMBER 4

The life I now live in the flesh,
I live by faith in the Son of God, who
loved me and gave Himself for me.

Galatians 2:20



Whether or not we like the concept, Christ loves to respond to us according to our faith. I used to bristle over this idea until I started exercising a little more belief and experienced completely unexpected and exceeding results.

In fact, I've noted a pretty reliable ratio along the way: the less faith we have, the more we tend to resent the concept. Maybe you're bristling about it right now. But let me just go ahead and say what this certified sanguine is thinking: nothing on earth is more fun than faith. If you decide to sign up for the great adventure of faith, I can promise you'll never get bored.

SEPTEMBER 5

He demonstrated this power in the Messiah
by raising Him from the dead and seating
Him at His right hand in the heavens.

Ephesians 1:20



God exerts an incomparable power in the lives of those who continue believing Him. Nothing on earth compares to the strength God is willing to interject into lives caught in the act of believing.

Can you think of any need you might have that would require more strength than God exerted when He raised His Son from the dead? Me neither. He can raise marriages from the dead and restore life and purpose to those who have given up. He can forgive and purify the vilest sinner. God's specialty is raising dead things to life and making impossible things possible.

SEPTEMBER 6

I am saying this for your
own benefit ... so that you may be
devoted to the Lord without distraction.
1 Corinthians 7:35



Anytime someone makes fun of me or tells me I'm too radical or demonstrative for them, I always have the same thought: "Beloved, I was once the most bound-up, defeated believer you've ever met, and now I'm a walking miracle experiencing the power of God. With all due respect, how's life going for you?"

Sometimes God demands radical measures when He wants to bring about radical results. I may look silly, but to the glory of God, something's working. This woman should have been a lost cause. I just hope God takes each of us to a place we've never been with Him before.

SEPTEMBER 7

The one who loves Me will be
loved by My Father. I also will love him
and will reveal Myself to him.

John 14:21



I believe that a significant measure of spiritual vision is developed simply by watching. The more we “see” God at work, the more we’ll believe. And the more we believe, the more we’re liable to see.

As you participate with God in the increase of your faith and sanctification, God will undoubtedly be at significant work in your life. He accomplishes so much, we don’t have eyes to see it all. But if He’s willing to make some of His work and a measure of His presence observable, I want to stop all distractions for a moment and see it. Don’t you?

SEPTEMBER 8

When Jesus heard it,
He answered him, "Don't be afraid.
Only believe, and she will be made well."
Luke 8:50



We must cease to accept the visible as if it's the only possible solution and start believing what God says over what man sees. Could any restlessness and dissatisfaction we feel in our souls be Christ initiating and authorizing a new day of awakened faith and outpoured Spirit? Oh, God, let it be!

Please don't misunderstand me to say that believing God only involves believing Him for dramatic miracles in our lives and in the lives of others. But if we don't include believing Him for the miraculous, can you imagine the tragedy of all we could miss?

SEPTEMBER 9

If the ministry of condemnation
had glory, the ministry of righteousness
overflows with even more glory.

2 Corinthians 3:9



At the Last Supper, Christ introduced a term with revolutionary implications. As He raised the cup, He said, “This cup is the new covenant established by My blood; it is shed for you” (Luke 22:20).

You and I are under the new covenant. And if we understood the fullness of the implications, we’d shout, “Glory!” Indeed, that would be the key word. We look upon the lives of people like Moses and wish we had such manifestations and revelations of divine presence. But if we really understood the meaning of the verse above, we’d not only shout, “Glory!” We’d shout, “Surpassing glory!”

SEPTEMBER 10

When you judge another,
you condemn yourself, since you,
the judge, do the same things.

Romans 2:1



If we want to be filled with faith and behold some wonders, we are wise to avoid giving in to two temptations: judging and arguing.

Whatever we do, we must avoid judging someone else for a weaker or lesser faith. I have enough fear of God in me to know that I will likely be tested on the very things I've judged in others.

But don't argue with them either. Nothing is logical about miracles. Therefore, to the degree that we debate matters of faith, we could find ourselves drained of it. Keep seeking. Keep believing. And count on God to take care of the rest.

SEPTEMBER 11

Look at how great a love the Father
has given us, that we should be called
God's children. And we are!

1 John 3:1



Who does God say we are? He spent no small amount of ink expressing the various facets of sonship (and daughtership). For example:

“He chose us in Him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted through Jesus Christ for Himself, according to His favor and will, to the praise of His glorious grace that He favored us with in the Beloved” (Eph. 1:4–6).

If we knew nothing else but these few truths and accepted them into our belief system, our lives would be altered.

SEPTEMBER 12

God's righteousness is revealed
from faith to faith, just as it is written: "
The righteous will live by faith."
Romans 1:17



If the thought of God's accepting us by faith alone causes the mercury in our self-righteousness meters to rise, we may still be trying to take some credit for our acceptable standing before God through Christ. Grace is humbling, isn't it?

Reminds me of the time my daughter Amanda called me on her cell phone to tell me she had just driven beside a car with a bumper sticker that read, "What if the hokeypokey *is* what it's all about?" After a good laugh, the thought came to me that on the biblical subject of righteousness, faith is what it's all about. Stick that in your song and dance to it.

SEPTEMBER 13

My life is down in the dust;
give me life through Your word. I told You
about my life, and You listened to me.
Psalm 119:25–26



For years I lived in a cycle of poor self-image followed by poor choices feeding a poorer self-image and even poorer choices. I was a Christian, so this was not due to my being in an unredeemed or ignorant state. It was directly due to believing my past's prediction over my future rather than God's Word.

When I began to study the Scripture in-depth, I had no idea that God's first purpose for stirring in me an insatiable appetite for His Word was to perform intense surgery on my broken heart and distorted mind. But that's what happens when we believe who God says we are.

SEPTEMBER 14

Teach me Your way, LORD,
and I will live by Your truth. Give me an
undivided mind to fear Your name.

Psalm 86:11



Through a study of the Word in my latter twenties, I came upon Scripture after Scripture characterizing a child of God. Soon I began to believe them for others. But I was unwilling and hesitant to apply these same Scriptures to myself.

Surely someone besides me has confidently assured a hurting or questioning person of a biblical truth that applied to him or her as a child of God, though you wouldn't accept it for yourself. Perhaps you've also noticed that God doesn't put up with that for very long. He is adamant that we allow Him to teach to us what He wants to teach *through* us.

SEPTEMBER 15

Do not be afraid or discouraged
because of this vast multitude, for the
battle is not yours, but God's.

2 Chronicles 20:15



The common word “discouraged” means all the things you might imagine, but I found there is one English synonym that is worthy of particular meditation and thought: “demoralization.”

As I reflected on the ramifications of this word—demoralization—I felt like the Holy Spirit revealed an insight to me concerning one possible dimension of it. I believe demoralization can occur when Satan figures out who you and I fear most that we are—and what we fear most that we cannot do—then he sets out to confirm it. When you see that happening, you can know he’s at work. Again.

SEPTEMBER 16

“It’s a ghost!” they said, and cried out
in fear. Immediately Jesus spoke to them.
“Have courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”

Matthew 14:26–27



When God told Joshua not to be terrified or discouraged upon entering the Promised Land, He gave him the important reason. It had nothing to do with the absence of terrifying or discouraging circumstances. On the contrary, Joshua had never faced anything so frightful or potentially disparaging in his life.

What reason did God give Joshua for turning from fear and discouragement in the face of huge opposition? The same reason Jesus gave to His disciples not to be afraid in the storm. It wasn’t the removal of their frightful circumstances but the presence of their Savior.

SEPTEMBER 17

I know the plans I have for you ...
plans for your welfare, not for disaster,
to give you a future and a hope.
Jeremiah 29:11



I honestly thought my genuine love for God would keep my handicapped feet on the path all by itself. I clearly remember telling God in my twenties that no one would ever love Him more than I and that He'd never be sorry He called me.

Then I fell headfirst into a pit—not for the first time or, tragically, the last. Over and over the words rung in my head like church bells drowning in discord: I failed God! I failed God! Somehow I don't think I'm the only one who ever felt that way. But He knows the plans He has for you. Plans to give you a hope and a future. You can because *He* can.

SEPTEMBER 18

If I say: “I won’t mention Him or
speak any longer in His name,” His message
becomes a fire burning in my heart.

Jeremiah 20:9



When we are filled with the Holy Spirit by yielding to His lordship, and we read and receive God’s Word, something virtually supernatural takes place.

Picture the Holy Spirit like a flammable substance within us. (Because oil was often associated with anointing in the Bible, many scholars believe oil symbolized the Holy Spirit.) Next, imagine taking the torch of God’s Word and combining it with the oil of the Holy Spirit. What is the result? The consuming fire of God blazes within us, bringing supernatural energy, glorious activity, and pure, unadulterated power.

SEPTEMBER 19

I tell you, all the things you pray
and ask for—believe that you have
received them, and you will have them.

Mark 11:24



News flash: we should be experiencing lots of answered prayer. Lots of it. But I have a feeling much of the body of Christ feels like I did for so long. I prayed all the usual “bless and protect us” prayers, but my ordinary mode of operation was to pray things that looked like they were probably going to turn out anyway.

I doubt many believers ever grow to the point that they know the mind of Christ well enough to continually pray petitions He answers affirmatively. We can, however, mature in our prayer life to the point that we see far more affirmative answers than we previously have.

SEPTEMBER 20

Even though He had performed
so many signs in their presence,
they did not believe in Him.

John 12:37



I got a sense one day that, frankly, God was bored with my prayer life. He seemed to be saying, “My child, you believe me for so little. Don’t be so safe in the things you pray. Who are you trying to keep from looking foolish? Me or you?”

See, sometimes I decided I’d rather not ask for certain things than risk a no. I reasoned that God was sovereign and I’d simply let Him do what He wanted. In reality, I was terrified that God or I would let me down and shake what little faith I had. The question I heard from the Holy Spirit still convicts and chills me. Is He asking you something similar?

SEPTEMBER 21

Through the proof of this service,
they will glorify God for your obedience to
the confession of the gospel of Christ.

2 Corinthians 9:13



We could think of many examples where obedience comes from faith. Sometimes, for instance, we have to exercise faith to believe that obedience to God in a difficult situation will ultimately bear fruit, even though it looks as though it might immediately cause hardship.

We also have to exercise faith to believe God can handle the consequences of our obedience if someone important to us is not going to approve first.

For many of us, the step of faith begins much further back: we have to exercise faith to believe we are even capable of long-term obedience. And we are.

SEPTEMBER 22

As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord,
walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him
and established in the faith.

Colossians 2:6–7



I often speak and apply Scripture when I vocalize my most serious prayer requests. I also might use Scripture over matters that require long periods of time, such as the salvation of a resistant sibling. I often interject Scripture into requests for miraculous intervention, as well.

Each of these represents a time when we're most tempted to dwindle in faith, energy, and longevity in prayer. But by using Scripture, I transfer the burden to God's Word rather than my ability to pray correctly or adequately. Because it is from God's divine mouth, His Word has energy all its own. I let it do the work.

SEPTEMBER 23

Now He has reconciled you by His physical
body through His death, to present you holy,
faultless, and blameless before Him.

Colossians 1:22



One way God hammered a biblical identity into my belief system was through a number of *this and that* conversations. When I saw Scriptures characterizing a child of God, I constantly sensed Him saying to my heart, “Beth, you are *this*.” For a long time, I responded, “No, Lord, I am *that*”—one of the hurtful things I thought about myself.

Months turned into years, and the voice of God grew increasingly insistent: “Beth, when will you ever believe you are *this*?” He was getting me to the point where, even though I may have felt like a *that*, he wanted me thinking like a *this*.

SEPTEMBER 24

We are the circumcision, the ones who serve
by the Spirit of God, boast in Christ Jesus,
and do not put confidence in the flesh.

Philippians 3:3



With a mustard seed of faith to at least believe I was *this* even though I felt like a *that*, God brought about a breakthrough. With constant doses of His Word and a growing cooperation in my heart, He taught me to believe Him enough to at least start making decisions like a *this*.

I would come to a crossroad of decision and think, “I still feel like *that*, but God says I’m *this*. How would a *this* behave in my current situation?” I’d picture someone who I knew was a *this* and try to imagine what she’d do. And over time my habits began to change. I started behaving like a *this*. After all, *this* is who I am.

SEPTEMBER 25

We have received grace ... through Him to
bring about the obedience of faith among all
the nations, on behalf of His name.

Romans 1:5



All the while I was preoccupied with *this* and *that*, Romans 1:5 was hard at work. My obedience flowed directly from my faith to believe I was who God said I was, even when I didn't feel like it. Not surprisingly, the more I acted like *this* instead of *that*, the more I felt blessed, chosen, adopted, favored, redeemed, and forgiven.

I guess that's why I'm like a dog gnawing on a bone in my unceasing insistence that anyone can live victoriously. Anyone can know the fruit of obedience. Dear (equally hardheaded?) one, if I can live victoriously through the power of the Holy Spirit, anyone can.

SEPTEMBER 26

Simon, Simon, look out! Satan has asked
to sift you like wheat. But I have prayed
for you that your faith may not fail.

Luke 22:31–32



Why did Jesus pray specifically for Simon Peter's faith not to fail? Because Peter's future was not dependent on a perfect track record. It was dependent upon his faith. Peter would desperately need the courage to believe he was still who Christ said he was even after such failure. He would need to believe God knowing that it was credited to him as righteousness.

For some reason, the hardest biblical truths to accept are the ones about us. But don't let that be said of you. Believe you are who God says you are, and fathom the double blessing of God crediting it to you as righteousness.

SEPTEMBER 27

If you have faith the size of a mustard seed,
you will tell this mountain, “Move from
here to there,” and it will move.

Matthew 17:20



Do you remember when Christ spoke these words to His disciples? The next words out of his mouth were these: “Nothing will be impossible for you.” Christ did not tell his disciples only to “think” with faith-filled authority, nor did He tell them to perform certain physical demonstrations. He distinctively told them to have faith and to “tell this mountain” what it needed to do.

In other words, I think we could say Christ taught His disciples to “believe and therefore speak.” I think we, too, could speak to some mountains at appropriate times, and they just might move.

SEPTEMBER 28

When they hear, immediately
Satan comes and takes away the
word sown in them.

Mark 4:15



In case the thought of telling mountains to move makes you nervous, let me assure you that I, too, have seen the misuse and abuse of concepts like this through practices that involve disturbing shouts and rebukes (as if the louder the better) and presumptuous naming and claiming. My plea is that we not miss the use because of misuse.

The concept of God assigning or entrusting limited authority to His children under the umbrella of His own is consistent from Genesis to Revelation. Satan has much to gain by turning us off to faith practices.

SEPTEMBER 29

If you believe,
you will receive whatever
you ask for in prayer.
Matthew 21:22



If we truly believe according to the sound application of Scripture that God is extending authority to us as His children over a certain matter, we might be shocked what we could tell to “Move!” and it would. I’ve tried telling a few mountains to move at times (mostly in private) and, lo and behold, to this Baptist girl’s surprise, some have!

I’ve had some fun learning to exercise my weak and awkward faith—and even to see it grow a bit—on “mountains” that have taken any number of forms. I don’t mind telling you that I think God has gotten a kick out of it, too.

SEPTEMBER 30

These are opposed to each other, so that you don't do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Galatians 5:17-18



Any supernatural results that arise from biblical practices come from God alone. If a mountain moves, God moved it. He simply invited us to join Him by allowing us to exhale a powerful breath of the Spirit.

Having the faith to tell a mountain to move and asking God to move the mountain are not opposing concepts. Like many biblical practices, we don't replace one with the other. We seek to be led by the Holy Spirit and discern when to implement certain practices. God alone must be the one and only initiator in matters of faith.

OCTOBER



OCTOBER 1

A joyful heart makes
a face cheerful, but a sad heart
produces a broken spirit.

Proverbs 15:13



Would you be offended if I told you that I not only think God is awesome, wonderful, and faithful but that I also think He is fun? In fact, in my opinion those who take the faith out of spiritual living have taken the fun out of life. They can play it safe if they want, but I like living out on a limb with God.

I've put all my hopes and all my faith in Him. I have absolutely nothing else to hang on to. I'm banking on God and His Word with every drop of energy I have. If He doesn't come through, I've made a fool of myself. But I'm not worried about it, because He has yet to fail me.

OCTOBER 2

Lies and not faithfulness prevail in the land,
for they proceed from one evil to another,
and they do not take Me into account.

Jeremiah 9:3



Your tongue—just like mine—has most likely been misused and misappropriated countless times. As if our own tendencies aren't bad enough, we also live among a people of unclean lips. Many of us live or work in environments where backbiting, gossip, lying, profanity, and off-color remarks and jokes are pandemic.

God wants to send you and me forth into our worlds in His name. And the instrument of His greatest potential use in each of our lives is the tongue. No, we're not all called to speak, teach, or preach, but we are all called to use our mouths to glorify His name.

OCTOBER 3

We should wash ourselves clean from every impurity of the flesh and spirit, making our sanctification complete in the fear of God.

2 Corinthians 7:1



Jesus Christ graced earth's guilty sod to offer Himself as the perfect sacrifice and fulfill every requirement of the Law. He shed His blood on an altar constructed of two pieces of wood and fashioned into a cross. Because the fire of holy judgment met with the blood of the spotless Lamb, we need no other act of atonement.

But we are desperate for the continuing work of sanctification. Too much power is at stake to continue cultivating an inconsistent and unconsecrated mouth. The challenge of a tamed tongue is so great that we'd be wise to give it daily attention in prayer.

OCTOBER 4

In the year that King Uzziah died,
I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty
throne, and His robe filled the temple.

Isaiah 6:1



Today you and I stand before the same throne the prophet Isaiah approached in his glorious vision. God is just as holy, Just as high and lifted up. The train of His robe still fills the temple, and the seraphs still cry, “Holy!”

But the writer of Hebrews 4:15–16 tells us that because we have Jesus as our great High Priest, we boldly approach a throne of *grace*. And the same grace that saves also sanctifies. We need not hang our heads and beg. All we need do is lift up our faces and ask. May Jesus touch our lips again with coals from the altar and set our tongues aflame with holy fire.

OCTOBER 5

But on the seventh day, march around the city seven times... Then the city wall will collapse, and the people will advance.

Joshua 6:4-5



When the Israelites marched around Jericho, their seventh trip around on the seventh day could not have seemed any different from the rest, with the exception that they felt wearier. Why did God purpose for the wall to fall on that particular round? Because it was time.

Day-in and day-out, the fundamentals are the way I march repeatedly around my Jerichos. Unlike Joshua and the children of Israel, I never know when my present Jericho is going to fall. I just know that I'm to keep believing and keep marching. When the time is complete, the wall is going to collapse.

OCTOBER 6

My foes will rejoice because I am shaken.

But I have trusted in Your faithful love;
my heart will rejoice in Your deliverance.

Psalm 13:4–5



You and I have each experienced times when we've prayed our hardest for two different people to be healed of physical illness. One is delivered on earth; the other is delivered in heaven.

We've also prayed for people struggling to make ends meet. One gets a job; sometimes the other loses her home.

So why does God so often bring such different results from the same depth of earnest, believing prayer? 1) We don't know; 2) we're not supposed to know; and 3) we're not responsible for the One who does. We are not God. We are His children.

OCTOBER 7

Often a spirit seizes him ... and it throws
him into convulsions.... I begged Your
disciples to drive it out, but they couldn't.

Luke 9:39-40



As we deeply desire to love and help people, we must be careful not to allow them to make us feel responsible for getting something from God or explaining His mysterious actions. If we do, we are letting them make us false christs, and we have escorted them not only into inevitable disappointment but into idolatry.

Jesus' first followers were surely in these kinds of positions constantly. They lived and loved by faith but, remember, they didn't get everything they asked for either. God must reason that the hearts and minds of mortals can't handle unwavering success, even in spiritual terms.

OCTOBER 8

What then can we say
that Abraham, our forefather
according to the flesh, has found?
Romans 4:1



Abraham and David lived in different eras and fulfilled different positions, yet they shared one commonality that related heavily to the concept of faith being credited as righteousness. Both had sinned so grievously that faith was demanded for them to believe they were still who God said they were: a father of multitudes and a king whose kingdom would never end. True restoration demands faith.

God can credit our faith as righteousness without concern that we'll take advantage of the freedom. He knows faith that doesn't lead to obedience is all talk and no walk.

OCTOBER 9

You are My witnesses ... so that
you may know and believe Me and
understand that I am He.

Isaiah 43:10



Believing God doesn't happen on special occasions or sudden demand. Present-active-participle believing is a lifestyle— a daily, deliberate choice. It is a belief that awakens God in the morning and says, “Lord, I thank You for another day to know You and believe You. Whatever means You may choose to increase my faith today, I commit myself to that glorious end.”

After He sings us to sleep at night, may our Father be able to look at the Son on His right and say, “She believed Me today.” He will credit it to our account as righteousness.

OCTOBER 10

We are convinced that we have a
clear conscience, wanting to conduct
ourselves honorably in everything.

Hebrews 13:18



All—such a small word means so much. But never in history has the concept of giving everything to one chief end been so challenged. We have never been more fragmented or have lived in a society that demanded more pieces of us. How can a person who is giving a thousand pieces of herself to innumerable demands and desires ever know wholeness?

The Lord Jesus offers us the one and only way to wholeness: giving ourselves wholly to Him. Every fish. Every loaf. Withholding nothing. We give Christ our all. And with it He is able to do the impossible.

OCTOBER 11

The anointing you received
from Him remains in you... His
anointing teaches you about all things.

1 John 2:27



I ache for the body of Christ in our generation to learn how to tarry before God and expectantly wait for Him to speak. I'm desperate to learn it for myself. If we do, what revelation we would receive! We cannot have a drive-thru relationship with God and expect to behold His glory.

Like the children of Israel, much of the body of Christ still stands back and watches those they consider truly anointed draw near to God's glory. Dear One, *you* are anointed! Never settle for a secondhand relationship. Never be satisfied with distant glory.

OCTOBER 12

I will give them a heart to know Me,
that I am the LORD. They will be My
people, and I will be their God.

Jeremiah 24:7



Great faith is born nowhere else but in the presence of God. There is only one way we can know that God is who He says He is, and that is by knowing God.

The more we know God, the more we will believe Him. And the more we choose to believe Him, the more we will get to know Him.

This is the cycle that replaces “believe little, see little; believe less, see less.” The know-believe cycle is the one we want to be pedaling for the rest of our days! The way that we birth faith is by knowing the One we believe, then we walk our faith by believing the One we know.

OCTOBER 13

I know whom I have believed and am
persuaded that He is able to guard what has
been entrusted to me until that day.

2 Timothy 1:12



The God to whom you commit yourself and everything that concerns you is huge. He is the omnipotent Maker of heaven and earth. He is the One who sees. He is the One who knows. He is the One who acts on behalf of His children.

He is the Mighty Warrior. He is the compassionate Father. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He is the coming King.

He is love. He is light. He is good. He is right. He is your soul's delight. He is whatever you need. He alone is wise. In Him alone life makes sense, and apart from Him all is chaos.

OCTOBER 14

I know your works; you
have a reputation for being
alive, but you are dead.

Revelation 3:1



If God were to give the worldwide church of Jesus Christ a grade today, as He did to the seven churches in Revelation, I fear we'd receive an "F" for faith. Most of us—and certainly I—have been tightly chained, smugly satisfied, and dangerously arrogant through unbelief.

But I am convinced that God is calling the body of Christ to a vast revival of a very specific nature: a revival of biblical faith. I see a fresh emphasis springing up all over. This faith realization is birthed through an eye-opening realization and authentic repentance of the far-reaching plague of unbelief.

OCTOBER 15

Do you believe only because
I told you I saw you under the fig tree?
You will see greater things than this.
John 1:50



Over the past years, God has challenged me and empowered me to change. And never in my history with God have I received more blatant approval from Him over a newly directed approach. I still research the Word with the same fervor and pursue sound scholarship, but now I intentionally add my faith to it.

In other words, I actively say, “God infuse these words not only into my heart and mind but also into the marrow of my belief system. Bring these words to life in me today. Help me not only to learn them but also to walk by faith in them. Help me believe You.”

OCTOBER 16

We have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and the one who remains in love remains in God.

1 John 4:16



Today, even when I miss the mark in making sound application of a biblical truth or when I misread a spiritual signal from the Lord, I've sensed Him saying to my heart, "You're on the right track, child. Stay after it! Keep practicing belief, and you'll learn more and more about My desires as you go."

One of my new mottoes has become, "If I err, let me err on the side of belief." Scripture makes me confident that God looks on the heart. I'd much rather Him see misguided actions from my believing heart than safe-and-sound actions from an unbelieving heart.

OCTOBER 17

Now faith is the reality
of what is hoped for, the proof
of what is not seen.

Hebrews 11:1



The words “hoped for” and “not seen” in the verse above should quickly suggest that we aren’t likely to make an exact science of faith. The nature of walking by faith rather than by sight comes with its obvious risks.

One of the inevitable questions each person challenged to believe God has to answer is whether she is willing to risk being wrong from time to time. Faith may not be palatable to perfectionists for this very reason. Thankfully, I gave up on perfection a long time ago. I’ve found that a continual commitment to the pursuit of balance steers me back on course.

OCTOBER 18

The law perfected nothing,
but a better hope is introduced, through
which we draw near to God.

Hebrews 7:19



One positive result of past failure is that you surrender the pursuit of perfection and, if you've gained any sense along the way, you replace it with the pursuit of God's redemption.

Nothing is more redemptive than faith in God. You learn that failure may be painful, but it's rarely fatal.

After coming to grips with the high premium God places on our faith, I refuse to give up a life practice of believing God just because I accidentally swerve off the road a few times in my faith journey. Hebrews 11:6 says *faith* is what pleases God, not perfection.

OCTOBER 19

Grant that Your slaves may speak Your
message with complete boldness, while You
stretch out Your hand for healing.

Acts 4:29–30



I believe God is about to perform a fresh work in His body of believers, one that has been calendared in heaven since time began. And, yes, one that will involve signs and wonders as He extends His final saving and judging revelations to planet Earth.

You and I may not see the kinds of characterizing signs and wonders His Word predicts, but we are to prepare for them by adjusting our faith to the swelling work God is planning to perform. We must leave the generations that come behind us a heritage of faith and an invitation to go further still.

OCTOBER 20

It is God who is working in you,
enabling you both to will and
to act for His good purpose.

Philippians 2:13



Does God need our faith before He can act, since He already has the events of the last days planned? Of course not. His purpose from the moment He created humanity was to invite man to partner with Him in His work.

Simply put, faith partners with God. Faith also invites God. Swelling faith can hasten swelling works of God because, frankly, He favors the invitation.

With all my heart, I believe God wants us to ask Him to reveal Himself more blatantly on earth so that many will be saved, others delivered, others helped, and still others healed.

OCTOBER 21

Be imitators of God, as dearly loved children. And walk in love, as the Messiah also loved us and gave Himself for us.

Ephesians 5:1–2



Every time I read Ephesians 5:1, I picture God sending us out the door of our secret place with Him and into the world, saying, “Now go out there and act like the dearly loved child you are today. And not just *anyone’s* dearly loved child. Keep in mind today that your Father created this world you live in and told the sun to come up again this morning.

“I’ll be sitting here on My throne all day long. Keep checking in with Me and let Me know what you need. You have My cell number: Jeremiah 33:3—‘Call to Me and I will answer you and tell you great and wondrous things you do not know.’”

OCTOBER 22

Be on your guard, so that your
minds are not dulled ... or that day
will come on you unexpectedly.

Luke 21:34



The mind is often the last inner chamber we allow God to sanctify. One reason is because it is a never-ending challenge to keep clean, and we sometimes adopt the attitude, “Why bother?” But, oh, we must bother because the mind is the biggest battlefield on which our spiritual battles are fought. Even our feelings eventually bow down to our thoughts.

People say, “I can’t change the way I feel.” But if we change the way we think—the way we believe—we will change the way we feel. It is a demonic doctrine that says our love for God doesn’t feel or that our minds cannot be clean.

OCTOBER 23

May the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely. And may your spirit, soul, and body be kept sound and blameless.

1 Thessalonians 5:23



A big part of living the sincere, sanctified, believing life is learning how to behave consistently whether we're in the world or in the church.

Something is wrong, for example, if our coworkers would be shocked that we go to church. Most believers don't work in environments where preaching to coworkers is part of their job description, but would coworkers find our behavior inconsistent with the belief system we profess at church?

Relief arises from consistency—from being the same person at the shopping mall as we are at Sunday worship.

OCTOBER 24

Let us hold on to the confession
of our hope without wavering, for
He who promised is faithful.
Hebrews 10:23



God is more than willing to cleanse us from the guilt of repented sin! He will never turn us down as we approach Him on the basis of Christ's accomplished work on Calvary.

But for us to apply this accomplished work, we've got to approach Him with a full assurance of faith. In other words, we've got to believe God will do what He says He will do!

Christ has already done the work, but we must receive it by faith. He wants nothing more than to give you and me the grace gift of a fresh, clean conscience, but we've got to accept it through belief!

OCTOBER 25

After three days, they found Him in the temple complex sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.

Luke 2:46



In this rare scene of the child Jesus, I am thankful to see that He not only speaks but He also listens. And not only does He listen, He also asks questions.

Contrary to popular opinion, faith is not the avoidance of questions. In fact, our faith grows when we seek answers, and thankfully we find many of them between Genesis 1 and Revelation 22. We may hear a gentle “Because I said so” to questions He chooses not to answer, but I don’t believe our heavenly Father is offended by questions. Rather, He is a God who listens, who allows us to pour out our hearts to Him.

OCTOBER 26

Martha was distracted by her many tasks, and she came up and asked, “Lord, don’t You care that my sister has left me to serve alone?”

Luke 10:40



Sometimes we are so shocked when a seasoned servant of God confesses that he or she is struggling with belief and an awareness of God’s loving care. We find ourselves thinking, “You of all people! You are such a wonderful servant of God. How can you doubt for a moment how much He cares for you?”

Could it be that service itself has somehow distracted this person from abundant, life-giving intimacy with God? Christ’s love for us never changes. But we must not neglect to give Him ample time and opportunity to lavish us with the love He always feels for us.

OCTOBER 27

Consider the ravens: they don't sow
or reap; they don't have a storeroom
or a barn; yet God feeds them.

Luke 12:24



One of the best ways to become more acquainted with the heart of God is to search the Scriptures and study the things He values most. That's what this verse is all about.

No matter how much value everything else in the world represents to Him, you are more valuable to God than all the rest put together.

As people who act out what we believe through our lifestyles and decisions, we need to take this statement of biblical fact to heart. If we truly believe what God says about our value to Him, our lives will be dramatically altered.

OCTOBER 28

Now to Him who is able to protect
you from stumbling and to make you stand
in the presence of His glory ...

Jude 24



Even after all our frailties and failures, Christ Jesus can hardly wait to acknowledge us before the very angels of God. If He is that unashamed of us in all our imperfections, how can we be ashamed of Him, our Redeemer and Deliverer?

So don't duck your head in shame under the coffee table. At one time or another, all of us have faced the temptation to shrink away from openly acknowledging Christ. But I've learned one of the best ways to get over our attacks of shame: do it over and over until it loses its intimidation. The more we practice, the easier it gets!

OCTOBER 29

Can any of you add a cubit to his height by worrying? If then you're not able to do even a little thing, why worry about the rest?

Luke 12:25–26



Why do you think worry is so difficult to control? Maybe one reason is because we have so many prime opportunities to practice it! We're never going to overcome worry by eliminating reasons to worry. Life isn't suddenly going to fix itself. God wills that we overcome worry even when overwhelmed by legitimate reasons to worry.

All our worrying—even when done in the name of love—can accomplish absolutely nothing. But all our praying in the name of Jesus could entreat God to accomplish anything. When will we learn to turn our worry effort into prayer?

OCTOBER 30

Why are you amazed at this? Or why do you
stare at us, as though by our own power or
godliness we had made him walk?

Acts 3:12



As we actively love others and risk praying big prayers for them, let's not dream of taking credit when we receive what we ask. Not only will we offend God and mislead people, we will place ourselves in position to take the blame when we *don't* get what we ask.

I am often reminded of a bumper sticker I once saw, which succinctly said: "There is a God. You are not Him." As the words of Peter attest, none of us possesses enough "power or godliness" to enact a miracle in someone else's life—even on our best day. Faith expressing itself through love is a miracle in itself.

OCTOBER 31

While we are at home in the body
we are away from the Lord—for we
walk by faith, not by sight.

2 Corinthians 5:6–7



You and I have talked a lot about our Promised Lands from the beginning of this book. We started this yearlong journey at the Jordan River's edge, looking into the distance to our Canaan, the land where we've been called to walk by faith and fulfill our divine destinies.

Our land of promise is the place where we abide, actively and presently believing God. It is a good land. A land of harvest and plenty. I pray that you have been moving step-by-step across the dry riverbed, with the waters of the Jordan heaped to each side. Now is no time to quit walking by faith.

NOVEMBER



NOVEMBER 1

“Why are you troubled?” He asked them.

“And why do doubts arise in your hearts?”

Look at My hands and My feet.”



Christ's willingness to continue drawing us to belief totally astounds me. At no time after appearing to His disciples in resurrected form did He say, "You bunch of idiots! I'm sick of trying to talk you into believing Me!" When the sight of Him wasn't enough, Jesus said, "Look at My hands and My feet."

We ourselves have often seen His hands by way of His constant provision and glorious intervention. We have seen His feet as He's gone before us. Surely we, too, have beheld the hands and feet of Christ with the eyes of faith. May we look again today—and believe!

NOVEMBER 2

My dear brothers, be steadfast, immovable,
always excelling in the Lord's work, knowing
that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

1 Corinthians 15:58



Like me, I'm sure you've been through seasons when one crisis seems to roll in behind another, when you're faced with losses beyond what your heart can bear. I'm not glad when these troubles happen. I don't rejoice over loss. But even when my heart is very sore, I'm aware it's still beating. I am alive, and life is strangely abundant.

Had God not taught me His Word and made Himself the uncontested love of my life, I think I might have wanted to quit. If you, too, tend to fear having your heart broken, ask Him to redirect your energies toward faithfulness instead.

NOVEMBER 3

You were called to this, because Christ also
suffered for you, leaving you an example,
so that you should follow in His steps.

1 Peter 2:21



Hardship sometimes comes as a direct result of sin and disobedience. We are usually aware when consequences of sin have caused us deep suffering, but many other times, trials have nothing to do with disobedience. Yet we may wonder why we can't muster enough faith to be healthy, problem-free, and prosperous.

Please be encouraged to know that difficulty is not a sign of immaturity or faithlessness. The Holy Spirit will do His job and let you know if you're suffering because of sin. Otherwise, remember—we all suffer many hardships. The key difference is this: ours are never in vain.

NOVEMBER 4

This man Paul has persuaded and misled
a considerable number of people by saying
that gods made by hand are not gods!

Acts 19:26



The Ephesians believed that the image of the goddess Artemis had fallen from heaven. Some scholars assume they were describing a meteor that hit Ephesus, which the people imagined to look like a multi-breasted woman. I am sometimes amazed at the things people believe.

I'm no rocket scientist, but I find Paul's message of a Messiah sent from God who offers eternal life to everyone who believes much more plausible than that. Yes, God requires faith, but not as much as a number of belief systems falling out of the skies today. Go ahead and believe Him. He's very believable.

NOVEMBER 5

Speaking the truth in love,
let us grow in every way into Him
who is the head—Christ.

Ephesians 4:15



The best way for a child of God to avoid being kidnapped is to stay close to home. Children in natural families cannot live their entire lives in their yards, but children in the spiritual family of God can! Continuing to live in Christ means remaining close to Him, retaining a focus on Him. Any other focus can easily lead to deception.

Many of us have probably let something become a bigger focus than Christ Himself, even if that focus was on a biblical teaching or doctrine. But we are far less likely to be kidnapped when we stay focused on the Head, Jesus Christ.

NOVEMBER 6

[God] keeps His gracious covenant loyalty
for a thousand generations with those who
love Him and keep His commands.

Deuteronomy 7:9



I once thought Exodus 20:5, which refers to the sins of the fathers being visited upon the children, was one of the scariest verses in the Bible. Then I found that the word “visit” means to take a census or head count. In other words, when a parent practices sin and rebellion, God can take a census in that family and find those continuing results.

But sin and rebellion are not the only heritage passed down to future generations. Let your children see the sincerity of your faith. Let them see you praying and trusting. Nothing carries the weight of sincere faith!

NOVEMBER 7

We always pray for you that our
God will ... fulfill every desire for
goodness and the work of faith.

2 Thessalonians 1:11



God can deliver anyone from anything at any time. He doesn't need any help. Yet He invites us to be part of His great work through prayer.

Never underestimate the effects of intercessory prayer lifted for our deliverance. Never underestimate the effect of prayer for others. If we don't intercede for one another, we miss opportunities to see His deliverance and to thank Him for His faithfulness.

I call this God's profit-sharing plan. When we pray for one another, we share the blessings when His deliverance comes because we've been personally involved.

NOVEMBER 8

Don't be afraid, Paul. You must stand before
Caesar. And, look! God has graciously given
you all those who are sailing with you.

Acts 27:24



The effects of one person's actions can be like an umbrella over several other heads. The kind of cover these figurative umbrellas provide is not only determined by belief in God versus unbelief, but also by faithfulness versus unfaithfulness.

God gave Paul an umbrella of protection in Acts 27 because of Paul's obedience in ministry. Whether or not the others realized it, they were gathered under the umbrella and found safety.

You and I are centered on the bow of the ship when storms come and the waves crash. May the rest of the crew find an umbrella of blessing in our midst.

NOVEMBER 9

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives to all generously and without criticizing, and it will be given to him.

James 1:5



One way to have more faith is to ask for it! If you're like me, sometimes we don't need more of anything. We just need the courage to exercise what we already have. Other times we authentically require an increase to do God's will, and He will not refuse it if we ask in Jesus' name.

Jesus will never turn us away when we come to Him with gut-level honesty and request what we lack. Since it is impossible to please God without faith, you and I will constantly have new challenges to believe God. Let's learn to confess our unbelief and ask Christ to empower us to overcome it.

NOVEMBER 10

We also speak these things,
not in words taught by human wisdom,
but in those taught by the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:13



I've been shocked over the past several years to realize that a few things I was certain were well established in Scripture were actually huge doctrines of man built on single verses. Yes, those Scriptures are still absolutely true, but they don't necessarily warrant building entire, dogmatic belief systems around.

I get a little worried when I can't get Scripture to teach Scripture, when I can get very little applicable permission from the Word. If I can find no other biblical backup for a certain spiritual concept, I tend to think I'm better off accepting by faith what I cannot explain by reason.

NOVEMBER 11

That is not how you learned about the
Messiah, assuming you heard Him and were
taught by Him, because the truth is in Jesus.

Ephesians 4:20–21



Some of our beliefs do indeed meet the test of Scripture, while others need to be reconsidered. When all is said and done, we never want our *stand* of faith to exceed our *walk* of faith. Authentic biblical stands are important, but we need to see our nouns of belief become present-active-participle verbs of believing.

Take heart in this assurance: any part of our long-held belief systems that the Holy Spirit desires to uproot—beliefs that are biblically unsupported—will be replaced with something better and far more adventurous. Anything not of the Lord is always the lesser.

NOVEMBER 12

I am the LORD, and there is
no other... I, the LORD, speak
truthfully; I say what is right.

Isaiah 45:18–19



Though many people ask, “Why doesn’t God just prove Himself and His claims?” He will not allow every shred of doubt over His existence and creatorship to be removed. He isn’t about to give away all the answers, because our faith remains His favorite revelation to a lost world that He exists.

God allows each of us to take our best shot at being God. Many intellectuals proclaim that God has been overruled or is dead, while they celebrate their heady victory. But God is secure. He knows who He is and what He’s going to do—in the course of time.

NOVEMBER 13

If I live at the eastern horizon or settle at
the western limits, even there Your hand will
lead me; Your right hand will hold on to me.

Psalm 139:9–10



David, the shepherd-king psalmist, was an artist. He painted pictures with words. And he painted one of my favorites in this passage from Psalm 139.

Just picture a child of God fleeing from Him to the far side of the sea. Now imagine God's strong arm stretching forth from the heavens, His right hand gripping the prodigal child with such passion and affection that the veins in His hand and wrist bulge.

This is what drives our faith. Faith is complete engagement with God, holding on to Him and His promises because we know He's holding on to us.

NOVEMBER 14

The LORD God formed the man out
of the dust from the ground and breathed
the breath of life into his nostrils.

Genesis 2:7



You may wonder why God didn't create our bodies the way He did the other elements of the creation, calling them into existence from absolutely nothing. He certainly could have, but He chose not to. All He had to do was speak.

But I believe God wanted to get His hands involved. You might say that He was willing to get His hands dusty. Then He looked on man and considered him the finest of all His works.

Remember, our entire purpose for existence is engagement. Is it little wonder, then, that we were even put together in an act of engagement?

NOVEMBER 15

Which of you, wanting to build a tower,
doesn't first sit down and calculate the cost
to see if he has enough to complete it?

Luke 14:28



Each of us will internally calculate the risks involved in believing God or not believing God. Faith can often seem like risky business.

But actually, we take certain risks whether we choose active faith or not, and we need to weigh them against each other. So ask yourself, "What am I risking if I decide to surrender to a life of present-active-participle believing God? And what am I risking if I don't?"

Be honest with God about this. He knows that each of us is calculating the risk. The most powerful thing we can do is involve Him in the process.

NOVEMBER 16

You sent Your good Spirit to
instruct them. You did not withhold
Your manna from their mouths.
Nehemiah 9:20



We will never outgrow our need to be taught by others who are wiser and more knowledgeable than we are. The body of Christ would nearly collapse without the gift of teaching.

We must be careful, however, not to fashion our faith secondhand. I still believe much of what I was taught in my early days of studying solid Bible doctrine, but after years of also seeking God for myself, I've become convinced that He is able and willing to do more than I first imagined. We've got to make sure that our primary teacher is the Rabboni Himself, Jesus Christ.

NOVEMBER 17

Will not God grant justice to His
elect who cry out to Him day and night?
Will He delay to help them?
Luke 18:7



If a powerful safeguard in Bible study is to develop our theology primarily on the Scripture's most repetitive principles, you will find God's miraculous intervention among the most repetitive of all. And since God is never less than who He was the day He spoke the worlds into orbit, the challenge placed before us is: "What would we believe Christ Jesus could do if all we had was a New Testament?"

We desperately need God to show His glory, and I believe He's willing. To use computer terminology, I'm convinced He's looking for invitations of faith written in bolder fonts!

NOVEMBER 18

Do not forget the lives of Your poor people
forever. Consider the covenant, for the dark
places of the land are full of violence.

Psalm 74:19–20



Destruction and depravity threaten to suffocate our society. Mockers surround us. The enemy seeks to devour us. Church attendance is dropping. Many believers are in bondage. Never before have such haunts of violence filled “the dark places of the land.” The last days draw nearer, and many people remain lost.

The world is in desperate need of true spiritual awakening, and believers are in desperate need of a fresh infusion of faith. Yes, we seek God primarily to find Him, not to see Him perform. But may He take His hand from the folds of His garment and show us His glory!

NOVEMBER 19

Didn't God choose the poor in this world
to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom
He has promised to those who love Him?

James 2:5



God had complete foreknowledge when He created us. Our infirmities, insecurities, and insufficiencies neither surprised Him nor repulsed Him. They were all part of the human package. Yet we wonder why He would choose us?

The answer is because He delights when hearts so prone to wander choose Him. What would be His greater source of joy—for perfect people to do perfect things? Or for pitifully self-centered, world-centered humans to fight the daily battle to be God-centered? Beloved, our victories bring far more delight to God than our defeats bring disappointment.

NOVEMBER 20

By faith Jacob, when he was dying,
blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and, he
worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.

Hebrews 11:21



Something about picturing the worship of this old man just before he died is precious. Perhaps the fact that he worshiped while leaning on his staff indicates he was too old and feeble to fall prostrate or even to bow before God.

Close your eyes and imagine the scene. Also picture his sons and grand-sons as they watched him. Whether or not they appreciated it, they were blessed in more ways than one, weren't they? That's because few things are more priceless than a generational heritage of worship. May we, too, be faithful to pass one down to those who come behind us.

NOVEMBER 21

Avoid irreverent, empty speech,
for this will produce an even greater
measure of godlessness.

2 Timothy 2:16



Few things destroy our witness like rudeness, unkindness, and the like. And I fear that a misinterpreted sense of superiority makes this shortcoming rampant among our religious ranks.

Interestingly, the same Christian who might be appalled over a profane word spoken by someone else might be totally oblivious to the ways she misuses or abuses her own tongue. Perhaps you've heard someone pray at a restaurant, then watched her become so insolent to the waitress that you wanted to crawl under the table. Sins that differ from ours always seem worse.

NOVEMBER 22

I will hope continually and will praise You
more and more. My mouth will tell about
Your righteousness ... all day long.
Psalm 71:14–15



I recently heard a wonderful song confessing that we humans don't have a sea of forgetfulness. No, you and I don't have a sea of forgetfulness we can cast things into. Much of it is all right here.

But the psalmist understood that the more he focused on his bad or hard memories, the more downcast he felt. So he deliberately refocused and reframed his difficult memories in the goodness and faithfulness of God.

Short of a lobotomy, we can't throw away our memories. We have to deal with them before God. But we need to get our old pictures in a new frame.

NOVEMBER 23

When I saw Him, I fell at His feet
like a dead man. He laid His right hand
on me, and said, “Don’t be afraid!”

Revelation 1:17



God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is a God so holy, powerful, and present that when He revealed Himself to Ezekiel in the Old Testament and John in the New, both dropped like dead men. He is the magnificent One, full of splendor, beautiful beyond comprehension—the I Am That I Am throughout every generation. Whoever He was, He is. Who He was to them, He is to you.

Start taking Him up on His Godness. When you have no idea what to believe Him for in a given situation, just believe Him to be huge. Come, holy God, and be Thyself.

NOVEMBER 24

You are the God of my refuge. Why have
You rejected me? Why must I go about in
sorrow because of the enemy's oppression?
Psalm 43:2



Interestingly, when God withheld His wonders, the ancient Hebrew people tended to conclude that something was wrong.

I am by no means suggesting that we should assume something is wrong in our relationship with God if we don't see miracles. Many variables may be at work in whether God responds to our prayers, needs, or desires with an obvious miracle. I just want to consider that God's wonders were such a part of Israel's history, the people started asking questions when they saw little or no divine intervention. Shouldn't we do the same?

NOVEMBER 25

“Why do you ask My name,”
the Angel of the LORD asked him,
“since it is wonderful?”

Judges 13:18



Throughout the annals of history, God presented Himself to His chosen people in many ways and by many titles. Among them were descriptive characteristics like “wonderful” and “marvelous.”

I throw around such words fairly frequently, but I love knowing that when I use them to describe God, they take on a more literal meaning. “Wonderful” cannot be disassociated from wonders, nor can “marvelous” be disassociated from marvels. Yes, Jesus is so much more than a miracle worker, but don’t miss the fact that God unashamedly associates Himself and His Son with wonders.

NOVEMBER 26

To Jesus (mediator of a new covenant),
and to the sprinkled blood, which says
better things than the blood of Abel.

Hebrews 12:24



How I praise God that the sprinkled blood of Christ speaks a better word! I don't want God to simply treat me justly. I've made many mistakes and committed countless sins. I need mercy! How about you? The blood sprinkled from Christ's torn body speaks grace to all who accept the perfect offering by faith.

But though the payment for all our sin has already been made, God still calls His own to obedience. We must not be unwilling to give God what He wants from us the most. Faith means believing that blessing never fails to follow obedience, no matter the sacrifice.

NOVEMBER 27

Enoch walked with God 300 years
and fathered sons and daughters....

Enoch walked with God.

Genesis 5:22, 24



When all is said and done, God may have His own personal testimony of all who lived by faith. Don't miss the four-word testimony of one of His saints found in Genesis 5: "Enoch walked with God."

That's all we have to do in order to please God. Walk with Him. He wants our company, and the only way we can walk with Him is to walk by faith and not by sight. The law of Moses did not exist in Enoch's era. He had no rules or regulations. We have no grounds for believing that God appeared to him or spoke aloud from the heavens. In a cold world, Enoch simply had a feverish pursuit of God.

NOVEMBER 28

Jesus said to him, “No one who puts
his hand to the plow and looks back
is fit for the kingdom of God.”

Luke 9:62



Sometimes we misunderstand where God has told us to go. Thankfully, He knows our insecurities and uncertainties. But very often through Scripture we see God reconfirm His calling to His child. If God has granted you several reconfirmations of His direction, persevere and walk with Him there, even if the full purpose of it eludes you.

God does not begrudge our attempts to make sure we're on the right track— through the Scripture, through listening, through the counsel of wise people of faith. Let's just be sure we don't slip into practicing unbelief after reconfirmation.

NOVEMBER 29

Israel said to Joseph, “Look! I am about to die, but God will be with you and will bring you back to the land of your fathers.”

Genesis 48:21



Even after this clear pronouncement, the book of Genesis ends with Joseph dying in Egypt, never making it back to the land of promise alive. Either someone was pitching around a false prophecy, or there's more to blessings than meets the eye!

Well, God would never affirm faith in misunderstandings or in misleading prophecies, so the former premise is out of the question. Actually, the fulfillment of this blessing happened just as foretold, only not in the time frame the hearers presumed. See, God has a much broader view when He works in our lives.

NOVEMBER 30

I will praise You, because I have been remarkably and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful, and I know this very well.

Psalm 139:14



Though he lived several thousand years before Charles Darwin, a simple shepherd's inspired appreciation for the wonders of human existence far surpassed the human hypotheses of an acclaimed scientist who convinced much of the world that he had the answers.

For example, while Darwin sat at his desk and reduced all creation to simple blobs of protoplasm, the outstretched DNA in his body could have reached back and forth to the sun about fifty times. Charles Darwin was fearfully and wonderfully made. He just never knew it. So are you, Dear One.

DECEMBER



DECEMBER 1

The LORD said to Abram: “Go out from your land, your relatives, and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.”

Genesis 12:1



I love the way the King James Version renders the first part of this command from Genesis 12:1—“Get thee out of thy country.” Very few of us took our first leaps of faith without hearing God say into our spiritual ears, “Get thee out of thy comfort zone.”

Let’s put it another way: if we were already where we’re going, for all practical earthly purposes we’d be dead. We can rest assured that what God has for us— even in our earthly future—is not identical to our present. Whether we like it or not, a fair amount of going is involved in following.

DECEMBER 2

We want each of you to
demonstrate the same diligence for
the final realization of your hope.

Hebrews 6:11



One of Abraham's monumental tests remains a painstaking challenge for each of us today. Between "go" and "receive" is more often than not the faith test of time. Allow me to rename this condition the Later Syndrome. Few of us will miss it, because it's too important.

Would it help to know that Christ also experienced the test of time? He didn't perform His first miracle until He was thirty years old. If we didn't know better, we might think God was running a little late, considering Jesus had only three years remaining in His earthly ministry. Nope. He was right on time.

DECEMBER 3

The one who plants and the one who waters are equal, and each will receive his own reward according to his own labor.

1 Corinthians 3:8



Our lives build on the faithfulness of the believing generation before us, and those after us will build on ours. Our ego says, “If I don’t do the planting, sowing, growing, and harvesting, none of it will get done.” We’re mistaken. As much as we’d like to think otherwise, we have just one little piece, and our faithfulness with it is paramount.

God uses time to prepare us to build with what we’re given. He calls us to make contributions of quality, not just quantity. We waste time when our impatience for earthly inheritance keeps us from knowing what to do with it.

DECEMBER 4

“If I want him to remain until I come,”

Jesus answered, “what is that to you?

As for you, follow Me.”

John 21:22



One of our challenges is watching others who seem to be operating effectively in their Promised Land, while we still feel like aliens in tents, wondering whether we misunderstood.

To add insult to injury, some of these people we're watching may be younger than we are! Have you ever found this frustrating?

But not only is comparison a waste of time, it can also be deadly. If we're not careful, we can allow resentment to kill our opportunity to grow. God reserves the right to handle us as individually as the prints He stamped on our fingertips.

DECEMBER 5

“Don’t You have an answer to what these men are testifying against You?” But He kept silent and did not answer anything.

Mark 14:60–61



Trusting in the sovereign plan of God even necessitated that Christ not always act, though He certainly had the ability to. What might have happened if He had always exercised His power rather than trusting God and refusing to be goaded into action?

If we’ve walked with God for very long at all, we’ve each faced times when faith required us not to act, even though everything within us was wanting to take action. Even the most action-oriented among us must learn to sit on our hands when challenged to do things in our own power, outside of God’s timetable.

DECEMBER 6

Jesus responded to them,
“My Father is still working,
and I am working also.”

John 5:17



If you belong to Christ, you need to know that He and His Father are not only at work continually in the universe and among believers as a whole. They are also and always at work in you through the third member of the Trinity.

What you and I desperately need is keener spiritual vision to behold some of their activity and to sense their presence. What have we got to lose besides a load of defeat and doubt?

If God said it, I want to believe it. If God gives it, I want to receive it. If God shows it, I want to perceive it. If Satan stole it, I want to retrieve it.

DECEMBER 7

They saw a large crowd around them and scribes disputing with them... . He asked, "What are you arguing with them about?"

Mark 9:14, 16



Mark 9 records a very interesting interchange between Christ and His disciples after some of them were unable to cast a demon from a tormented child. I am convinced that the argument they had with some of the educated, dignified teachers of the law diminished their faith so drastically, they were unable to do one of the very things they had been empowered by Christ to do.

If you want to be full of faith, don't argue with a legalist! Love them. Serve side-by-side with them if God wills. Don't judge them. But understand that unbelief is highly contagious.

DECEMBER 8

I am putting a stone in Zion to stumble over, and a rock to trip over, yet the one who believes on Him will not be put to shame.

Romans 9:33



I'll show you what I've learned to assume when a mountain won't budge. When Jesus said in Matthew 17:20 that we could tell mountains to move, He didn't generalize His illustration with "any" mountain. He specifically said we could speak to "this" mountain. To what mountain did He refer? He and the disciples had just come down from the mountain of His transfiguration.

So if you have the faith in God to tell a mountain to move—and it won't—assume that Christ wants you to climb it instead and see Him transfigured. Either way, the mountain is under your feet.

DECEMBER 9

For this I suffer, to the point
of being bound like a criminal;
but God's message is not bound.

2 Timothy 2:9



Paul believed what Christ believed. It's what made him who he was. He did not make it—it was making *him*. It was the very truth of God and not the invention of any human. No whip could beat it out of him. From his last imprisonment he wrote that although he was chained, God's Word was not chained.

Indeed! God sends forth His Word, and it never returns void, unchaining the soul of every person who has the courage to believe it. May we, then, commission each other to spend our lives devouring His Word. Breathe it. Speak it. Live it. Love it. And brace yourself for it.

DECEMBER 10

And they will be called
righteous trees, planted by
the LORD, to glorify Him.

Isaiah 61:3



We are no longer under the law and authority of our pasts, but we are free to use them as they lend expression to our faith in Jesus. As much as you might not want to hear this, you couldn't become the servant God is calling you to be without the threads of your past being knitted into the Technicolor fabric of your future.

God is far too practical to allow your heritage to have absolutely nothing to do with your future, I am convinced this is true in my own life. God is never more glorified than when He brings an oak of righteousness out of what was once so damaged a root.

DECEMBER 11

He will not forget your work and the love
you showed for His name when you served
the saints—and you continue to serve them.

Hebrews 6:10



Believing in Christ and believing Christ can be two very different things. We all begin with the former, but we certainly don't want to end there! We want to keep believing what Jesus says about Himself and His Father—and about us—until we see Him face to face.

Think of the roll call of the faithful in Hebrews 11. As eternally vital as it is, none of these were commended for the initial faith that enabled them to enter a relationship with God. They were commended for ongoing acts of believing at times when their physical eyes could not see what God had promised them.

DECEMBER 12

He answered, "Whether or not He's
a sinner, I don't know.
One thing I do know: I was blind, and now I can see!"
John 9:25



Who is your Jesus? Who do you believe Jesus to be with your life? In reality, what we believe is measured by what we live, not by what we say. If your life were a Gospel like those in the Bible, who could people believe your Jesus to be?

Think specifically and concretely. Based on your life, might people believe Jesus to be a Redeemer because He has obviously redeemed your life from a pit? Or a Healer because He has healed you from a certain disease? Questions like these help us see our progress in the faith, giving us reason for rejoicing and helping us see where He wants us to go.

DECEMBER 13

They want to be teachers of the law,
although they don't understand what they
are saying or what they are insisting on.

1 Timothy 1:7



I derived most of my early impressions about Jesus based not so much on what I *learned* at church but what I *saw* at church. I certainly believed Jesus saves. But I believed Him for little more because I saw evidence of little more. Perhaps, like me, you have derived a staggering amount of your impressions of Christ from vastly incomplete if not totally unreliable sources, as sweet and respectable as they may be.

The few marvelous exceptions have marked me forever, but I wonder why so many believers believe so little of Jesus. Either He no longer does what the Bible says, or we don't give Him the chance.

DECEMBER 14

God is able to make every grace overflow
to you, so that in every way, always having
everything you need, you may excel.

2 Corinthians 9:8



The only excuse for even a single ounce of victory in my life is the supernatural delivering power of Jesus Christ. I was in the clutches of a real, live devil, living in a perpetual cycle of defeat. Only a miracle-working God could have set me free, then dared to use me.

You may remark, "That's not a real miracle!" but Scripture suggests that no greater work exists. The most profound miracles of God will always be those within the hearts and souls of people. Moving a mountain is nothing compared to changing a selfish, destructive human heart into something He can use.

DECEMBER 15

Then Jesus said to him,
“‘If You can?’ Everything is possible
to the one who believes.”

Mark 9:23



Through His work on the cross and His plan before the foundation of the world, Christ has already accomplished so much for your life in heaven. But if His work is going to be accomplished here on earth where your feet hit the hot pavement, you need to start believing Him. Now!

When we received Christ as Savior, it was like a pipe of power connecting our lives to God's throne. Unbelief clogs the pipe, but the act of believing clears the way for the inconceivable. If we don't see miracles, let it be because He showed His glory another way, not because we believed Him for so pitifully little.

DECEMBER 16

He has satisfied the
thirsty and filled the hungry
with good things.
Psalm 107:9



When my daughter Melissa was a toddler, she was never satisfied with just a little of anything. Every time I offered her a treat, she'd cup her plump little hand, thrust it forward, and say, "Can me have a bunch of it?" The way she saw life, why bother with a little if you could have a big bunch of it? Indeed!

How tragic for us to continue with pangs of emptiness. What a waste! Christ came to bring us a bunch of it! So stop feeling guilty because you crave lots of joy in life. You were made for joy! You are a jar of clay waiting to be filled. Let's toast to a life overflowing with new wine!

DECEMBER 17

Love the Lord your God with all
your heart, with all your soul, with all
your mind, and with all your strength.

Mark 12:30



I am convinced that virtually everything in an individual believer's life hinges on his or her deliberate belief and active acceptance of the lavish, unconditional love of God. I'm not sure we can be reminded too often of God's absolute priorities for our lives.

No matter how different our gifts, personalities, denominations, or styles of worship, God's chief priority for each one of us is that we love Him with everything in us. But like two chambers in one heart, the lifeblood of His first priority cannot flow apart from the second: that we love others as ourselves.

DECEMBER 18

All the LORD'S ways show
faithful love and truth to those who
keep His covenant and decrees.

Psalm 25:10



One of the biggest hang-ups many people have in loving God and others lavishly is a distrust or unwilling acceptance of the immutable fact of God's love. Everything begins there.

How can we get on with loving God and loving others? We can consider all God has said and done to prove His love to us through His Word and His Son. Then we can confess the sin of unbelief and choose to act upon what God has said and done regardless of the ebb and flow of our emotions.

If we would but practice this daily, how our lives would change!

DECEMBER 19

Having been justified by
His grace, we may become heirs
with the hope of eternal life.

Titus 3:7



Daily we say all kinds of things about ourselves. Sometimes what we say about ourselves is not necessarily accurate, but it's what we believe.

Trust me, I know about this one. I lived much of my life with a highly inaccurate estimation of who I wasn't and who I was. As a young person, I swung dizzily between feelings of "I am a victim and I'm not as good as anybody else" to "I'm no one's victim and I'm going to be better than everyone else." Believing and living a lie is so exhausting. What finally got me off the swing? Learning to see myself in relationship to Jesus Christ.

DECEMBER 20

“Master,” Simon replied, “we’ve worked hard
all night long and caught nothing! But at
Your word, I’ll let down the nets.”

Luke 5:5



Peter and his companions had worked hard. Day in and day out. Then one day Jesus walked up and everything changed.

Isn't that exactly like Him? Jesus walks right up, catches us in the act of being—again today—exactly who we were yesterday, and offers to turn our routine into adventure. Have you allowed Christ to do that for you?

If you're bored with life and stuck in a rut of routine, you may have believed in Christ, but you may not yet have agreed to follow Him. Christ is a lot of things, but boring? Not on your life! Life with Him is a great adventure.

DECEMBER 21

I also saw the Holy City, new Jerusalem,
coming down out of heaven from God, pre-
pared like a bride adorned for her husband.

Revelation 21:2



I believe heaven will be far more creative than most believers seem to picture it. Surely a God who created this world with all its magnificence, diversity, and experience does not have an eternal home that is like a one-act play. I hardly think so.

Nor can I buy that we'll always be in one huge corporate gathering. How in the world could private encounters happen with millions of the redeemed in heaven?

The way I see it, that's one reason we have eternity. Plenty of time for each of us to have Jesus all to ourselves. Oh, I think we have lots of surprises in store.

DECEMBER 22

When the disciples
heard it, they fell facedown
and were terrified.

Matthew 17:6



All three synoptic Gospels record the transfiguration, but only Matthew's account supplies the detail that the three disciples fell facedown to the ground.

I am convinced that the people of God miss many appropriate opportunities to fall facedown to the ground, not in an emotional frenzy but in complete awe of God.

Oftentimes we don't have a clue who we're dealing with. I believe one of Jesus' chief reasons for transfiguring Himself before the three disciples was to say, "I am not like you. This is just a glimpse of who I am."

DECEMBER 23

Abba, Father! All things are possible for You.
Take this cup away from Me. Nevertheless,
not what I will, but what You will.

Mark 14:36



Sometimes obeying God in a matter will be the hardest thing we've ever done in our lives. We are not wrong to feel. We are only wrong to disobey.

Hash it out with God. Ask for the cup to be removed. But resolve to do His will, no matter what. Glory is at stake. That's why Jesus drew the three disciples close enough to see. To teach them to pray—not to sleep—in their anguish.

This time they slept. They had little power to do otherwise. But a time would come when each would rise from his own Gethsemane and bear his cross. Salvation always necessitates a cross.

DECEMBER 24

The angel said to them, “Don’t be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.”

Luke 2:10



I am convinced God wants us to get involved in our Scripture reading. Using our imaginations and picturing the events as eyewitnesses can make black ink on a white page spring into living color.

No matter how the glory of God appeared, it scared the shepherds half to death. The words of the angel are so reminiscent of Jesus. He often told those nearly slain by His glory not to be afraid.

Oh, how I love Him! The untouchable Hand of God reaching down to touch the fallen hand of man. May we, like the shepherds, waste no time embracing the news.

DECEMBER 25

While they were there, the time
came for her to give birth. Then she
gave birth to her firstborn Son.

Luke 2:6–7



In the Jewish calendar, the fourteenth day of the first month is called the day of conception. If our God of perfect planning and gloriously significant order happened to overshadow Mary on the fourteenth day of the first month of His calendar, our Savior would have been born toward the end of our December.

We have absolutely no way of knowing whether or not He did, but I would not be the least bit surprised for God to have sparked His Son's human life on one Passover and ended it on another. Until a further "Hear ye! Hear ye!" from heaven, December 25 works fine for me.

DECEMBER 26

He named it Ebenezer,
explaining, “The LORD has
helped us to this point.”

1 Samuel 7:12



Ebenezer means “stone of help,” like the one Samuel set up to memorialize the great victory that was won after Israel’s repentance from years of idolatry. As we walk out the remainder of our time line of faith, let’s keep memorializing God’s obvious interventions through such stones of remembrance. And let’s keep walking by faith with an “Ebenezer” stone in our hand until we see the next astonishing evidence of His promises.

Ebenezer stones constantly remind us that with God’s help we’ve made it “up to this point.” And we can be sure we’ll make it some more.

DECEMBER 27

There has been no day like it before or since,
when the LORD listened to the voice of a
man, because the LORD fought for Israel.

Joshua 10:14



As badly as the Israelites smelled after their victory at Gibeon—the time when the Lord caused the sun to stand still in the sky for a full day—not one soldier in Joshua’s army was heard saying, “I wish I’d stayed home. I may never get the stains out of this robe or the broken strap fixed on my sandal.”

No, their grandchildren sat spell-bound at each retelling. There had never been a day like it, and they wouldn’t have missed it for the world. Sometimes God requires much of us so we can experience the unmatched exhilaration of partnering in divine triumph.

DECEMBER 28

Give glory to the LORD your God
before He brings darkness, before your feet
stumble on the mountains at dusk.

Jeremiah 13:16



I remember the day when rising flood-waters came within an inch of our back door. My normally soft-spoken husband raised his right hand and said, “Stretch forth Your mighty hand, O God, and recede the waters.” Instantly, the torrent turned to sprinkles. The rain stopped.

I’m convinced that if I had asked the same thing, God probably wouldn’t have done it ... or at least not so dramatically. My man needed to know that God is as willing to work in his life as his wife’s.

Stop looking at others as if they are so much more spiritual than you and just start believing God!

DECEMBER 29

Don't worry about tomorrow,
because tomorrow will worry about itself.
Each day has enough trouble of its own.
Matthew 6:34



I can remember in the early days of getting through the withdrawal of addictive sin, I'd seek God in the morning, then live on His sufficiency until noon. Then until dinner. Then until bedtime. Then the worst time of all: the black of the long night. I begged God to help me.

One day turned into two. Two days turned into seven. Weeks into months. Months into one year. Then two. Then three. Then four. Then ten.

That's how we did it. And we are making it, God and I, one day at a time. If you tumble into unbelief, stand back to your feet ... and just start walking again.

DECEMBER 30

They did not receive what
was promised, since God had
provided something better for us.

Hebrews 11:39–40



Hebrews 11 is commonly called the hall of faith. It is God's testimony of flesh-and-blood faithfulness. But while all of those mentioned here lived lives of faith and gained the evidence of many promises, none received every promise in their earthly lifetime. Verse 40 says, "They would not be made perfect without us."

Dear One, you are the continuance of Hebrews 11. It concludes with verse 40, but I think God might have each of us see ourselves as Hebrews 11:41. When He pens the final dot on our earthly time lines, His lasting testimony of our lives will be what we did ... by faith.

DECEMBER 31

We ask and encourage you in the Lord Jesus,
that as you have received from us how you
must walk and please God, do so even more.

1 Thessalonians 4:1



I am praying with all my heart that this won't have been just another book. Believing God isn't a book or a Bible study. It's a lifestyle. And I'm praying that the faith adventure suggested in these pages has only begun for you now that you've reached the end of the year.

Nothing is like experiencing the affirming, undeniable nod of God. So I'm praying that He will do something obvious to show you that you're on the right track—so that when seasons come with fewer evidences, you'll have the unwavering assurance that God is believable. Go into this new year believing God!