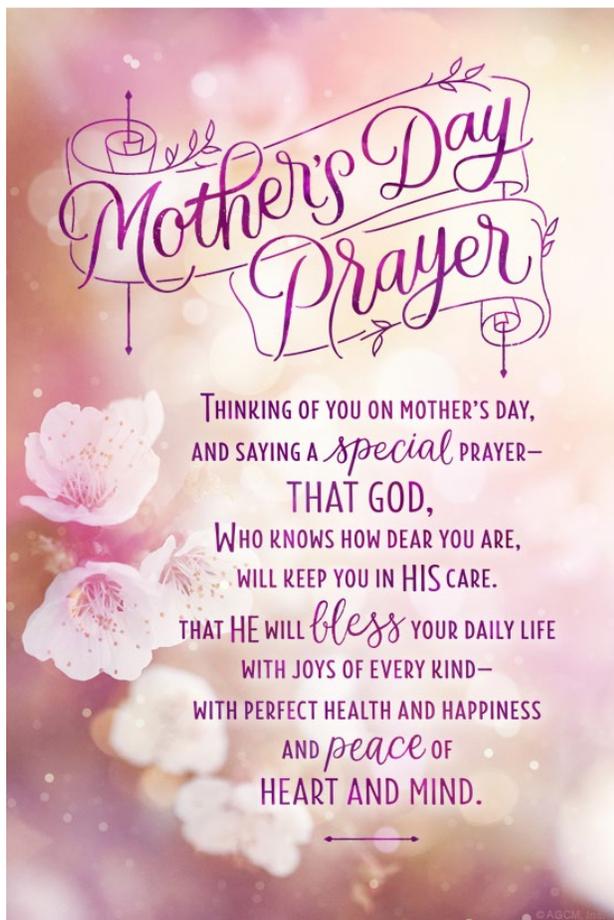


As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another. Proverbs 27:17

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Here is a special prayer to our newest readers at the Topeka Women's Correctional Facility in Kansas.



“Words to Grow By” BY LINDA LEWIS, GMI
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

What is Hope?

Hope is the little voice you hear whisper “maybe” when it seems the entire world is shouting “no”.

Hope is **not** pretending that troubles don't exist
It is the hope that they **won't** last forever.

That hurts will be healed and difficulties overcome.
That we will be led out of the darkness and into the sunshine.

And **always** remember God's promises;
For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord Thoughts of Peace and not of evil To give you a future and a hope.
Jeremiah 29:11

Hope is wishing something would happen.

Faith is believing something will happen.

Courage is making something happen.

Wishing you hope, faith and courage!



Joshua BY PASTOR MIKE HERNANDEZ, CHURCH OF THE HARVEST

Every month this year Pastor Mike gives us a look at a different man from the Bible.

Have you ever been asked to replace someone who is impossible to replace? Can you imagine being Gene Bartow - the guy who replaced John Wooden, perhaps the greatest basketball coach ever. How about being John Adams, the second president of the United States? He had to replace George Washington, the man who led our national army in the Revolutionary War and the first president of the United States. What happens when a great leader doesn't have someone ready to replace him or her? Martin Luther King Jr. was a great leader, but there was no one ready and able to replace him. Although his vision for Civil Rights continued and his impact can never truly be measured, the movement was never the same without him.

Moses was one of the greatest leaders in history. He led the Children of Israel out of slavery, wrote the first five books of the Bible and performed many great miracles. He was a leader who seems impossible to replace.

"Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people to the land which I am giving to them - the Children of Israel." - Joshua 1:2

Not only was Joshua asked to replace Moses, but he was asked to lead the Children of Israel into the Promised land...something Moses wasn't able to do. This seemed like an impossible task! How was Joshua prepared for such a task?

Joshua was a leader among his tribe. Joshua was from the tribe of Ephraim, which means he was a descendent of Joseph. He was the first general of the Israelite Army (Exodus 17:9-13). He saw how when Moses lifted his rod, Israel prevailed. He saw how an army of slaves defeated the trained army of Amalek because God was with them.

"So Moses arose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up to the mountain of God." - Exodus 24:13

Joshua was invited up the mountain where God gave Moses the Ten Commandments. Joshua and Moses were up in the mountains for 40 days while God gave Moses the law and the tablets of stone. Joshua was witness to the power of God while being in the mountain with Moses.

"So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. And he would return to the camp, but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle" - Exodus 33:11

This is one of the most encouraging verses in the Bible. Moses had such a relationship with God, that God talked to him face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. How I long for a relationship with God like that! I would love for God to speak to me face to face! Notice that Joshua got a very close view of this relationship as he was in the tabernacle with Moses. In fact, after Moses would leave, Joshua would still hang out in the tabernacle. Joshua loved to spend time in the Lord's presence. When Moses would leave, Joshua would linger a little longer in the tabernacle. Joshua was beginning to understand the key to Moses' success was the presence of God.

When Moses lead the Children of Israel close to the Promised Land, he wanted to send out spies to investigate the land. Joshua was one of the "spies" chosen (Numbers 13-14) and along with Caleb, was convinced that they should go into the

Promised Land (even though giants dwelt there). Joshua and Caleb were the only two from their generation that entered into the Promised Land. Joshua had the faith to enter the Promised Land because he had already been spending time in the Lord's presence and had already seen the Lord's power.

Joshua believed in the Lord. He understood that if the Lord was with him, they could conquer the Promised Land (Numbers 14:7-9). After the Children of Israel refused to obey the Lord and enter the Promised Land, they had to wander around the desert for 40 years. During that time, Joshua continued to serve as Moses' aid.

After 40 years passed, Joshua was now in charge. His first instructions from God was to cross the Jordan and enter into the Promised Land. In this conversation, the Lord tells Joshua to "be strong & courageous" three different times as well as to obey the Book of the Law (Joshua 1:6-10).

Joshua's first miracle as leader was similar to one of his mentor's most famous miracles - crossing a body of water. For Moses, it was the Red Sea. For Joshua, it was the Jordan River.

"And the Lord said to Joshua, 'This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you.'" - Joshua 3:7

Can you imagine the confidence that came into Joshua after hearing these words and then crossing the Jordan River? The Jordan River parted just like the Red Sea parted. Not only did he see that God was with him, the entire nation saw it. We all have what I call "God Moments" in our lives where something so amazing happens that we have to give the credit to God! This was one of those moments for Joshua.

Joshua then was instructed by the Lord to reestablish the covenant that God made with Moses and this would entail circumcising all the males in the nation (Joshua 5:2-9). There are times in our lives that we need to reestablish our covenant with God and remove all the things from our life that are not from God. This could take the shape of many things like sin or relationships.

Joshua then meets the Commander of the Army of the Lord and gets unique instructions on how to take Jericho, the first city in the Promised Land. The instructions were for the Children of Israel to walk around the city one time for six days then seven times on the seventh day. On the last time around on the last day, they were to give a shout and the Lord would give them the city. This is not your typical battle plan to take a city, but because Joshua believed in the power of God, he obeyed (Joshua 5:13-6:27). The results, the Lord not only gave them Jericho, but the rest of the Promised Land. Joshua, with God's help, was able to lead the people to their destiny.

One last point on Joshua. When he was old and getting ready to die, he had one final conversation with the Children of Israel. In this conversation he challenged the people to make a decision on who they would serve. He gave them three options - the gods their fathers served in Egypt (their past), the gods of the people who were nearby (their culture) or the Lord. Joshua's answer was simple: "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:14-15). I believe this is a question we must all answer...who will we serve.

From the Yard (As much as possible we try to bring you articles from those incarcerated)

To Mothers Incarcerated



Mother is the name for God on the lips of every child, and to those that are incarcerated; she is even more than that. From conception to birth, infant to toddler, from pre-school to grad school and beyond, our Mothers, at least the vast majority of them, want their children to be safe, of a sound mind, to be their best and to have the best. Good Mothers

therefore, mold, shape, teach and guide their young, and for the most part, we follow our Mother's guidance, holding dear to her advice. Unfortunately, whether by our bad choices, chance taking decisions, dire circumstances or by someone else's design, some of us fall by the wayside, finding ourselves in the snares of incarceration. In the darkness of prison, all captives look for some sort of light to see through the crooked places. In most instances, that brightness comes from the Spirit of our Mothers.

A Mother's love, of course, is second to none. In the life of Jesus, the Exalted Christ, His mother Mary, also known as "The Blessed Amongst Women", made sacrifices, as well as having to be a witness to the tragedies in her son's life. First, she had to deal with the shock of being told by an Angel that she would have a baby when no man had touched her. As a virgin, she had to have a child without the pleasure of intercourse with her husband, and had to convince her earthly spouse of how she had divinely conceived. Very soon, after which, she had to flee the town of her family because authorities sought to kill her son; he was convicted in the womb. She had to give birth in a different city, to the King of Kings, in the lowliest of conditions, an animal stable. Not much time later, she had to pick up her family to go on the run again, this time to another country.

As Jesus grew, the Mother of Jesus was taken to watching her son do his Father's work from the sidelines, proud I'm sure. Notwithstanding, horrifically, Mother Mary was also on the sidelines to watch her guiltless son be crucified. She kept her faith during his death, while he was jailed in the depths of hell. She was amongst those praying and waiting for him in the upper room when he defeated death, and she was there when her 33-year-old son ascended this world leaving her as he entered into Heaven.

The strength of the Madonna, the Mother Mary, still resides in billions of Mothers today, especially those who strongly support their children who are incarcerated. To add to the laundry-list of things that Mothers must do regularly, here are the additions that they endure dealing with the prison system:

They first, have to suppress their hurt and frustrations when learning that their baby (no matter the age) is in danger, for whatever reason. Many times they have to listen to our lies and the convolutions of our stories while trying not to be emotionally confused. They have to experience the weaknesses of not being able to just snatch their loved-one from the clutches of imprisonment. They have to see us in handcuffs. They use their savings to pay bondsmen and/or attorneys to save us. They send money to our accounts to help feed us and give us some extras to make us happy in Sadville. They write letters, send us cards for all occasions, and they open up e-mail accounts just to read our angry words.

To Mothers Incarcerated cont'd

Mothers of the incarcerated follow us from courtroom to courtroom, from jail to jail which includes traveling across the state to visit with us, if only for minutes. They raise our children in our absence. They pray for us all day, every day, even when they do not realize that they are begging God to protect us; we live off of our Mother's prayers. They cry for us, they hurt for us, and they love us, regardless of which heinous act we may have committed. Truly, during incarceration, there is very little return for the gift of having a Mother do a prison sentence with you; this is a true example of unconditional love. Do not take lightly when it is said that she does a prison sentence with us, because they, too, are locked up for as long as we are locked up. When we get incarcerated, we incarcerate our Mothers, and what type of person would lock their Mother up??

To Mothers Incarcerated, you are greatly appreciated!!

So, as we put our appreciation on the record with Mother's Day, please extend prayers and give reverence to the **Super Mothers** who care for those in jail, whether the captive be their offspring or not. Jesus said that those who would not visit the least of these in prison, would not visit Him if He were in prison, and there is a grievous penalty for that.

Happy, Happy, Happy Mother's Day to all Mothers, those who are with us and to those who have moved on, and especially the Mothers Incarcerated!!!

By Darryl L., Son of Linda

"Hollywood"

On Behalf of all the Men incarcerated across the State of Kansas

More "From the Yard"

Build Your Character – By Derek B. El Dorado

Character matters more than reputation. Character reflects who you are on the inside; reputation is tied to what others think about you. Reputation develops from character. It is more important to be honest, direct, just and fair than to be concerned about how others perceive you. Worrying about what others think of you wastes time and does not bring about positive change in your life. Doing so means that you value the external over the internal – that someone else's views and opinions are somehow more valuable than yours and therefore you will listen to them before you will listen to your own heart. In practice, this leads to doing compromising things, or simply not listening to yourself. Listen to your heart, be just, keep your word and live righteously.

Write Us

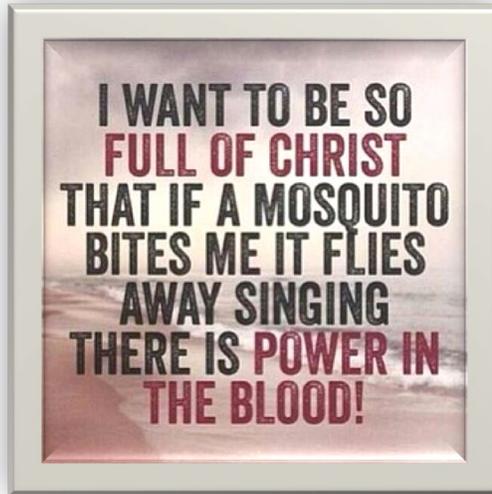
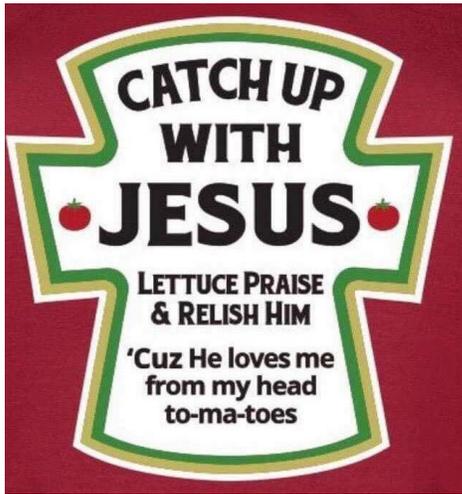
We would love to hear from you. If you have a testimony, a prayer request or a question about your walk with the Lord, send us a letter. We would love to pray or rejoice with you.

Maybe you are a writer and you have a spiritual word of encouragement for the readers of our newsletter. We would love to review your article to see if we can use it in our newsletter. We also like to share poems from the more artistic saints.

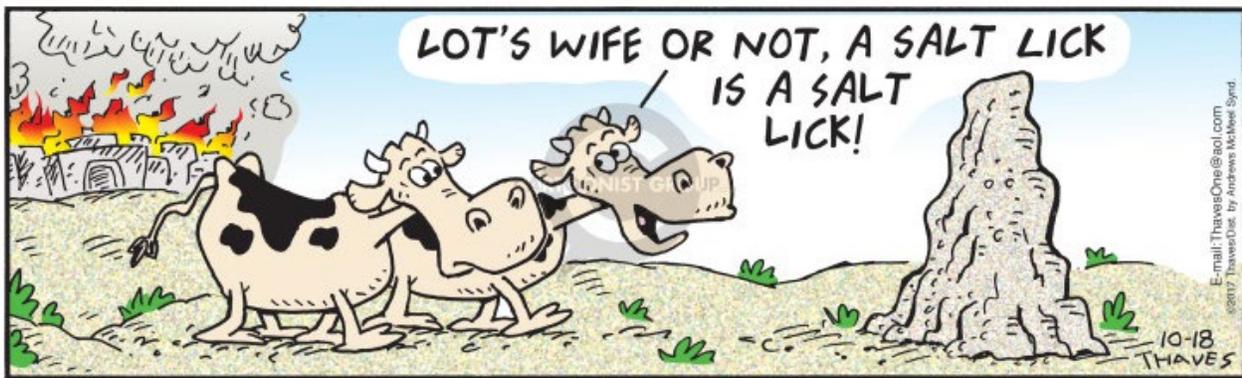
Growth Ministries, Inc., Attn: Executive Secretary, P.O. Box 4375, Olathe, KS 66063



A Little Humor



Daniel slept in a lions den
Peter slept in a prison
Jesus slept in a storm
No matter your circumstance, you can take a nap.



Closing Words LONNIE JOHNSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GROWTH MINISTRIES INC

How well do you know God?

One of the reasons God created us is so that we could have a relationship with Him and get to know him. Satan knows that and does everything he can to keep us from getting to know our creator. God knows everything that there is to know about us because He made us. But sometimes we don't know as much about Him as we should. Many of us know of Him, many of us know a few things about Him, but do we really know Him? We often know our friends, spouses and relatives better than we know God. This is probably because we nurture those relationships more than we do our relationship with God. We hang out with our family and friends daily. How much do we hang out with God?

God wants to be more than a distant being in the sky. God wants to be more than your 911 operator and emergency response resource. God wants to be everything that you need.

For instance, Deuteronomy 4:31 says, *"For the Lord your God is a merciful God. He will not leave you or destroy you or forget the covenant with your fathers that he swore to them."* This is just one, but a very important thing to know about God. God wants you to know that He is merciful and not the spiritual police. When we think about all the things we have done in our past, and the mistakes we still make today, we need to know how merciful He is and not fall into the rut of condemnation.

Who is God to you? Is He just an authority figure that watches to see if you are going to make a mistake, so He can punish you? He is so much more and wants to be more. He wants you to know He is Your Provider, Your Protector, Your Lawyer, Your Healer, Your Father. Get to know Him better through His Word, through prayer and quiet meditation.

What must I do to be saved?

If you have never accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, or if you have turned away from Him living a life of unrighteousness, and wish to be connected to Him, then take a moment and say the prayer below:

"Lord, I confess that I am a sinner and ask for your forgiveness. I believe that your son Jesus died on the cross for my sins and was resurrected with all power. I invite Jesus to be the Lord of my life and your Holy Spirit to come into my heart to guide me for the rest of my days. Amen."

Romans 10:9 says that *if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*

If this is you, please write Growth Ministries and we will gladly help you start your new life in Christ.

Growth Ministries, Inc., Attn: Executive Secretary, P.O. Box 4375, Olathe, KS 66063