

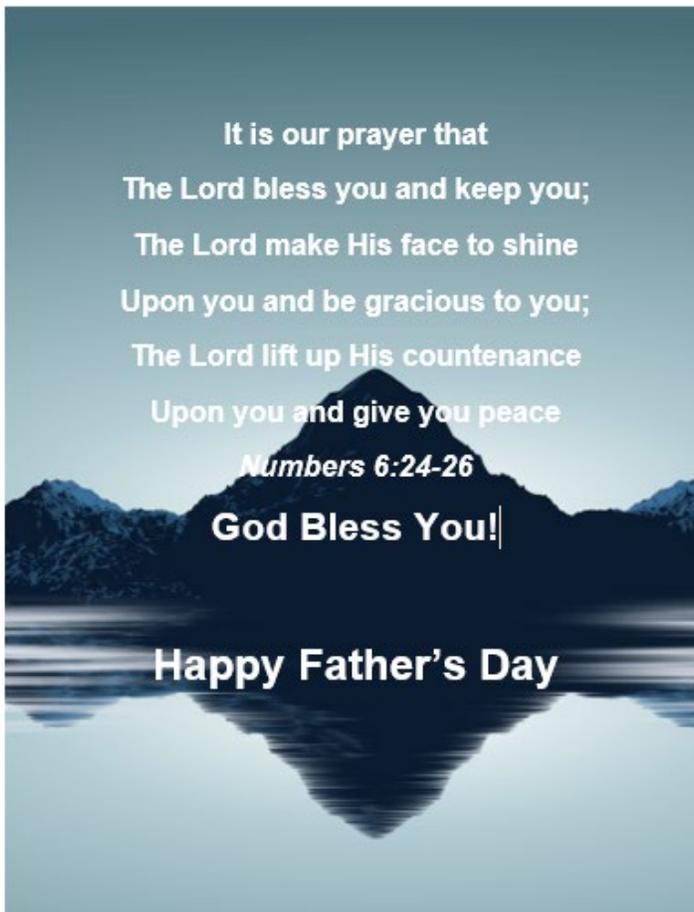


*As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another. Proverbs 27:17*

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**To All Fathers**



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

What is the difference between  
Mercy & Grace?

**Mercy** is God not punishing us  
as our sins deserve.

**Grace** is God blessing us  
despite the fact that we do not  
deserve it.

**Mercy** is deliverance from  
judgment.

**Grace** is extending kindness to  
the unworthy.

In essence it means that **Mercy**  
is not getting what we do deserve  
and **Grace** is getting something  
we don't deserve.

**Mercy & Grace** are unearned  
Blessings from God.

So always remember this,  
God's **Mercy** is bigger than any  
mistake that you've made.

His **Mercy** is new every  
morning. *Lamentations 3:22*

And that's something to shout  
about! Hallelujah!



## Gideon BY PASTOR MIKE HERNANDEZ, CHURCH OF THE HARVEST

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

Isn't it amazing that God sees what we don't see? Sometimes when we look in the mirror, we see all of our failures and deficiencies. When we look around us, we see circumstances that seem impossible to change. When we look within, we see frailty and weakness. I believe this is how Gideon felt.

Gideon was one of the unlikeliest choices to be a leader. He was the least in his father's house and from the weakest clan in Manasseh (Judges 6:15). When the Lord calls him, he is actually threshing wheat in a wine press while hiding from the enemy. A wine press is a structure that was used to squish grapes to make wine. The wine press needed walls to contain the grapes and wine. The way you thresh wheat is to take the wheat in a winnowing fork and throw it up in the air so that the wind can remove the chaff from the wheat. So if you get the picture, due to the walls of the winepress, Gideon was having to work extra hard with lesser impact to accomplish his task. This was because he was doing the right thing in the wrong structure.

"And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, 'The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor!'" - Judges 6:12

Now I'm guessing this was the last greeting Gideon would have ever expected to hear. The Children of Israel were under the oppression of the Midianites, Gideon is least in his clan, and he was threshing wheat in a wine press all while hiding from the enemy. Gideon was not feeling like a mighty man of valor!

How many times do we feel defeated? How many times do we feel like our enemy is too big for us? How many times are we exhausted as we try to do the right thing but don't get the results we want? I'm sure this is how Gideon felt...and yet the Angel of the Lord calls him a "Mighty Man of Valor"! You see, God sees things in us that we ourselves don't see.

"Then the Lord turned to him and said, 'Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?'" - Judges 6:14

So not only did the Lord call Gideon a Mighty Man of Valor, but He then told Gideon to save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Gideon's response, would have been like any of our responses if we were asked to do the same thing...he asked, "how could I save Israel?". In other words, he questioned his ability. And so many times we do the same thing when God asks us to do something that seems impossible. And yet God still helps us obey the very command He gives us.

To ensure that Gideon was hearing from the Lord, he asked for a sign. Gideon asked for a fleece of wool to be wet with dew and the ground to be dry. When God accomplished this impossible task, Gideon then asked for a second sign...for the fleece of wool to be dry and the ground to be wet with dew. God did this for Gideon as well (Judges 6:36-40).

We learn through this that it is okay to ask God for a sign...to give God a "fleece test". However, I will warn you that if you ask for a fleece test, you need to ask out of a pure heart. You also then need to be prepared to obey whatever God has told you to do. For Gideon, that was saving his people.

After the second fleece test, Gideon called the army together to fight the Midianites and 32,000 men showed up to fight. The Midianites numbered around 135,000 men (Judges 8:10). Those probably aren't the odds any military leader would take. But with God, numbers aren't as important as His presence and power.

"And the Lord said to Gideon, 'The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.''" - Judges 7:2

When the weaning of men was over, Gideon was left to fight the Midianites with 300 men. At this point, Gideon is all in as God gave him clear signs with the fleece tests. So he took his men and approached the camp of the Midianites.

God knew that Gideon was afraid so He told Gideon to sneak into the camp of the Midianites. While at the camp, Gideon overhears two Midianites talking. One Midianite shared a dream with the other and the interpretation was that God has delivered the camp into the hands of Gideon (Judges 7:9-15). With this encouragement, Gideon knew God was going to do something amazing!

Gideon divides his men into three groups. He gives every man a trumpet, a clay pot and a torch. The men were told to hide the lit torch in the clay pot and when Gideon blew his horn, they were to blow their horns, break the clay pots and lift up a shout.

This is an interesting strategy as these aren't the typical weapons that the military would use. I would think a sword and shield, maybe a bow & arrow, or a spear would be better weapons for battle. But Gideon chose a trumpet, a clay pot and a torch.

In general, blowing a trumpet would signify an alarm of war, a call to assemble, or a command to march (Numbers 10:1-10). The fourth annual holy day is the Feast of Trumpets, a "memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation". In this setting, I believe the trumpet represents an alarm of war and the noise of 300 trumpets in the still of the night would cause confusion, alarm and bewilderment to those 135,000 sleeping Midianites.

The clay pot represents us as people. We have the light of God within us and when we are broken, the light of God shines forth.

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels (clay pots), that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us." - 2Corinthians 4:7

The torch represents the light of God. The light shines brightest in the darkest places. Wherever we go, we are the "light of the world" (Matthew 5:14-17). We are to allow the light of God to shine through us to have an impact on others.

When Gideon and his men blew the trumpets, broke the clay pots, lifted the torches and gave a shout, the Lord set every man's sword against his companion (Judges 7:22). Gideon and his men literally stood around the camp, with their torches lifted up, and watched the Midianites destroy each other. They didn't even have to fight as the Lord fought for them a great victory!

We can learn many lessons from this story. First, when God tells us to do something impossible, we can trust that He will help us accomplish the task. Second, our weapons and strategy for battle are not the typical weapons and strategy, but if we will learn to rely on the Lord, and His weapons and strategy, we will accomplish great things. Finally, we are to be broken clay pots and let His light shine through us.

## Making a Difference BY BEVERLY BROWN, GMI VOLUNTEER WRITER

My father died when he was only 56 years old. My mother was 53. She rarely had a job outside of the home and was lost when he was gone.

Money was very tight for Mama. As a result, she lived with us for three years until she was old enough to collect Daddy's Social Security. She felt like she was a burden on us because she could not contribute financially.

Often she would say, "I don't know why the Lord doesn't just take me, too. I just don't know why I'm still here."

Even though she couldn't contribute financially, she helped in many other ways.

Later Mama was able to move into a town home. During the time she lived there, she babysat several of her grandchildren. She was firm and yet did little things to make their time with her fun and memorable.

She took them for rides around the lake or to the store to get a treat. She joked, sang, and taught them life lessons.

Mama picked up my sister's son, along with his friends, from school. They would beg her to take them by McDonald's. She would teasingly respond with, "Do you kids think I've taken you in to raise?" Then take them by McDonald's with the understanding they could have a hamburger or French fries, but not both.

They loved her.

When she passed, all her grandchildren, and children, felt a huge loss.

Mama had absolutely no idea of the impact she made with not only those grandchildren, but others whose lives she touched along the way.

Recently my grandson gave me a little book in which he wrote things he loved about me. Things like my smile, my kindness, my compassion and my humor. I was astounded! And very humbled. I had absolutely no idea he felt that way.

Your life has impact, also. Even though you may feel you are not in a position to make a difference, you do. Each thoughtful deed touches someone's life. Things you didn't think twice about doing or saying touched at least one person.

The biggest impact you can make is when you pray for someone. That can be life changing. You may think that is not much to do, but it is. You are reaching the spiritual realm.

Please do not feel your life is in vain and has no value. You do have value!

You may feel like you have no purpose in life, but you do. Sometimes it takes a while to realize what that is.

Can I tell you that it is the little things that matter most? The personal touches are the things people will remember most about you.

Little things you say or do have a huge impact, especially to those you love.

Your life has meaning and impact – even though you may be unaware of it. Don't ever feel that it doesn't.

Each day is a gift. Realize that you are making a difference today.

**YOU**  
make a  
**Difference**

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## True Stories of Transformation from Prison to Influential Professionals through Education

Published April 26, 2018

Ample research and results show that education has a massive impact on lowering incarceration and crime rates. More and more, the reports, data, and stories confirm that education is the key to reducing recidivism—the likelihood of inmates to return to prison after being released.

A study by Emery University found that:

- Former offenders who complete some high school courses have recidivism rates around 55 percent.
- Vocational training cut recidivism to approximately 30 percent.
- An associate degree drops the rate to 13.7 percent.
- A bachelor's degree reduces it to 5.6 percent.
- A master's brings recidivism to 0 percent.

Here are some examples...

**Kenyatta Leal:** Growing up with an absent father, Kenyatta Leal's dealing with drugs and robbery with firearms led him to a life sentence in the San Quentin, California prison at the age of 22. In prison, Leal learned about The Last Mile, an entrepreneurship program for inmates. "I was always looking for a way to channel my entrepreneurial energy and gift." The Last Mile inspired Leal to launch Code.7370, an education program that teaches incarcerated individuals how to code. To overcome the challenge of no internet connection, Code.7370 created a proprietary programming platform that simulates a live coding experience. Once inmates graduate, they're invited to join TLMworks, the first web development agency to provide individuals coming out of prison with the opportunity to earn a living, professional wage.

**"Software engineers who are judged by the quality of the code they develop, not by the stigma of criminality." — Kenyatta Leal**

**Marilyn Barnes:** In and out of prison for 20 years, Marilyn Barnes struggled with drug addiction. Her time in California prison as a young woman made things even worse. With the help and guidance of Root and Rebound's *Roadmap to Reentry* guide, Barnes went on to earn her master's degree in education, authored the book *From Crack to College and Vice Versa* and founded a non-profit, Because Black Is Still Beautiful. Having experienced systemic problems firsthand, Barnes' education fuels her passion to help people break free from the cycle of recidivism.

**Sean Pica:** Sean Pica entered prison as a 9th grade New Yorker with a 24-year sentence. He said he had little hope in himself or any sort of redemptive future. But, when he began reading children's books to fellow inmates and teaching them how to write letters to their loved ones, he witnessed how education created a flicker of joy amid the isolation. Soon, he enrolled in an organization called Hudson Link, a education program in prisons (and Stand Together Foundation Catalyst), and took college classes. After he was released, he went on to earn 400 credits from Nyack College and two master's degrees from New York Theological Seminary and Hunter College. In 2007, Pica returned to lead Hudson Link as its Executive Director. Today, Hudson Link's programs give an education to thousands of men and women in prison, less than 4% of whom recidivate, compared to the rate of 67% nationwide. Pica's work saves New York State taxpayers over \$21 million per year, and that number continues to increase.

# Fathers Day Word Search

Find the hidden words.

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

BBQ	FATHER	HOLIDAY	LAUGHTER	SPECIAL
BRAVE	FISHING	HOME	LOVE	SPORTS
CARING	FOOTBALL	HONOR	MEMORIES	STRONG
CHILDREN	FUNNY	HUGS	NURTURE	SWEET
DADDY	GIFTS	JOKES	PARENT	THOUGHTFUL
DEVOTED	GIVING	JUNE	PROTECT	TIE
FAMILY	HEART	KISSES	RESPECT	TOOLS

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### 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.

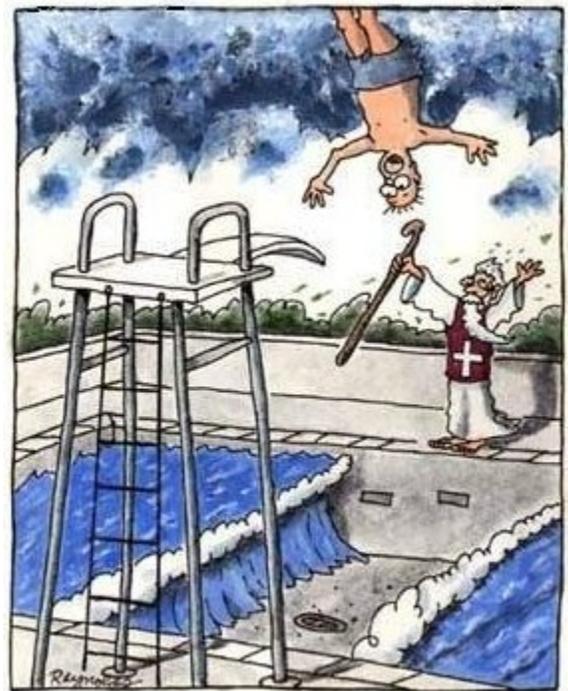
Growth Ministries, Inc., Attn: Executive Secretary, P.O. Box 4375, Olathe, KS 66063



### A Little Humor



HOW COME THE WAITRESS GETS 15% AND GOD ONLY GETS 10%?



Moses' first and last day as a lifeguard.

## Closing Words LONNIE JOHNSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GROWTH MINISTRIES INC

### Are you throwing rocks or love?

In the book of John, chapter 8, verse 7, Jesus is quoted as saying “So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, **He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.**” He was talking to a crowd of people that were just about to stone a woman to death because she slept around with other women’s husbands. According to the Old Testament laws, this was the punishment for such a crime. But we all know that Jesus came to earth to shake things up. He challenged the “rock throwers” to look at themselves **first** before passing this harsh judgement.

So, what about you and me? Are we quick to cast stones at our neighbors, family and friends? Have we become so saved that because we have stopped drinking, lying, cheating and stealing, we feel we are in a position to pass judgement on those that still do? Maybe we are not ready to stone them, but how quick are we to condemn people to hell? *“My goodness! Will you look at her over there with that short, tight skirt on? She is on her way to hell in a handbasket.”*

If we really knew the Word of God, we would know that God hates all sin. Not just the sin of “wearing too little clothes” (if that is a sin). And if we really look at what the bible calls sin, we may be shocked that many of us practice sin every day; things such as thoughts of foolishness, any unrighteousness, failure to do good, and unbelief.

Jesus’ approach was different from what the crowd was planning. They were acting out of anger, self-righteousness and tradition. Jesus was acting out of love. He got her alone and called out her sin, set her on the right path, and charged her with living holy and righteous going forward.

It is easy to throw a stone and call someone a sinner. It takes maturity in God’s love to tolerate the outward appearance of a person’s sin and cover it with a genuine love and a willingness to work with that person on changing their life.

#### **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**