



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

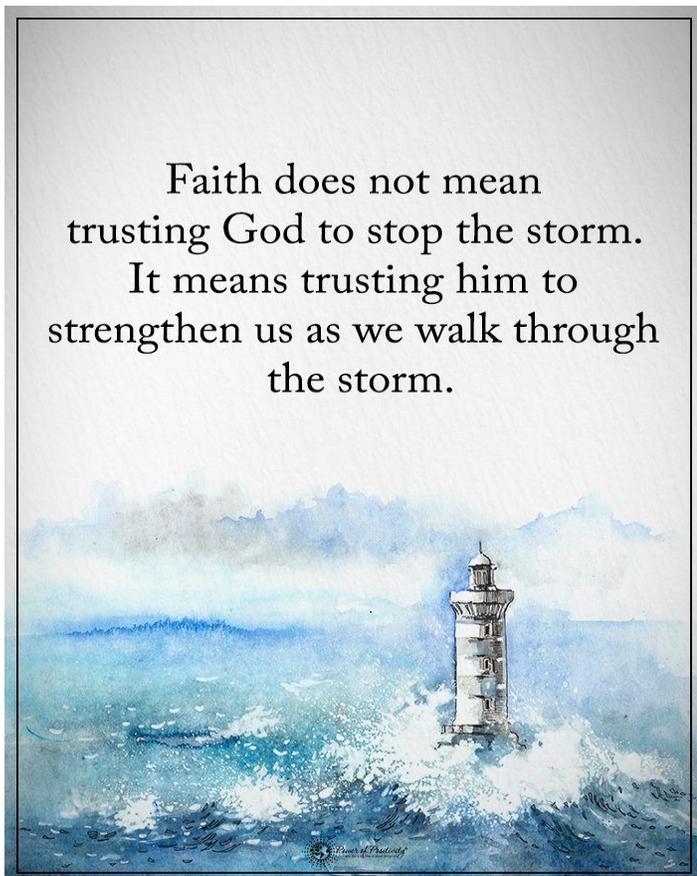
In this Issue

Women Empowering Women	Pg. 1
Peter	Pg. 2-3
God is Not Afraid of Your Doubt	Pg. 4
Just for Laughs	Pg. 5
From the Yard	Pg. 6-7
Hurdles of Female Ex-Offenders	Pg. 8
Words to Grow By	Pg. 9
Word Search	Pg. 10
Closing Words	Pg. 11
What Must I Do to be Saved	Pg. 12

Women Empowering Women
(Words of Encouragement for the Ladies in
Topeka Correctional Facility)



Faith does not mean
trusting God to stop the storm.
It means trusting him to
strengthen us as we walk through
the storm.



Only God can
Turn a Mess into a MESSAGE,
A Test into a TESTIMONY,
A Trial into a TRIUMPH,
A Victim into VICTORY!
LET GO...LET GOD!

And let us not forget;
Be strong and courageous.
Do not be afraid, neither be
dismayed,
For the Lord your God is with you
wherever you go. Josiah 1:9



Peter BY PASTOR MIKE HERNANDEZ, CHURCH OF THE HARVEST

This month we will be discussing a man who I can identify with. He was a man of great faith and also a man of great failure. He saw amazing miracles and He had moments of little faith. He was outspoken yet a leader in the early church. If you haven't figured it out, this month's hero of faith is Peter.

Peter was one of the 12 disciples chosen by Jesus. He was part of Jesus' tightest circle as many times it was Jesus, Peter, James & John (Mount of Transfiguration in Matthew 17 and the raising of Jairus' daughter to life in Mark 5 are examples). We are going to look at three stories of Peter's life and learn from his successes and learn from his failures.

The first story of Peter's life we will visit is found in Matthew 14. Jesus told His disciples to get into a boat and cross over to the other side. In the middle of the night, the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water as He crossed the sea. The disciples, of course, were scared when they saw Jesus walking on the water, and I don't blame them. Jesus reassures them that it's Him and everything is going to be okay.

And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" – Matthew 14:28-31.

This is a moment of tremendous faith and little faith. Peter actually walked on water! He did something that no other man in the history of the world (besides Jesus) has ever done! That is amazing! Yet, the moment He took His eyes off of Jesus, he sank. Then he cried out to Jesus to save him. Jesus reached out His hand and lifted him, and then called him out for having little faith and doubting.

I think about this story and I ask myself, would I rather be Peter, wet in the boat or the other 11 disciples dry in the boat. I think I would rather be Peter because at least he got out of the boat. He may not have walked on water very long, but he did walk on water! As long as he kept his eyes on Jesus, he was doing something amazing. The moment he took his eyes off of Jesus and looked at the wind and waves, he sank. The same is true for us, when we look at Jesus and not our circumstances, we can do amazing miracles! When we take our eyes off of Jesus, like Peter, we sink.

The next story we will examine is the story of Peter's denial of Christ. At the last supper, Jesus told the disciples that where He was going, they couldn't follow. Peter declares that he wants to follow Jesus and will even lay his life down for Jesus. Jesus responds that Peter would deny Him three times before the rooster crows (John 13:36-38).

I'm sure once Peter heard this statement from Jesus, he was bound and determined to prove his loyalty. So when the mob came to arrest Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, Peter drew out his sword and cut off a man's right ear (John 18:10). When I think about this scene, I imagine Peter taking a swing at the man's head to decapitate him but the man ducked so all he got was the ear. Peter was ready to fight and die for Jesus. The mob outnumbered the disciples and were better armed, yet Peter didn't back down. This took faith! However, when Jesus didn't fight back but actually surrendered, Peter ran away, along with the rest of the disciples.

Peter then followed Jesus into the temple court and was identified as one of Jesus disciples. He denied that he was (John 18:16-18).

Peter Con't

Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, "You also are not one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not." One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?" Peter again denied it, and at once a rooster crowed. – John 18:25-27

Peter, again showed great faith! He was ready to die for Jesus. However, he truly didn't understand Jesus' plan, so when Jesus didn't fight, Peter didn't know what to do. He first ran away so he wouldn't be arrested, then he followed Jesus. When he was questioned about his relationship with Jesus, he denied that he was a disciple. Before we get too down on Peter, I look at my own life. How many times have I doubted Jesus, especially when things don't go the way that I think they should go? I don't know that I would have acted any different. Like I said earlier, I can identify with Peter.

The last story we will delve into happens at a beach. The resurrection has already happened and the disciples were waiting for direction for their next steps. Peter, getting tired of waiting around, decides to go fishing (John 21:3). After fishing all night, Peter hadn't caught anything. Jesus was on the beach and told him to cast his net on the right side of the boat. Peter obeyed and the net started filling up. Peter then jumps into the sea and swims to shore. There, Jesus has breakfast waiting for them.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. – John 21:15-17

I love this dialog between Jesus and Peter because it shows how Jesus meets us where we are at. The first two times Jesus asks Peter if he loved Him, Jesus used the word – Agape, which is God's love described in 1 Corinthians 13. Peter answered Him both times with the word Phileo – which is man's love or brotherly kindness. The third time Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him, He used the word Phileo. Although this hurt Peter's feelings, I see this as Jesus' attempt to meet Peter where he was at. Peter was probably full of guilt and shame for denying Jesus. He didn't think he could use the word Agape so he used Phileo. Jesus understood and didn't get mad at him, but asked him at the level of his faith. The other beautiful part of this dialogue was Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved him...the exact number of times that Peter denied Him. Jesus was trying to restore Peter.

Peter goes on to be a pillar in the early church and was very influential in the Kingdom of God advancing. Peter was the first to preach on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-39), was the first to reach out to the Gentiles (Acts 10:44-48) and gave his life as a martyr for the gospel. In fact, when Peter was crucified, he asked to be crucified upside down because he didn't consider himself worthy to die like his Lord & Savior. Peter gives me great hope! He had his ups and downs, just like me. Every time he fell, Jesus was there to pick him up. I know the same is for me, when I fall, Jesus is there to pick me up. The same is true for you. Jesus never gave up on Peter! Jesus never gives up on me! Jesus never gives up on you!

God is Not Afraid of Your Doubt BY ALYWIN MITCHELL, GMI VOLUNTEER WRITER

(Alywin is one of our newest writers)

In the Gospel of John, Thomas is one of the main characters in one of the Bibles most important and often read stories. In this story, Thomas got a nickname that he would be identified with throughout earthly history: Doubting Thomas.

¹⁹ That Sunday evening the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them! “Peace be with you,” he said. ²⁰ As he spoke, he showed them the wounds in his hands and his side. They were filled with joy when they saw the Lord! ²¹ Again he said, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.” ²² Then he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone’s sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.” ²⁴ One of the twelve disciples, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), was not with the others when Jesus came. ²⁵ They told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he replied, “I won’t believe it unless I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side.” (John 20: 19-25) NLT

So, when Thomas told the other disciples that he needed proof, he wasn’t calling them liars. He wanted evidence to believe that Jesus had risen from the grave, so he was just being honest. But this was not a testament of Thomas’s character. We learn from the story of Thomas that he was sincerely devoted to His master. Jesus and the disciples had gotten word that one of their friends, Lazarus, was dying. Lazarus lived in Bethany which is about 2 miles from Jerusalem. (John 11:1–3) NLT. The disciples knew that if they went back to Bethany they could be killed, because they had already received death threats. But Jesus was going anyway.

“Thomas, nicknamed the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let’s go, too—and die with Jesus.” (John 11:16) NLT

Thomas’s readiness to stay with Jesus despite the fact they could all die is remarkable. Thomas demonstrated extreme loyalty to Jesus. Yet he struggled with uncertainties and questions.

Thomas was ready to go with Jesus and die if necessary. So, it is clear that a believer in Jesus Christ can be spiritually strong one moment and spiritually weak the next.

²⁶ Eight days later the disciples were together again, and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were locked; but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them. “Peace be with you,” he said. ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don’t be faithless any longer. Believe!” (John 20:26-27) NLT

But Jesus, understanding his unbelief, was very gracious to Thomas. He let Thomas do what he asked.

Thomas touched the wounds of Jesus and then made one of the most overwhelming acknowledgements of Jesus in the Bible.

²⁸ “My Lord and my God!” Thomas shouted. ²⁹ Then Jesus told him, “You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me.” (John 20:28 - 29) NLT

Jesus came to Thomas in his need and then led him back to faith. We can all be honest and straight forward with God about our doubts and questions. Jesus understands our struggles and is more than able to strengthen our trust and faith. Then, as Thomas did, we will be able to confess, “My Lord and my God!” in full conviction of who Jesus is, Our Lord and Savior!

Just for Laughs

Q. Why couldn't Jonah trust the ocean?

A. Because he knew there was something fishy about it.

Q. Who was the greatest financier in the Bible?

A. Noah, he was floating his stock while everyone was in liquidation.

Q. Who was the smartest man in the Bible?

A. Abraham. He knew a Lot.

Q. What animal could Noah not trust?

A. Cheetah



Q. Who is the shortest person in the Bible?

A. Bildad the Shuhite (shoe-height). Nehemiah (Knee-high-miah) was a close second.

Q. How long did Cain hate his brother?

A. As long as he was Abel.

Q. Why did Noah have to punish and discipline the chickens on the Ark?

A. Because they were using "fowl" language.

Q. What do they call pastors in Germany?

A. German Shepherds.



Q. Which area of Palestine was especially wealthy?

A. The area around Jordan; the banks were always overflowing.

Q. Who is the greatest babysitter mentioned in the Bible?

A. David. He rocked Goliath to a very deep sleep.

From the Yard, *Inspirational words of encouragement from inside the walls*

Simon A, Lansing Correctional Facility (written 7/28/20)

Today, in these trying times, most of us are stressed out over financial problems, family problems, work-related issues and life in general. I am from Kansas City, Missouri and the homicide rate is already at 109 deaths. Please pray with me for our churches, policemen, and law-abiding citizens.

Pray that we continue to overcome evil with good, preach and obey the gospel of Christ Jesus to all. Let us love one another as Jesus has loved us. As far as stress is concerned; Philippians 4:6-7 (NLT). Tell God everything you need, then thank Him for all that He has done and will do. And you will receive peace that you won't be able to explain. Romans 8:28, I edify and encourage us to trust God and thank Him that He is working even while we are asleep. He is working together all things for the good to those who are called according to His purpose.

I would like to share this poem by my brother Simon:

At times it seems like it's too easy to be stressed.
 Especially when we have bills to pay and don't know where we're going to get our next paycheck.
 But God is on our side and we are always blessed.
 God is our provider even when we feel like a nervous wreck.
 Just keep counting our blessings. Just keep counting our blessings every day and night.
 Just keep trusting Jesus and fight the good fight.

Love, Peace and Joy.



Love by Brendon B, Lansing Correctional Facility

Love is blind,
 Love is real,
 God is Love
 For God we feel.

Humble we must,
 Pray we do,
 Follow the path,
 Always stay true.
 Time is right.

Love is near,
 In God we trust,
 In God we fear.

If Love is blind,
 And Love is true,
 God is a must,
 God's with you.

From the Yard Continued

Break Every Chain by Chris W, Hutchinson Correctional Facility (Written 9/15/20)

My Testimony and Some Healing Advice for Addicts and Those in Bondage

My name is Chris W. I am serving time here in Hutchinson awaiting a transfer to another facility. I was what you might call a "functioning addict" for about 20 years. Weed, ecstasy, cocaine, and crack were all on my menu. Alcohol washed it all down, as this was a part of my lifestyle as a DJ in Kansas City, Memphis, and Chicago. The ultimate recipe for destruction; sex, drugs, and money. DJ'ing concerts for celebrities and big parties for "Hood Stars" was my forte; but it was also fuel to my addiction and a recipe for disaster.

I was also a Bouncer in pretty much every major club in KCMO, so I became very popular in the "night life" scene amongst women. The devil really had a hold on my life. I became addicted to methamphetamine as well and that was the ticket that brought me to prison on a 2nd degree murder charge (I won't get into that) for a 17 year sentence. This was the time when I cried out to the God and asked Him to transform my life, to heal me of my addiction and to bring me back closer to my family.

See, He did it for, and He can do it for you. No matter what chains bind you, whether it is addiction to drugs, alcohol, sex or anger issues, selfishness or maybe you have abandonment issues. Those are all PHYSICAL PROBLEMS, ok? Those physical problems have spiritual roots!! Rehab, and medicines are physical solutions, but you cannot fix a spiritual rooted problem with a physical solution. You must address it with a spiritual solution. See, this is what has kept me sober for 5 years. How do you do it? Let me explain. First, you have to take a painful trip down memory lane, and think back to when your pain began, what caused you to pick up those drugs or alcohol or caused you to become angry or bitter. It could have been a parent's divorce, bad breakup in a relationship, loss of a job or a loved one. The list goes on and on. You must figure out where it began and why, and who was responsible for it.

Now, read 2 Corinthians 2:10. It says, *when you forgive this man, I forgive him, too. And when I forgive whatever needs to be forgiven, I do so with Christ's authority for your benefit (NLT)*. My friends, my fellow brothers, your freedom lies in FORGIVENESS. You must address those who have wronged you if you can and then forgive yourself. The healing will begin and you will gain peace and sobriety. It's hard, but worth it. I see so many people still using drugs while locked up, numbing the pain of reality. A never ending cycle. Don't you want peace? Don't you want true freedom from your past? Don't you want true freedom from your past? FORGIVE!! There's undeniable power in forgiveness.

God Bless

Female Ex-Offenders Describe the Hurdles to Re-entering Society

Most female ex-offenders, returning home after incarceration, need help with substance abuse, education and housing.

Canise Robertson was released from jail after serving time on a drug conviction. Robertson, started pursuing a bachelor's degree at the University of the District of Columbia but said what she really needed when she was released from jail — and all she really wanted — could be boiled down to three words: a second chance. “All the other things would follow”, she said. “The community can recognize me as Canise Robertson, not as an inmate or a number,” said Robertson, a recovering addict.

Darnella Adams was released from prison after serving 17 years. She now works full time and goes to school. “I was incarcerated for murder. When someone asked the question of what “they” look like — “they” look like me. But what I did almost 18 years ago is not indicative of the person I am today.” “Without God, I would not be”, says Adams.

According to the Department of Justice, over 225,000 women were incarcerated in state and federal facilities in 2017. Female inmates have higher rates of drug use and mental health problems, and 7 out of 10 incarcerated women have children younger than 18, according to government statistics.

In order for women to successfully re-enter society, according to Washington DC's Offender Supervisory Program, both vocational skills and proper counseling are needed. It is hard enough that certain parts of society see them differently than everyone else. Successful re-entry of former offenders, returning to our community, is critical to reducing recidivism, saving taxpayer dollars and building safer, healthier neighborhoods



Words to Grow By

LINDA LEWIS, GMI DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

His Eye Is on the Sparrow

My Brothers and Sisters, most of us are familiar with the hymn "His Eye is on the Sparrow" but just in case you're not, the words simply say:

Why should I feel discouraged,
Why should the shadows come,
Why should my heart be lonely,
And long for heaven and home,
When Jesus is my portion, My constant Friend is He;
His eye is on the sparrow,
And I know He watches over me.

I sing because I'm happy,
I sing because I'm free.
For His eye is on the sparrow,
And I know He watches over me.

Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable? Matthew 6:26

And the answer is YES!

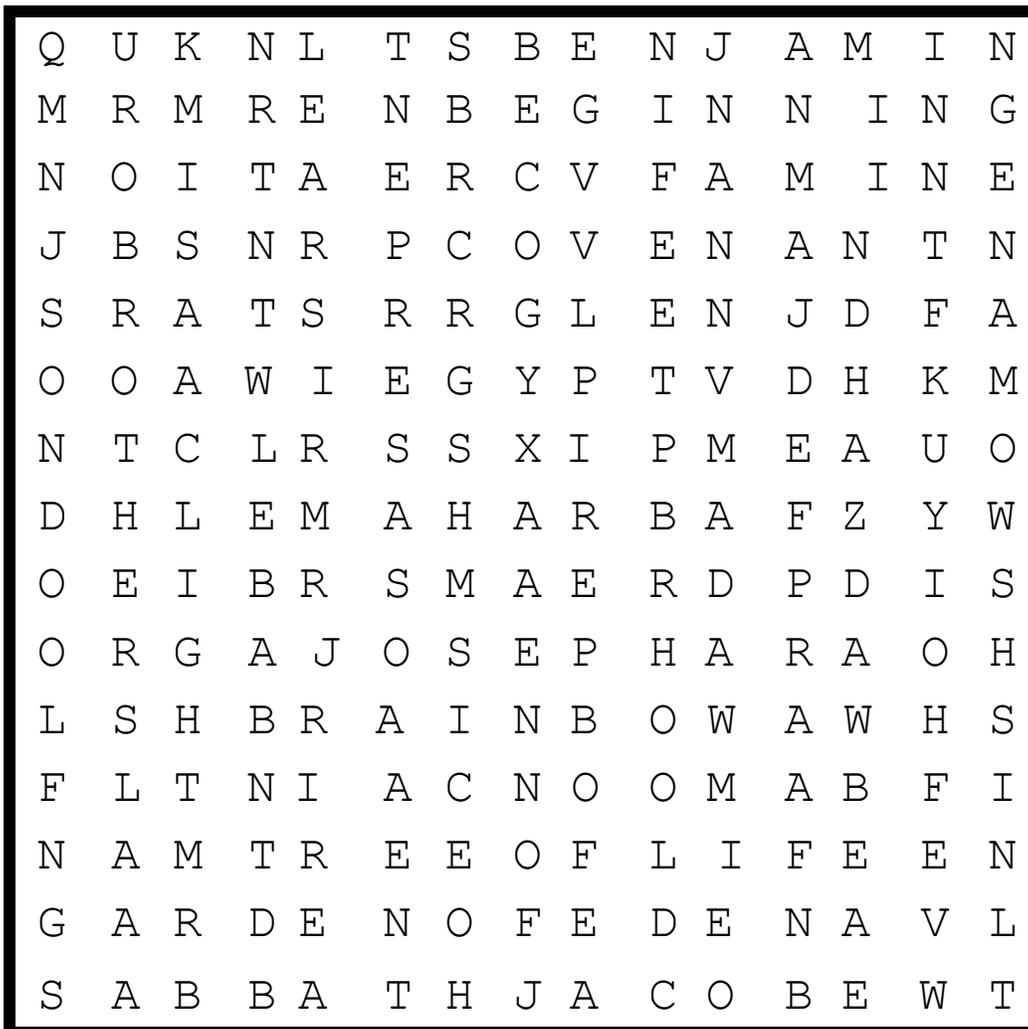
The Lord your God is with you. He is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you; He will quiet you with His love. He will rejoice over you with singing. Zephaniah 3:17

So with that in mind my brothers and sisters,
Trust the past to God's Mercy,
The present to God's Love,
And the future to God's Providence.

His Eye is on the Sparrow and He watches over YOU!

Word Search

Genesis



ABEL
 ABRAHAM
 ADAM
 ARK
 BABEL
 BEGINNING
 BENJAMIN
 BROTHERS
 CAIN
 COVENANT
 CREATION

DREAMS
 EGYPT
 EVE
 FAMINE
 FLOOD
 GARDEN OF EDEN
 ISAAC
 ISRAEL
 JACOB
 JOSEPH
 LIGHT
 MAN

MOON
 PHARAOH
 RAINBOW
 SABBATH
 SARAH
 SERPENT
 SEVEN DAYS
 SIN
 STARS
 TREE OF LIFE
 WOMAN



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

Absence of a Yes is Not Always a No?

Have you ever asked someone to do something and it seemed like they took forever to respond? Maybe you sent them an email or a letter, or maybe you left a voice mail on their phone. Maybe you were able to ask in person and they said they had to get back with you. A day goes by, two days, maybe a week with no answer. Now you're feeling some kind of way about it. Maybe a little neglected or even disrespected. You know how we get. Now we have a bad attitude towards that person.

We sometimes get that way with God. We pray for something we feel we need right away. It may be something really serious like a bill that needs to be paid right away ("or else"), or an illness that may be life threatening and it seems to be getting worse. You get the idea. And God has not shown up. Where is He? You start to wonder if you are worthy of His blessings, or if God actually cares about you, or maybe you did something wrong to block your blessing.

First, I want to assure you that once you enter into a relationship with God, He cares about you just as much as He does all His children. Secondly, when you have a relationship with Him, He does not bless you based on your performance. His promises are just that, **promises**. He does not break His Word about providing for all your needs just because you slipped or fell.

Sometimes His lack of response may be that He is waiting for the right moment to show up. He may need you to know, without a shadow of a doubt, that it was Him that made it happen. He wants you to be able to tell everyone with complete certainty who He is and what He is capable of. Or maybe the answer that you asked for is not the answer you need and He is working it out another way. Each person's situation is different but God will bless us all the same, which is in accordance with the unconditional love He has for us. No matter what your situation is, He has you covered. Even if the outcome is not the outcome you prayed for or desired. My Bible says in Romans 8:28 **that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose**. So no matter what that outcome is, God is leading you to the **best** outcome in accordance with the plan He has for your life. This is where trust comes in. We have to trust God to know what is best for us.

Another perspective of trusting in God is we have to learn to be patient. We cannot see over the hills or around corners of life. We don't know what is waiting on us down the road but God does. He is going to give us what we need when the time is right. My Bible says in Isaiah 40:31 **that those who wait on the Lord Shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint**.

Trust in God and know that He loves you. Know that He always knows what is best for you and has you covered no matter what it looks like.

What must I do to be saved?



If you've never accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, or if you've turned away from Him for a life of unrighteousness, then take a moment and say this prayer:

“Lord, I confess that I am a sinner and ask 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

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 you more artistic sisters and brothers.

We also ask that you be mindful of what you send to us as there are some things that are prohibited for print:

- Inappropriate Verbiage/Profanity
- Sexually Explicit Verbiage/Images
- Political opinions
- Opinions regarding social/systemic injustices
- Demeaning or Offensive Views
- Legal Information/Advice
- Photographs

Thank you so much for adhering to these guidelines and we look forward to hearing from you.