



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

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Words to Grow By

LINDA LEWIS, GMI DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

Prayer Changes Things

You've more than likely heard someone say, "I need to pray about it" or "You just need to pray about it" before giving you an answer that you're looking for. And we may think to ourselves that it's easier said than done OR we want to pray, but feel as though we just don't know what to say to God. So, here's a prayer that will help you:

Lord, teach me to pray.
When I open my eyes in the morning,
teach me to pray.
When my head rests on the pillow at night,
teach me to pray.
When troubles, successes, sadness, and
joy come my way, teach me to pray.
When I fear, teach me to pray.
When I am calm and resolved,
teach me to pray.
When I plan and when I fail, teach me to
pray.
And when I consider how very little time I
have left on this earth,
O Lord, teach me to pray.
In Jesus' Name Always,
Amen

God hears and He answers. Isaiah 65:24

LIVE IN SUCH A WAY

THAT IF SOMEONE

SPOKE BADLY OF YOU

NO ONE WOULD

BELIEVE IT



John the Baptist BY PASTOR MIKE HERNANDEZ, CHURCH OF THE HARVEST

Sometimes serving the Lord is about understanding your purpose and following through on that purpose, no matter the cost. This month we are going to look at a hero who exemplifies that thought.

John the Baptist was born at a time when God was silent. It had been several hundred years since God had sent a prophet to Israel. The nation of Israel was under the rule of the Roman Empire. They were waiting for their deliverance, which they believed was going to come from the hand of the Messiah.

Zachariah was a priest and he and his wife, Elizabeth, were righteous before God and walked in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord. But they had no children and were well advanced in years (Luke 1:6-7). One day, when Zachariah was serving incense in the temple, an angel appeared to him.

But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared." – Luke 1:13-17.

Before John was even born, God had communicated his purpose to his parents. He was to prepare the people for the Lord's coming. I'm sure that Zechariah and Elizabeth communicated with their son his purpose and prepared him for that purpose, as best as they could. John the Baptist also would have grown up knowing that his cousin, Jesus, was the coming Messiah.

John the Baptist had the advantage of knowing his purpose when he was born. We don't have that advantage, so we have to figure it out as we go. One of the best ways we can figure out our purpose is to ask ourselves, "What are we good at? What comes easy to us? What are we passionate about?" These questions help us figure out our purpose. God wants us to flow into our purpose.

John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair

John the Baptist Cont.

and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." – Mark 1:4-8

John knew that his purpose was to prepare the way for the Messiah and he starts his ministry by proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. When the people came out to hear him, he started baptizing them in water. This is why he is called "John the Baptist". As he preached repentance, he was preparing people for the coming Messiah. He was saying that people needed to turn away from their sins and turn back to God.

As he baptized people, John also proclaimed that someone was going to come after him, who will be mightier than he. Of course, he was talking about Jesus, the Messiah. He knew His purpose was to prepare the way for the Messiah. When people started following Jesus and stopped following John, he wasn't upset. He was happy as he knew his role. John the Baptist said this famous line:

"He must increase, but I must decrease." – John 3:30.

When we know our purpose, personal recognition is not important. All that matters is fulfilling your purpose. John the Baptist was humble and wanted to point people to the Messiah. He wasn't about personal gain or prestige; he was about fulfilling his purpose.

John was not only humble, he stood for righteousness. He was thrown into prison for telling Herod that he shouldn't be married to his brother's wife, Herodias. He could have looked the other way but he spoke the truth, even though it cost him his life. John was ultimately beheaded by Herod as a gift to Herodias daughter for dancing (Matthew 14:1-11).

John the Baptist is a great example of someone living who completed his purpose! He knew his purpose, understood his purpose then acted on his purpose. When people started to follow Jesus more than him, he knew his purpose started to come to pass. When that happened, he walked humbly, continuing to point people to Jesus, as the coming Messiah. When he was beheaded, he knew that he had completed his purpose. This is how I want to go, knowing that I have fought the good fight, finished my race and kept the faith (2 Timothy 4:6). I want to be a man who also completes his purpose!

Then Suddenly BY BEVERLY BROWN, GMI VOLUNTEER WRITER

Second Kings tells of a time when Samaria was besieged by an evil king. The city was surrounded by the enemy army. There was no way to get in or out of the city, so no food or supplies could be brought in. As a result, there was a great famine in the city. Because of this, the people ate anything they could to stay alive. Some even resorted to cannibalism.

The people had given up hope but the Lord gave the prophet Elisha a word for the people. He told the messenger from the king that by the next day, there would be more than enough food to feed everyone. The messenger did not believe him. The messenger saw only the current conditions and could not imagine that in 24 hours the circumstances would drastically change.

Meanwhile, four men who had leprosy were sitting outside the city gates. Because of the disease which was considered unclean they were not allowed in the city. They decided they were not going to sit there any longer. They were going out to meet the enemy army. If the army took them captive, at least they would be fed. And if the army killed them, they were no worse off than if they stayed by the city gate—they would starve to death anyway.

At dawn the four men set out for the enemy camp. But when they got to the camp, there was no one there. The Lord had caused the army to hear chariots, galloping horses and a huge army approaching. The army panicked because they thought the king of Israel had hired more armies to come to their defense. This was what they decided they heard, so they fled into the night leaving their tents, horses, donkeys, food and everything else.

The four men ate their fill, took some bounty and finally told the rest of Samaria of all the enemy army had left. Because of this, Samaria had more than enough to eat and word Elisha had told them came true exactly as he said.

I am telling you this story to encourage you that things can drastically change seemingly overnight. I do not know what you may be facing but I encourage you to not give up hope.

I knew someone who had yearned to be married and for a baby. For decades she prayed and sought God for a husband. This person reached her 40's and still had not even dated more than once or twice. It seemed her situation would never change. It had gone on so long, it felt like it would go on forever.

Within a year this person had met someone, married and was expecting a baby. She never in her wildest dreams thought she would ever meet someone. Then to meet, marry and have a baby in less than two years seemed like a miracle. But that is how our God works.

I can give you more examples like this.

You may have things you have been praying about for years. It seems that nothing will ever change. You might be believing for healing, or for a situation to turn around, or for reconciliation with a loved one. Don't give up. Keep on hoping, keep on praying and keep on believing. You never know when your "suddenly" will happen.

In the meantime, continue to seek God first in every situation. When you do this, you can have peace that passes understanding even during this season of waiting for your breakthrough.

GOD CAN DO IT JUST
LIKE... THAT!



Just for Laughs

Pancakes

A mother was preparing pancakes for her sons, Kevin, 5, Ryan, 3. The boys began to argue over who would get the first pancake. Their mother saw the opportunity for a moral lesson.

"If Jesus were sitting here, He would say, 'Let my brother have the first pancake. I can wait.'"

Kevin turned to his younger brother and said, "Ryan, you be Jesus!"



God Is Watching

The children were lined up in the cafeteria of a Catholic elementary school for lunch. At the head of the table was a large tray of apples. A nun lettered a note and posted it on the apple tray: "Take only ONE. God is watching."

Moving along the lunch line, at the other end was a large tray of chocolate chip cookies. A girl wrote a note, which she put next to the tray of cookies, "Take all you want. God is watching the apples."

During a Sunday school lesson, a child learned about how God created human beings. The child became especially focused when the teacher explained how Eve was created from Adam's ribs. Later in the week, the boy's mother saw him lying down on the floor, so she asked him what was wrong. His reply was priceless: "Mom, I have a pain in my side—I think I'm getting a wife."

Women Empowering Women

STAND

Strong women don't play the victim,
 Don't make themselves look pitiful,
 And don't point fingers.
THEY STAND AND THEY DEAL!

Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. 1 Corinthians 16:13

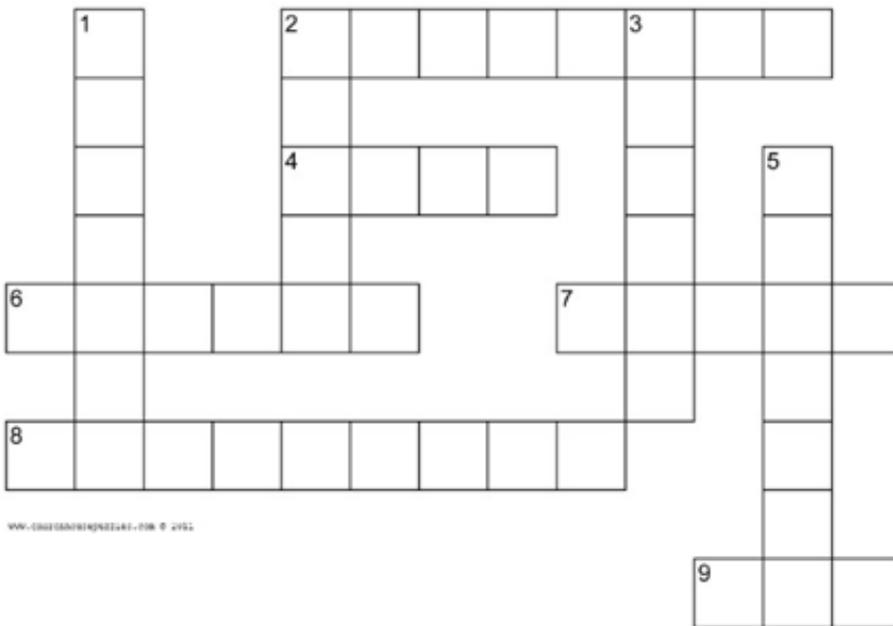
Faith in God is life's greatest adventure.
 Loving God is life's greatest romance.



Crossword Puzzle

People in the Bible

1 Samuel



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ACROSS

- 2 David's best friend
- 4 First king of Israel
- 6 Last judge of Israel
- 7 A man after God's own heart
- 8 Gave David the showbread to eat
- 9 Fell off his seat backwards and broke his neck

DOWN

- 1 Stood over nine feet tall
- 2 Shepherd from Bethlehem; his youngest son became king of Israel
- 3 Mother of the prophet Samuel
- 5 Brought food and supplies to David in the wilderness

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



How Far is Too Far?

Sometimes we tend to take things too far. We often mess up relationships and situations. For instance, we have a good job with a manager that really likes us. Maybe we take advantage of that and start coming in late or slacking on the job. They keep overlooking our bad behavior until one day enough is enough. They have to let us go. We beg and insist we will do better and they let us stay on. But we go back to the same behavior until they have had more than enough and let us go. Now we are without a job.

What about our significant other? We take that person for granted and neglect them. We may even cheat. We get caught and ask forgiveness but keep repeating the offense. Finally, they leave us and find someone else and now our lives are miserable.

I am sure you can think of your own examples of how you thought you could just do what you wanted to do and the world told you that they were not having your nonsense and decided that forgiving you one more time was not worth it to them.

I am glad God does not look at us that way. Psalms 136:23 says, "Who remembered us in our low condition, For his mercy endures forever." His mercy can outlast any period of craziness we go through. At the end of our trifling behavior all we have to do is ask our father to forgive us and He will. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." The bible also says he will never leave us or forsake us. What I am trying to tell you is that no matter how far you have gone off the beaten path, no matter how crazy you acted, no matter how big of fool you became, God still loves you and is waiting on you like the father who waited on the prodigal son to return.

I am so glad that God is not like Mankind where his patience runs out and he has conditions on how far He will love us. He loves us unconditionally. No matter how bad off we are or how far we take it. We can make it back into His love. If you have wandered down that road and feel like you have gone too far, I have come to tell you that God is waiting on you to return. Jesus is sitting at His right hand right now advocating for you telling God that you are reading this and that you want to come back. If Jesus is speaking on your behalf, nothing can keep you from making it back to the love of God. **Romans 8:34 says "Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us."**

Make things right. Stop wandering further away. You have not gone too far to be forgiven by God.

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.