



Growth Ministries Inc.

**The Growth Journal
Magazine
JULY 2021, VOLUME 5, ISSUE 9**



Words to Grow By
July 2021

It's A Fixed Fight!

It doesn't matter what you've done, where you've been,
What you've been through or even what you're going through right
now.

Trust and Believe...It's a Fixed Fight and You've Already Won!
The devil has thrown every fiery dart and every stumbling block at
you.

More than you could ever imagine.

But guess what...

The devil is a liar and he is defeated!

Your past does not matter, only today, the present, is what counts
And the devil is ALREADY defeated!

It's a Fixed Fight!

God's got you and all of your circumstances.

Pray, Trust, Believe and Receive!

Deuteronomy 20:4 "for the LORD your God is He who goes with
you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you."

Inside This Issue

Words to Grow By... 1

Women Empowering Women... 1

12 Disciples – Bartholomew... 2-3

Curtis' Story... 4

Life Timeline... 5

Created to Do Good Works... 6-7

God Will Never Let Go... 8-9

Arron's Story... 10-11

Healthcare Vouchers... 12

Word Search... 13

Just for Laughs... 14

Closing Words ... 15

What must I do to be saved?... 16

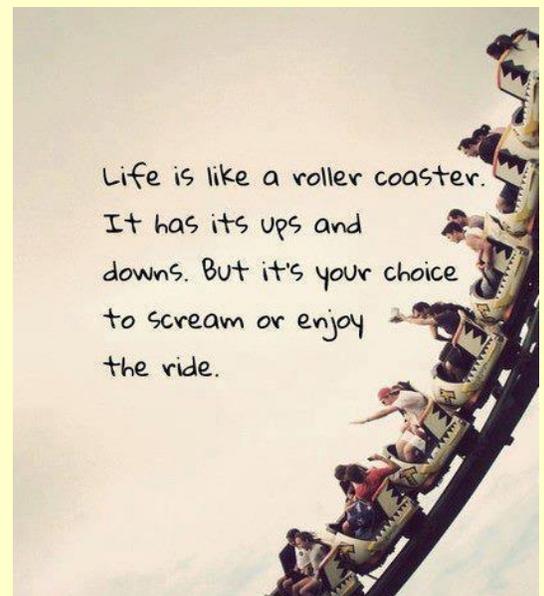
Write Us... 16

Women Empowering Women

**Wonderful
Optimistic
Marvelous
Amazing
Noble**

YOU are God's Masterpiece! *Ephesians 2:10*
Fearfully and wonderfully made! *Psalms 139:14*

Life is like a roller coaster.
It has its ups and
downs. But it's your choice
to scream or enjoy
the ride.



The 12 Disciples of Jesus Christ – Bartholomew

by Alywin Mitchell



Over For the past few months, we have been looking at the lives of Jesus' disciples. We began with Peter, then James, John, Andrew, Judas Iscariot, Philip and now Bartholomew.

Most Bible scholars believe Nathanael and Bartholomew were one and the same. Bartholomew is a family name, meaning "son of Tolmai," which implies that he had another name. Nathanael means "gift of God" or "giver of God."

Again, as with some of the other disciples we know very little about Bartholomew because he was so rarely mentioned in the Scriptures. But he must have had significant importance to the work of the church or Jesus would have never called him in the first place.

In the synoptic Gospels, the name Bartholomew always follows Philip in lists of the Twelve. In the Book of John, Bartholomew is not mentioned at all; Nathanael is listed instead, but after Philip.

The Book of John describes Nathanael's call to follow Jesus. Philip, who was most likely a really good friend, found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." (John 1:45)

Nathanael was quite cynical and suspicious about the idea of a Messiah from Nazareth. He considered anyone from Nazareth as unacceptable for the work of God. Some scholars say the Jews look down on Nazareth because it was on the border of a Gentile country, Nazareth was sometimes called "Galilee of the Gentiles", and the Jews were so deeply prejudiced against the Gentiles that they considered anyone or anything touched by a Gentile to be unclean in the sight of God. That's why he said, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth" (John 1:46). But Philip, rather than arguing with him about his prejudices just simply replied "come and see".

When Nathanael (Bartholomew) responded negatively about where Jesus came from, Jesus said "Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit" meaning, he is not a fraud or a hypocrite. Jesus isn't saying that Bartholomew is perfect, but that he is a sincere, honest, and upright man. Nathanael said, "How do you know me"? Jesus replied, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you". Then Nathanael quickly changed his mind about Jesus saying "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel"

Nathanael was astonished to realize that the Lord already knew him and that he was aware of him being under the fig tree. In Judaism, the mention of the fig tree, is based on a Jewish figure of speech. It is a symbol for the study of Law (Torah). In rabbinic literature, the proper place to study the Torah is under a fig tree.

The 12 Disciples of Jesus Christ – Bartholomew Continued

by Alywin Mitchell, GMI Writer

Jesus' knowledge of Nathanael under the fig tree caused Nathanael to respond with an amazing confession of faith. Because he had been studying The Torah, he understood and he proclaimed Jesus to be the divine Son of God, the King of Israel. In response to his confession of faith Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that." He then added, "Very truly I tell you, you will see 'heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on' the Son of Man." Jesus is referring to the story of Jacob's ladder in Genesis 28. Except instead of ascending and descending on a ladder like in Jacob's dream, the angels will ascend and descend on the Son of Man. This means that Jesus Christ Himself will be the final connection between God and mankind.

After the ascension of Jesus, Nathanael (Bartholomew), like the other apostles, set out to spread the gospel to the "uttermost parts of the world." But Bartholomew went a lot further than most of the other apostles. Legend says he went to Kodungallur, Kerala, India, like the disciple Thomas. Over 4,000 miles from Jerusalem. But legend also tells us that after he went to India he went back to Armenia. Terevan the capital of Armenia is approximately 3600 miles from Kodungallur. Other traditions trace him as being a missionary in Ethiopia, Mesopotamia, Parthia, and Lycaonia. I've always thought that since the apostles went to different places, they would have discussed which direction each of them would go. An early story says the disciples cast lots, like flipping a coin these days, and divided up the world to decide who would go where, so that everyone could hear about Jesus.

It is believed that while Nathanael was establishing Christianity in Armenia he was martyred. There is no biblical record of his death, most biblical scholars agree that he was basically scourged to death.

Through the story of Nathanael, we see that we must be especially careful of false presumptions, bigotries and prejudices that can cloud our judgment. In the presence of Christ, we are transformed from prejudice to purity.

Nathanael or Bartholomew which ever name you want to use, held nothing back, but gave his all to serve the Living God. He knew to accept Jesus Christ as Lord is to live a life of complete obedience and trust. He knew to be a disciple of Jesus Christ is to live a life of submission and service to Him.

His heart and his eyes were fixed upon Jesus Christ because he knew that Jesus Christ is and will be, our all-in-all.

If I Can Do It, So Can You – The Curtis Wooten Story



Meet Curtis Wooten. Curtis has been walking in right relationship with God and his community since he was released from El Dorado in 2017. He will be the first to admit that every day has not been a walk in the park. Our Director, Lonnie Johnson, has been in constant communication with Curtis since his release. They connected while Curtis was doing time. Lonnie asked Curtis if he would answer a few questions that may help some of our readers as they are coming out.

Here is that interview:

LJ: How long has it been since you were released?

Curtis: On August it will be 4 years.

LJ: What was your biggest struggle after you were released?

Curtis: My Biggest struggle is being too hard on myself.

LJ: What has been your biggest accomplishment in that time?

Curtis: I actually have two things I consider big accomplishments. One is that I published a book and the other is I got married.

LJ: Who has been your biggest supporter?

Curtis: My sister has been my biggest supporter.

LJ: What would you tell those about to be released to watch out for?

Curtis: The best advice I have for anyone being released is to be thankful for God's Grace, stay humble, & believe in yourself.

LJ: What is the first thing a person should do when they get out?

Curtis: The first thing a person should do upon release is follow the requirements of the parole officer and enjoy your family. After that, you have work to do.

LJ: Is there anything else you would like to share with our readers about dealing with life after incarceration?

Curtis: Life after incarceration doesn't have a blueprint, we all have plans and goals. We must remember to involve God in those plans to see them come to pass. And as long as you have God on your side, nothing in this world can stop you.



Lonnie had the pleasure of driving to Curtis's hometown and officiating his wedding over the Juneteenth weekend. This is one of Curtis' accomplishments he mentions above.

My Past, My Present, and My Destiny Timeline!

**Anthony J. Butler-CEO/Founder-The VIP (Violence "I" Prevent) Movement, LLC
Multigenerational Speaker-Author-Poetic Presenter-Creative Thinking Consultant**

AGE 0.....5.....10.....15.....20.....25.....30.....35.....40.....45.....50.....55.....60.....65.....70.....75.....80.....85.....90...

"PM"

**PRE ME
MY HISTORY**

"AM"

**AFTER ME
MY LEGACY**

We must free ourselves of being ignorant about our history. I often have my audiences refer to a personal timeline. This timeline spans before they were born and stretches after their death. I ask them, "do you know the history of your parents or those who raised you?" Think about how your parents lived. What was their upbringing like? Did they have angry parents? How did the background of your parents affect you? What memories do you have as a child? These questions and more get us to reflect about our history and the history of those who raised us.

Point to your age on the timeline above. Point to the approximate age that a pivotal traumatic event in your life left an impression that has shaped you to a certain extent. As you reflect, was this pivotal moment in your life something you personally experienced? Was this something you indirectly experienced, but have lived vicariously through another person? You are here now. Where do you plan to go? What is your destination? Does it include you moving forward with unproductive words and actions? Let's examine our history. Our analysis from a historical perspective will help us see how we arrived at this point and what we need to do next. God STILL has a plan for you! Don't lose hope. Don't let the mistakes we make define us. You have people who are praying for you! God STILL has a plan for you...for all of us! Bless you and I know you can move forward with productive words and actions.



In my opinion, no one should be convicted of capital punishment because they still have a purpose after committing crimes. I believe everyone has a cause and who am I to say they have already fulfilled that purpose.

In the Bible, God used murderers. Exodus 2:11-12 says, "One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. Glancing this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand." (NIV)

At 40 years old, Moses killed someone, but his life wasn't over. He went on to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, then guide them through the wilderness for 40 years. Moses became a patriarch of the Christian faith, appearing at Jesus transfiguration (Mark 9:4).

King David had a similar story. In 2 Samuel, Nathan the prophet rebukes David saying in 12:9, "Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites." (NIV)

King David orchestrated the murder of the husband of the woman he committed adultery with, but God didn't relinquish his title. David continued to lead God's people, ridding them of their enemies and planning the construction of the temple.

According to Old Testament law, these figures deserved the death penalty, but they had work to do.

You still have work to do.

Just because you took a life, kidnapped a person, or dealt drugs doesn't mean you don't have a purpose in life. Those acts don't define you. Moses' life took a significant turn for the better after he murders someone. Only God can say what He has in store for you now. You can still bring Him glory.

Moses and David aren't the only success stories in the Bible. Noah was a drunkard. Abraham was too old. Sara was impatient. Isaac was a daydreamer. Jacob was a liar. Leah was considered ugly. Joseph was abused. Gideon was insecure. Samson was a womanizer. Rahab was a prostitute. Elijah was suicidal. Jonah ran from God. Naomi and Ruth were widows. Job went bankrupt. Martha worried.

Zacchaeus was too short. Thomas doubted. Saul/Paul tried to destroy the Church and all followers. Lazarus was dead.

My favorite verse in the Bible is Ephesians 2:10, which says, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." When I was baptized as a baby, the pastor read this verse. In every stage of life, it has been true.

When I was depressed.

When I was broke.

When I was in transition.

It all led to where I am now. God was preparing me to do good works. I often get stuck on the "what ifs," like what if I had called that friend before he committed suicide or what if I had gotten out of that relationship earlier. Then I remind myself that if life hadn't gone the way it had, I wouldn't be where I am now. And I LOVE where I am now.

The problem with "what if" is that changing the past will change the present. What if I had gotten out of that relationship earlier? It might have saved some heartache, but would I have learned the same lessons? That relationship prepared me for the one I'm in today so I would go through it again to have this wonderful, fruitful marriage.

God still has plans for you. He has work for you to do. He prepared you for something specific. So don't give up yet. Don't give in to despair, hatred, or malice. Hope is always a possibility.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 says, "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."

God Will Never Let Go by Dr. Anthony Moore

A little boy was swimming in a lake near his home in Florida when an alligator quickly began to chase him. As he quickly swam to get away, he was screaming and his mother saw him. Without thinking twice, the little boy's mother saw him and frantically jumped in the water. Just as she grabbed her son's arms, the alligator viciously clamped down on his leg. Regardless of the alligator's deathly grip, his mother pulled him away from the alligator and swam to safety.



At the hospital, news reporters wanted to see the boy's scars and alligator teeth marks on his leg. But the boy said, I want to show you some other scars that I'm more proud and grateful for. He showed them the scars on his arms from his mother's finger nails where she dug in and wouldn't let go.

This story is not just an illustration of bravery and courage, but a demonstration of mercy, persistence, and tenacious love! God showed how much He loved us by sending His one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through Him. (1 John 4:9 NLT) You see, like the mother rescued her son from the alligator, Jesus saved us from the depths of hell and death. Prior to Jesus' death on the cross, we were doomed to sin and destruction. But God in His mercy and unfailing love for us, decided to send His only Son in the likeness of human flesh to suffer and die for you and me! For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16 KJV)

In this story, the "boy" represents you and me – humankind. The "mother" represents Jesus, the "alligator" represents Satan, and the "scars" represent the nails that were in Jesus' hands. It's odd that all of Jesus' wounds were healed when He rose from the dead except the scars in hands and wounds in his side. Don't you know it wasn't the "nails" that held Jesus on the cross? It was His everlasting and perfect love for you and me! Thank you, Jesus!

No matter what you're going through right now or what you may have done in the past, God will never let you go! Even when it looks dim, hopeless and you can't seem to hold on, God will never let you go. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish; no one can snatch them away from me. (John 10:28 NLT) Regardless of your circumstances or lot in life, God promised, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5 KJV)

When you give your life to Christ, sometimes Christians go through tough times, tragedy, trials and tribulations. Unfortunately in life, bad things do happen to good people. But, even when everything may not seem to be good in your life, hold on because [even though you can't see it right now] things are working for our good. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28 KJV)

Hold on, keep the faith and don't give up, God is working on your behalf despite your current situation. Paul reminds us in Romans 8:31, "What shall we then say to these things? If God be

for us, who can be against us?" Since God is for us, no one can be against us! God is not just for us, He is also our refuge, our fortress and our protection. David said in Psalms 46:1, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

The songwriter said, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness; I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand. All other ground is sinking sand."

God will never let go because He is my strength! David said in Psalms 27:1-3; 5, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock."

Be encouraged, I am praying for you and your families! In my closing, as you read this poem entitled,

"Footprints in the Sand" author unknown; remember, God will never let go!

One night I dreamed a dream.
As I was walking along the beach with my Lord.
Across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life.
For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand,
One belonging to me and one to my Lord.

After the last scene of my life flashed before me,
I looked back at the footprints in the sand.
I noticed that at many times along the path of my life,
especially at the very lowest and saddest times,
there was only one set of footprints.

This really troubled me, so I asked the Lord about it.
"Lord, you said once I decided to follow you, You would walk with me all the way.
But I noticed that during the saddest and most troublesome times of my life,
there was only one set of footprints. I don't understand why, when I needed You the most, You would leave me."

God whispered, "My precious child, I love you
and will never leave you,
Never, ever, during your trials and testing.
When you saw only one set of footprints,
It was then that I carried you."



My Testimony by Arron Long

My name is Arron Long, also known as D.O.C. # 112095. I am a former inmate and former “menace” to society. Here is my testimony:

Former to Crime

I was raised in Russell to blue collar parents. I grew up in the church and at nine years old I was “saved”. I moved to Olathe, KS at the age of twelve. I did not grow up in a bad environment, but it did have its ups and downs. I ended up smoking weed every day to numb out the craziness. My mother ended up leaving and taking every dime from my family’s accounts, leaving my dad broken and broke. This is when a darkness swept over me.

In a panic, my siblings and I were on our own. My little brother was still in high school, my little sister just had my oldest niece, and my older brother took control of our family’s business trying to save it by not taking any income and putting everything into the accounts to save it from being repurchased. There were a lot of things going on for a 19 year old. All of a sudden my little sister came to me crying. My niece had an eye infection, and she had no insurance. I made a call to friends I knew about selling weed. I ended up selling weed and was introduced to harder substances. That ended up leading to addiction, which ended up to 36 months in prison. At 26 I got out and tried my best to stay away, but the first moment my Parole Officer put me in a tough spot, I used all my new, “friends” that I met in prison to help me get set up back in the lifestyle I’d just gone to prison for. I ended up absconding and got introduced to the real deal. I was rolling through Northeast KCMO and ended up sitting on St. John’s Ave and Denver. During this time, I was shot at, I was stabbed, I died twice from over-dosing, and was in a dark deep pool of sin and darkness.

My Salvation and Rebirth

I was in my jail cell one night and was deep in my thoughts. I hopped off my bunk and picked up the Bible. I opened up to Matthew, Chapter 6 and started reading. Matthew 6: 25-34. These words from Jesus were my saving grace. I ended up crying and fell to my knees; see even though I grew up in church I never actually knew what being saved meant. On my knees crying, I looked up and asked Jesus to take care of me. I surrendered all of my evil deeds and told Him I surrender my entire self to Him from now until I enter the gates of heaven. I smelt a floral fragrance during this time that was so strong, goosebumps were all around me, and right then I was flooded with the Holy Spirit. Instantly, everything changed. How I thought, how I talked, and my demons were gone. I was free from the bondage of the devil and was released from every sin I previously committed. I ended up getting probation instead of the prison sentence and when I was released, I moved into an Oxford House and started filling my cup. I went to church, I went to NA meetings, I went to bible studies, I went to doctrine classes; I knew I needed to immerse myself in a new lifestyle so that when I got home, I would be so filled up in the Word that I would lay down and sleep. I woke up every morning with scripture. I isolated myself from all social media for 6-months and was solely focused on building my new life that was given to me from the sacrifice of Christ our Savior. I had a bank account, a credit score, and was even paying rent consistently. To most people that is normal, but to me this was all new and very rewarding. I took baby steps and knocked little things out one at a time and that was also new to me.

My Testimony Continued by Arron Long

God blessed me with a promotion at my job where I was one of five supervisors. God blessed me again because now I lead an entire division at a new company. Just like that, in two years, God blessed me with a promising career, a fiancée, two boys who call me Dad, redemption and respect from my family, and most importantly a discipleship.



Prophecies

After I was saved, I had two dreams in jail. One was me passing out jail jumpers with 1 Samuel stamped on every jumper. The next day I woke up and read 1 Samuel not knowing what to look for but trusting God. I ended up at 1 Samuel, Chapter 22; this is where David first ran away from Saul. David ended up with his first vanguard of 400 men. These men were all outcasts from Israel for various reasons. Right then I cried, simply because God showed me a sign that even if you'd committed acts that made you feel outcasted by society, God still has plans for you if you seek Him.

My second dream was an outreach called "The Unreachable Outreach". God told me to go back to the neighborhoods I committed sins in and disciple to everyone.

You must surrender in your prayer my brothers and sisters. Surrendering your past life is the only way to redemption. You have a testimony that can save others. I will end with this, I am praying for all the lost sheep to seek their shepherd and be found and reborn. Jesus is a miracle worker and can change your entire life if you ask. I love you all and believe that you all will become great disciples.

Matthew 7:24-27

24 "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. 26 And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

When you make God your foundation then nothing can crumble your house. God bless you all.

Free Healthcare Vouchers

Growth Ministries is committed to connecting individuals to resources that can help them as they reintegrate into society. This month we would like to highlight Kansas City's Medicine Cabinet.

If you are in the greater Kansas City area or planning on locating there, here is a great medical resource.



KANSAS CITY'S **MEDICINE** **CABINET**

Kansas City's Medicine Cabinet is available to all greater KC (MO & KS) area residents who need help paying for health/medical services and supplies. We help with basic dental needs, diabetic supplies, durable medical equipment, prescriptions, hearing aids, eye exams and eyeglasses.

Contact me at danielle@kcmedicinecabinet.org or call 816.276.7506 for eligibility details or to schedule an Outreach KCMC event.

KC Medicine Cabinet's Sight & Sound program can bring vision and hearing professionals to your site to test for hearing and vision loss. Plus, we provide free hearing aids and free eyeglasses to those who qualify. Contact me at danielle@kcmedicinecabinet.org or 816.276.7506 for more information.

Who is Eligible?

- Individuals whose household income is up to 200% of federal poverty level
- Approximate per-month income:
 - Single person – \$2,147
 - Two people – \$2,903
 - Family of four – \$4,417
- Required Documentation:
 - Prescription or Medical order
 - Proof of income for entire household
 - Picture ID
 - Social Security Cards or ITIN Cards for entire household
 - Proof of address for past 30 days
- Each individual may receive one service date within a 12-month period with a maximum of \$1,800 in services within a lifetime.

Growth Ministries Inspired

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

ASPIRATION

VICTORIOUS

POSITIVE

MOTIVATED

DESIRE

MERRY

FRUITFUL

EXPECTATION

FORTUNATE

ASSURED

YEARNING

DREAM

ANTICIPATE

OPTIMISTIC

CONFIDENT

SMILING

TRIUMPHANT

UNTROUBLED

DELIGHTED

UPLIFTED

UNFAILING

STIMULATED

PROFITIOUS

GROWING

SUCCESS

PROSPERITY

FINISH

ACCOMPLISHMENT

A priest buys a lawn mower at a yard sale. Back home, he pulls on the starter rope a few times with no results. He storms back to the yard sale and tells the previous owner, "I can't get the mower to start!" "That's because you have to curse to get it started," says the man. "I'm a man of the cloth. I don't even remember how to curse." "You keep pulling on that rope, and it'll come back to you."

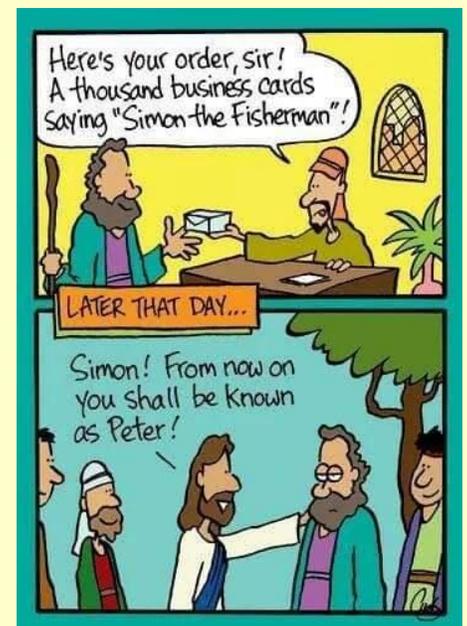
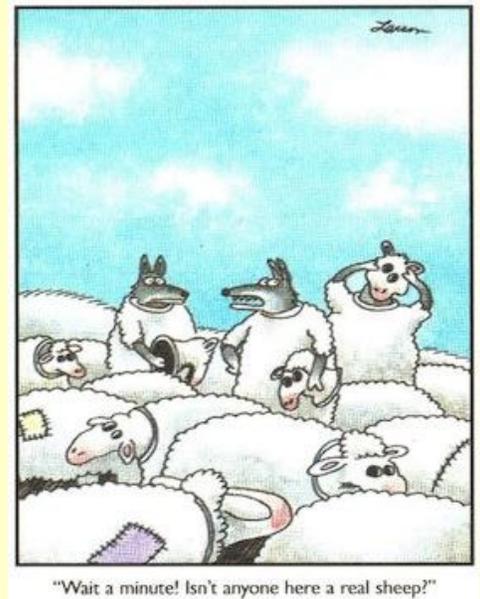
In the foyer of a church, a young boy was looking at a plaque with the names of men and women who had died in various wars. He asked the pastor, "Who are these people?" The pastor said, "Those are members from our church who died in service." The boy asked, "The early service or the second service?"

"What's wrong, Bubba?" asked the pastor. "I need you to pray for my hearing," said Bubba. The pastor put his hands on Bubba's ears and prayed. When he was done, he asked, "So how's your hearing?" "I don't know," said Bubba. "It isn't until next Tuesday."

A priest and a pastor are standing by the side of a road holding up a sign that reads "The end is near! Turn around now before it's too late!" A passing driver yells, "You guys are nuts!" and speeds past them. From around the curve, they hear screeching tires—then a big splash. The priest turns to the pastor and says, "Do you think we should just put up a sign that says 'Bridge Out' instead?"

A burglar breaks into a house. He starts shining his light around looking for valuables. Some nice things catch his eye, and as he reaches for them, he hears, "Jesus is watching you." Startled, the burglar looks for the speaker. Seeing no one, he keeps putting things in his bag, again, he hears, "Jesus is watching you." This time, he sees a parrot. "Who are you?" the burglar asks. "Moses," the bird replied. "Who the heck would name a bird Moses?" the man laughed. "I dunno," Moses answered, "I guess the same kind of people that would name a Rottweiler Jesus."

Our fourth grader celebrated his birthday on crutches, so he couldn't carry the cupcakes into school without help. I asked our sixth-grader, Noah, to help his brother carry them in. "I could," he said, "but I'd prefer not to." Spotting a teaching moment, my husband asked Noah, "What would Jesus do?" Noah answered, "Jesus would heal him so he could carry his own cupcakes."





Hold Your Head Up

Life has a way of knocking us on our butt over and over again. Some of it is undeserved, but if I were to be honest, we bring a lot of it on ourselves. That makes it even harder to rebound because of the shame, embarrassment, and humiliation of making the same stupid mistakes over and over. That can come with a lot of guilt and even self-condemnation. Then you have the finger pointing, shaming, name calling and ostracizing from society and those close to us. That can then lead to depression and anxiety.

Am I driving down your block, am I pulling into your driveway, or am I knocking on your door? At this point a shot of dope, a sip of liquor or punching someone in the face may not sound like a bad idea. But it is. It is a very bad idea! That only leads to more problems. But we already know this, right?

Often times when we reach this state we can't seem to find what we need within the world's resources. We may find temporary comfort in money, sex, or good times, but it seems like something's always missing. We need to feel like we are worth something, that *someone* believes in us or *someone* will be there to help us navigate this bumpy, rocky road called restoration.

I have great news. God is that *someone*. I am sure you've heard this before, but did you know that no matter how much you mess up, God will forgive you? 1 John 1:9 says, **"If we confess our sins God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"**. The word "all" is very important in that verse. That means no matter how bad you messed up nor no matter how many times. God does not grade us on our performance or lack thereof like the world. He loves us for who we are. His creation. His handywork. His children. He loves us so much that he left the perfection of heaven, wrapped himself in flesh and died on a cross as a sacrifice for all of our sins past, present and future. That's right, Christ even died for the sins you have not yet committed. Therefore you don't have to sulk and stand in a corner if you slip up. He confirms that idea in His word. Romans 8:1, **"There is therefore now no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus"**.

As a child of God you don't have to worry about if you messed up too much. You are in good company such as people like Moses the murderer, David the king that forced himself on another man's wife and had him killed, Noah the drunkard, and many others that God forgave, cleaned up and used for great works. You are worthy because God has made you his righteousness when Christ made himself sin for you.

The world may call you this or that, but God said you are part of a Royal Priesthood (1 Peter 2:9), He says you are more than a conqueror (Romans 8:37) and not a failure, He says you are the head and not the tail, above and not beneath. (Deuteronomy 28:13).

I *like* who the Creator of the universe says that I am. After that, not much else matters. For that reason I can "hold my head up" and be all that I was designed to be.

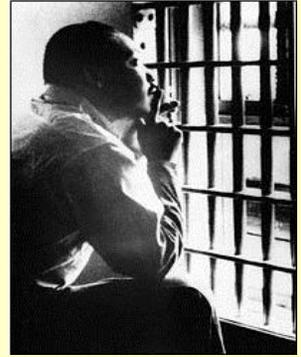


What must I do to be saved?

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