

The Growth Journal Magazine

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There is nothing to Fear but Fear Itself



You are not good enough...You're a failure...You will never amount to anything...You will never change...No one will ever trust you again...You didn't graduate...You will always be a loser...

Lies, lies! These are strategically placed traps laid out by the enemy. He knows your real worth, your real value and your real potential. He knows God created you in His image (Genesis 1:27) so that means you are wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14).

Satan will drop these little soundbites in our spiritual ear to snag us, slow us down and distract us. When we start buying into this mess, we start to build up a fear of success. We doubt our ability to live our lives the way God intended.

That's why the only thing we have to fear is fear itself. This famous phrase is from former President Roosevelt. He was talking about the only thing holding people back from dealing with the Great Depression was fear. Roosevelt's famous expression relates to the idea of fear by showing how crippling and debilitating it can be if people let it rule their lives.

As Christians, we cannot allow the lies of Satan to cripple or debilitate us. Who will you believe? The Word of God, or the lies of Satan?

Lonnie Johnson

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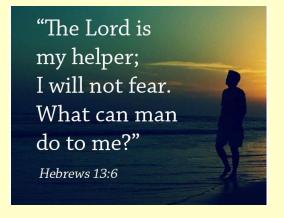
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The 12 Disciples of Jesus Christ – Thomas by Alywin Mitchell

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



But before we get into the story. A little background about Thomas. As with most of the disciples we know very little of their lives before or after they were called by Jesus. But we do know that Thomas was a fisherman like Nathaniel and Philip. (John 21:2-8)

In the Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Thomas is mentioned only in the listings of the apostles. It is only in the Book of John that we read the wonderful story of Thomas. Thomas was also called Didymus, which is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Thomas, they both mean "twin." The Scriptures don't tell us the name of Thomas's twin. Christian tradition hold that Thomas took the gospel to either Parthia, which roughly corresponds to an area in northeastern Iran, although part is in Southern Turkmenistan today, or India and that he was martyred for his faith.

Now the story of how he got the nickname of "Doubting Thomas."

Close to the end of Jesus' earthly ministry, there were people in Judea that were planning to try and kill the Lord Jesus. This was the same time that Jesus and the disciples heard that their friend Lazarus was close to dying. The other disciples tried to talk Jesus out of going back to Lazarus' hometown of Bethany. Bethany was near Jerusalem where the threat of death waited for them. But Jesus was set on going, and Thomas told his fellow disciples: "Let us also go, that we may die with him". (John 11:16) Thomas's readiness to stay with Jesus despite the fact they could all die is remarkable. Thomas was sincerely devoted to His master. Thomas demonstrated extreme loyalty to Jesus. Yet he struggled with uncertainties and questions.

So, it is clear that a believer in Jesus Christ can be spiritually strong one moment and spiritually weak the next.

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)

The 12 Disciples of Jesus Christ – Thomas Continued

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.

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)



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)

Doubt may have factored into his response to his friends, but it was not the defining quality of his life. Thomas should be better known for his extraordinary loyalty, his absolute obedience to the gospel, and his faith in the Lord Jesus.

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. The

Cows Are More Scared of You by Renae Parks, GMI Writer

I grew up in rural lowa and both of my grandparents are farmers. When I was a small child, I traveled with my grandpa in his big semi when he hauled cattle. One time when we stopped for lunch, my grandpa noticed that I didn't go near the trailer full of plump cattle. He laughed and said, "They are more scared of you than you are of them."

After we returned to the farm with an empty trailer, he took me to one of the cattle lots by the house. As we walked up, I slowed down and hid behind my grandpa's leg. A few cows looked up as we approached. He put a hand on my shoulder and said, "Watch this."

Grandpa raised his arms and whistled. The cows scattered, tripping over each other to get away from the farmer. I watched the cows run away and before I knew it, my wide eyes were against the iron bars of the fence. Grandpa laughed.



They are more scared of you than you are of them.

Sometimes we are afraid of shadows, monsters under the bed, and the boogieman—or in my case, cows. Our fears aren't warranted. That's what I want to shine a light on, the things we are afraid of that we shouldn't be.

For the longest time, I was afraid to ask my parents about my childhood. Though I was very blessed to grow up in a Christian home with all my physical needs met, my parents were absent emotionally. My dad worked a lot and my mom was often depressed. After I got married and wanted to start a family; I was afraid the same thing would happen to my children.

My husband encouraged me to ask my parents simple questions like why was Mom depressed. It took me months to get up the courage. When I finally asked, I was on the phone with my mom and I asked what changed when my siblings and I were born.

My mom didn't respond.

I panicked. My hand gripped the phone a little tighter and I started pacing around my house. I said, "Mom? Did I say something wrong? We don't have to talk about it."

She asked why I wanted to know. Between sniffles, she asked, "Are you writing another article?"

That's when I started rambling. "No, I was just curious. I mean, I just wanted to know. Not that our childhood was bad, but I just..." Then I started crying and I just said it, "What happened? Why did everything turn for the worst when my brother and I were born?"

Meanwhile, my mom was sitting in her living room halfway through a book called, "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Surviving a Relationship with a Narcissist". She hadn't told any of us kids; my older brother, me, or younger sister, that she was thinking about getting a divorce. My mom was too scared. "What do you mean?"

I think I took the deepest breath of my life before replying, "I'm afraid that when Zach (my husband) and I have kids, everything is going to fall apart."

Cows Are More Scared of You Continued

That's when my mom told me what was going on—the thoughts of divorce, the years of mental abuse, the narcissistic tendencies of my dad, everything. She told me, very firmly, "Zach is not your dad. You are not your dad. You two will not make the same mistakes we did."

I don't remember much more of the conversation, because I was in shock. Before hanging up the phone, I ordered the book my mom was reading and told her I would call again in a few days after reading it. For the first time in my life, I felt more of an adult than my parents.

My fear of life falling apart after having kids was unfounded. I didn't need to be afraid of starting a family or how it would affect my relationship with my husband. Just because my formative years were full of trials, doesn't mean that's how my kids will grow up. My childhood had a logical explanation. I was afraid of a cow.

Though I was scared to ask, my mom was more scared to tell me what happened during my childhood. I was afraid of a cow. Knowing the truth was good for me, my mom, and our relationship. Since then, I have been able to support my parents, especially my mom, through this hard time and many people have rallied around our family.

Don't be afraid of the cows in your life. They may look bigger than you, stronger than you, but they aren't. With just a little courage you can stand up against them. Don't be afraid to ask, do, or tell. You never know if your fears are cows—something you don't need to be afraid of.

I Will Fear No Evil by Mike Doss

You may have heard of the acronym of FEAR, False Expectation Appearing Real! Is this, however a true description of fear? Is fear just false expectations that we are worrying about unnecessarily and we shouldn't ever experience the feeling of fear?

In an article by Lisa Fritscher and reviewed by Daniel B. Block, MD titled "What Is Fear" she writes:

"Fear is a natural, powerful, and primitive human emotion. It involves a universal biochemical response as well as a high individual emotional response. Fear alerts us to the presence of danger or the threat of harm, whether that danger is physical or psychological.

Sometimes fear stems from real threats, but it can also originate from imagined dangers. Fear can also be a symptom of some mental health conditions including panic disorder, social anxiety disorder, phobias, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Fear is composed of two primary reactions to some type of perceived threat: biochemical and emotional.

Biochemical Reaction

Fear is a natural emotion and a survival mechanism. When we confront a perceived threat, our bodies respond in specific ways. Physical reactions to fear include sweating, increased heart rate, and high adrenaline levels that make us extremely alert.1

This physical response is also known as the "fight or flight" response, with which your body prepares itself to either enter combat or run away. This biochemical reaction is likely an evolutionary development. It's an automatic response that is crucial to our survival.

Emotional Response

The emotional response to fear, on the other hand, is highly personalized. Because fear involves some of the same chemical reactions in our brains that positive emotions like happiness and excitement do, feeling fear under certain circumstances can be seen as fun, like when you watch scary movies. 2

Some people are adrenaline seekers, thriving on extreme sports and other fear-inducing thrill situations. Others have a negative reaction to the feeling of fear, avoiding fear-inducing situations at all costs.

Although the physical reaction is the same, the experience of fear may be perceived as either positive or negative, depending on the person.

Symptoms

Fear often involves both physical and emotional symptoms. Each person may experience fear differently, but some of the common signs and symptoms include:

Chest pain. Chills, Dry mouth, Nausea, Rapid heartbeat, Shortness of breath, Sweating, Trembling, Upset stomach. In addition to the physical symptoms of fear, people may experience psychological symptoms of being overwhelmed, upset, feeling out of control, or a sense of impending death."

So, the above acronym of fear might be true in some cases, but not always. Fear is a natural and powerful human emotion! It can be both helpful, for survival, and harmful, if it persists for long periods of time due to some mental health conditions, or exposure to threats for a prolonged period.

I Will Fear No Evil Continued

The apostle Paul referred to this exposure to constant threat when speaking to the church at Corinth in 1 Cor. 15:30-31 "And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? 31 I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.1" Paul is referring to the persecution he was daily facing in living for God and spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 11:24–28 (NKJV) — **24** From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. **25** Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; **26** in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; **27** in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—**28** besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.

Talk about daily exposure to fear!

One of my favorite verses concerning fear is found in Psalms 23

Psalm 23:4 (NKJV) — **4** Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

The Psalmist declared a liberation from fear, not because danger wasn't present or real, but because of whom he had committed his life to. He did not fear evil because God was with him. Not only did he not experience fear, but he had "peace" amid real danger! His reference to the "rod" and "Your staff" indicated the constant reality of God's presence with him in the face of a very dangerous place, rife with the presence of evil. Today, no matter where we are or what situation we find ourselves in, we can find comfort in the abiding presence of God through God's Word, and the presence of His Holy Spirit!

When you are stripped away from all comfort and protection; when you are placed in a situation of what seems helpless or hopeless, there might be nothing else to turn to except the protection of an almighty God!

Isaiah 43:1–3 (NKJV) — **1** But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. **2** When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you. **3** For I am the LORD your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in your place.

Control of our fears begins with who I am placing my trust in. What will you trust in when you are shackled and powerless and led to the fiery furnace (Da 3) or a den of lions (Da 6)? For God's "Redeemed" His call to them is "Fear Not"!

Why not get God on your side today? Surrender your life to God today! Make Him the "Lord" of your life from this day forward. Seek Him in the Word of God and ask God for the abiding presence of His Holy Spirit! It is not God's will that anyone perish, but that all would come to eternal life through Him (2 Peter 3:9). God desires to be your "Shepherd" today! If you need further help, "Growth Ministries Inc." stands ready to assist you in any way possible. Reach out to God and Growth Ministries Inc. today!

Pranks and Consequences by Dr. Robin Lynes, GMI Writer

What started out as a childhood prank, quickly turned into years of hurt, feelings of isolation and bad choices. It has been said that guys will duke it out and the next day they will be friends again. Not so much with girls. Girls are competitive, spiteful, downright mean and nasty to each other. Unfortunately, some people do not mature and grow out of these characteristics in adulthood.



From a very early age, I had the gift of being able to connect with people. I was what you would call a "social butterfly" who would openly speak to anyone, at any time, without fear. I wanted people to feel comfortable, welcomed, and safe when they were around me. I realize now my gift may have been perceived as wanting to be the center of attention, but my childish mind didn't know any better. I wanted everyone to like and accept me.

One night, at a sleepover with a group of 11-year-old girls, one girl got the group to go along with playing a prank on me. The girls all acted as if they were "gay" and persuaded me to go along. The incident was uncomfortable and innocent but as a child that wanted to fit in and be accepted, I agreed with the rest of the group that night that I was "gay". I know now, it was all a ploy because the girl that started the prank liked a boy that was giving me attention. Afterward, the girl started rumors around the entire school that I was "gay". Needless to say; the boy and the entire school turned away from socializing with me and the rumor followed me all throughout the rest of my school days. Back in my day, "gay" was socially taboo and shunned.

People who had previously hung out with me and been my friends were afraid to be around me because they didn't want to be labeled as "gay" and isolated like I had been.

God loves each of us, no matter what we have done, has been done to us, or what anyone thinks of us. Jesus died for our sins to allow us to have a relationship with God to be able to confess our sins and be forgiven. In my case, even though I was raised in the Methodist church and knew better, to refute the rumor, I started being promiscuous and sought attention from the "bad boys" that didn't care so much about reputation. I was fortunate God was with me and I never got raped or pregnant. We can't control what others do to us or think of us, but we can control our actions and reactions to the situation.

Isaiah 41:10 – "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." It is important to remember God is with us, strengthening us and holding us up when we don't have the strength on our own anymore.

2 Timothy 1:7 – "For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control."

Pranks and Consequences Continued

Eventually, God gave me the strength to overcome the rumors and helped me realize I am a child of God and worthy of the good things He has in store for me. I stopped caring so much about what other's thought and started making better choices. I have learned, the bullies in life are the ones that are feeling inadequate about themselves, so they try to hurt others. The early lessons learned in managing my actions and reactions to bullies and rumors has helped me succeed in the workplace. The more successful you are, the more the devil intervenes and tries to knock you down. Unfortunately, there will always be "bullies" in this world in one form or another. Learning how to control your actions and reactions and having faith that God will help you move forward is key.

Philippians 4:6 – "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."

I have learned to pray for people who do not treat me well and to forgive them for their actions. When you pray for those that hurt you, they no longer have power over you. Eventually, they may even change their ways into more pleasant behaviors. Regardless of other's actions, God gives you the strength to overcome and not be consumed by rumors and behaviors of others if you give it to Him and believe He will guide you through the situation.

I pray you have peace, perseverance, and faith to move forward through whatever situation you are facing today and tomorrow. Knowing God's got your back no matter what and that He loves you will help as you move forward. One small step forward is still a step forward. Your journey isn't over with yet. Step forward in faith, with self-control.

Anxiety by Arron Long, GMI Writer

2 Corinthians 4:8-9—We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

Deuteronomy 31:8—The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I understand the fear and anxiety that comes with being confined in prison. There are a lot of demonic spirits that flow throughout prison yards that lead to violence, drug use, gang pressure, extortion, etc.

It is very easy to wake up in a pessimistic mindset and get into your head about how you're confined and unable to get out. The idle mind is the devil's biggest weapon because you start to think about the temptations as a way of escaping and get the "Might As Well" mentality.

However, once your surrender your life to the Lord fully, and put that tiny mustard seed of faith in Him, you will be able to walk without fear and anxiety. You will know that the man or woman who was booked into D.O.C. is not the same person that is reading this article. Turn your idle mind into the Word and Disciple and be a vessel. Start your walk with Christ and look for ministers at the facility to confide in. Find or start a group of followers and do bible studies, praying sessions, and communion. Surrender your old self and become anew and you will not have the fear and anxiety you have felt because you are a new person. Bishop T.D. Jakes compared being born again from a traumatic past to Jacob wrestling with God and becoming Israel. Jacob was crippled in his leg after wrestling, but he became Israel after and was now the patriarch of God's nation of his people. Even though we have a past that put us in the cell, we are all reborn into a new person. We all might have a limp from our past life but we are still new in our mind, heart, and soul because the Holy Spirit has poured into us.

In conclusion, fear not for God has you in His grip and has everlasting love and protection over you by the sacrifice of his son Jesus Christ.

Jeremiah 46:27

"Do not be afraid, Jacob my servant;
do not be dismayed, Israel.

I will surely save you out of a distant place,
your descendants from the land of their exile.

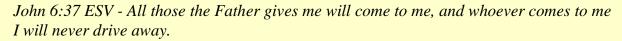
Jacob will again have peace and security,
and no one will make him afraid.



Arron Worshiping God

Are You Hopeless? by Minister Terrance Saunders

NO NEED TO FEEL HOPELESS





RETURN TO THE SAVIOR AND LIVE

There was a season in my life when I was filled with hopelessness. My life seemed to be falling apart. Loss of parents, family scattered, bad choices (on my part - I own it), financially struggling, lack of understanding and a STRONG sense of hopelessness. Nothing seemed to be going right.

Maybe you feel hopeless today. You are in a dark place, overwhelmed by the situations you are facing and wondering when it will get better. In times such as these, I encourage you to have hope in God's Word.

Psalm 43:5

why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

In the Bible - many were faced with a difficult or trying situation. But their turning point came when they sought or had interaction with the Savior.

Elijah had low self-esteem and wanted to die but God encouraged him!

Job suffered through great loss - but God spoke life to him!

Jeremiah faced being lonely, feelings of defeat/rejection, and insecurity - but God strengthened him!

Jonah was angry and wanted to run away - but God showed mercy!

The woman with the blood issue - but God healed her!

NO MATTER WHAT - YOU CAN ALWAYS HAVE A "BUT GOD" ENCOUNTER... Read that again!

Watch this - He showed compassion in time when it felt like none existed. He offered grace and mercy - yet we don't deserve it. He brought hope in a hopeless time. He instilled purpose when we didn't understand our existence. He gave and gives you the victory.

The promises of God remain current today - even when we are feeling down and out. Nothing we face in this world can nullify the promises of God. JUST BELIEVE. It's by faith we stand firm!

Hold on to hope, Jesus Christ. Keep fighting with the help of Gods Spirit. Your life has purpose!



Words to Grow By

Fear Not and Have Faith

What is Fear?

False

Evidence

Appearing

Real

Faith is not a feeling.

It is a choice to trust God even when the road ahead seems uncertain.

How do I know that? I'm so glad you asked.

Isaiah 4:10 says, "So do not fear, for I am with you;

Do not be dismayed for I am your God."

Never forget that God is not a man, that He should lie,
Nor a son of man, that He should repent.
Has He said, and will He not do?
Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good? **Numbers 23:19**

Nothing else to be said...mic drop!

Women Empowering Women

F.E.A.R. vs. F.A.I.T.H.

Fear has two meanings:
Forget Everything And Run
OR

Face Everything And Rise

The question is...which will you choose?

Remember

When **FEAR** knocks on your door, Send **FAITH to** answer.

F.A.I.T.H. over F.E.A.R.

Philippians 4:6

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Fearless Achiever Robust **Flourishing** Rugged Bold **Fortified** Spunky **Brave** Conqueror Gumptious Supported Courageous Loved **Tempered** Daring New **Tenacious** Plucky **Thriving Dauntless** Determined Resilient **Victorious Energized** Resolved

Just for Laughs

















She Has, He Has

Adapted from the Book, "Root Reasons for Violence,
Knowing Why It Happens,
Learning How to Stop It"
By Anthony J, Butler

She has needs. Needs that make it hard for her to sleep, so deep that it seeps into her soul like memories of his touch, his voice, it doesn't take much for tears to rush from her eyes sent from the void inside, her cries come from within...tossing and turning, yearning for the man who used to hold her hand, but now she holds mixed messages that messes with her mind, reliving a rescue mission looking for a man who walked out and left her abandoned and behind and now she has questions for her dad.

He has needs. Needs that get ignored and delayed because his rage is captured in a cage put on display in unbelievable actions that typically set the stage for misdiagnosed craves splashing against his heart, a tidal wave of emotions beyond his bravado, bragging, joking, and boasting is a little boy searching for his father, searching frantically while he is young, but as he gets older, bitterness is buried in his soul and now he says why bother. He has brokenness and unresolved issues because of his absent father.

He has his height. She has his eyes. He has soared. She has supernatural strength inside. He has overcome despite the pain. She has blossomed as a result of the rain.

She has...He has...
POWER!

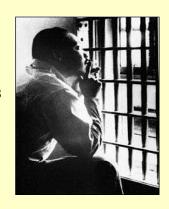
Let's use this power to confront our fears and overcome our hurt that often plays out in how we treat ourselves and others.

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