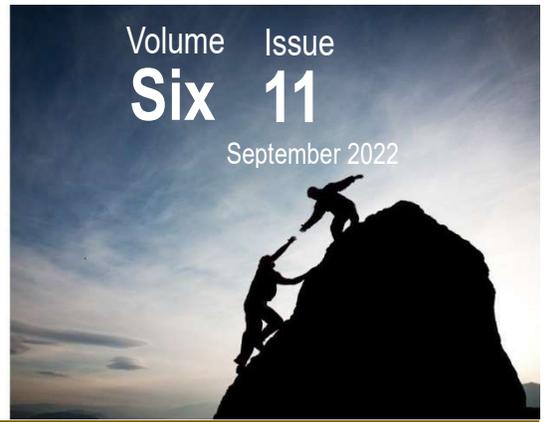


food for thought >>>

“Greater love has no one than this,
to lay down his life for one’s friend.”

John 15:13



Proverbs 27:17 As Iron Sharpens Iron, So One Person Sharpens Another

The Growth Journal

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Women Empowering Women

A Successful Woman

A successful Woman is one
Who can build a firm foundation
With the bricks
Others have thrown at her.
Every storm is part of your journey.
Yes, you will make it through this one too.
You will come out stronger
Than you were before!
God’s Got You...Trust and Believe!
Psalms 121:7-8

Linda Lewis

Words to Grow By

God Loves You No Matter What!

God loves you simply because
He has chosen to do so.
He loves you when you do not feel lovely.
He loves you when
No one else loves you.
Others may abandon you, divorce you, and ignore you,
BUT
God loves YOU!
He loved you yesterday.
He loves you tomorrow.
He loves you always.
Regardless of if you mess up.
**He loves YOU,
Way beyond your worth,
No Matter What!**
Romans 8:31

Linda Lewis



The scriptures clearly state that the original man, Adam, was the direct result of a creative act of the Lord God. Man was created in the image and likeness of God as a tripartite being, meaning consisting of three parts, consisting of spirit, soul, and body.

The study of the doctrine of man has also been called Anthropology. Anthropology is the *scientific* study of humanity, concerned with human behavior, human biology, cultures, societies, and linguistics, in both the present and past.

Christian Anthropology is the study of humanity from a *Christian /Biblical* perspective. Christian Anthropology deals with who we are and how we relate to God. Whether people are inherently good or inherently sinful is crucial in determining how our relationship with God can be restored. Christian Anthropology helps us to understand who we are from God's perspective. A key verse on Christian Anthropology is Psalm 139:14, "*I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.*"

One of the main questions of secular *scientific* anthropology is the origin of man. We want to know where we came from and where we are going. There are three theories concerning the origin of man.

1. *Atheistic Evolution*

The Atheistic Evolutionist believes in the theory of spontaneous generation; that all forms of animal life evolved from more primitive forms of life.

2. *Theistic Evolution*

This theory claims that higher forms of life evolved from lower forms, but the lower forms were created by God.

3. *Theistic Creation*

Theistic Creation believes in the Scriptural fact that God is the life source, the originator and maintainer of all forms of life, and the one who created all to reproduce "*after their kind*".

What is man?

King David in beholding the glory of the heavens asked the question, "What is man that you are mindful of him"? (Psalm 8:4)

Man is a Created Being

"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness..." There are two words used in the Genesis account of creation. These words are "created" and "made" (Genesis 1:26; 2:1-3). The word "create" means to make something out of nothing, to bring into existence. The word "make" means to fashion and form as a potter forms a vessel of clay. Man owes his existence to God, the creator, and sustainer of all things.

Man is an Intelligent Being

Man is a being having reason, intelligence, imagination, and the ability to express his thoughts in language.

Man is a Dependent Being

The fact man owes his existence to a creator, makes him a dependent creature. He is not self-existent and cannot be independent.

Man is a Moral being

God created man with free will, and the ability to choose. It is this which makes man a moral and therefore responsible creature. God created man with the power of choice.

Man is a Love Being

God is love and love must not only have an object but must have that which can reciprocate that love (1 John 4:16-19).

The Doctrine of Man cont.

God is triune in His being, so man, created in the image and likeness of God, was created as a triune being, consisting of spirit, soul, and body.

There are three different words both in Hebrew and Greek about man's tripartite being.

In Hebrew:

- Ruach which means - Spirit
- Nephesh which means - Soul
- Beten or Geshem which means - Body

In Greek

- Pneuma which means - Spirit
- Psueche which means - Soul
- Soma which means – Body

Spirit: The God-conscious part of man, capable of knowing God.

Soul: The self-conscious part of man, capable of knowing one's self.

Body: The sense or world-conscious part of man, capable of knowing and receiving things from the world around him.

God's purpose for creating man.

The Bible, the inspired, **inerrant, infallible, word of God**, makes it abundantly clear that God created man and that He created him for His glory! Therefore, the first and ultimate purpose of man, according to the Bible, is simply to glorify God. We fulfill our purpose of glorifying God by living our lives in a passionate, intimate, personal relationship and faithful service to Him.

God's second purpose for creating man was to reproduce His nature. God, our Father wanted us, His children, to look like Him on the inside. He wanted us to bear the family "image and likeness."

God's third purpose for creating man was to have someone share His function of ruling the universe. He not only purposed that we would be something, our character, but that we would do something, our function. Our father wanted us to share His dominion, the universe!

God's fourth purpose for creating man was to share some of His creative powers. God wanted His children to reproduce more children to be in the family. The four-fold purpose of God is both progressive and interdependent.

The more we get to know our Creator and the more we love Him (Matthew 22:37-38), the better we understand who we are and what our purpose is. We were created to bring Him glory. King David tells God, "*In your presence there is fulness of joy. In your right hand are pleasures for evermore*" Psalm 16:11 Fullness of joy is found in knowing God and delighting in the excellence of His character. To be in His presence, we begin to experience an intensity of joy in the Lord that we have never known. To enjoy fellowship with Him is a greater blessing than anything that we can imagine! As we glorify God and enjoy him, Scripture tells us that he rejoices in us.

"I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well." Psalm 139:14



Many of us wonder if we are capable of being loved, appreciated, and forgiven after all that we have done. There is a very simple answer to this. **YES!** There is nothing you can do that Jesus' death didn't cover if you are truly repentant and love Jesus as your Lord and Savior. I've done things in my life that I believed that I shouldn't be forgiven for. I honestly believed that. Boy was I wrong! Once I started reading and understanding what Jesus died for, I realized that not letting go of my past was insulting Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. He went to hell for us so that we would be forgiven **ONCE** and for **ALL**. Did you catch that? He died **once and for ALL people**. He covered our sins and continues to do so through His abundant grace and mercy. Your only job is to receive it with open arms, truly believe Him and sin no more. That means you promise to "turn away" from sin. It doesn't mean that you will be perfect. No one is perfect but the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Jesus calls us to look forward and not backward. Why? Because He doesn't live in the past, He lives in our future. Of course, He is presently with us, always beside us and never leaves us, but He is our everlasting life which is our future. In Him, we always have a place to rest. A place to escape the pain of this earth. But if we do not forgive ourselves and love ourselves as He loves us, we cannot meet Him in our present circumstances that He longs to heal. Whether you realize it or not, there is nothing missing and nothing broken in you! That is what God, the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit believe. That is how Jesus sees us and that is how we need to see ourselves. Once we do, we will be filled with the Holy Spirit and be able to conquer anything the devil throws our way. As a warrior for Christ that is my stance no matter my circumstances and no matter what anyone thinks of me.

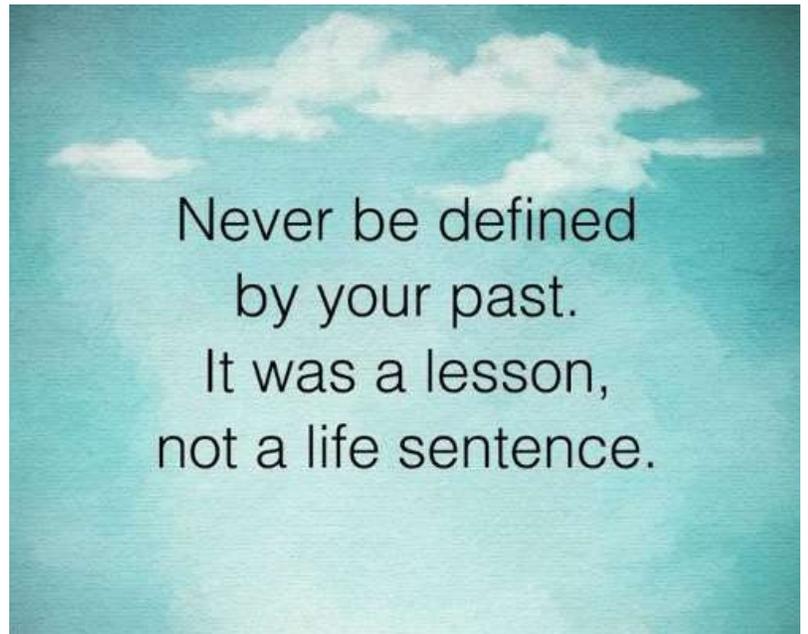
Every one of you not only matter to Jesus, but matter to me. You are children of God just as I am. So, if my sins, my horrible situations, and my past actions can be forgiven then yours can too. It is my honor, as a follower of Christ, to honor my brother and sisters in Christ! I've had people do terrible things to me in my life. Once I forgave them and let Jesus love me unconditionally, I learned to love others the same way. God always has a purpose for you! If you don't understand it, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you. I believe with every bit of my heart that God is absolutely good. **He is not the one that causes bad things to happen to us.** All of us have Satan and free will for that. God didn't want me to be sexually abused most of my life, but Satan did. Why? So that I wouldn't feel loved and wouldn't follow my destiny that God set for me. Guess what? That lying dirtbag lost!

Your Past is Gone Forever cont.

The thing I really want you to understand is that although I may only have this article to tell you that I appreciate you, God loves you unconditionally and Jesus died so that you would be saved. But none of that matters if you don't let go of the past. Once you are born again in Jesus Christ, your past is gone forever! If anyone tries to remind you of it, ignore them, move on, and find true Christian followers of Jesus. Anyone that tries to remind you of your past has not only a spirit of jealousy but a spirit of antichrist upon them. You will get hit with the antichrist spirit by a lot of people in all walks of life all the time. Why? Because once you are filled with the power of the Holy Spirit and covered by the blood of Jesus you are saved. Only those saved are the ones the devil goes after. He wants you to become **anti-Christ** so he can remind you of all your failures. His goal is to separate you from the Word of God so that you don't feel worthy of love and forgiveness. Do you see how absurd this is? It is a game of trickery and lies. Therefore, you must know and never forget how much you are loved. Not just by God but by your brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus! Just look at what Growth Ministries does to try and let you know you are loved. That is just one person bringing together many people that love to give you words of encouragement through this magazine.

Don't ever be confused by that antichrist spirit. Don't let it in even a little bit. Jesus himself had to shake the dust off his sandals and move on because there was no one that would accept Him in his own hometown. It didn't make him mad or angry but instead He focused on those that wanted his unconditional love, those who wanted everlasting life, those who wanted deliverance from death, sin, and the grave. He left the antichrist spirit with nothing. He walked away and it lost!

So even though none of us will ever be perfect, know that to me you are loved, you are special, and you are saved. If you are reading this then start following a path of a total life restoration in the name of Jesus Christ. It's my hope that you find joy in your heart every day, peace in your mind and love toward yourself because you are fearfully and wonderfully made!



Robert was released from prison in September of 2020. Since then he has obtained a great job, enrolled in college, is working on a degree, and started a business. He has been a part of the Growth Ministries team encouraging others. Here are some words of encouragement from him.



Hey guys, I wish I could hear from you all more often, but I'll reach into you.

Everyone reading this has some type of goal or achievement they want to accomplish in life.

Those of you that knew me know that I had a few business plans I wanted to start when I got out. Let me start by telling you that I HAVEN'T STARTED ANY OF THEM YET! I have started one that wasn't in my plans at all.

However, I'm better prepared to start them in the next coming years.

I did start college for business, and it is a great learning experience. I learned a lot and applied it in many ways.

I don't want to get into the specifics of my exact business. I will tell you it has been a struggle to build a business. At the same time, a blessing in experience and relationships. The business or your goal will come to life through hard work, and a bit of being in the right place at the right time which I call God's planning.

You have to continuously take steps in whatever your goal is. A lot of times I wanted to give up and forget about it. I didn't. I couldn't. Don't allow yourself to do it either. Remember your purpose. You were born for a reason that God implanted in you. Wake up every day and live that like you were meant. Be a better you every day.

I will say I miss seeing some of you all every day and the advice you gave me. I tend to think about what I learned from people often. Your wisdom is not forgotten or unused.

If you are preparing for release to the Kansas City area contact Growth Ministries, and I will help you get employment.

Don't be afraid. Just know if the people that have been where you are wanting to go in life or have achieved what you want, so can you.

Please take my advice and Keep Striving.

Love you all. And God bless.



In Luke 10:1 Jesus sends out another 72 disciples or laborers into the harvest, and in Luke 10:17 we see the 72 came back in rejoicing and excited about the fact that demons obeyed at the name of Jesus Christ. In the new living translation it reads like this “when the 72 disciples returned they joyfully reported to him, Lord, even the demons obeyed us when we use your name! “

And as I ponder verse 17 the Lord dropped another scripture in my spirit that comes out of **Philippians 2:10-11** which states *“that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue declared that Jesus Christ is the Lord to the glory of God the Father.”* Then God showed it to me over in **Romans 14 : 11** For the scripture says, *“As surely as I live, says the Lord, every knee will bend to me, and every tongue will declare allegiance to God.”* So then I asked God to show it to me in the Old Testament, because the Old Testament, being the foundation of the history in the New Testament, came to not do away with the Scriptures but to accomplish the purpose of the Old Testament teachings and commands. So God took me to Isaiah 45:23 which says *“I have sworn by my own name; I have spoken the truth, and I will never go back on my word: every knee will be into me, and every tongue will declare allegiance to me. “*

After reading and meditating on the scriptures and looking at God's word from another perspective that he gave to me, I believe that God is saying that by us lovingly obeying his teachings now in this life and making confession with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and sharing the gospel with others, and being the word, or should I say doing the word, we are showing God that we are choosing to bow and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and God is Lord to us in this life and in all eternity. But for those who do not bow and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord by their lifestyles and their words in this life, they will have to bow and confess Jesus Christ is Lord at judgment. And that's not good! Because when we bow and confess Jesus Christ in our life now we receive eternal life now and forever. However, at judgment God will make all who didn't bow and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord in their lifetime through their actions and words of loving obedience; to bow and confess, and their end will be the Lake of Fire!

So, I want to encourage everyone who reads this article to live a life of lovingly obeying God's teachings and his commandments, and to share the life of Christ, the gospel, with others making your confession that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior. I believe that in this way we can keep our names written in the Lamb's Book of Life just as it says in **Luke 10:20 when** Jesus told the 72 laborers who came back in rejoicing *“but you don't rejoice because evil spirits obey you; rejoice because your names are registered in heaven. “* Why? Because it is a reasonable service to live a life pleasing unto God, being transformed by the renewing of our minds. It is also fact that demons bow at the name of Jesus. They recognize Jesus as being Lord. That is normal for demons. Therefore, we do not have to get excited about the demons bowing or trembling at the name of Jesus because that's a given. But we must work on not allowing the demons to cause us to keep our names out of the Book of Life!

Captivity

They put my heart in handcuffs and chained it to the bed
This feeling in my chest feels like they left me here for dead
And I can't stop the voices that are filling up my head
And all they keep on saying are the words that you had said

You're searching for the answers while you refuse to see
Only the truth inside is what can really set you free
The gun is in your hand but all you're gonna find
Is that you're aiming at the mirror and the lies you hide behind

Can you hear the sound of soldiers
as they're marching through the street?
And the cries from all the broken people falling at their feet
Can you see the true identity when you're looking at the face
Or the crooked lines regrettably were painted in its place
Cast the slave to the grave!
Break the chains I'm not your slave anymore

Oh it's captivity

Activity

Can somehow move a mountain?
It's the proximity
I rid of me
I cleaned my sins inside the fountain
I'm bound no more
Break the chains open the door

In any given situation everyone will make mistakes

Hell Inside of Heaven

Graduate Freely

Like blots of ink in color on paper to saturate
It's moments like these that define what it means to graduate
A higher calling, yes, a much better way to elevate
It's people like us the world was meant to celebrate
Cause life is not always easy, hardly ever is it fair
For it all to mean something makes the truth worth the dare

We learn how to walk, and learn how to run
Learn how to fall down, and have the right kind of fun
It can be truly amazing what you see with your eye
Better to love so intensely and not even know why
Faith is a rod more scary than the rest
It's when the light gets turned off that you take the real test

There won't always be someone to hold your hand strong
If you hold on to your soul, you will never go wrong
Take each step forward, take each one in stride
It's better than going backwards with a false sense of pride

Therapy is something that most people fear
For all the good that it does, I hope that you make it clear
No title like felon or label of criminal
Carries a message like we do, something subliminal
For all that we've been, are, or will be
Give it all that you've got to graduate free

“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.” 2 Corinthians 3:17

It would be the very height of arrogance and the extreme depth of stupidity for me to say that I understand, or feel, or think that I know what those incarcerated are going through. But the Lord Jesus Christ does. There is promise after promise in Scripture that reminds us that Jesus can empathize with what you’re feeling.

There’s no greater joy than seeing throughout Scripture that our God, the Creator of the universe, deeply cares about what you’re going through. Jesus knows and He felt your pain, temptation, frustration, your loneliness, and sorrow and He knows how to help you get through it. He lived, suffered, and died for each one of us so we’d never have to be alone. Jesus came to earth so that He would know how to lift us.

Jesus knows all about pain and He knows your pain. He knows your depression. He knows your misery. He knows your thoughts. He knows your deepest fears. He knows us better than we know ourselves. But as followers of Christ, we don’t have to feel this way.

Jesus Christ, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, was overwhelmed with sorrow and grief to the point of death. We cannot fathom the pain Jesus experienced on our behalf and in our rightful place. He was so deeply distressed and upset that His sweat turned to blood. In medical terms, this is called hematidrosis or hematohidrosis. It is an extremely rare medical condition that causes you to sweat blood from your skin when you’re not cut or otherwise injured. It only happens under extreme physical or emotional stress.

Don’t believe for one nanosecond that Jesus does not know and understand your hurts and pains. There will be a day when pain, mourning, and crying will be permanently defeated. *“And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”* Revelation 21:4

Please realize you don’t have to walk through this difficult season in isolation. Jesus died a horrible, brutal death so He could have an intimate, passionate personal relationship with you, so you could experience His unconditional grace, mercy, and love. As a result, He can walk with you through all the highs and lows of life. Turn to Him today. Seek comfort in His presence, and rest in the fact that He understands exactly what you’re feeling and what you need to keep on keeping on!

He is close to the brokenhearted (Psalm 34:18). He heals and binds our wounds (Psalm 147:3). He is faithful and will do what He says (1 Thessalonians 5:24). Jesus is the essence of love (1 John 4:8), He is forgiving (Matthew 18:21-35), slow to anger, gracious, and compassionate (Nehemiah 9:17). Jesus Christ, the High Priest, and the only Savior of mankind are all we need. In Him, there is freedom (Galatians 5:1).

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.” HEBREWS 4:15

"I AM" Coming After You

By Anthony J. Butler: Founder | CEO of The VIP Movement | Multigenerational Speaker | Author | Educational Consultant |

"I AM" coming after you! The misused, the abused, the falsely accused, the used, the confused, the amused, the ones with the short fuse, the angry dudes with multiple tattoos and tennis shoes that will get praised, sprayed, or booed. That's not cool, figuratively speaking, the owl who says who, who, who me? Who, who? Make no mistake... "I AM" coming after you!



You have been disrespected, molested, and abandoned and left with a chest, heart and all that has been severely messed with. I specialize in open heart surgeries. Hyperboles have been bestowed on thee at the age of 3 or younger pain pulsates through your veins...full of thirst for love and hunger games have been played since you were a babe that have stayed stuck in your soul. So, you struggle mightily to let your soul glow. So, you have begun to run like the wind when it doesn't have a breeze. Freeze, don't move! "I AM" coming after you!

You with the clenched fist. You who are at risk. You with the slit wrists. You with a death wish bestowed on your date of birth. You with the brilliant mind buried in a brain of hurt and I know it hurts to remain masking tears that are about to burst. Let it out. Go ahead and boo-hoo because "I AM" coming after you!

You with the thoughts of low self-esteem. You with the child even though you're just a teen. You with the white shirt and the baggy jeans. You with the teardrops etched on your face. You reppin' hoods with numbers attached with creative names coupled with a tray, deuce, or ace. I care enough about you. You are worth the chase. You who live with sirens singing, tennis shoes hanging, dangling from wires, sirens singing...alarms, ambulance, police, and fire. They make a mean choir performing often and that's why maybe you have checked out and live out of tune. That's what a daily dose of doom will do, but still that doesn't stop me from coming after you!

You with the music drowning out your pain. You with the dark clouds pouring purple rain. You with the parents who are missing from your life. You with the arguments playing loud each and every night and it's all over your airwaves. I understand. I would like to send this shout out to all the people who misbehave.

You with the apologies, "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to hit her."
You who lost your zest and drive. No longer a go getter.

Listen. Be still and know and I can assure you that this is true, "I AM" coming after you!

You can run, but you cannot hide. I can feel your pain and your silent cries. I see your tears flowing... when no one knows and you didn't know that "I AM" here when you're full of rage and fear. "I AM" here when you are feeling regretful and lonely. "I AM" only a whisper away.

Just say help and all the emotions you are feeling now and have ever felt will be released and my love will wrap around you to hold you up like a belt and I won't ever let go... beneath your feet your soles are tired burning holes in the ground from running the wrong way.

All of that ends right now...tonight, today..."I AM" coming after you!

You who are broken, bruised, messed up, dressed up, the sick, the slick, the rejected, the sinful, the scarred. I want the callous, the worn out, the murderers, the hard... "I AM" coming after you! Thus saith the Lord!

Throw your hands in the air, bowed head, eyes closed and cry out to me.

SURRENDER!!

"I AM" here for you!!!



In Genesis Chapter 16 we read about a woman named Hagar. Hagar's name means "Forsaken" or "Flight", and her life was a painful fulfillment of her name. She was a handmaiden to Abraham's wife, Sarah. (In the modern world, we would call her Sarah's slave.) When Sarah was unable to get pregnant, she gave Hagar to Abraham and told him to have a baby with her. (Today, we would call that sex trafficking).

When Hagar did get pregnant, she and Sarah had a falling out. Sarah was so cruel to her, she ran away into a desert. Hagar's life had become hopeless. She had nowhere to turn, no one to talk to, not a single friend to bail her out or give her a hand up. She was alone and abused, a victim in every sense of the word.

In verses 7 and 8 we are told the Angel of the Lord found her. God appearing to someone in human form is Jesus, but the Old Testament authors did not yet know his name, so they called him the Angel of the Lord.

Jesus found Hagar. And not only does he speak to her, a slave, and a woman, he calls her by her name. He knew her. He knew exactly where to find her, and he knew her name, he knew her life, her suffering and abuse. He knew she was pregnant.

But after he called her by her name, Jesus asked Hagar to tell him where she had come from, and where she was going. He asked Hagar to talk to him, to unburden her heart to him about all she had come from. And he asked her to tell him what she was thinking and planning. He invited her to talk to him as if he were a confidant and a friend. Jesus desired her to open her heart to Him.

Many times, we cannot believe God's heart is open toward us until we are willing to open our heart to Him. When we hold everything inside, protecting our heart, it is like building a wall of protection around ourselves. But walls work in two directions. They keep things in, and they keep things out. When Hagar opened her heart to talk to Jesus, that opened the door for His concern and His wisdom to come in.

Jesus saw Hagar. When she was helpless and alone, he came to her and asked her to talk to him about her past and her future. And after they had talked together, he told her to go back to Sarah and submit to her. Hagar was instructed to fix her own attitude toward Sarah. Once Hagar became pregnant, she believed she was better than Sarah. Her attitude had become part of the problem. Jesus helped her take responsibility to fix her own attitude.

Going back took a lot of courage. But when Hagar fixed her attitude, her relationship with Abraham and Sarah improved. When she did leave, 14 years later, she wasn't running away. She had been released and sent away. God found her, blessed her and her son, and took care of her.

And all of this hinged on that afternoon by the spring when Jesus found her. She named the spring "Beer Lahai Roi" which means "Well of the One Who Lives and Sees Me." From that moment on she was no longer fleeing her life. From that conversation with Jesus on, she was no longer "Forsaken". God called her by name. When she visited with God, He added his compassion, comfort, and wisdom into the mix of her mess of a life. His grace accompanied her back into the situation that made her flee. But now she was made strong, as well as humble. And her life changed.

God is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. When we are utterly broken, helpless, and emotionally fleeing from the mess of life, He knows our name. He is always ready to have a conversation with anyone willing to open their heart to Him.

There were times in my life that I would wonder if I was of any value to anyone and if God really cared about me. I had to change the way I was living my life.

I wasn't considered fast, but we all have our secrets, friends we don't need, places we shouldn't go and most of all thoughts I would have about myself. It took a while before I realized that God forgives and loves us more than we could ever imagine.

I got with a group of God-fearing people, and I found myself changing about places I use to go (they no longer interested me), friends I had who didn't look out for my best interest, and the old thoughts I had were fading away slowly, yes fading away. As I got into the WORD.. Wow! I began to see how valuable All people are to God and not only that, but God really cares about everyone no matter what anyone says against you.

JOHN 3:16 says: God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son and whoever believes in Him shall NOT perish but have EVERLASTING life.

COL 1:19 How it pleased the Father (God) that Jesus died for our sins (He was Crucified). Jesus rose on the third day to reconcile (redeem) us back to righteous standing with God thru the blood on the cross. For me that was the beginning of the journey and I'm still on The Battlefield. Allow me to share a few scriptures that keep me trusting God's Word.

PS:23 THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD, I SHALL NOT WANT

PHIL 4:13 I CAN DO ALL THINGS THRU CHRIST WHO STRENGTHENS ME

PHIL 4:19 MY GOD SUPPLIES ALL MY NEEDS

PS: 136 GOD'S MERCY ENDURES FOREVER

1Jn 4:4 GREATER IS GOD WHO IS IN US THAN HE THAT IS IN THE WORLD

IS 41:13 THE LORD SAYS: FEAR NOT, I WILL HELP YOU

HEB: 13:5 THE LORD WILL NEVER LEAVE OR FORSAKE YOU

1THES 5:16-17 REJOICE ALWAYS, PRAY WITHOUT CEASING, IN EVERY-THING GIVE THANKS, THIS IS THE WILL OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS FOR YOU

People, we have work to do. All God asks of us is that we Love one another as He Loves Us. I realize that can be hard when you're faced with opposition every day. But God is so good. He tells us how to overcome opposition.

EPHES; 6:10-18 Put on the Whole Armor of God so we may be able to stand against the wiles of the evil one (daily).

There are benefits when we study GOD'S WORD, we can be in PEACE no matter what's going on around us.

1 Jn 5:11-1 He who has Jesus has life. He who does not have Jesus does not have life.

There is a song that keeps playing over and over in my head the last few weeks. It is a song I love singing at church and says a lot about our God.

Who He is and why we can trust Him.

It's by Nigerian gospel singer Sinach and had been sung by many contemporary Christian artists like Michael W. Smith and Mandisa. It's called "Way Maker". When this song rehearses in my head whenever I am driving or walking or just lying down on a couch or in my bed, I can't help but think of what it means.

It explains beautifully who our God is:

"Way maker, miracle worker, promise keeper, light in the darkness,
My God, that is who You are."

And even a few verses down as the song rehearses in my head,

"Even when I don't see it, you're working
Even when I don't feel it, you're working
You never stop, you never stop working, you never stop, you never stop working.

He never stops working
Our God is at work with us here
Our God is a healer, He is a comforter."

It's so easy for us to sometimes wonder when we're in stressed moments or the world and the problems that come with it don't make sense to us, that we tend to ask the question "is there really a God that cares about me and this messed up world?" Does God really understand what we are going through? Can God really understand my mess and fix up my mess? Is God even strong enough better yet, smart enough to take on the evils that this world brings?

I would say yes and yes and yes!

Why is that? Because of what these lyrics say about our God.

Our God is OUR:

Waymaker. God will make a way where man cannot. Only God can turn what seems to be an impossible situation into a possibility and a victory.

There's a quote that says, "Trust god, and he will show you the way. In John 14:6 Jesus shares with a man and says to him, "I am the way and the truth and the light." That means that only Jesus and only Our God can make a way for you where no human being can.

God is OUR miracle worker.

As you read through the New Testament as well as throughout the early portions of the Old Testament, we can see that our God performed miracles in the lives of men and women when everything seemed to come against them. Even Jesus performed miracles when he turned water into wine, when he healed a woman with blood issues and raised people from the dead. And even more so when Jesus, after suffering a brutal crucifixion, came back to life! So if Jesus and his father in heaven God were willing to show their love to these men and women by performing miracles, shouldn't you believe that our God is a miracle worker and would do exceedingly and abundantly above all you ever hope, dream, and ask for?

God is OUR Promise keeper.

There are well over 3,000 promises in the Bible that God says that we as believers have if we would just believe it and apply it to our lives. Many of these promises come in the New Testament which today's Christians should claim. Promises such as Acts 17:27-28, where it states that "God is not far from each one of us, for in him we live and move and have our being." Or in Romans 6:5-11 where it states, "since we have been united with Christ in his death, we will also be united with him in his resurrection; thus we can count ourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus." Or in 1st Corinthians 1:2, "we have been sanctified in Christ Jesus and have been made holy." For as it says in the infamous 1st Corinthians 5:17, "if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation; the old has gone the new has come." Or in Philippians 1:6, "he who began a good work in us will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." As well as in Philippians 4:19, "God will meet all our needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus."

OUR God is a light in the darkness.

That means when we approach evil in our everyday lives or we see evil raising its ugly head in every world event that takes place, we need to take heart and realize that the light of Jesus will someday erase that darkness and we will forever live in that light, if we truly have accepted Jesus as the Son of God who came to this earth to love us, and die for us, and will come back for us someday.

God never stops working on our behalf. That doesn't mean we won't face trials. That doesn't mean we won't face pain and heartache. But we can say this and hopefully you will believe this; God never stops working for you. God will never stop loving you. God always thinks about you. And God is always for you.

Remember our God is on your side. The key is will you let him stay on your side. If you can do that then it's so easy to think that he truly is our way maker, miracle worker, promise keeper, light in the darkness. Yes, that's our God who we serve and love and loves us just the same.

[Psa 142:1-7 NKJV] **A Contemplation of David. A Prayer when he was in the cave.** I cry out to the LORD with my voice; With my voice to the LORD I make my supplication. I pour out my complaint before Him; I declare before Him my trouble. When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, Then You knew my path. In the way in which I walk They have secretly set a snare for me. Look on [my] right hand and see, For [there is] no one who acknowledges me; Refuge has failed me; No one cares for my soul. I cried out to You, O LORD: I said, "You [are] my refuge, My portion in the land of the living. Attend to my cry, For I am brought very low; Deliver me from my persecutors, For they are stronger than I. Bring my soul out of prison, That I may praise Your name; The righteous shall surround me, For You shall deal bountifully with me."

We see David as a warrior king, a powerful biblical figure, God's chosen king after God's own heart. There is another side of David that we sometimes gloss over. After David killed Goliath in Saul's reign, David was fleeing for his life from King Saul. David was hiding in dark, damp caves trying to escape Saul's persecution. At one point he wrote Psalm 142, presumably at the Cave of Adullam (1-Samuel 22:1).

Psalm 142 is a powerful Psalm where David cries out to God for the troubles of his life on the run. Sometimes a silent prayer might not be enough. All alone in a cave pouring out his troubles and his complaints for God. David doesn't have anybody else, just him and God. He probably doesn't know who he can trust ('They have secretly set a snare for me.').

He feels forsaken. The language about him looking at his right hand and there is no one who acknowledges him, no one cares for his soul/heart. The 'right' in his day was where his witnesses, legal counsel or defenders would stand (see Psalm 16:8 or Psalm 110:5). Remember, David was anointed by Samuel to be King and here he is hiding in a wet, cold, dingy, bug-infested cave from the current King he was anointed to replace. When? How?

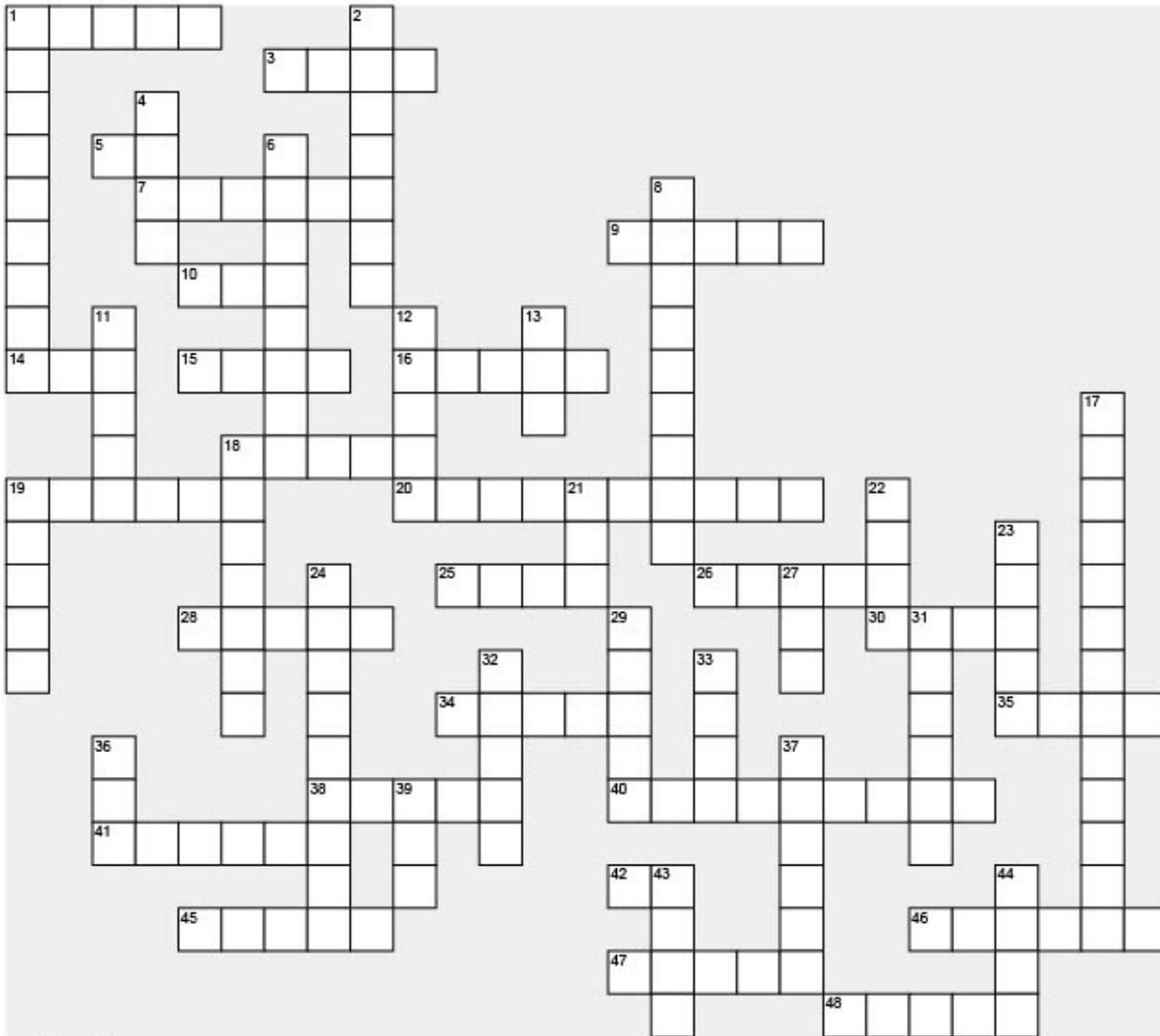
Saul was a King also anointed by God. David reaching out to God as his refuge, to give him the strength to motivate himself and save his life from Saul's warriors that are hunting him down.

David feels his soul/heart is locked up and he is totally forsaken by everyone. His only hope is God. This is a very powerful prayer to bring him out of a hopeless, scary place and lift him up to be surrounded by God that he can share his heart with. For his own safety, David can't change his circumstances or the physical place he is in, this cave. David is praying to God to change him on the inside to free his heart. He might be the only one in the cave, but when God hears his prayer and frees his heart, he won't feel alone or forsaken anymore. God will be with him.

Just for Laughs

1. **What did Jonah's family say when he told them about what happened before reaching Nineveh?** "Hmm, sounds fishy."
2. **What was Moses' wife, Zipphora, known as when she'd throw dinner parties?** "The hostess with the Moses."
3. **What did the classmate say when asked why they kept walking next to the same person at school?** "I was told I'm supposed to walk by Faith!"
4. **Which Bible character was super-fit?** *Absalom.*
5. **What did Adam say when he was asked his favorite holiday?** "It's Christmas, **Eve.**"
6. **What do you call a Bible character who just pulled into church?** A parking **Lot.**
7. **What did God's people say when food fell from Heaven?** "Oh man-na!"
8. **What did pirates call Noah's boat?** "The *arrrrrrk.*"
9. **Why did Boaz hate lying?** Because he loved *truth.*
10. **How are toddlers and those who attempted to build a tower to Heaven similar?** They all babble.
11. **Why didn't anyone want to fight Goliath?** It seemed like a *giant* ordeal.
12. **Which king liked to do things on his own?** *Solomon.*
13. **What kind of car would Jesus drive?** A *Christler.*
14. **Which nursery song would Jesus have heard the most?** "Mary Had a Little Lamb."

The Passion of the Christ



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ACROSS

- 1 _____ of life
 3 The _____ to Emmaus
 5 Do this in remembrance of _____
 7 the lost sheep of _____
 9 Turn neither to the _____ or the left
 10 thy _____ and staff comfort me
 14 _____ of God
 15 _____ of the Jews
 16 What is _____?
 18 _____ of thorns
 19 Judas got 30 pieces
 20 Geological event at crucifixion

- 25 the upper _____
 26 _____ soldiers
 28 time of day
 30 Wise men came from the _____
 34 born in the city of _____
 35 held to Jesus' mouth
 38 died in our _____
 40 religious leaders
 41 Pontius _____
 42 The Great I _____
 45 Christian symbol
 46 A crown of _____
 47 the olive _____
 48 carried the cross

DOWN

- 1 released by Pilate

- 2 Sea of _____
 4 split in two at crucifixion
 6 Mary supposed him to be the _____
 8 came to Jesus by night
 11 two sat in the tomb
 12 sealed the tomb
 13 what they did at the last supper
 17 I am the _____ and the life
 18 They yelled _____ him!
 19 _____ of the spirit
 21 If I could just touch the _____ of his garment
 22 I will not drink of the fruit of the _____
 23 denied him but was restored

- 24 religious leaders
 27 The Son of _____
 29 betrayer
 31 Simon's brother
 32 Pilate washed them
 33 In the beginning was the _____
 36 Then he took the _____
 37 wearing a _____ robe
 39 Peter cut it off
 43 A virgin mother
 44 disciple whom Jesus loved

Psalm 8:4-6 NKJV

4 What is man that You are mindful of him,
And the son of man that You visit him?
5 For You have made him a little lower than the angels,
And You have crowned him with glory and honor.
6 You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands
You have put all things under his feet



Lonnie Johnson
GMI Executive Director

Let me start by saying you are God's prize possession. He created you for the purpose of having a personal relationship with him. Satan hates that because he will never have that. He is very jealous of us to the point he wants us dead. He hates God created us in his image. That is why he works hard to get us to sin. And sometimes he does not have to work that hard because sin is in our spiritual DNA when we are born. Satan knows when we sin, we are not like God, and we start to separate from our relationship with Him.

Our scripture above tells us why he is so jealous of us. God is very *mindful* of us. That means we are always on God's mind. He is always thinking of how He can bless us. He has made provisions on earth and in heaven for our success. The Apostle Peter writes, "**His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.**" 2nd Peter 1:3. God equipped us to live a godly life. Satan wants you to think otherwise. He wants you to think we are not good enough for God.

Satan was only a servant when he got kicked out of heaven and now, he's an enemy. But **we** are **God's child**. He visits us (see v. 4 above) and checks on us like a good father. Even when we mess up, He still wants to visit with us. Even more so when we mess up so he can bring us back to a healthy and godly state. Satan would have you believe that God does not want to have anything to do with you when you sin. That is one of the reasons he is the father of lies.

This Psalm says that God made us a little lower than the angels and **crowned us with glory**, meaning he made us to be magnificent and great. Satan wants you to think otherwise. The Psalm says we are **crowned with honor**. That means we have great **value** to God. We mean a lot to him. We are special to God.

Verse 6 really makes Satan hot. Satan wanted power and to be able to rule all of God's domain. But God **gave us dominion over His Works**. That's everything He created. Nature, animals, and all God made has to submit to mankind. When we are walking in right relationship with God, we walk in authority over creation with Him. Satan is very hot about us having that role and not him. That is why he must lie, kill, steal, and destroy to appear to be in charge. He has to steal our authority, and because we don't always know who we are, we give it away.

I am here to tell you brothers and sisters, God made you to be special. That does not go away when we make mistakes no matter how big or small. He still has big plans for you. Just like he did with Moses after he killed a man. Just like he did with David after he raped a man's wife and had the man killed. You are..., always have been..., and always will be..., very special to God.

Take a moment and let Him know how much you love Him. Let him know you are sorry for any sins you have committed. Let Him know you are grateful He loves you despite your shortcomings. He loves you because he created you for the sole purpose of loving you. Wow! Now that makes you very special to Him.


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Changing the World One Life at a Time

The Passion of the Christ

Solution:

