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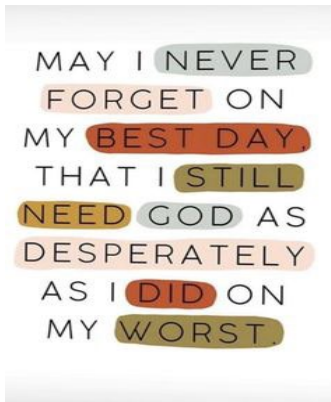
### Words to Grow By - Let Go and Let God!

Let go of your problems and let God handle them.  
 Let go of your hurt and let God heal you.  
 Let go of your fear and let God sustain you.  
 Let go of all your worries and let God Bless you. *Matthew 6:25-27*

Remember,  
 His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me/YOU! *Matthew 10:31*

### Women Empowering Women - BELIEVE!

Keep your dreams alive.  
 Understand to achieve anything requires faith and belief in yourself,  
 Vision, hard work, determination, and dedication.  
 Remember all things are possible for those who believe.



I believe  
 If you keep your faith,  
 You keep your trust,  
 You keep the right attitude,  
 If you're grateful,  
 You'll see God open up new doors.

BELIEVE! *Mark 11:24*

*Linda Lewis*  
 GMI Contributor

# Previn's Story

The story I'm about to share with you is one of the most encouraging stories I have ever received from God, and it came through my 8-year-old son. God used this little man of mine so many years ago to give me something good to hang onto and to encourage me to always trust in Him for this 8-year-old's future.

I was always searching for this little guy. And he was a little guy with loads of curly black hair, skinny as all get out, and a big, white-toothed smile all packed into a small frame. His energy level well exceeded mine, so it wasn't unusual to be searching for him most of the day. I was a little concerned about his whereabouts this particular afternoon because we lived on one of the busiest streets in the neighborhood in central Wichita. I stepped out on the front porch and was about to shout his name when I heard a song coming from around the corner. This boy loves music, and he loved my boom box, so I wasn't surprised to find him on the corner with the music box hanging around his neck. He was playing a Christian song by Christian artist Sandi Patty. The whole scene brought a big smile to my face.

I asked him, "son, what are you doing?" With that huge white toothed smile he said, "I'm stopping people and playing them a song and telling them about Jesus!" (Not what I expected to come out of an 8-year-old). Then without hesitation he cried out, "Mom, when I get big, I'm gonna tell the whole world about Jesus!" Needless to say, I was one proud Momma and I looked up and quietly said, "Father God, I'm going to believe this was spoken through him in answer to my prayers."

Just 8 short years later, this same little boy was now 16 years old walking into prison to serve a 28 and ½ year sentence for second degree murder and aggravated assault. I was devastated. But as I went through those first years with him, God would bring back to my remembrance that little 8-year-old on a corner telling people about Jesus and I decided right then that he would be doing that when he grew up. This story has encouraged me over and over again in the 29 years he's been inside. He was just released this month, repentant, forgiven, and restored. A new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17) and he'll finally know the freedom there is in Christ (John 8:36). And I know that he will pursue his place in ministry as a disciple of Christ willing and ready to tell the whole world about Jesus.

No matter what you did to put you behind bars, you can count on these things:

1. Jesus died for you, He took your sins and nailed them to a tree with Him. **1 Peter 2:24**
2. God has a purpose and a plan for you. There is purpose in everything you experience in life. He knew you before you were conceived and knew your name before your parents named you. **Psalms 139**
3. He gave His son so that you would be adopted into His family. He has life for you and life abundantly. It is there for you. **John 10:10; 2 Corinthians 6:18; Psalm 68:6**
4. He is ever present with those who call on Him in righteousness and truth. You are not alone. **Isaiah 41:10; Deuteronomy 31:8; Psalm 145:18**
5. God's love for you is deep, unconditional, and full of forgiveness. He will quiet you with his love. **Zephaniah 3:17; Romans 5:8**
6. When times are hard and you find it difficult to understand the pain, He will reveal the purpose of the trials and heal you of your pain. **James 1:2-4, 12; Proverbs 3:5-8**
7. If the Son has set you free, then you will be free indeed. **John 8:36**



# Anything, Everything, Always, Continually, All, Never, Every...

By Anthony J. Butler | CEO/Founder | Speaker, Author, and Consultant at The VIP (Violence I Prevent) Movement, LLC |

How can I get encouragement and find strength when a loved one dies?  
How can I get encouragement and find strength when I am locked up?  
How can I get encouragement and find strength when I experience betrayal?  
How can I get encouragement and find strength when I feel so hopeless?  
How can I get encouragement and find strength when my health is compromised?  
How can I get encouragement and find strength when I am being lied on, misunderstood, slandered, maligned, attacked, and disrespected?  
How can I get encouragement and find strength when my money is funny and I have more bills than I can handle?  
How can I get encouragement and find strength when \_\_\_\_\_???

There are certain words that I read in the bible that have me coming to an unexpected stop as I hit the brakes hard....Screeeeech!!! I call these words "100% of the time words."

Often, when we are not going through difficult times, the words we read or the scriptures we quote don't hit us hard until we are challenged to implement it in the middle of life's mayhem!

In two of my favorite passages in the bible, I am intrigued by all of these "100% of the time words." As the words were literally being written, the writers of these words were experiencing hardships, including being locked up at times as well.

I challenge you to read the passages below and receive strength and encouragement as you implement these "100% of the time words." It may not make sense to us or seem impossible to have this mindset...but...God will help us. He will remind us of how loving and merciful he is. He will speak to us directly in a variety of ways. He will send people, occurrences in nature, and sometimes even animals to get us back on track, encourage us, and strengthen us.

Philippians 4 :4-9(NLT)...**Always** be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! **5** Let everyone see that you are considerate in **all** you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon. **6** Don't worry about **anything**; instead, pray about **everything**. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. **7** Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds **anything** we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. **8** And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. **9** Keep putting into practice **all** you learned and received from me—**everything** you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.

**1 Thessalonians 5:15-22 (NLT)... 15** See that no one pays back evil for evil, but **always** try to do good to each other and to all people. **16 Always** be joyful. **17 Never** stop praying. **18** Be thankful in **all** circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus. **19** Do not stifle the Holy Spirit. **20** Do not scoff at prophecies, **21** but test **everything** that is said. Hold on to what is good. **22** Stay away from **every** kind of evil.

*Bev Brown  
GMI Writer*

I awake and wonder what new  
Sorrow or heartache awaits me today?  
Lord, I feel overwhelmed by the issues of life.  
I feel I have no reserve resources left within.

But deep within I know You are ever faithful,  
And Your word is ever true.  
You are my Lord, my strength, my source and my song.  
You never give me more than I can bear.

As I draw in to You and rely on You,  
You give me peace that passes understanding,  
Joy in the midst of my sorrow,  
And hope when there seems to be no hope.

Even in the midst of these trials and heartaches,  
My heart is filled to overflowing  
With love for and gratitude to You, my Lord and Savior.  
You are my very present help in time of trouble.

Therefore, I will praise You,  
My ever-faithful King,  
Knowing You hold me and everything else  
In the palm of Your hand. Amen

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## Just For Laughs!

Two guys are walking through a game park & they come across a lion that has not eaten for days. The lion starts chasing the two men. They run as fast as they can and the one guy starts getting tired and decides to say a prayer, "Please turn this lion into a Christian, Lord." He looks to see if the lion is still chasing and he sees the lion on its knees. Happy to see his prayer answered, he turns around and heads towards the lion. As he comes closer to the lion, he hears it saying a prayer: "Thank you Lord for the food I am about to receive."

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Two little boys were known troublemakers, stealing everything they could get their hands on, even from the church. One day a priest stopped one of the boys and asked, "Where is God?" The boy shrugged and the priest repeated, "Where is God?" The boy ran out of the cathedral crying to his home where he hid in a closet. Eventually his brother found him and asked, "What's wrong?" The crying boy replied, "We're in trouble now! God is missing and they think we took him!"

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A drunk staggers into a Catholic Church, enters a confessional booth, sits down, but says nothing. The Priest coughs a few times to get his attention, but the drunk continues to sit there. Finally, the Priest pounds three times on the wall. The drunk mumbles, "Ain't no use knockin'! There's no paper on this side either!"

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One night a lady came home from her weekly prayer meeting, found she was being robbed, and she shouted out, "Acts 2:38: 'Repent & be baptized & your sins will be forgiven.'" The robber quickly gave up & the lady rang the police. While handcuffing the criminal, a policeman said, "Gee mate, you gave up pretty easily. How come you gave up so quickly?" The robber said, "She said she had an axe and two 38's!"



# Do I Get Bitter or Get Stronger?

“David was greatly distressed because the people spoke of stoning him, for all the people were embittered....But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.” I Samuel 30:6

If you’ve been alive long enough to reach adulthood, you know that everyone faces difficult seasons in life. Period. The question has never been, “Will I face hard things?”

Rather the question has always been, “When I face hard things, do I get bitter or get stronger?”



Our typical, human reaction to difficulty is to get bitter.

All of David’s men, his army, turned on him.

David had led them to victory. They had volunteered (no draftees in this army!), and they had willingly pledged loyalty to him. BUT, when the enemy struck close to home, when wives and children were captured, they immediately threw a huge pity party.

I’m sure these men

~ felt desperate, they were panicked and probably experiencing some trauma.

~ felt powerless, they obviously didn’t believe there could be any good outcome to the situation. They had already given up. They had thrown in the towel. And in this state of powerlessness,

~ they believed someone had to be blamed. All the fear, anger, and grief, had to have a cause. David was the most convenient target, so they turned on him. They were talking about stoning him, taking his life in order to satisfy their own need for an emotional outlet.

~ they were not thinking helpful thoughts. They were thinking, and then talking, gossiping, and colluding in ways that were perpetuating the trauma rather than interrupting or healing it.

David, on the other hand -- even though he too had lost wives and families, even though he was equally suffering -- did not drink the Kool Aid of bitterness.

David “strengthened himself in the LORD”.

How does one tap into strength when bitterness is knocking at the door?

There are two keys I see in David’s history that paint a vivid picture. With these keys, he had been digging a well of strength in his good days as well as his difficult days.

1. David crafted his identity before the LORD. Even as a shepherd, he had a sense of God’s hand upon him as he killed a lion and a bear. When he killed Goliath, David knew he was small of stature. He knew that he could not physically conquer Goliath. But.... But God. David had a history of recognizing God was with him. So when he faced Goliath he faced the giant as a son of God, not as a young boy.

And here again in I Samuel 30. David leans into HIS lord. He reminds himself WHO God is and WHO David is.

## Do I Get Bitter or Get Stronger? cont.

It is more difficult to carve out your identity with God when the heat is on. While it can be done, while God does show up in fiery furnaces, the most reliable course is to daily lean into your identity in God. Daily remind yourself you are “chosen, not forsaken”. You are remembered, not abandoned. You are supported, not ignored.

This type of identity is formed by:

1. Agreeing with God’s word. Find a passage that deeply resonates, then camp out in it, soaking in it, asking the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of your heart to SEE and to FEEL the truth, to know beyond mental assent. To KNOW in your bones the truth of what God has spoken over you in Scripture.
2. By noticing how God shows up for you in daily life. All the ways you are supported, even in ways that may seem trivial. Train yourself to NOTICE. There was still hot water when it was your turn to shower. The food was good. The breeze you felt, a smile, or maybe just an unexpected sense of well-being that washes over you. When you LOOK, you WILL see the goodness of God. And when you see and savor these moments, you are shifting your identity. You are beginning to agree with God. No longer is your salvation just a concept, it becomes a daily experience. Eventually these experiences accumulate, and you can take them to the bank to cash in when a difficult situation comes down.

David crafted his identity before the Lord.

David ALSO turned his experiences of God’s goodness back toward God and offered his gratitude, appreciation, and worship. David cultivated an attitude of gratitude. He didn’t allow himself to fall into the trap of entitlement, assuming he deserved God’s favor. Rather, he softened his heart to receive gifts he knew he did NOT deserve.

It takes great humility to receive gifts you haven’t earned. David cultivated this kind of humility. And because he cultivated the humility to receive grace, he then had the courage and strength to turn to God when he needed grace.

We don’t worship God because God needs our praise. We worship because it is the only appropriate response to recognizing God’s kindness and gracious heart toward us in light of His own Glory.

Because David had leaned in over time, he had created pathways in his heart and head that were easy for him to follow, even when he was distraught. The trauma David faced did not overthrow his relationship with God. Even in distress David knew he was God’s son, and he knew God was worthy of praise rather than accusation and bitterness.

And so David did what he had taught himself to do.

He shut his mouth to complaint and gossip, and turned his heart toward God.

He drew upon his history, upon the heart of worship he’d cultivated, upon those many moments he had savored upon sensing God’s grace.

And he found the courage he needed to stand up and lead a mob of angry, bitter men to yet another victory.

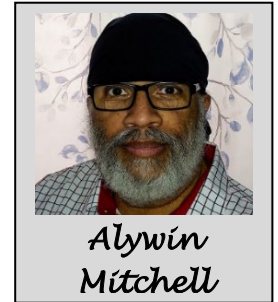
What we do daily has more importance than we typically realize. In times of crisis and difficulty, it is our previous daily habits that will crush us...or carry us.

# What Does God Want From Us?

## Micah 6:8 (Part two) Loving Mercy

*"He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God."* Micah 6:8

Last month we started studying "What does God want from us" with "doing Justice." This month we will look at the second part of this question as stated in Micah 6:8...Loving mercy!



*"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."* Matthew 5:7

Our Father God desires us to "love mercy," or, in some translations, kindness. The Hebrew word used here is "hesed," pronounced "(CH)EH sed." It means "loyal love" or 'kindness or love between people, specifically of the devotional holiness and reverence of people towards God and of love or mercy of God towards people.

"Mercy" is a cornerstone characteristic and nature of God, evidenced by its reiteration in Scripture. It's mentioned 262 times in the King James Version, 157 times in the English Standard Version, 99 times in the New American Standard Bible, 170 times in the Amplified Bible, and 146 times in the New English Translation, according to Bible Gateway. And it's also mentioned additionally as "mercies" and "merciful."

### Love Mercy

Our God wants us to have a heart moved to mercy, having compassion and kindness for those in need. He expects His people to show love to their fellow man and to be loyal in their love toward Him. Mercy reveals how just and fair, yet loving and compassionate, God is.

Saint Thomas Aquinas said, "Justice and mercy are so united that the one ought to be mingled with the other; justice without mercy is cruelty; mercy without justice is profusion."

When God shows his mercy, he does so with absolute intentionality and might. The benefits of God's mercy include peace, love, and joy. We need constantly to meditate on the mystery of mercy. It is a wellspring of joy, hope, and peace.

When it's within our power or right to punish or harm someone, but we show mercy and forgiveness instead, we demonstrate mercy. And even though we'd all like to think of ourselves as merciful, it's not an attribute that comes naturally.

As a follower of Jesus, the command to love mercy reveals our heart. Jesus of Nazareth, by his words, actions, and entire person, shows the mercy of God.

God's mercy is reflected in the cross of Jesus Christ, an absolute manifestation of His love for us. Mercy is an extension of an expression of love, "an act of kindness, compassion, or favor." Mercy is a characteristic of the One True God.

God's plan stems from His merciful love for His people. Knowing there was nothing we could do to earn our way into His presence, He made a way through the crucifixion of Christ. Defeating death, Jesus opened up access to God for us.



# What Does God Want From Us? cont.

In Christ, mercy and truth meet together.

At its core, mercy is forgiveness.

## **What does it mean to Love Mercy?**

Let's face it. Everyone likes to escape the negative consequences of wrong behavior. Whether a sigh of relief or the thrill of a narrow escape, averting punishment feels good. But is that mercy?

Mercy will cost us comfort and time. It will cost us money and status. And sometimes, it will give us heartache.

We love mercy because we stand justified before God because of his mercy. Mercy is the ultimate and supreme work by which God comes to meet us.

True mercy always has a certain amount of sacrifice to it. It's the way we react after something has been taken from us. It's how we react after we've been treated badly or unfairly.

God could demand mercy from us, and in several ways, He does, but forcing us to be merciful doesn't make us merciful. Our God wants us to love mercy because it's the only way to become people who genuinely respond with mercy, grace, and goodness.

Our God responds with patience, wisdom, and mercy despite the constant betrayal. And in the most fantastic display of mercy in history, the sinless Jesus Christ went to the cross as punishment for all mankind's sins.

Even though we believe in Jesus Christ, we constantly struggle to work out our salvation and not make wrong decisions that hurt ourselves and others. And God still shows His mercy to us.

Our God is both a God of justice and a God of mercy. We must all be thankful for His mercy because we would be dead in our sins without it. God represents all that is righteous, yet He desires to show us mercy and grace each and every day.

We show mercy because mercy has been shown to us.

Love is the common denominator between mercy and grace. "Mercy is what gets us out of trouble," writes Dr. Ray Pritchard. "Grace gives us what we don't deserve."

The world seems to be witnessing increasing levels of violence, fear, and hatred that challenge us daily.

Jonathan Edwards said it very clearly:

"God is pleased to show mercy to His enemies, according to His own sovereign pleasure. Though He is infinitely above all and stands in no need of creatures; yet He is graciously pleased to take a merciful notice of poor worms in the dust."

*"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."* Lamentations 3:22-23

## God's Glory is All Around Us

Have you ever wondered where is God in all this mess? I mean, let's face it, this world seems darker now than I can ever remember it. The "key word" in the previous sentence is "SEEMS". We must always remember that God knows all things and through Him, all things are possible! As people, and as Christians, we tend to forget daily that we are supposed to live in this world but not be of it. That means we need to live our life in the spiritual realm where God is victorious! As Christians we are called to be better than non-believers. Who would come to God's side if we can't be the light shining for those in the darkness? Haven't you ever wondered how Paul kept going while imprisoned in Rome? He was filled with the goodness of God, the peace of understanding who he was in Christ Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit to endure all things. God sent the Holy Spirit to be our comforter, our guide and to provide us with spiritual gifts! These gifts are not only to help others but to help our faith and love of the Lord grow!

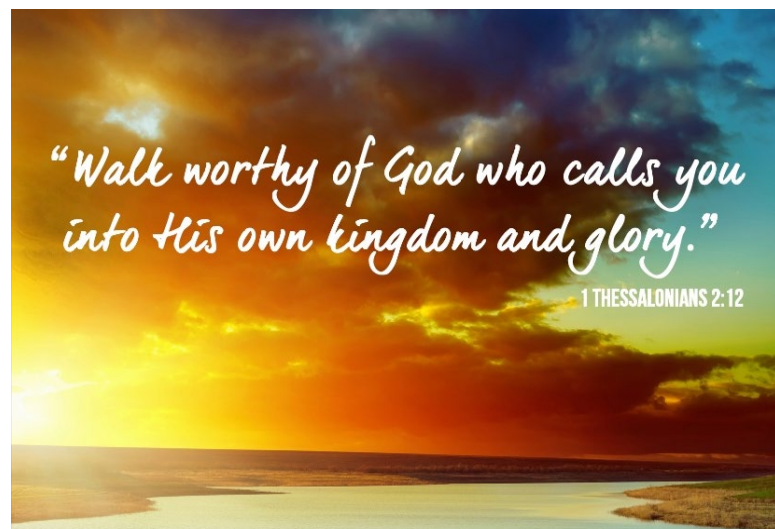


They are listed as follows: the word of knowledge, increased faith or edification, the gifts of healing, the gift of miracles, the gift of prophecy, the discernment of spirits, speaking in tongues and interpretation of tongues. When we learn to exercise these gifts, which is through the authority given to us by Jesus Christ, we get into a closer personal relationship with Jesus. It is so important to remember that none of these gifts work by our own might. It is through the name of Jesus that the Holy Spirit will manifest these gifts through you as a servant of the most high God. But I am here to tell you that when I "exercise using ALL my spiritual gifts", I always get results. Now sometimes they aren't in my face results, the result may come later or it may be instant. Why do you think that is? Is it because God loves me more than someone else? Is it because I have been chosen to have a greater anointing than someone else? Absolutely not! Everyone has the ability to access and use all of these gifts. However, they are given through a measure of Faith. The more you ask, the more you will receive. Did God not say in his word, "Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you." Luke 11:9 So you see, there is no doubt in the above scripture. It doesn't say "maybe" or "perhaps". It clearly says "it will"—not just once, but three times! God loves to emphasize the things that really matter to Him. He does it everywhere in the bible. The thing that really matters to God is boiled down to one major point—US. We are what matters to God. That is why he gives us guidelines to follow throughout the entire Bible. That is why he gives us Commandments to follow so we don't go astray and hurt ourselves, as well as others. That is why he gives us all of the gifts of the Spirit. It is so that we can be a blessing to ourselves and to others. When we use His gifts, we bring heaven to earth for people that truly are broken and need our help. This includes us! Think of how many times a simple hello from someone can change your entire day. Haven't you ever wondered why you walk by 10 people without saying a word and then, all of a sudden, the next person that comes along you blurt out hello? That's a word of knowledge from the Holy Spirit. God's word is not difficult or dictatorial or scary. He's not asking us to be perfect. He's asking us to love one another as he loves us. These simple actions bring the goodness of God into the world. Once enough of us, as brothers and sisters in Christ, start doing these things on a regular basis, God's glory will show up for all of us to see!

## God's Glory is All Around Us cont.

In my life, I am now working with people on deliverance and healing. You can never be afraid to fight like heaven to defeat hell. I remember as a kid I was scared of something as simple as Scooby Doo. I know that sounds crazy, but to me that cartoon was scary. Now I see things in the spirit that make the goblins in Scooby Doo seem like a cute little puppy. God also gives me visions of beautiful things. What I'm saying is the discerning of spirits is how we become stronger in the body of Christ. I always wondered why the Bible said, and I'm paraphrasing, what father would give their son a snake if he asked for a fish. God's trying to teach you to use discernment as well as show you that the Lord would never do that. He would never forsake you even if your earthly father did. That is why we cannot trust in men. There's not one single person on the face of this earth that we could count on in every circumstance. We are not perfect, but God is. I know we often exaggerate and say oh yes, my friend would walk through fire for me. But in reality, that's not true. It sounds great, but it's not real. However, God's love, God's willingness and God's promises are always yes and amen. He is the only one that we can count on. His promises are real.

In order to get closer to him, learn to use all the gifts of the spirit that he gave you. Spend time exercising that muscle. Dig into the Word and find out what you can do with those gifts. There is nothing better than being set free from bondage. That is why Paul had joy all the time, no matter his circumstance. He was free. I have seen miraculous changes in people that go through deliverance. They no longer hurt, hate or suffer. Their entire countenance changes. People notice the Holy Spirit residing inside of them. People want to be around them, and are drawn to them. So let your light shine through in what seems like a dark time. Remember, it only seems like it. God's glory is all around us!



## Complain...Criticize...Condemn

Imagine what your prison cellblock would sound like if there wasn't any chronic chatter of complaining, criticizing, or condemnation towards someone or something? I would say really quiet. Have you heard the sage advice, "If you don't have something good to say, then don't say it at all?". So let's be honest, what is your own verbal exchange like with what I call the 3 c's?

The bible has much to say about our words and their impact. In Proverbs alone we find an array of insights. Stemming from a negative lens, (18:7) tells us, "A fool's mouth is his ruin, And his lips are the snare of his soul"; or the command in (4:24) to "Put away from you a deceitful mouth And put devious speech far from you"; or (20:19) that warns about the spread of drama with, "He who goes about as a slanderer reveals secrets, Therefore do not associate with a gossip". On the flip side, (15:1) encourages us with, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger"; or the analogy in (16:24), "Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones"; or the one concerning the gate of your front yard (mouth) in (21:23), "He who guards his mouth and his tongue, Guards his soul from troubles".

Remember the nursery rhyme, sticks and stones will break my bones but names will never hurt me? It's a complete farce. The one proverb that sums up the issues of what we say and how we say it is found in (18:21), "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit". In essence, as my bible notes say, the greatest good or the greatest harms are on the tip of our tongues.

James tells us the tongue is comparable like a rudder is to a ship (3:4). A rudder directs its course through open seas. But when you put a boat in the water you best have a proper navigational system. Jesus reveals what that is in one of His confrontations with a group of Pharisees and scribes who were committed to the highest standards of ceremonial laws. In Matthew 15:1-20, Jesus gets right into teaching mode. In effect He says ... You hypocrites, don't get it twisted, you have all these ritual cleansing laws but they don't square with what the prophet Isaiah says, "These people honor me with their lips, But their heart is far away from me". (v. 8) Jesus explains further to the surrounding crowd, "It is not what enters the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man". (v. 11) And to Peter needing more clarification, Jesus gets right to the root of the issue, "... the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile a man". (v. 18)

The 3c's are a cancerous type of pollution that reins in the heart of people (vv. 19-20). Ultimately the condition of your heart determines the outlook and direction of your life and life itself. The words we speak are the reflection. Having said this, I have to be honest and self-confrontational by confessing to both a degree greater and lesser, past and present; having judged, slandered, and spoken unwell about someone or towards something. I have been aware of it but there were times I didn't realize the level of intention aimed. Sometimes I don't know which is worse, the knowing or the unknowing of spewing the 3 c's?

Proverbs (18:8) says, "The words of a whisperer are like dainty morsels, And they go down into the innermost parts the body". Someone has said, "I love what it does for me but I hate what it does to me". It's such an innate craving that is detrimental, God inspires it to be repeated in (26:22). The 3 c's are like a wild fire that spreads outwardly towards others without constraints but also burns within its host, destroying the soul. (See James 3:6)

## Complain...Criticize...Condemn cont.

I am sure you have heard and used the justifying conjunction of "but" as I have. For example, "I don't personally know the person, BUT ... (then proceed to throw some 3 c darts at someone or a situation)"; then continue downplaying it with, "look at what they've done!, BUT who am I to judge, I've got my own issues". So, what's really going on? What are the implications?

The reality of it is that when you drive others down like fence posts to create a space for yourself, you believe you are worthy to stand behind them because when you take inventory of someone else's life or a situation, you don't have to address your own mess. Furthermore, you steal the person's identity by dictating what God should or shouldn't do with His love and grace. In doing so you end up losing the purpose God has for you because comparisons will distort and destroy your own character and contentment. The very thing you desire you sabotage which is a relationship with God, but also to be known and valued by others.

This type of self-righteousness exists because we minimize God's moral standards for a holy life and underestimate the depth and history of our own immoral excess. Don't rush into judgement with someone you know nothing of. You cannot be open to what is in God's hands when you hold inflated opinions in one hand and in the other eat the scraps of gossip and drama about others.

Prison is a place where rumors spread extremely quick. What is often added are personal interpretations to an unknown source and truth and justify it with, "... so and so said". For those of us incarcerated we have all stood by listening to someone vent their 3 c's but when we condone by head nodding agreement or by idle silence, we allow the negativity to exist. Those who cavil about anything and everything are those who are in a state of unrest. The chronic expression of the 3 c's contains two elements. 1. Protection of insecurities. 2. Pointing out the flaws and failings of others to gain a brief sense of moral superiority.

Prison is also a place where anger is a common emotion. In its agitated state it wants someone to endure something unpleasant by any 3 c right. For those on the receiving end, don't settle for another's view point as your own. Let it be God's voice, not theirs. Consult the Word.

Finally, James says we contradict our profession of faith with 3 c language. The most devastating aspect is this: To slander or condemn is to blaspheme God. It carries that kind of weight when it involves humanity made in the image of God.

"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my rock and my Redeemer".

Psalm 19:14

Praises to Him

Brian L. GMI contributor

## Closing Words – What Are You Running From?

1 Kings 19:1-5 <sup>1</sup> And Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. <sup>2</sup> So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, “May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them.”<sup>3</sup> Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, <sup>4</sup> while he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. “I have had enough, Lord,” he said. “Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.”<sup>5</sup> Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep.



Lonnie  
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Director

Prior to the above text, Elijah had experienced some pretty amazing things as a Prophet of the Lord. The Lord had him proclaim a drought as penalty for the evil by the kings of Israel. That drought came to pass and during such he was brought food by ravens each day. He was later instructed by God to visit a poor widow during the drought who was about to use her last flour and cook one last meal and die. Her jar of flour never ran out while Elijah stayed with her. She also had a son that got sick and died. Elijah raised him from the dead. He later presented himself to the evil king Ahab who was married to hateful Jezebel. As a result of that meeting, he challenged Ahab’s 450 prophets to a demonstration of who’s god was real. Their god Baal never responded to several pleas from their prophets to appear. Then Elijah called on his God, and he answered. God sent a fire that consumed the sacrifice and the altar Elijah built. Then Elijah commanded the people that were watching to kill all 450 prophets with their swords, and they did.

You would think that after all he had experienced through the Lord, Elijah was ready for anything. However, he crumbled after a very loud and serious threat from the evilest woman in the land, Jezebel. This was the thing that sent him running. 1 Kings 19:2 **So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, “May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them.”**

Take a moment to think. What is it that has, that is or that will make you walk (or run) away from your God-given assignment? What is it that will knock you off your square? Lack of confidence, fear of losing your job, fear of being unpopular, death, pride, being betrayed by another Christian? There are a number of ways Satan can come at you. And it seems like the more you overcome, the more he throws at you.

Fortunately, this story of Elijah has a good ending. If you read further, you will see that God finally stops Elijah from having this pity party. Sometimes we just have to stop, turn to God, and allow Him (through prayer and His Word) to remind us of who He is and what He can do. Sometimes we just need to look back at what he has already done for us to regain our confidence. There is nothing too big for God to deliver us from. And even if He doesn’t, we have to remember that He is still God, He is still in control, and we need to trust him with everything. Even our life and our death. I love when the three Hebrew boys were about to be thrown into the furnace. They refused to be moved. *Daniel 3 16:18* <sup>16</sup> **Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. <sup>17</sup> If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king.**<sup>[c]</sup> <sup>18</sup> **But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”**

Stop running, turn back to your assignment, and remember God stands before you and behind you. He has your front and your back. He will never leave you, nor forsake you. Whatever Satan is telling you is a lie.



## **Habakkuk 2:2** ESV

And  
the LORD answered  
me: "Write the  
vision; make it  
plain on tablets, so  
he may run who  
reads it.

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We want to know what you like about our magazine. What are some of the articles you want to see more of? Are there any specific types of stories that inspire you?

- **Send us something to publish**

Do you write poetry? Do you have a powerful testimony? Do you have a particular scripture that you want to share why it inspires you? Maybe you are an artist and want to share a drawing. Send it to us and let us check it out. If approved, we will publish it for others to see. Please refrain from any inappropriate material. We are a Christian organization and will not publish anything that is unsuitable for our readers.

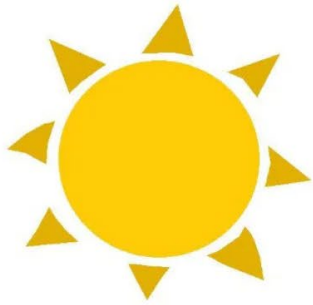
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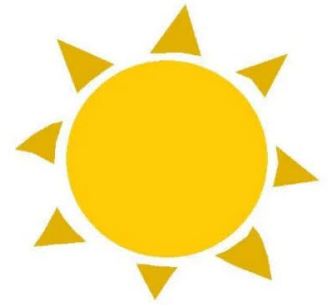
  
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*Changing the World One Life at a Time*



# Summer Word Search



SUMMER	G A R D E N Y S M B M T O L S
SUNSHINE	N I A R M E L E S E E R W O U
SWIM	U C I N C I P E A S I A M S N
BOAT	L M L I N O I T A C A V R P S
CAMP	P O P S I C L E Q L D E K I H
HIKE	U I P E C A M P I O O L F C I
GARDEN	Y T N S R E T L M D N T R E N
PLAY	P W N S O E P A T G N E D X E
BEACH	A U G R I A D Y B O A Y A T E
JULY	R L J U L Y G R S A S O U P A
AUGUST	K E F G L C E A T H I R G A S
PARK	B A L Y P A E N O C R E U R D
PICNIC	S H O R T S O O H A E H S H R
POPSICLE	U Y P E M N O S A E S S T D E
ICE CREAM	C H E T A M C L Y B G M R E S
SHORTS	X L A O V Z R C O J B R I N S
DRESS	F O S E M A E R C E C I O W L
TRAVEL	B L O S S U M M E R W B M O S
VACATION	
SEASON	