

TTT - June 2016

#1- First Love - 6/1, 6/26

Chuck Swindoll said, “The problem with life is that it gets so ‘daily.’ Even those of us who like routine sometimes might get bored of the same schedule, day in and day out. When faith feels stagnant and prayer becomes repetitive, we need to return to our first love. If you have feelings of distance or apathy toward God, reach out to him and ask him to reignite your passion.

Returning to our first love is to revisit the day, time, hour when we allowed God to take control of our lives. It’s stepping back into the memories and the experience of how God’s grace changed us. Remember how it felt when you first found out God how loved you? Someone once told me if I were the only person who ever lived on the earth, Jesus would have died for me. That’s amazing love!

I remember asking Jesus into my heart at age 17, a drug addict and alcoholic, compulsive liar, and drug dealer, I had been trying to clean up my act and couldn’t do it on my own. When I gave the control of my life over to God, my desire to take drugs was taken away immediately. I was set free from bondage, and couldn’t wait to everyone what God had done. We are reminded God’s will for us in Rev. 2:4 “*But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.*”

Let's pray, Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your patience and grace. Thank you for being ever-present, and wooing us back to you when we are hard hearted or uncaring to you. Thank you for seeking us and reminding us of your passion for us. In Jesus' Name, Amen

#2 – Everyday Shuffle 6/2, 6/27

Are you tired of plodding through life? Like a plane on 'automatic pilot,' our prayers can be repetitive, predictable and even humdrum, we go through the motions. Ever wonder if God really hears your prayers? The remedy could be as simple as admitting un-confessed sin. Think about how it felt when you first found out how much God loved you? It's good to be reminded of His presence protecting us even when we were not seeking Him.

Saul of Tarsus met God on the road to Damascus. Struck down by a bright light, as he was flat on his face, the powerful voice of God asked, "Saul, Saul why do you persecute me?" Acts 9:4 (NIV) Literally blinded by the experience, God's love touched Saul's hardened heart. Saul received spiritual insight and began to preach about the amazing love of God.

Encounters like Saul's Damascus road experience are rare, but first love encounters with God need not be. When we revisit, remember and return to the passion of our first love, it renews our minds and revives our hearts. This truth is meaningful and

penetrates even the darkest season of disappointment or loss. With my dad's recent funeral services last week, I'm mindful of it during this stage of my grieving process, thinking about my Heavenly Father, love encourages me to remember He is preparing a place for me in heaven.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your love for us. Even when we were on the run from you, you sought us and captured us with your grace. Thank you for offering us new hope through your son's sacrifice. Would you restore our passion, would you return us to the state of our 'first love?' Thank you. In Jesus' Name, Amen

#3 - Blessing Yourself & Others 6/3, 6/28

"God bless you" is often said to offer encouragement to someone when they sneeze or depart from our home. The word "bless" means to offer approval or encouragement. When someone is sarcastic, critical or cuts themselves down or makes fun of someone else, it not only hurts people's feelings, but also probably wounds God's heart.

Did you know blessing others was a practice the Lord taught Moses to do for his brother Aaron and his priests? It's fitting that we offer blessings to each other and also to bless ourselves. When we do this, we are speaking life over ourselves and those we love. The Lord showed Moses how to teach the priests to

bless each other in Numbers 6:22-27 “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.”

God honors those who follow him by honoring them, like an earthy father gives special privileges to their children, God shows us favor when we delight in Him. Praying scripture over ourselves and our families is using God’s prayer book, the Bible, to give our words wings.

Another prayer of blessing is from I Kings 8:57-58 (MSG) Let’s pray this over ourselves and loved ones: “May God, our very own God, continue to be with us just as he was with our ancestors-may he never give up and walk out on us. May he keep us centered and devoted to him, following the life path he has cleared, watching the signposts, walking at the pace and rhythms he laid down for our ancestors.” In Jesus’ Name, Amen

#4 Stand Down 6/4, 6/29

Richard Gerald Adkins was born July 17, 1931 and died on June 23, 2014. My dad was just three weeks from celebrating his 83rd birthday. Soon after dad died, Phil’s 18 year old grandson, Alex, was found dead in his bed. My friend, Debbie’s 8 year old

granddaughter, Emma, with Cystic Fibrosis, was hospitalized. And then another friend, Judy was given the diagnosis of lung cancer and was told she has two years to live. Disease and death are rampant, like enemy troops, these attack us and remind us of the brevity of life and how essential it is to maintain our position.

King Jehosephat lead the Israelites in a literal war against their evil enemies, these same lessons can be applied to today's spiritual battles. The enemy troops seemed to multiply before the eyes of the king. Vast and impenetrable, the armies of the pagan Moabites, Ammonites and some of the Meunites were not far from attacking King Jehosaphat and the Israelites. Terrified, the king turned to God and prayed. The prayer began with praise as he recognized God as His creator, acknowledged God's sovereignty and His power. The king's desperation and commitment to God assured the Hebrew people of God's presence and certain victory. In 2 Chronicles 19:6, "We can cry out to you to save us and you will hear us and rescue us".

"Take your position, stand still," the priest's son, Jahaziel said, "and watch the Lord's victory." Whatever battles we face, we must expect the Lord to be victorious. Let's pray, "Dear Father, thank you for the opportunity to 'stand down,' to wait on you and your provision. Help us to wait on your timing for the answers you want to give. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

#5 God Will Fight Our Battles 6/5, 6/30

God's ways are not our ways, especially when it comes to fighting battles. God gave unusual instructions when King Jehosaphat asked how to win a battle against a vast army. God said, "stand still." If the command would have been given in today's military terms, it would have been, "stand down." We all know, in offensive battle this is not done. The king gave the orders and the people. King Jehosaphat's words are recorded in 2 Chronicles 19:21, "Believe in the Lord God and you will be able to stand firm."

If we allow our battles to be fought God's way, there is no question who will win. The victory has already been won. We need to believe God will conquer our foes. Our natural reaction is to look at the magnitude of our problems, like enemy troops multiplied before the eyes of the king, we might be distracted to focus on the problem and not the solution. If we do this, we fight our battles, using the temporary quick-fix methods of the world—words with pat phrases, fad diets, worldly advice or even ignore another person's emotional pain. If we submit and commit the person to God's plans: stop, stand still, wait, and believe, we expect God to work. When the victory comes, it will be obvious it came from God. Then, we celebrate.

Let's pray, "Heavenly Father, thank you for showing us how you want us to gain the victory in our battles. You know our tendency

– to run ahead of you. Forgive us for our impatience, our manipulation, our unwillingness to allow you to work. Help us to stop, stand still, wait and believe you are working. We celebrate the victory you bring. In Jesus' Name, Amen

6 How to Regroup the Troops 6/26

What battles rage on your field today? Take “time out” to regroup your troops and “stand down.” Are you disappointed in someone who has let you down? Are you disappointed in your job, suffering from financial loss, grieving a loved one, struggling with addiction? Here are a few pointers from 2 Chronicles 19, the battle of King Jehosaphat:

One of the most difficult things to do in doing battle God's way is to stop. “Cease striving and know I am God,” Psalm 46:10.

When we are stopped, we must stand still. “Take your position, stand still, and watch the Lord's victory” 2 Chronicles 19:17.

Do you think God is taking too long? He wants us to wait. “That is why I wait expectantly, trusting God to help, for He has promised,” Psalm 130:5.

We must trust Him – that's called believe. “Believe in the Lord your God, and you will be able to stand firm” 2 Chronicles 19:21.

When He wins the victory, we can celebrate. “Then all the men returned to Jerusalem, with King Jehosaphat leading them, overjoyed that the Lord had given them victory over their enemies” 2 Chronicles 19:21.

Let’s pray,

“Dear Father, thank you for the opportunity to submit to your will today. We choose to “stand down.” I commit all of those who are struggling with disease and death to your plan, give them peace, comfort and hope in your plans for their future. Thank you for this chance to stop, stand still, wait and believe. Lord, protect my family and friends from everything but what will glory you the most. We praise you in advance for the opportunity to celebrate and glorify you. In Jesus’ Name, Amen

#7 Warrior’s Prayer 6/27

We’ve all been tested. Sometimes by people we love and other times by people we don’t even know. Regardless of how trials come, we must defend ourselves spiritually. When we received Jesus as our personal savior, we were no long on Satan’s side. We are fighting a spiritual battle and to win, we must ‘suit up’ with the armor of God. Don’t fight a supernatural fight with natural weapons! Please pray the Warrior’s Prayer with me, it’s found in Ephesians 6:14-17

Heavenly Father,

Your Warrior prepares for battle.

Today I claim victory over Satan by putting on

The whole armor of God!

I put on the Girdle of Truth!

May I stand firm in the truth of Your word

So I will not be a victim of Satan's life.

I put on the Breastplate of Righteousness!

May it guard my heart from evil

So I will remain pure and holy,

Protected under the Blood of Jesus Christ.

I put on the Shoes of Peace!

May I stand firm in the Good News of the Gospel

So Your peace will shine through me

And be a light to all I encounter.

I take the Shield of Faith!

May I be ready for Satan's fiery darts of

Doubt, denial and deceit

So I will not be vulnerable to spiritual defeat.

I put on the Helmet of Salvation!

May I keep my mind focused on You

So Satan will not have a stronghold on my thoughts.

I take the Sword of the Spirit!

May the two-edged sword of Your Word

Be ready in my hands

So I can expose the tempting words of Satan.

By faith Your Warrior has put on the whole armor of God!

I am prepared to live this day in spiritual victory!

Amen

8 Depend On God 6/8

“Have it Your Way” or “Be Your Own Boss” are recommended by our culture to guarantee happiness. In reality, these are stand-alone arrogances are guaranteed to satisfy. In advertising, self-sufficiency and independence are used as synonyms for happiness. But this is not how God designed us to

live. As believers, we have found this is not true. Dependence is on God not a sign of weakness. The only way to maximize our potential and enjoy our lives to their fullest extent is to live in harmony with our Creator. This happens when we are totally satisfied in our relationship with Him. “Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.” Psalm 37:4

Without God at the center of our lives, it’s hard to find joy in trying circumstances. Joy is not dependent on the absence of trials. It is contingent on the basis of the One whom we trust. We must believe God has our best interests in mind. We can show Him we trust Him when we submit to His plans. One way to show God you are wholeheartedly relying on Him is to pray continually. I Thess. 5:16-17 says, “Be joyful always, pray continually.” When we pray without ceasing, we invite His presence into every area of our lives. With His presence, besides peace, love, there is abundant joy. He promises never to leave or forsake us. Keep your mind on His word, letting it transform your mind.

Let’s pray this prayer of commitment from Psalm 119:10-12 “With my whole heart I have sought You, oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against you. Blessed are you, O Lord! Teach me your statutes.”

#9 Everyone Hopes in Something 6/9

What are you hoping for? Financial security? A stable career? A satisfying marriage? Family harmony? As believers, we can get caught up in the false hope offered by the world. Each year, approximately 23 million Americans claim to struggle from anxiety disorders, 17.5 million with clinical depression, 530,000 actually attempt suicide and many others endure the daily pain of fear and hopelessness.

Many have found their search for hope is futile and they will never get what they want. Romans 8:24 reminds us “hope that is seen is no hope at all.” The remedy is to focus on what God guarantees, we can find comfort and joy in what is true and reliable: God’s hope.

God’s true biblical hope God is the only for sure hope we can obtain as explained in Heb. 11:1 “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” When we hope in God and fix our eyes on His promises, we can cling to the divine assurance of Scripture. Because God always keeps his promises, we can be confident our hope will never be disappointed. This Christ-centered hope must be the foundation of our lives and when it is properly understood and applied, it affects every single area of our lives. We fall down and we rise up, but God’s promises are forever. When all you have is hope, you have

everything you need: the promises of God and the power of the all-sufficient Savior.

Let's pray, "Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the hope you offer through life in your son. I want to stand firm on your promises. Thank you that when I hope in you, I will not be disappointed. In Jesus' name, Amen"

#10 Eye on Me 6/10

I remember when my kids were toddlers; I didn't let them out of my sight. It's a parent thing - we keep our children in range of sight so we can try to protect them from evil and attempt to keep them out of harm's way.

In some ways our God's care and concern over us, his blessed children is similar. Yet his true desire and passion is much more than we can ever comprehend. 2 Chronicles 16:9 explains God's constant watch care over us, "For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him." In my mind's eye, I picture the Lord's scope of vision like a 360 degree camera, nothing and no one can escape his view.

Psalm 33:16-19 reminds us, "No king is saved by the size of his army; no warrior escapes by his great strength. A horse is a vain hope for deliverance; despite all its great strength it cannot

save. But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine.”

So staying in the line of God’s sight is a choice we make. His eyes on us, our eyes on Him. This makes all the difference in how we work, play and live. Let’s close in this prayer from Psalm 25:14,15: “Dear Lord, thank you that you “confide in those who fear you; you make your covenant known to us.” I pray that “my eyes are ever on you Lord, for only you will release my feet from the snare.” I choose to keep my focus on you. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

#11 Keep in Step 6/11

Trying to keep up with someone who has long legs can be challenging. But trying to lead them can be nearly impossible especially if we don’t know the way. Sometimes when God is leading us a different way than we have planned, we may feel like we can’t keep up. And then we think, I know a better way so we try to step in front of God and attempt lead him. Each time I have thought my way is better than God’s, I end up falling flat on my face. I am reminded of Jer. 10:23, “I know that a man’s life is not his own, it is not for man to direct his steps”

Recently, my life took a different turn than I had planned. “I asked to hear from the Lord, he was silent. I sought the advice of

many counselors. I sought peace, God said, to hear from Him, I must believe He is working and trust Him to lead me in His ways. "A man plans his way but the Lord directs his steps." Prov. 16:9

As we let God lead us, through the uncharted territory, we must allow Him to lift us above our own will. The poster "Footprints" when there was only one pair of footprints, the Lord was carrying his child through the rough terrain. Let's pray, "Dear Father, our prayer is for you to "let us keep in step with the spirit" (Gal. 5:25) Help us not to run ahead of you, but to stay close to you, trusting that you know the way. Let our footprints be as one, "that we should follow in his steps" (1 Pet. 2:21) In Jesus' Name, Amen

#12 Wildfire Faith 6/12

Do you ever feel like you are burned out? Years ago, I was burning the candle at both ends, married to a small groups pastor, mother of two school-aged children, involved in church, school and community activities. Who was I fooling?

One day, I decided I had enough. I decided to find replacements for some of my volunteer church and school commitments to focus on my family. My decision to give away some of these responsibilities wasn't a matter of giving up by quitting; it was obedience to God, to let him be the leader of my

time. This was the remedy for my burn out, yet it also prevented further damage to my faith.

The changes didn't make sense to some people in our church because they were counting on me to do an important job. I knew if I didn't obey God, there would be only embers and ashes left from the state of burn out I was in. Philip Yancey says, "Faith means believing in advance what will only make sense in reverse."

Romans 12:11-12 reminds us "Don't burn out; keep yourselves fueled and aflame. Be alert servants of the Master, cheerfully expectant. Don't quit in hard times."

At times we must burn the candle at both ends, but to prevent ourselves from burn out, choose to serve your Master. Be alert – asking Him what's next and then cheerfully do what is next.

Let's pray, "Father, thank you for your plan for my life, let me stay connected and in communication with you – the source of my energy, so that I do not burn out. I want to shine my light brightly, fueled and aflame with the power of your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' Name, Amen"

#13 Joy Unspeakable 6/13

I love to laugh. At jokes, my own quirks clean comedy, life's strange occurrences. I try to find humor wherever I am. As

believers, we have many reasons to be happy, even joyful. Jesus has given us a lot to be joyful about: Jesus has conquered the power of the grave – he has overcome death.

If you have lost a loved one who knew Jesus Christ as their personal savior, you know what a comfort this is! John 16:33 says “I have told you these things so that in Me you may have perfect peace and confidence. In the world you will have tribulation and trials and distress and frustration; but be of good cheer! For I have overcome the world.”

Wow – those words are not only true, they also encourage me with the fact that Jesus wants us to be courageous, confident and certain that He has deprived the world of its power to harm us. Jesus has conquered the world for us.

A joyful person is also healthy – spiritually, emotionally, and physically. This happens when you fill your mind with thankful thoughts until your heart overflows with thanksgiving, praise and joy. We are designed to be filled with these heavenly contents to bring life and hope to the world. Proverbs 17:22 says, “A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.”

Let’s pray, “Father thank you for overcoming the world through sending your son to conquer the grave. Thank you for giving me joy through praise and thanksgiving. Thank you that neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate

me from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our lord. In Jesus' Name, Amen

#14 Contentment Training 6/14

Every few months, I take a long drive in my car alone. I spend the first few hours speaking heartfelt prayers outloud to God. It is amazing therapy for my soul. God's word says it's good for us to be open before God Psalm 62:8 "Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge."

I used to think I had to clean up my act before I went to God with my requests. I thought he wouldn't want to see my life all messy. But God wants us to bring all the messes we've made to him, he has already planned how he will clean it up. He wants us to trust Him to make a message out of our mess. Phil 4:12 reminds us "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want."

The way it works for me is: I begin by telling God how frustrated and upset I am feeling. It really helps to pour out my heart, share my feelings and release my pent-up emotions. A good cry goes a long way. I know God hears my cries. I ask God to increase my awareness of His presence with me. I listen in the

depths of my spirit for God's response. God brings helpful scriptures to my mind, which bathe my mind and heart in them. And then I praise Him, this lifts my spirits like nothing I've felt before.

Let's pray, "Father, thank you for arranging messes in our lives to help us to be honest with you. Thank you for caring about our soul and wiring us to need you. In Jesus' Name Amen."

#15 Who Are You Looking For 6/15

Ever felt lost or lonely? Of course, all of us have. Jesus' promise to be with us always reminds us we will never have to face anything alone. If you have trusted Jesus as your personal savior, you can stand firm on this truth that He is with you even unto the end of time.

So where do these feelings of fear and abandonment come from? The enemy uses them to keep us separated and distrusting the hand of God. One is doubt – not believing God says he will fulfill His promises. The only way to come against doubt is to know God's word. Another obstacle is distraction – not staying focused on loving and serving God. To come against distraction, we must focus on loving God with all of our heart mind, soul and strength. The last thing that could separate us from God is discouragement. To come against discouragement, we must remind ourselves of God's love and His plans for us.

In order to return to the place of feeling accepted and loved by God to walk in the abundant he has for us, we must remind ourselves of the greeting found in 2 Chron. 15:2, that Azariah gave to King Asa when he returned from battle, “The Lord will stay with you as long as you stay with him! Whenever you look for him, you will find him. But if you forsake him, he will forsake you.”

Let’s pray, “Lord we love you, thank you that you are looking for us. We look for you as we choose to trust you and believe you will do what you say. Lift our discouragement, doubt and keep our focus on you. In Jesus’ Name, Amen”

#16 Hope Is An Anchor 6/16

I was once a hopeless dope fiend and now I am a dopeless hope fiend. I don’t know where I would be without the light of hope in my life. Whether you live in a garbage heap or a palace, without the hope of Jesus, we have nothing to look forward to.

If in the midst of a storm at sea, a ship may drop anchor, when it does, it is secured by the huge 25 ton iron anchor that goes down deep. When strong and wild waves hit the boat, the rough waters won’t tip it over, it is safe and secure because the anchor has held it fast to the bottom of the sea.

This is how hope works – it keeps the eternal part of us safe and secure in the storms of life. Our hope must be solidly in

Christ, vibrantly connected to Him, we can endure and we are secure even in life's fiercest storms. Hebrews 6:19 says "We who are holding on to the hope of God's salvation promises have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure."

We must drop anchor during the storms of our lives hold on to the living hope in Jesus Christ. When I had cancer, I held onto His word by studying the names of God. When my husband was tragically killed in a motorcycle accident, I held onto hope by clinging onto His promises. How are you holding onto hope today? Let's pray from Hebrews 10:23 "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful." Dear Lord, we choose to hold on to the hope you offer us in your son, Jesus Christ. You never let go of us. In Jesus' name, Amen."

#17 Bind Up Broken Hearts 6/17

When I was little, I quickly learned what to do when I cut myself. Mom would say, "Apply direct pressure." And even as a five year old, amateur cook, when I sliced my hand open cutting apples for a snack, with two fingers, I would press on the open wound. Within seconds, the bleeding would stop.

A careless cut can wound us, yet sarcastic comments can cause misunderstandings and separate the closest friends. A broken heart is one of life's most painful experiences. Those who

have had our hearts broken by disappointment or loss, know the anguish and helplessness of how it feels to nearly “bleed to death” emotionally. Jesus Christ is the only one who, by the power of the Holy Spirit, applies the direct pressure of His presence and stop the deadly blood loss. This is the only way to heal a crushing hurt and relieve devastating disappointments.

Jesus came to heal broken hearts. Isaiah 61:1 says “He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted.” The original word for bind up is “chavash,” meaning “to bind on, wrap around, to bind up as a wound, bandage or cover. Strong’s dictionary adds a visual definition: “to compress, to stop.”

When our hearts are broken, we feel vulnerable and helpless emotionally. We must trust God to put the pieces of our hearts together, to close up the wounds and bind them with the bandage of grace. We must let Christ bind up our wounds. Will you exchange your bondage of unforgiveness for His bandage of grace?

Let’s pray, Heavenly Father, we ask for your healing for our wounds. We plead the blood of Jesus over each and every hurt inflicted on us. Thank you for the healing you offer through the presence of your love and grace. Thank you for binding up our broken hearts and healing our wounds. Let our scars become a testimony of your power. In Jesus’ Name, Amen”

#18 The Potter and Clay 6/18

If you've watched a potter make a clay pot on a potter's wheel, you remember how fascinating it is. You see the wheel turn around, as the potter's hands patiently shape the clay. The clay stays soft and pliable as the potters' hands are dipped into water; the wheel's motion assists the formation of a masterpiece. Similarly, God's hands form us into a vessel fit for serving Him as life's motion assists in our development. To stay moldable to the Potter's touch, it helps to remind ourselves of His love. We must remember – although we might not trust His hand, we can always trust God's heart.

Sometimes God reminds us we are not in charge through circumstances spinning out of control. Is. 29:16 says; "You turn things upside down, as if the potter were thought to be like the clay! Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'He did not make me?' Can the pot say of the potter, 'he knows nothing?'"

In the days, weeks and months following the tragic day my first husband, Pastor Paul was killed in a motorcycle accident, my emotions were raw and some days ran the gamut from giddy highs to desperate lows. Yet my circumstances were impounded and surrounded with God's love, the prayers and presence of His people encompassed me in a powerful way. I didn't want God's hand to shape my understanding of grief and loss in this way. One

day, I finally submitted to His plan, I said, “Ok, I will let you redirect my life and allow you to heal my broken heart and wounded soul however you wish. Make me more like Jesus.” I am thankful to say God has given me a sensitive heart that cares for the grieving, the widow and the orphan because sought healing through Him. This happened when I submitted to the Potter’s authority and looked at my life through His eyes, because He allowed me to heal, I can relate to each of these situations.

If we remain pliable in the hand of the Potter, desiring to be conformed into the image of His son, this allows Him to shape us and make us into a new creation. Our responsibility is to have a regular prayer time and Bible study. When you sit alone with God, you begin to observe His ways are not your ways. Giving leadership to God is not easy, but it is best. When we choose to obey God, to do things His way and not ours, we are under His authority and find true liberty.

True freedom, healing and transformation is entirely possible when we submit to His control. Is. 30:15 says, “In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it.” Let’s pray, “Father, it’s a privilege to be molded into a vessel that is fit for your use. I thank you for shaping me and making me into a vessel worthy of being filled with the holy contents of the Holy Spirit. Keep me pliable and

receptive to whatever you have planned for my future. In Jesus' Name, Amen

#19 Enjoying His Presence 6/19

I love being married. It's fun to be in my husband's company. We don't even have to speak, we can be sitting still, walking the dog or riding in the car together. One of the best things about loving someone and being in love is enjoying being in their presence. The same is true of our relationship with God. Our enjoyment of God will lack complete fulfillment if we don't walk in relationship with Him everyday. Isaiah 33:2 reminds us, "O Lord, be gracious to us, we long for you. Be our strength every morning, our salvation in time of distress. God wants us to walk with Him, to ask Him for directions and to let Him lead.

When we choose to spend time with God and obey Him, He gives us daily strength. Psalm 84:5 reminds us "Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage, as they pass through the valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs." God also offers us the treasure of His sure foundation. I Cor. 3:11 says, "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid which is Jesus Christ." This is where obedient lives are found – from days of obedience. God offers us the treasure of wisdom and knowledge – that is "what to do with what you know." Psalm 119:105 says "His word is a light to my feet,"

that is a guide to the steps I'm taking. And "His word is a light to my path," a guide for my immediate future." Let's pray, "Father, we love being in your presence. Thank you for your love and strength. Thank you for the treasure you give us when we spend time with you face to face. In Jesus' name, Amen."

#20 Changes and Challenges 6/20

I don't like change at all. In the past six months, I've experienced more change than I have in a long time, more than the past twenty years. On Christmas day, I became engaged to my boyfriend, then he sold his family home of 32 years, we bought a home together, we got married, I moved into our new house, and moved from my family home of 26 years. We had been married only ten weeks, when my father died suddenly. Although most of the changes have been positive, they have still been the means for me to make adjustments, which cause stress.

Someone once said, "the only constant in life is change." Our world is in a constant state of change. But God stands firm when everything else moves.

Thankfully, the only one thing that hasn't changed in my life is my God. In fact, his character quality of immutability, which is something that only can be attributed to God, is immutability. Which means – never changing, always the same, constant, reliable. Isaiah 54:10 says "Though the mountains be shaken and

the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,” says the Lord, “who has compassion on you.”

Grab on to God, He is reaching out to you; let Him pull you back up. It's only through Him that you can get up again and stand firm because our God never changes. Hebrews 13:8 says, “Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever. “

Let's pray, “Dear Heavenly Father, thank you that you don't change. You are reliable, constant and dependable. Thank you for your constant love and grace over me in my ever changing circumstances. I commit my challenges to you. In Jesus' Name, Amen”

#21 Free Indeed 6/21

A common attraction at our local county fair is the house of mirrors. When a person walks into the exhibit, you see your reflection 'rearranged' depending on the shape of the mirror's width or height. One mirror makes you appear dwarf-like, another makes you appear tall and skinny, like a bean pole. As you look at your distorted image, you are deceived by the image you see in the mirror.

Although the house of mirrors can be appreciated as comic relief, the concept of the house of mirrors is a tangible spiritual

illustration for how we can be misled into believing something other than what is true about God. Satan can keep us ensnared in doubt, deception and despair. His lies convince us God doesn't love us or care about us. The enemy of our souls loves to maximize our problem and minimize God's power.

Jesus came to make us free through the truth. "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32 We must live close to God, when we do we can face the truth about ourselves. When we look into the mirror of God's word – we read the word and the word reads us – we see ourselves the way God sees us. Romans 8:1-2 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

Let's pray, "Thank you Father, that you sent your Son to set us free. Help me to remember in every situation, the truth will set me free. In Jesus' Name, Amen."

#22 God's Unfailing Love 6/22

Turn to the person beside you and tell them "God loves me so much." Did you have a tough time sharing that fact? Me too. I find it's easier for me to say to someone else, "God loves you so much. One of the reasons why I have a difficult time believing God loves me is because I know my own faults and weaknesses .

I know all the reasons why God shouldn't love me. I bring up the sins I think God shouldn't forgive. Plus, I don't want to be disappointed if God's love doesn't come through. But living under this type of guilt and shame is not how God designed us to live.

I've learned when I praise God, it reminds of how His love has covered my sins, I have a much easier time receiving His love. Psalm 103:1-5 says, "Praise the Lord, o my soul, all my inmost being, praise His holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagles'."

Now, let's try that again. Turn to the person beside you and tell them, "God loves me so much." Was it easier the second time around, yes, it was for me too. Praise God for the gift of forgiveness and healing.. Let's say it together: "God loves me so much." Let's pray, "Thank you, Heavenly Father, for your great love. You have forgiven all my sins and healed all my diseases. Thank you for your amazing love for me. In Jesus' Name, Amen."

#23 Thank You Therapy #1 6/23

At the beginning of each episode of the Rocky and Bullwinkle show, various filler cartoons would run and one of the silliest (and cutest) featured a pair of very polite squirrels. The

talking squirrels' (smile) sweet conversation would carry on like this: "You first," the oldest would say, inviting his brother to step out onto the tree limb before him. "No, you first." The youngest would retort. "After you, please." The oldest insisted.

The dialogue went on until finally one would take the step, leading to another exchange. "Thank you," the oldest said. "No, thank YOU," responded the younger. And such would their generous words carry on and on until my sister and I would laugh ourselves off the seat of the couch.

However, a strange thing happened to us –we began to imitate the polite squirrels. After my sister helped me with a chore I would say, "Thank you." Her response would be "No, thank YOU." It's amazing how much our productivity and our good deeds increased when we had an attitude of gratitude. The same is true with our relationship with God. Let's stop today and apply a little "thank you" therapy.

1. Thank God we can call on His name.

"Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name, make known among the nations what he has done." 1 Chronicles 16:8

2. Thank God we can sing to Him.

"I had the leaders of Judah go up on top of the wall. I also assigned two large choirs to give thanks." Nehemiah 12:31

3. Thank God we can praise Him.

“Enter His gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.” Psalm 100:4

Try practicing your THANK YOU Therapy today!

#24 Thank you Therapy #2 6/24

Have you felt whiney and grumpy lately? Try a little thank you therapy. It's amazing how much our productivity and our good deeds increase when we have an attitude of gratitude. The same is true with our relationship with God. Let's stop today and apply a little “thank you” therapy.

4. Thank God we can praise Him for triumph over sin.

“But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Corinthians 15:57

5. Thank God He guides us.

“But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of Him.” 2 Corinthians 2:14

6. Thank God we can thank Him in every circumstance.

“Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.” 1 Thessalonians 5:18

7. Thank God for thank you therapy.

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:4-7

“Thank you therapy” happens when we find things for which we can thank God. Let’s choose thankfulness!

Dear Heavenly Father, you are the God of creation, our provider, our Lord, our friend. Help us use a thankful spirit as we lift up thankful hearts to you. Thank you for the trials and triumphs, struggles and joys. We praise you and bless you in Jesus’ Name, Amen.

#25 Believe 6/25

‘Believe’ was “My One Word” for 2014. To exercise and strengthen our muscle of faith, we must choose to believe God. Henrietta Mears, the founder of Gospel Light was asked at the end of her life, if you could do anything different with your life, what would it be? She said, “Believe God more.”

Have you looked forward to something for a long time, when you finally got it, it wasn’t at all what you thought it would be. Did

you feel deceived? Like you had been tricked? You had faith in the object, not in the one it came from. “Our belief in God is not blind faith. Belief is having a firm conviction something is true, not hoping it’s true.” (Max Lucado)

When bad things happen to good people, we think, if this is the way God loves me, I don’t want any part of it.

We must trust God. That good, or bad, He has best interests in mind for us. How big is your God? Is He big enough to handle all of your problems? There is no middle ground when it comes to believing God – either we operate in fear or faith.

“Believing God’s plan is best is a crisis of the will. We are deceived when we feel we can’t trust God with our situation and don’t believe he can help us. Doubt is the opposite of belief. The only anecdote for unbelief is to accept the truth. Those who believe God can put their faith in Him in any circumstance. Once we understand God’s character, we can trust him and believe He loves us. In spite of immobilizing circumstances, we can choose to move gracefully and freely through trials. Let’s choose to believe God more, today!