

TTT September 2016

#1 - What's Your Name?

"Becky, Kathy, Casper, Ginger, oh whatever your name is..." mom's voice was shrill. She was spent and exasperated by the time she went through the list. When I heard her say, "SHERYL DEANN." Now she used both *my first and middle name*. Even at seven years old, my ears burned when I heard her tone and the title she used. I knew I was in big trouble. She had called me by name, and you'd better believe her intent and use of my titles had achieved the ultimate goal. My mom had gotten my full attention.

You might be thinking, *Okay, Sheryl, I get your drift when it comes to calling my kids to dinner. But I still don't get, 'why knowing how to call on God using His name so important?'*

Here's an answer from the St. Anthony Messenger, "A name is a major part of someone's identity. The Israelites were surrounded by people who believed in many gods. These gods and goddesses exhibited all the human vices—and some of the virtues—but supposedly had much greater power. These deities were invoked easily and often.

Moving from believing in many gods to believing in a single God took a long time; reverence for the uniqueness of God's name was part of the process. This concern for God's name continues in the New Testament. The apostle Paul says Jesus was given a name above all other names.

God's name is very important, Isaiah 12:4 says, "Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted."

#2 Our Identity Can Be Defined By Our Name

When I was a child, sometimes my mom called me, and used my first and middle names. If this happened, I knew she meant business. In the same way, if we call on God's unique names when we pray, we offer specific, power packed and effectively directed prayer.

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Daniel 2:20 "Praise be to the name of God forever and ever; wisdom and power are his."

Psalms 20:7 "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God."

Psalms 48:10 "Like your name, O God, your praise reaches to the ends of the earth; your right hand is filled with righteousness." What's in a name?

Names are more than groups of letters that represent a person or identify objects. Names are powerful. A person's character and destiny can be influenced by his or her name. Start today by calling on the name of the Lord God right now.

Let's pray, "Heavenly Father, thank you for caring enough about our needs to share your many names with us to encourage us to ask for your help specifically and intentionally. Psalm 115:1 "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness." In the name of our great God, amen.

#3 Spiritual Fatherlessness

"Be careful, sweetie," my dad's strong voice cautioned me to avoid the object in the road. He'd just removed the training wheels on my Schwinn; I was seated securely on the banana seat, both hands on the handlebars, the front tire still wobbled a little. My eyes fixed on the path ahead, "Yes, Father," I said. I veered to the left just a little and swerved to avoid the obstacle. Father is one of the most familiar and commonly used name of God."

However, some cannot relate to God as a caring, tender and involved dad, like mine. Maybe they've been disappointed by their own negative personal paternal experiences. So what's the big deal about 'spiritual fatherlessness'? A lot. According to a recent study, '15 million American children — one in three — live without a father. In the past decade, families with two parents in the home has dropped significantly.

From poor academic achievement and teenage pregnancy to drug use and crime, most social problems cannot be properly understood without considering the absence of fathers in homes. Many of the social problems we face are a direct result of the fatherless home. Even as the country added 160,000 families with children, the number of two-parent households decreased by 1.2 million.'

God wants us to show the world of 'spiritual fatherlessness' what it means to be included the family of God. So let's share how wonderful it is to be loved by a Perfect Heavenly Father. Psalm 68:5-6 "A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families, he leads out the prisoners with singing. Thank God He is the perfect father.

#4 Spiritual Orphans

'Spiritual fatherlessness' causes a breach between the natural father, spiritual father and heavenly father. The devil destroys harmony between our most valued relationships. This is not necessarily a physical detachment, but a spiritual battle waging war against those that mean the most to us. I am the first born of four children, my dad always called me princess. However, for a few years, dad and I exchanged only harsh words, disagreement and disconnection. Unfortunately, I was unaware of the enemy tactics to divide our family. I was rebellious, un-submissive and could not respond to my father's attempts to show me his love.

It's interesting that one of the final verses in the Old Testament is Malachi 4:6 "and he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their father lest I come and strike the earth with a curse."

At seventeen, I was falling deep into drug addiction. I stayed high as much as possible, trying to fill the emptiness in my life with the highest high or the cutest guy while my need for affection only increased. My family pulled strings to get me a volunteer summer job at a Christian camp. The camp staff assigned me lists of chores. When I threw fits over doing these tasks, the staff said, "Love covers over a multitude of sins." (I Peter 4:8 [NIV]) Their words, repeated over and over, immersed me so I couldn't get the five-word phrase off my mind. After two weeks of experiencing how "Love covers a multitude of sins," I embraced it. I allowed God's abundant love to cover my multitude of sins and finally understood the perfect love of my Heavenly Father.

#5 Adopted by a Perfect Father

I was given a fresh start I didn't deserve. I was a rebellious teenager, and asked Jesus to forgive my sins. The divine connection to my Heavenly Father was restored. I had to do three things:

1. Communicate with God as my Perfect Father.

The breach in my relationship with God could only be restored through His Son. The blessing came when I came to know God as my Perfect Father. I began to believe God's love could cover the things that held me captive: drugs and alcohol, lying and stealing. James 1:17 "Every Good and perfect gift comes from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."

2. Invite God to heal my father wound.

I was searching for meaning, purpose and identity in things and people that would never satisfy. When I decided to be transparent, God could heal me. I had get to the place where I allowed God to heal my father wound.

James 5:16 "Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."

3. Ask God to let me be a father.

Once I allow God to heal my father wound, I wanted to share my joy with others. In the world of 'spiritual fatherlessness' it's wonderful to be included the family of God. Psalm 68:5-6 "A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families, he leads out the prisoners with singing. I thank God for adopting me into His family.

#6 Jehovah Shammah

A loud crash woke me up from a deep sleep. I opened my eyes, squinting to sort through the shadows. Yet there was no difference from when my eyes were closed. I couldn't see a thing. I didn't remember where I was. I cried out to God, "Help me, Lord." Immediately I felt peace, comfort, and hope in the shelter of God's presence. Instead of feeling breathless from fear, a sigh of relief became my prayer of thanksgiving and praise. "Thank you Jehovah Shammah."

This peace gave me fortitude to get up and look for the source of the loud crash. I was relieved to find one of my hanging pictures had pulled off

its grip from the wall hanger and lay in pieces on the floor. No intruder had crashed in one of my windows. Whew. Jehovah Shammah is the name of God that promises His presence. Choosing to praise God instead of abiding in fear invites Jehovah Shammah into our difficulties. Deuteronomy 31:6 says, "the Lord your God is the one who goes with you, He will not fail or forsake you. Isaiah 41:10 says " Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with My righteous right hand". God is here for us, now. Jehovah Shammah is the God who is here for all of us who cry out, today, tomorrow, and forever.

Let's pray.

Dear Jehovah Shammah, thank You for being the One who goes with me. Thank You for the hope I have that You will not fail or forsake me. Thank You for the strength I find in Your presence today. In Jesus name, amen.

#7 Jehovah Shammah - The God Who is There

The Old Testament temple was built as a place for God to dwell. At that time, the Israelites were deep into worshipping other gods. God had given them many opportunities to repent from their rebellion. They stubbornly refused. God withdrew His presence not only from the temple, but also from the city of Jerusalem. He was so angry over their repeated rebellion that He said, in effect, "I've had it. I'm out of here." God promised the nation would be restored and His presence would return to Jerusalem. The city would be called Jehovah Shammah. Prophecy was fulfilled when God's presence returned to the temple. The way it happened wasn't at all what anyone expected.

God's presence was restored to Jerusalem in the form of a tiny baby brought to the temple to be offered back to God by his parents, Joseph and Mary. Jehovah Shammah is the God who is there. Our God is already in our tomorrows. Jeremiah 29:11-12 reminds us, "'For I know the plans I have for you,' says the Lord. 'They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope'". God is here for us, now. The Holy Spirit is our reminder that God is here for us, He is closer than a brother. Matthew 28:20 says, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age". Jehovah Shammah is the God who is here for all of us who cry out, today, tomorrow, and forever. Let's pray. "Dear Jehovah Shammah, thank You for being here right now. Thank You for renewing my hope. Thank you for giving me strength through your presence. In Jesus name, amen."

8 Light of the World

I remember when I found out there are names for the thousands of constellations. I was more amazed to find there were other galaxies and solar systems beyond ours. Even the sun, moon and stars had a beginning. An overlooked name of God is Father of the Heavenly Lights. Sun, moon, and stars are common terms for the illuminators of our atmosphere. Genesis 1:14-15 says “And God said, ‘Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth. And it was so”. God literally spoke these luminosities into being. In dictionary. com: “Light is something that makes things visible or brings clarification: All colors depend on light. Light is defined in physics as luminous energy and radiant energy. Light is the thing that causes our eyes to react. Light is an illuminating agent or source, as the sun, a lamp, or a beacon.”

God had great plans for the sun and the moon. In fact, he designed specific job assignments for each one. Genesis 1:16-19 says, “God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good”. The Father of Heavenly Lights gives light to our darkness. Won't you shine His light to a dark world?

#9 The Father of Heavenly Lights

God is the Father of Heavenly Lights. Genesis 1:14-15 describes the creation scene “And God said, ‘Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night.” Every spectacular sunrise is an offering of God’s affection, a daily reminder that God is still on His throne. Each moonlit night draped in a velvety sky dotted with twinkling stars is created for our delight and God’s glory. James 1:17 reminds us, “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights” God created the stars and moon to light the night. In the same way, He will shine His hope by offering His presence anytime we need it, but especially on our darkest days of depression and hopelessness.

Thank the Father of Heavenly Lights. Our Heavenly Father is the most generous person in the universe; He gave His only son for us. Let every breath we take remind us our life is a gift from Him. Now that you know more about this name of God, "Father of Heavenly Lights." Now will you invite your God into the dark places of your life? If you ask, the One who gave birth to the sun, moon, and stars will begin to push away your dark clouds of despair. How will you respond to the Father of Lights?

Let's pray.

Dear Father of Lights, thank You for Your plan and promise for my life. Thank You for every good and perfect gift You have given me. Thank You for the opportunity to share your light with others. I give You all the glory and praise. In Jesus name, amen.

#10 The Sun of Righteousness

Imagine a burning globe fueled only by the righteousness of God. It can't shine any brighter or burn any hotter. The sun of righteousness is a name for God found in Malachi 4:2 "But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings." "Sun of righteousness" can also be translated "son of vindication." The context refers to the Day of the Lord, the time when God vindicates His people and judges sin. The fact that the sun of righteousness rises with healing in its wings invokes the picture of the wings of a bird stretched across the sky, offering healing to those below. A healing effect will infuse the earth during this time, removing the negative impact of past sins.

When Christ returns, God's righteousness and peace will flood the earth. God's desire has always been to provide righteousness to those who trust Him. God's people were said to be "clothed in righteousness." God's people will see the Sun of Righteousness Himself rising over the world. It's a picture of the future millennial reign of Jesus Christ. The darkness of the Antichrist's reign will vanish, and the light of God will take its place. It's a new day dawning; God's people will rejoice in their freedom.

Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, your holiness and righteousness amazes us. Thank you, Sun of Righteousness for blessing us with your nearness as you burn up all the hurt and hate with your presence. Thank you for your purpose and peace. We look forward to your reign as you bring wholeness and hope to all who trust you now. In Jesus' name, amen.

#11 Where Can I Run?

I was a little late. Heads turned as I walked into the crowded Sunday school classroom. I'd had my last chemotherapy session just two days before, and everyone knew it. The group around the coffee and donuts dissipated as people moved my way. "Honey, how are you doing?" Lucy gingerly inquired. And then cautiously Betty wondered, "How are you feeling?" And finally, Sharon reprimanded, "I thought you should stay home and stay in bed today." These were concerned friends, almost like family, yet I felt like an innocent child getting a bad scolding. As a stage-four cancer patient, I was literally fighting for my life. I wanted everything to be back to normal, I was tired of being a cancer patient—and the attention it brought me. I felt out of control.

I understood these insight were meant to encourage, but instead they cut deep like sharp daggers. Others decided I needed to hear their advice and opinions about cancer's side-effects, diagnosis, and treatment. It didn't feel good when they told their own relative's death-by-cancer story. Some brought up the most up-to-date information on the most popular cutting-edge treatment. I needed a sign that said, "I'm doing very well, under the circumstances. I appreciate your continued prayers." I prayed God would help me be compassionate and gracious. Where could I run? I remembered a song I taught my kids when they were in elementary school. From Proverbs 18:10, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe." Amazing results, when I ran into the Lord's presence he protected me and healed me. He will do the same for you.

#12 Jehovah Maozi

I was a little late. Heads turned as I walked into the crowded Sunday school classroom. I'd had my last chemotherapy session just two days before, and everyone knew it. "Honey, how are you doing?" Lucy cautiously asked. And then Sharon scolded, "I thought you should stay home and stay in bed today." These were concerned friends, almost like family, yet I felt like a child getting a bad punishment. The meant-to-be encouraging words made me feel very wounded. It seemed the comments were tossed out carelessly. Where could I run? I turned to God to be my fortress. A fortress is a strong tower that can't be moved. God is a protective haven of shelter from harm, but He can only be this for us if we run to Him for safety.

Proverbs 18:1-2 says "The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer, my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold". I chose Jehovah Maozi to be my fortress,

my protector. Instantly, I felt his peace and was delivered from the pain of the hurtful comments. No matter what you are facing today, Jehovah Maozi—His presence is a refuge, His peace has impenetrable walls. Psalm 91:1-2 says “He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the Lord, ‘My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust.’”

Let’s pray.

Dear Jehovah Maozi, Thank You for Your name, that it is a strong tower. Help me to run to you and allow You to keep me safe. In Jesus name, amen.

#13 Alpha and Omega

Alpha and Omega is a powerful name of God. Revelation 1:8 says, “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, ‘who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty’”. Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet and Omega is the last letter. The Lord God is the beginning and the end. When he returns for his second coming, He will do so with all power and majesty in contrast to His first coming as a humble servant. Remember the name El Olam? The name of God that means He is eternal, without beginning or end, he is infinite. The infinity symbol, a mathematical symbol is sometimes used to illustrate the eternal concept of God. So how can God be eternal, yet at the same time have a definite beginning and end?

Revelation 22:13 explains, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.” God says he is the beginning of all things and the end of all things. God is the creator of time, He is beyond time itself, yet at the same time, He inhabits time. He is in control of the span of time, from His and time’s beginning throughout eternity, infinity and beyond. Are you totally confused? This concept might seem to twist your brain into a pretzel of contrasts, bottom line: God is beyond our comprehension. Job 38:4-5 reminds us, “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? Tell me if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it?”

God can be trusted with everything - from our first newborn cry to our last breath.

#14 The Beginning and The End

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty" (Revelation 1:8). Alpha and Omega is a powerful name for God. Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet and Omega is the last letter. Our God is the beginning of all things and the end. On that day when the earth has ceased to exist, there will be a new heaven and a new earth, a day of the New Jerusalem. Alpha and Omega will be seated on the throne. Revelation 21:6-7 says, "He said to me, 'It is done, I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.'" Today, I can stand on the finished work of the cross of Christ and look forward to His return. I can trust Him -- all time is in His hands. Revelation 1:7 says, "Behold, he is coming with the clouds and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it will be. Amen"

Let's pray.

Alpha and Omega, thank You for who You are. I praise You for being the First and the Last. Thank You for including me in your eternal purpose for the world. Let me to be a light to the world so that all men and women may know Jesus Christ as Lord. Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus! Amen

#15 Know God By Name

Father, Jehovah, Adonai, are a few special names of God. Did you know we can draw close to God by studying His names? When you get to know God this way, he will show you more of His power. Years ago, I was a stressed out young pastor's wife and worked a job outside of our home. As the mother of a preschooler and kindergartener, exhausted from the demands of my family and ministry, I was desperate in need of support and friends. God connected me with a Moms In Touch group (now Moms in Prayer International www.momsinprayer.org). This phenomenal group of women taught me how to worship God by praying His names. This practice has not only deepened my prayer life, it has increased my faith. I've become more acquainted with God's character and now so thankful to be actively seeking an ever-expanding trust in an Almighty God.

There are many ways to draw close to God as we study His word. But when we study God's names found in the Bible, we discover His unique character qualities. It takes time to examine these special names of God, one by one; it's like looking at a postcard of the Grand Canyon. The solo

shots each show a segment of a breathtaking view. When we absorb truths about God one at a time, we can better understand the reality of His character and His presence in our daily lives.

When we study the names of God, we:

- Experience God's power in fresh ways
- Increase our desire for intimacy with God
- Apply our experience with God to other areas of life – parenting, marriage, marketplace and personal communication
It's a win win!

#16 Names of God Reveal His Character

Did you know, the names of God each reveal something about His character? Understanding these special titles of our Heavenly Father reveals His purposes. When we call Him by name, it reaffirms His commitment to us and gives practical handles for our own life applications. There are many ways to draw close to God as we study His word. But spiritually, something exciting and personal happens when we study God's names. Not only do we find out about His unique character qualities and we can experience more of His Holy Spirit presence.

When we study the names of God, we:

- Experience God's power in fresh ways
- Increase our desire for intimacy with God

It takes time to examine these special names of God, one by one; it's like looking at a postcard of the Grand Canyon. Each solo shot shows a segment of a breathtaking view. When we absorb truths about God one at a time, we can better understand the certainty of His character and His presence in our daily lives.

Exodus 20:24 says, "Wherever I cause My name to be honored, I will come to you and bless you." God wants us to understand Him as we study His character through His names. Take a minute to underline Exodus 20:24 in your Bible, and let's pray: "Heavenly Father, I honor your name, I bless your name, I praise your name. I pray for your wisdom, discipline and insight as I set out on the journey to know you by Your names. Lord, I want to experience you more. Thank you for your willingness to allow us to find you. In Jesus' Name, Amen."

#17 Failing Forward

It's time to settle an important life question. How do you deal with failure? Failure is the inability to complete a task. Instead of feeling incompetent or running out of confidence and giving into failure and giving up, we must learn to reset our schedule and regroup our team. What happens when we don't reach your goal on time? Simple. Just set a new goal. Don't give up.

We all fail. But it's how we handle failure that will set us apart from other leaders. If we're going to learn to cope with discouragement, you must learn to deal with failure. Do you give into self-pity? Do you start blaming other people? Do you start complaining, "It's impossible." Take your failure on as a challenge and begin to believe "impossible" means "I'm possible" Belief doesn't just happen. It's a conscious choice to put one's hope in something worthy of trust. It is having faith in Someone who is reliable. One of God's character qualities is His faithfulness; He is worthy of our trust. He is constant, unwavering, dependable and reliable. Faithfulness is his fiber; it is his being. He will not change. In Mark 9:23, Jesus said, "If you can't?" "Everything is possible for him who believes." And in Philippians 3:12-14, the apostle Paul said, "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that which Christ Jesus took hold of me. But one thing I do: FORGETTING WHAT IS BEHIND and STRAINING TOWARD what is ahead, I PRESS ON toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in [#Christ](#) Jesus." God is bigger than your failure!

#18 Face Your Fears

What fear is causing you to be discouraged? Fear of criticism? Embarrassment? That you're not able to complete the task? How can you tell when fear is causing discouragement in your life? You have an intense desire to run! Have you ever said, "I've got to get out of here! I've got to leave the ministry! I've got to leave this marriage" It is usually not God's will for us to run from a difficult situation, if we don't learn in one place, guess what? God just gives us another chance to learn somewhere else. You don't run from a fear. It only gets bigger. The people most affected by fear are the people who live around people who are negative, you've got to get away from negative people. If you're going to soar with the eagles, you can't run with the turkeys.

When fear causes us to tremble emotionally, spiritually and even physically, it's because we don't understand what is happening or we don't know what the future holds. We feel out of control. Our circumstances

suffocate us with the unknown. Fear is a natural response to danger. In Psalm 40:1, David cries out “Rescue me, O Lord...,” living for years in the fear of what could happen, what might happen, David’s future was uncertain as the victim of King Saul’s pursuit. What we must do in the midst of our fear is realize who is in control. We must move through our fears and into the confidence of God’s provision. In Psalm 34:4 David shares how God provided for him, “I sought the Lord and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears.”

#19 No One Will Know

Don't you love vacations? School is out, schedules are relaxed, time off work is planned. God never takes time off from us, and we should learn to get refreshed, relaxed and renewed in our relationship with God all the time. There are more benefits in choosing God's will instead of our own. We show God our love and faithful dedication the through our routine of practicing our personal values and commitment to Him.

I remember a season when I wanted time off from God. “No one will know,” said the voice in my head. “It’s only one drink.” Thankfully I didn't cave in to the temptation. But it was a close call for me. I came within inches of backsliding into drinking alcohol. I was just a swig away from relapse. I remember the last time it happened, I thought -- it’s OK, I can handle it. "After all, it's just one drink." And that one time led to one more and then another. It all started with that first poor choice. The enemy wants us to trust ourselves instead of relying on God's power to withstand temptation. He wants us to mistrust the healthy boundaries given by God. It’s the little choices that chip away at our defenses. We must protect our eyes, our ears and ourselves from doing things that are not best for us. Even good is not good enough. Jeremiah 6:16 says, “Stand at the crossroads and look, ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.”

Let's Pray, "Father God, thank you for giving us your full attention. Help us walk with you always. In Jesus name, Amen."

#20 The Eyes of the Lord (w/c 286)

I remember a season when I wanted time off from God. “No one will know,” said the voice in my head. “It’s only one drink.” Thankfully I didn't cave in to the temptation. But it was a close call for me. I came within inches of backsliding into drinking alcohol. It’s the little choices that chip away at our defenses. We must protect our eyes, our ears and ourselves from doing things that are not best for us. Even good is not good enough.

I had promised myself, I wouldn't entertain the idea of drinking alcohol, or even consider its' delights. I knew if I looked even once with a longing glance at the tempting alcoholic beverage, it would lead to a fixated desire. And another unhealthy rationalization and finally compromise. I had committed like Job, to turn away. Job's commitment was to turn away from looking at women other than his wife. Job 31:1, he said "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a young woman." I had to turn away from any alcoholic beverage, period.

Maybe you don't have a problem with alcohol. I am very happy for you. Can you relate with any other indulgence? Is it your best kept secret? You can stand firm in your authority in Christ. God will come through. 2 Chronicles 16:9 "For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth, to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him."

Let's pray, Dear Heavenly Father, We commit our time off to you. Psalm 86:11 says, "Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth, give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name." In Jesus' name, Amen.

#21 The Power to Overcome

First things first. God wants us to love ourselves. God wants us to love what He is doing in us. God wants us to love the finished work of Christ in our salvation. How are you today? No, I mean how are you, really? If you could give yourself an emotional, physical and spiritual check up, on a scale of one to ten, with a ten rating as 'best,' how would you rate yourself? Oh, okay, sorry it's that bad. Do you think it has to do with the day of the week? Or last week's failures? Are you wondering why you fall short of your goals for achievement? Let's sort this out together.

Each time a new day rolls around, we have another chance to begin again. It's a restart, a fresh beginning, a do-over. Instead of beating ourselves up for the goals we didn't complete, the times we cheated on our healthy eating plan or the appointments we were unable to keep, we must confess our sin and inadequacy to God. We must ask for His strength to fill us up, take us over and enable us to complete His work. Then make a new list. Set an original plan. Review our mistakes, missteps and misgivings. Then choose to lean into the learning process, intentionally prioritize and accept what God wants to do in you. 1 John 2:14 says, "You are alive, and the word of God remains/lives in you." Kelly Minter says, "We can think of

God's Word as being His words, will and way. Here we can see that living by God's Word is inextricably connected to our strength to overcome."

#22 Why Believers Struggle

Ever wondered why a few believers struggle to walk close to Jesus? Some might even take a wrong turn because they have never been told the truth of their identity in Christ. The process of building the life of Christ into another person is called discipleship. When people first choose to follow Christ, the Holy Spirit bears witness with their spirits that they "are children of God" (Rom 8:16) But wait, there's more, new believers must become firmly rooted in Christ. This takes intention and purposeful training. Colossians 2:8 says, "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of the world rather than on Christ."

For many, there are unresolved spiritual conflicts. James 4:7 says, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." We must be honest with ourselves and others, to encourage each other to be vulnerable and strive to experience our freedom in Christ. The result is the ability to move on to maturity and fruitfulness. 2 Corinthians 3:17 "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." When we allow God to lead us, we are at peace with Him. Walking by the spirit is a moment by moment experience. Once we understand the truth of who God is, why would we want to walk by ourselves again? Matthew 11:28-30, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

#23 Our Daily Choice

Who is in charge? We must ask ourselves this question every day. As we choose to let God take control of our lives, we learn submitting to Him becomes habit. Romans 8:9 says, "You, however, are controlled not by the flesh but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you." Wouldn't it be great if we could just flip a switch so we would automatically do everything right? It doesn't work like that. We want to please the Lord, we sense His spirit within us, but we do fail to live the Christian life like we want to. Some of our bad habits don't instantly disappear. Our struggle with sin may even

intensify. We have a new heart and a new spirit. We have a new life in Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come." We have a new master. Colossians 1:3 says, "For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the son." Then why don't we feel renewed? Crucifying the flesh is the part of the battle that rages for our minds. We have to train ourselves to think in a way that lines up with the truth. Romans 12:2 says, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will." Let's pray, "Heavenly Father, we choose to think and act by the power of your Holy Spirit. In Christ, we can overcome. In Jesus name, Amen."

#24 Baby Steps

Remember your first steps? When we began to cruise the living room couch, we teetered and tottered as we held on. At first we took timid and tiny steps, trying to balance. This same principle is often true for the new believer. We have been transformed through faith in Christ. But we might feel a little wobbly until we experience God's presence through the Holy Spirit. We have received forgiveness, been accepted into God's family and we begin to realize our worth in Christ. We obtain supernatural power from the Holy Spirit. We renew our minds, getting rid of old patterns of thinking and replace them with the truth. Our emotions are marked by peace instead of turmoil.

We choose to walk in the Spirit, we daily crucify the flesh. Seem out of reach? Spiritual maturity is not an impossible dream. God tells us he has already given us everything we need to live a life of godliness. 2 Peter 1:3 says, "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness."

As we choose to follow the impulses of the Holy Spirit, we notice our baby steps become confident strides bringing us closer to maturity. God has given us every spiritual blessing we need for growth. Ephesians 1:3 says, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ." Let's pray, "Heavenly Father, thank you for leading me and guiding me as I

gain my balance. Thank you for giving me every spiritual tool I need. In Jesus' name, Amen."

#25 What is Walking in the Spirit?

Most of us want to be accepted by others. We want to be included in church activities, family gatherings and even asked our opinions in work related projects. If we are not brought into the inner circle, we might admit, "Oh that's okay, I have too much to do anyway." But deep inside, we are hurt by the exclusivity of the group.

Each of us have a choice -- we are free to be the people God created us to be and make the choice to rise above and live by faith. 2 Corinthians 3:17, "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." Because of the finished work of the cross, we are accepted, secure and significant. Abiding in this truth, we can confess our sins, deal with strongholds of the enemy, invite the Holy Spirit to fill us and begin to live according to our new identity in Christ.

Walking by the spirit is a moment-by-moment, day-by-day experience. We can choose either to walk by the flesh or the spirit. Once we've understood the truth of who God says we are, why would we ever want to walk by the flesh again? Galatians 3:3 reminds us, "Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?" Walk in the spirit and do not fulfill the desires of the flesh. Let's pray, "Heavenly Father, thank you for giving to us the power of your Holy Spirit. We invite you to fill us and help us live according to our new identity in Christ. In Jesus' name, amen."

