

Transformed Through Truth May 2016

#1 The Full Extent of Love 5/1, 5/26

One of the last things Jesus did to show His love to the disciples before the crucifixion, was to wash their feet. John 13:1 says, "Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love." Patheos.com says: At the Last Supper, Jesus would have been the "host" and the apostles the "guests." Washing the feet of weary travelers would have been a job assigned to a gentile slave by the host. Not even a Jewish slave would do this. The host of a meal would never lower himself to performing this vile task. "Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant. "Phil. 2:5-7

A pastor's wife for 28 years, I thought I knew a lot about serving: taking meals to the sick, visiting people in the hospital and praying for those in need. But I didn't know much about being a patient, until one day I found a lump. After several weeks of tests, my doctor told me I had cancer -- stage 4 non-hodgkins lymphoma -- blood cancer in my bone marrow in four places of my body. I prayed for God's will to be done -- whether He chose to heal me or not, I wanted to learn the lessons He had prepared. I had to let people serve me: bring meals, clean my house. With cancer as my teacher, I was determined to humble myself to the will of God. James 4:10 "Humble yourselves before the Lord and He will lift you up." God strengthened my faith and gave me hope for the future.

#2 What Does Love Look Like? 5/2, 5/27

One of our children was on the run from God and had moved away from our family. We needed prayer. I was desperate and knew others, would need encouragement, so I formed a prayer group: “Praying for Your Prodigal: Loving Those Near You but Far from God.” This group met twice a month during my cancer treatments and then for two years after. We prayed for our prodigal, adult children. So although my strength and energy were limited, I chose to spend it on something eternal – and prayer made a difference. Through months of prayer, eventually, my prodigal child returned to fellowship with our family.

What would you do if you thought you might die, or like Jesus be executed? Jesus chose to lovingly serve. Is Jesus asking to you show your love to him in a way you hadn't planned? You say, “wait a minute, that's not the way I thought it would be.” Yet God says “this is right where I want you.” Jesus showed us how to serve, he wants us to be willing to serve Him in any way that glorifies God. Are you willing to humble yourself and serve? When Jesus washed the disciples' feet, this happened. John 13:4-5 “so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.”

Let's pray, "Dear Father, How do you want us to serve you? Help us to do what Psalm 37:4 says “Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.”

#3 Unqualified and Under-gifted 5/3, 5/28

Do you feel unqualified? Under-gifted? Out of your comfort zone? I can relate. Several years ago, I found out about a bunch of High School kids that were close to getting kicked out of school for good. The academic dean asked me for help. I didn't feel qualified. "God, not me – I argued, I have a new job, I am busy, I am a cancer survivor, I have limited energy and time." I didn't know how to create a truant program at a local public High School.

I remembered what God brought me out of, once a rebellious and promiscuous teenager, chain-smoker, alcoholic, drug addict and drug dealer who cut class all but 5 days my junior year of High school. God reminded me – I knew what these kids were going through. At age 17, I went to work at a Christian camp in Lake Tahoe, surrounded by believers who loved me in spite of my weird hair, anger issues and bad habits.

I remembered how God showed me his love at a Christian camp -- I was a mess - God allowed me to experience how His love covered a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8). God helped me put together a presentation including my story, with the scripture from 1 Peter 4:8: God's love covers a multitude of sins. God gave me the insight and wisdom I needed to share His love with those in need. "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." 1 Cor. 12:9 Let's pray, "Father thank you that wherever you guide, you provide. Thank you for giving us wisdom and grace. In Jesus' Name, Amen."

#4 Do You Understand? 5/4, 5/29

"When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. 'Do you understand what I have done for you?' he asked them. 'You call me

Teacher and Lord and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher have washed your feet, you should also wash one another's feet...Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them." John 13:12-16

So following the example of Jesus, we must serve Him lovingly. When I asked Jesus what He wants from me, He said, "Sheryl, will you trust me?" The gift God has for me is a bright future - He wants me to trust Him with my future. In 2009, my pastor-husband was tragically killed in a motorcycle accident. I've had lots of fears -- fear of the future, fear of change, fear of adjustment. I liked things the way they were -- yet I know they won't ever be the same again. In Beth Moores' study on the book of James: Mercy Triumphs, "He gives more grace." Four little power packed words.

Jesus asked me to lay down all of my plans, ideas, ministries at His feet. And so I did - I laid it all down. What about you? Wonder how you will spend your life, time, ministry? Allow God to have a say in it. It's not a bad thing, it's the best thing for us. Ask God "What do you want?" And then, Psalm 46:10 "Be still and Know that I am God." Matthew 22:37, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."

#5 How Do We Know? 5/5, 5/30

How do we know God loves us? *Romans 5:8* says, "*But God demonstrates His own love for us in this, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*"

God created us in His own image...for a relationship with Him...but He gave us freedom of choice, to partake in the love relationship with Him or not. The problem is, we are separated from a Holy God because of our sin. *In Romans 3:23*, "*For all have*

sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” And in Romans 6:23, “For the wages (payment) of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

There is only one solution for the problem of separation from God...some have tried to earn their way to heaven by working harder or being religious...but *Hebrews 9:6 says, “Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission (forgiveness) sins.”*

Jesus Christ is the only answer to the problem...he died on the Cross and rose from the grave, paying the penalty for our sin...He provided a way for us to have a relationship with God.

John 3:16 says: *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son, that whosoever believes in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.”* What AMAZING love!

Because He sent His Son, His only Son Jesus to die for us. Which one of us would give OUR children...even our only child, for the lives of someone? Think a minute about how much you love even just one of your children or grandchildren...imagine God...desires you to be restored into a relationship with Him. Do you want to say yes to Jesus today?

#6 Before Time Began 5/6, 5/31

God has loved you since before the beginning of time, His son Jesus Christ died for you on the Cross and rose from the grave. Jesus calls you to make a decision for Him, today...He has a plan for your life, don't miss out on the life God has for you! There is only one solution for the problem of separation from God...some try to earn their way to heaven by working harder or being religious...but *Hebrews 9:6 says, “Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission (forgiveness) sins.”*

Jesus Christ is the only answer to the problem...he died on the Cross and rose from the grave, paid the penalty for our sin...so we could have a relationship with God.

John 3:16 says: *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten son, that whosoever believes in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.”* We can’t clean up our act ourselves, I know, I’ve tried. The sacrifice of Jesus’ blood covers our sins.

I John 1:9 says, “If you confess your sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Pray with me now:

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need your forgiveness.

I believe that You died for my sins.

I want to turn from my sins.

I now invite You to come into my heart and life.

I want to trust and follow You as Lord and Savior.

In Jesus’ name, AMEN

#7 Do You Believe 5/7

The story you are about to hear is true: I felt free. The conference had ended thirty minutes ago. My feelings of spiritual relief weren’t because I was now outside the four walls of the training facility. God’s word had cut through fear I believed about myself and my choices for my future. God gives fear as a natural response when our safety is threatened. Neil Anderson says, “Courage is not the absence of fear, but it is living by

faith and doing what is fright in the face of illegitimate fear objects.” I learned that behind my fears loomed lies I believed. God asked me to renounce these lies and once I did this, I could again be centered to believe the truth. Empowered, refreshed and reaffirmed in my ministry, I couldn’t wait to see what God would do next.

Now in my car, I arranged my lunch so I could eat while driving home, my phone rang. A man’s commanding voice said, “Everything you have believed about God is not true. To listen to our weekly hour long church service by phone, call this number.” Click. The call ended. I sat in shock for a moment and remembered the four-day truth encounter. I spoke aloud. “In the name of Jesus, I rebuke you. There is no weapon formed against me that will prosper. Greater is He who is in me than He who is in the world. Thank you Lord Jesus, that you have not given me a spirit of fear, but of power, love and of sound mind. I renounce this spirit of fear. I want to live by faith in you and in the power of the Holy Spirit. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

#8 Wait with Hope 5/8

What are you looking forward to? Christmas? Birthday? Vacation? Completing a project? Finishing a semester? Anticipating with an attitude of expectation is taking the long view. This is how we wait on God with an attitude of hope. Joyce Meyer says, “Hope is favorable and confident expectation, an expectant attitude that something good is going to happen and things will work out no matter what we are facing.” Hope is determined and does not give up. In John 16:33 Jesus says “In this world you will have trouble.” So we shouldn’t be surprised when we have trials, irritation and distress, but in spite of it, we can have peace. Jesus has overcome our difficulties and in Him we can have joy while we wait for His answers with an attitude of expectancy. Zech. 9:12 says

“Return to the stronghold, you prisoner of hope, even today do I declare that I will restore double your former prosperity to you.” I like that, when you are a prisoner, you don’t have a choice about it, remain encased in hope, looking for God’s answers instead of our solutions. To get excited about waiting on God’s answer. Micah 7:7 says, “As for me, I watch in hope for the Lord, I wait for God my savior; my God will hear me.” I choose to look carefully for evidence of God working in my life circumstances. I must not grow weary in waiting on God and trust that He hears my prayers. Especially when dealing with disappointment, hope will cause us to rise up and say, “God I praise you. You are working in this situation and working in me. My faith and trust and hope are in you.”

#9 Prevent Discouragement 5/9

Everybody gets discouraged. Unfortunately, discouragement is reoccurring and you can catch it more than once. Discouragement is highly contagious, when other people are discouraged, we can be brought down, too. We might even feel like giving up. But discouragement is curable. In ministry, the number one cause of discouragement is fatigue. Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do is go to bed and take a nap. We are human beings and we wear out. Maybe we just need some time off or even a vacation.

In Nehemiah 4, we see Nehemiah’s prayer after he was ridiculed for his efforts to rebuild the Jerusalem wall. In verse 4, “Hear us O our God, for we are despised.” The nay-sayers had criticized him for his efforts, but notice when discouragement actually set in, see v. 6 “*We rebuilt half the wall*”. When does discouragement usually set in? When you’re half done. Everybody works hard at first in the newness of a new project.

But after the newness wears off you start to get tired and you start to get fatigued. You start painting the living room and get half finished. You look around and say, "Oh, no. I've got to finish the other half." Have you ever climbed half way up a mountain and said, "I can't make it all the way to the top." So when we get tired half-way through completion, we must choose to turn to God and tell God all about it. Romans 8:26 "The Spirit also helps us in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

#10 Second Cause of Discouragement 5/10

Discouragement is defined by wiki-pedia as a loss of confidence or enthusiasm. The first cause of discouragement is fatigue. The second cause of discouragement in the ministry is frustration. In a building program or home remodel, when something is being built, it's usually messy, there are broken bricks and dirt and dried mortar. The waste that accumulates in any project can become very frustrating. Anytime you're trying to accomplish anything, have you noticed that trash multiplies? Like little rabbits over in the corner reproducing, if you don't clean it out periodically it's going to halt your progress toward your goal. We must learn to recognize rubble and dispose of it quickly so we don't forget our original intention. What is the rubble in your life? Rubble is things that waste your time and energy and prevent you from accomplishing what God has called you to do. Things like time wasting, facebook, twitter, draining people, even needless committee meetings. Or it could be unresolved spiritual conflict –we must let go of bitterness, unforgiveness, hurt or hate. God commands it " ... in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes." 2

Corinthians 2:11 We should get rid of this rubble, it can prevent us from good sleep, cause health problems and separate relationships. Heb. 12:15 says "See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled."

Martin Luther King Jr says, "Forgiveness is not an occasional act; it is a permanent attitude." Let's intentionally get rid of the rubble, be free to serve God - leave behind frustration and walk in freedom.

#11 Third Cause of Discouragement 5/11

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, you must learn to reset your schedule and regroup your team. What happens when you don't reach your goal on time? Simple. Just set a new goal. Don't give up.

We all fail. But it's how you handle failure that will set you apart from other leaders. If you'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. "If you can't?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who

believes.” (Mark 9:23) "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." Phil. 3:12-14 God is bigger than your failure!

#12 Last Cause of Discouragement 5/12

What fear is causing you to be discouraged? The fear of criticism? Embarrassment? That you're not capable of 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 seldom 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 envelop 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 and protection that over-rides the feeling of fear. 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."

#13 Remedy for Discouragement – Rest 5/13

In 1 Kings 18, Elijah had a great victory on Mt. Carmel, he had called down fire and his God burned up all the false prophets. It was a tremendous victory. But soon after, Elijah was on the other side of the desert, discouraged, depressed, defeated – hiding in a cave from Jezebel. He's down and discouraged and he said, "I'm so tired! I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired! Just kill me!" And God's remedy for Elijah's depression was not a sermon, but He put him to sleep. Elijah slept and then he got up and God fed him some food and then he went back to sleep. Then the same cycle happened all over again. God's remedy for Elijah's discouragement was eat, sleep, eat, sleep. We are human beings and we need to do human things – rest and play and relax and have hobbies, sleep. Psalm 127:2 *"It's vain for you to sit up late and rise up early."*

Sometimes the most spiritual thing we can do is go to sleep. God knows more about us that we do and He knows that when our bodies are tired, we'll be ineffective. Vince Lombardi said, "Fatigue makes cowards of all of us." Never make a major decision when you're depressed or tired. Rest your body, mind and soul to sharpen your effectiveness. At the feet of Jesus is where your soul will find rest as you share your burdens with Him. Isaiah 46:4 says, "Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you."

#14 Reorganize Your Life 5/14

Reorganize. Start over. Begin again. Use a fresh approach, a new strategy. When you are discouraged, it is not that you are doing the wrong thing, but you might be doing it in the wrong way. Our natural temptation is to give up on our dream. We think, "Maybe God didn't give me this dream in the first place." No, it may just be that you got God's call. It might be time to expand your vision and ask God to give you new ways of thinking. To try a new approach to the same ministry. You've faced a lot of discouragement, numerous problems and your workload seems unbelievable. It's time to reorganize your schedule. Evaluate things you need to cut out of your ministry. Examine what is important and what is not important and get rid of the rubble. Get rid of those things that clutter your life, that are wasting your time. The Pareto principle is: twenty percent of your time will produce eighty percent of the results. Find the twenty percent of the things you have to do and focus on the ones that produce the greatest results. In Nehemiah ch4 v. 13, Nehemiah in the middle of rebuilding the Jerusalem wall, saw the need to reorganize to complete the work: *"Therefore I stationed some people at the low points of the wall and exposed placed posting them by families with their swords and their spears and their bows."* It says *"We reorganized them by families."* We need a support group, a group of peers, that we can share with and who will love us unconditionally. There's no such thing as Lone Ranger Christianity.

#15 Encourage Yourself In the Lord 5/15

When I am discouraged, it helps me to remember three things:

1. Remember God's goodness to me in the past. Make a list 1-100 of all the amazing things that God has done. An attitude of gratitude, psychologists have proven, is the healthiest emotion we can have. The world's authorities on stress have actually registered that – the attitude of gratitude -- conserves more energy in your life than any other attitude that you can have. An attitude of gratitude is a healthy antidote to discouragement. Look for things that you can be thankful for. Remember God's goodness in the past.

2. Remember God's closeness in the present. I remember that I am not alone. No matter what I go through or what I'm experiencing, "*Lo, I am with you always.*" I'm not facing any circumstance by myself. God is with me, Christ is in me, the Holy Spirit is indwelling me. I stop and remember, God's goodness in the past and God's closeness in the present.

3. Remember God's power for the future. "*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*" Get your eyes off yourself. If you ask someone how are you doing, the answer: "So far, so good, under the circumstances." What are you doing under them? Circumstances are like a feather mattress. If you get on top you rest easy. You get under them and you suffocate. Corrie Ten Boom says: "If you look at the world, you'll be distressed. [Just read the newspaper.] If you look within, you'll be depressed. [You see all your own faults and weaknesses.] But if you look at Christ, you'll be at rest

#16 Resist Discouragement 5/16

If you give in to discouragement it's because you've chosen to. Victor Frankl was one of the Jews at the horrible concentration camp at Auschwitz. One day he stood before his

enemies in the concentration camp. They stripped him of everything, he was stark naked, even his wedding ring was gone. At that moment he realized they could take away every single thing in his life except for one thing. They could not take away his freedom to choose how he would respond. Each day you and I have choices.

Nehemiah made the choice to fight when he was rebuilding the Jerusalem wall. In Nehemiah 4:14 he said, "*Fight for your brothers. Fight for your sons. Fight for your daughters. Fight for your wives and your homes.*" He's saying, Don't give in. Resist the discouragement. The devil will attack you with everything, he especially loves to attack us with discouragement. The Bible says he is the accuser of the brethren. James 4:7 says "*Resist the devil*" because we are at war with those negative forces.

We cannot control grumpy people, but we can choose how you're going to respond to them. Don't look at the difficulty, look at the One who overcomes the difficulty. Get your eyes on Christ. The difference between successes and failures is that successful people never, never give up. Even when they're fatigued, frustrated, even when they feel like failures, even when they're scared to death, they just keep on.

Tough times never last. You may think, "I'm never going to get out of this." Someone was once asked, "What's your favorite verse?" He said, "It came to pass. When problems come, they didn't come to stay but they came to pass.

#17 Reflections on Fighting Discouragement 5/17

Let's take time for personal reflection. What is it that causes discouragement in your life? Are you tired? Take just a minute to relax and take a deep breath, let God drain that stress out of your life, pressures, problems, people, circumstances, critics,

challenges. Some of us need to take a longer break to take a rest from our routine. Others need to start a regular exercise program or watch our nutrition. Others need a hobby, something you enjoy so much you're willing to leave your work for it. Rubble has piled up and you're going back to a heavy desk and all kinds of commitments. It's time to reorganize your life. Never give up on your dream. If you feel like you're a failure, listen to this: "*There is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*" Reorganize. Start over. Begin again. Use a fresh approach, a new strategy. Our natural temptation is to give up on our dream. It might be time to expand your vision and ask God to give you new ways of thinking. God is the God of the second chance and He lets you start over. He says "*I will restore the years that the locusts have eaten.*" Others are dealing with fear: "I can't handle this." Fear will destroy your life if you let it. Say, "God help me to get my eyes off the problem, off the circumstance and keep my eyes on You." Tension is a warning light that you have taken your eyes off the Lord. When you get tense it is God's beeper saying, "You've lost your focus." "*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee.*"

#18 My Boaz Has Come 5/18

All of us want a story that begins, "once upon a time" and ends "and they lived happily ever after." The day the tragic motorcycle accident tore my husband Paul's physical presence from my arms, my world collapsed. My fairytale became a nightmare; my life as I knew it ended. With Paul's "promotion to heaven," our marriage of twenty-eight years was over. I became a widow. "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit

rejoices in God my savior for He has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.”

Luke 1:46

As a single woman, I had to humble myself, in my financial struggles, making major decisions (buying a car, putting a new roof on my home and remodeling a bathroom), travelling to Africa alone. “The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him.” Lam. 3:25

In June 2012, a widower asked if he could clean my garage, the Lord asked me to accept help. Jim Turner’s wife, Peggy eighteen months prior, succumbed to a five year battle with breast cancer. We shared our grief as we sorted. Jim and I became good friends and fell deeply in love. We were married on April 12, 2014. “Do not be afraid, you will not suffer shame. Do not fear disgrace, you will not be humiliated. You will forget the shame of your youth and remember no more the disappointment of your widowhood.” Isaiah 54:4

My story reminds me of Ruth, Naomi’s daughter-in-law, also widowed at a young age. God provided Ruth a kinsman-redeemer; Boaz. A hopeless romantic, my faith in fairytale happy endings has been restored. Jim and I look forward to many years of serving God together!

#19 I Will Not be Moved 5/19

“I Will Not Be Moved”, is sung by three time Dove award winner, Natalie Grant. The lyrics say, “I will stumble, I will fall down, I will make mistakes, I will face heart ache but I

will not be moved. On Christ the solid rock I stand all other ground is sinking sand. I will not be moved.”

Through the Lord Jesus Christ, we are called to live in a different dimension than we once lived in. We must know who our fortress is. We are to find our strength in Him. We must let God’s peace speak louder to us than our fears. Maybe you’ve felt as if you are sinking deeper in your misery; your disappointment, discouragement or despair is sucking you under like quicksand.

God never changes. God is immutable, which means – never changing. He is always the same, constant, reliable. Hebrews 13:8 says, “Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever. “

God does not fail. Deut. 31:6 says “Be strong and of good courage, fear not, for the Lord thy God will not fail nor forsake you.”

God’s word does not fail. Joshua 23:14, “Not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed.”

God’s love does not fail. 1 Corinthians 13:8 & 13, “Love never fails, but prophecies, tongues, knowledge will pass away. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. And the greatest of these is love.

God’s compassion does not fail. Lamentations 3:22,23 says, “It is because of the Lord’s mercy that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning, great is thy faithfulness.”

Choose to stand on Jesus Christ, the Solid Rock. He never fails.

#20 Our Refuge 5/20

Psalm 73:1-3 reminds us, "In you, O Lord, I have taken refuge, let me never be put to shame. Rescue me and deliver me in your righteousness, turn your ear to me and save me. Be my rock of refuge to which I can always go. Give the command to save me for you are my rock and fortress."

Through the Lord Jesus Christ, we are called to live in a different .We must know who our fortress is. We are to find our strength in Him. We must let God's peace speak louder to us than our doubts. You've felt as if you are swept away by an uncontrollable current by your disappointment, discouragement or despair.

God never changes. God is immutable, which means – never changing, always the same, constant, reliable. Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever. He never changes.

God does not fail. Deut. 31:6 says "Be strong and of good courage, fear not, for the Lord thy God will not fail nor forsake you."

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God's compassion does not fail. Lamentations 3:22,23 says, "It is because of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning, great is thy faithfulness."

Find refuge in the Lord Jesus Christ, he is your rock and fortress.

#21 The Little Choices 5/21

"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 remember the last time it happened, I thought -- it's OK, I can handle it. And that one time led to one more and then another. It all started with one poor choice. The enemy wants us to mistrust the boundaries given by God. He wants us to think boundaries are given to make us miss out, to make us feel like have less than what we are entitled to.

We must be on guard when we let our defenses down and condone compromise. 2 Chronicles 16:9 "For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth, to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him." God is waiting for us to ask for his help. He is looking for ways to give you support, to give you a way of escape.

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."

Dear Heavenly Father, We commit this time to you with a prayer from Psalm 86:11, "Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth, give me an undivided heart,

that I may fear your name, I will praise you O Lord, my God with all my heart, I will glorify your name forever.” In Jesus’ name, Amen.

#22 Revival Begins with Me 5/22

Have you forgotten how to thank God? You may be in need of revival. Revival restores us when we are bored with grace. Revival renews us if we have stopped believing God can make sense of our pain. If you’ve ever seen your blessings fade and your joy wane, you need revival. Need a refreshing touch of God’s grace? that’s revival.

Revival is available to any of us any time. Revival is the power of God that breaks through the lie, the deception of the enemy, the accuser who says, “Your God is not there for you.” If you have ever felt like God is not there and God does not care, you need revival. After decades of worshipping false gods, and even sacrificing their own children to heathen idols, King Josiah led the children of Israel to revival. God allowed the nation to get to the end of themselves; they were worn out with living for their own desires, they sought revival.

In 2 Chronicles 34. There were four steps to revival - # one – the people had to humble themselves before God. They had to realize they sinned against God by worshipping other gods. # two – the people had to confess their sin of following after other gods. Their prayer was to ask God’s to forgive them, for worshipping idols. #three – they recommitted themselves to God. Together, everyone chose to do things God’s way. #four: Revival came in to the hearts and minds of all the people like a flood. Revival began with one person: King Josiah.

Dear Heavenly Father, we need revival. Lord send revival into our hearts, our families, our churches, our cities. Thank you Lord for revival. In Jesus' name, Amen.

#23 We Are His 5/23

If you've ever rented a house or an apartment, you remember what it was like to live with the landlord's rules. You took good care of your rental, you asked permission before you painted the walls and the landlord took care of the repairs. That's the way it is with our "temple" our body – we are not our own. God is a gracious landlord, who has given us boundaries for living. When we follow his rules and stay within his boundaries, we abide in his peace.

I Corinthians 4:20 says "For the kingdom of God is not just a lot of talk, it is living by God's power." It's only by God's power we can let go of our plans, our agendas and submit to God's will. Andrew Murray said, "The condition for gaining God's full blessing is absolute surrender to Him."

Choices can be minor, yet others have lasting impact. In the midst of our choices, we must remember we are not our own. We belong to God.

I Corinthians 6:19-20 says "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own, you were bought at a price, therefore glorify God in your body."

When we let God take over, we surrender to God's love – it's saying yes – "Lord, you can be trusted with every aspect of my life."

Psalms 100:3 says "Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us and we are his."

Dear Heavenly Father, I surrender to you. I let go of my plans. I commit and submit to you. I give you my all. In Jesus' name, Amen.

#24 The New You 5/24

Remember when you accepted Christ as your savior? A few of us felt different, immediately. Some of us shed our bad habits right away and others, struggled with them for a while. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come!" We are made new in Christ. But our memory, our mind won't let go of our past mistakes. If you've ever wished you could go back and change your past, or you've thought, if only, you have been drawn into the trap of the enemy. Have you felt accused of a sin you've asked God to forgive? Yet you can't get over it? This can immobilize us. We feel ashamed, embarrassed, guilty, sometimes even unworthy of the grace and mercy which covers our sin.

We must remind the accuser whose we are. In Christ, we are loved. In fact, 1 Peter 4:8 tells us, "God's love covers a multitude of sins". That means God's perfect love is enough to erase every sin we have ever committed. When God looks down on us, he sees the righteousness of Jesus Christ. He sees us just as if we never sinned.

When we praise God, we can re-train our minds, to not be so self-centered. Psalm 34:1-3 says, "I will praise the Lord at all times. I will constantly speak His praises. I will boast only in the Lord. Come let us tell of the Lord's greatness, let us exalt his name together."

Dear Heavenly Father, Thank you that I am a new person In Christ. Thank you for making it possible through the Holy Spirit. Thank you for your power. In Jesus' name, Amen.

#25 One of Those Days 5/25

Ever felt out of sorts? Like everything you did unraveled? Some of us have had YEARS like that. God wants to remind us who is in charge. He wants us to seek Him When we get to the end of our capabilities and our resources, God helps us by gently showing us where we belong.

In Luke 10, Jesus was visiting Mary and Martha, in the preparation and stress of making the guests feel comfortable, Martha lost sight of what was really important – sitting at Jesus' feet. She began to judge Mary for sitting at Jesus' feet, listening to him teach. Martha complained to Jesus about her sister not helping her with the preparations. Listen to Jesus' words of caution in Luke 10:38-41, he said, "My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it and it will not be taken away from her." Jesus warning is also valuable for us to heed today. Often God will allow trials to shape us, to cleanse us from evil but also to refine us for his glory. Isaiah 48:10 says "I have refined you, but not as silver is refined. Rather I have refined you in the furnace of suffering." Psalm 73 verse 23, "Yet I still belong to you; you hold my right hand, you guide me with your counsel, leading me to a glorious destiny."

Dear Heavenly Father, Thank you that trials help give me the proper perspective of who you are. Thank you for holding my hand and leading me on with your purpose. In Jesus' name, Amen.