

## Transformed Through Truth

January 2016

Jan 1, 26 - Survive a Free Fall?

Is it possible to survive a free-fall from the Sears Tower in Chicago? The answer is yes. Or what if you fulfill a lifelong dream of skydiving and your parachute fails, could you survive the fall? The answer is still yes. The Wiki How-To manual says, "Hundreds maybe thousands of people have fallen from such heights and lived to tell the tale." You can increase your chances of survival by putting to use a few helpful skills. We literally trip and fall as we walk through life, like toddlers who move from cruising the couch to the first wobbly steps on their own. Or consider the woman whose arms are loaded with must-have sale items - the leather soles of her boots hit the freshly waxed floor and, as if she's stepped on a skateboard, her feet slip out from under her. Accidental falls happen when we least expect them and leave us surrounded by a mess.

Beyond the literal, physical ways we trip, teeter or collapse, life brings change and challenges that can move us out of our comfort zones. Facing emotional, spiritual or physical challenges can plunge us into aimless descent. Ever feel like you've been tripped up by an addiction, tormented by shame? Slipped up by doubt? Or fallen headlong into depression? God is near and waits for us to ask Him for help to get back up when life knocks us into a downward spiral. God wants us to reach out to Him in times of difficulty, doubt, despair, depression, disappointment, disease, destruction, divorce, discouragement, domestic violence or death. God's hand is extended to us. His will for us when we are down and out is for us to turn to Him and ask for a hand up. He asks us to lace our fingers with His. Psalm 145:14 says, "God gives a hand to those down on their luck, gives a fresh start to those ready to quit."

Dear Lord, thank you for reaching out to help me get back up. I choose to hold on to you. Thank you for giving me a hand, for giving me a fresh start and for allowing me a second chance. In Jesus' Name, Amen

Jan 2, 27 - Is True Love Possible?

Have you longed for a love that would hold you close throughout life? At age 5, I was awarded the book *Sleeping Beauty* for perfect attendance in kindergarten. That summer I escaped for hours at a time into Princess Aurora's fairytale life. I imagined my hair long and blonde like hers, my life adventuresome – rescued by a handsome young prince whose kiss of true love would break the spell of ordinary life. Years later, I felt like I didn't fit in anywhere, and as a teenager, I looked for love in all the wrong places. After years of living for myself, as a drug addict and alcoholic, I found God's hand was outstretched to me and His love was waiting for me. I Peter 4:8 showed me I didn't have to clean up my act. It says, "Love covers over a multitude of sins." God's love through the shed blood of Jesus was enough to cover over my sins with His grace and mercy.

God loves us. He draws us to Himself with a love that never fails, always hopes and wants the best for us. He asked his son Jesus Christ to die in our place. Jesus was the acceptable sacrifice for our sins. I John 4:9-10 say "This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." God wants to hold you close in a grace-filled, guilt-free embrace as you grasp His hand and walk together with Him through life. Won't you take His hand?

Dear Lord, I choose to take your hand. Thank you for offering your son Jesus Christ to take my place as a sacrifice for my sins. Forgive me for refusing your help. I accept your invitation to walk with you in a new life with you, my true love, Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Jan 3, 28 - How to Live Life to the Full

Do you want to overcome hurts, habits and hang-ups? All of us do. Somehow, we think we aren't worthy of the abundant life. The imaginations of the enemy can haunt us. But God's love gives no heed to our past sins. He's forgiven us of every one of them, and his love brings out the best in us. He wants us to respond to this love and believe that by faith He will use our past for His glory. St. Augustine of Hippo says, "Even from my sins, God had drawn well." We must keep walking with God, resting in His

mighty arms. His is an everlasting gentle grip of grace. The key is learning to let Him lead. Moving in cadence with His steps will come. God's handbook, the Bible, is our instruction manual.

Get up and take His hand. It's a choice to realize God's truth that you are loved, safe, and important. God's love mobilizes you to be all He has created you to be. Christ's love guarantees safety in your position in Christ; nothing and no one can remove you from the palm of His hand. God has an important plan for you in the kingdom. He has granted you divine favor through Christ's finished work on the cross; Christ died for you, was buried and raised from the dead. An abundant life offered through Jesus Christ is lived in God's grace. It takes trust to allow someone to help you up after a fall. God values you so highly, you can follow Him without fear through any twist or turn life brings. God has a plan for you, in the good and the bad things that come your way. We must allow Him to change our view from insecurity to confidence. Eph. 2:10 says "For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so that we can do the good things he planned for us long ago."

Dear Father, I choose to take your hand. I choose to believe your truth – I am loved, safe and important. Thank you for your everlasting, unconditional, purifying love. You see only the plans you have for my hurts, habits and hang-ups. Thank you for allowing me to see these through your eyes – as opportunities for your glory to shine through me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Jan 4, 29 - Belief Brings Relief

I believed a lie for two decades. It was something I had been told when I took ballet as an 8 year old, and some of the other students commented on my appearance. They said, "You are fat" - which my mind translated into "You are not good enough." It felt like a poison dart and it affected my self-perception. You might struggle with the same lie; or perhaps the lies you believe differ. Holding close to truth is the way we root out deception and take God at His word. We must devote ourselves to search out and find

truth. This means we are dedicated to learn what God thinks about us. When we do this, the impact of the opinions and accusations of others will be diminished. God helped me untangle the knots of self-deception so I would be free to experience His truth. God's Word cut through the lies and ushered in the truth of His love: "I have loved you with an everlasting love. I have drawn you with loving-kindness." Jer. 31:3 (NIV). When I heard, applied and believed what God said about me, I could love myself, my body and appearance, just the way God made me.

When you feel guilty, it is difficult to move forward. But we don't have to be victimized by our past, held captive to our thoughts or imprisoned by how others perceive us. Trusting God moves us ahead unhindered; our progress becomes secure as we apply God's word to our circumstances and allow Him to move us from deception to truth. It helps to take control of our thoughts and say His word out loud. The truth of Romans 8:1 break through guilt, shame, blame, and unworthiness, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Let God defend you and free you through the power of His word.

Dear Father, thank you for your word. I ask for you to show me the lies I have believed. Help me find scripture references that cut through them and bring in the truth. Renew my view Lord; show me what is true. Thank you for loving me with an everlasting love and for freeing me from condemnation. You have set me free, indeed. In Jesus's Name, Amen

Jan 5, 30 - Radically Loved By God

Do you think the abundant life is for someone else but you? Don't resist His help, ignore His outstretched hand or keep him at a distance. If you have accepted God's invitation, received His son as your savior but you repeatedly trip on your past mistakes, we need to talk. God wants you free from guilt and shame. God offers more than salvation. He promises a grace-filled, extravagant life in a different dimension. This life is possible, once we meet our true love, Jesus Christ. When we allow Him to love us, our true identity rests in Him. We must let his opinion of us speak louder to us than our past. This happens when we allow the truth of the Word of God to thwart the lies the accuser wants us to believe. Jon Egan said, "Define

you as radically loved by God. This is the true self. Every other identity is an illusion.”

Let God love you! Receive His unconditional, endless, eternal love. Take His hand. Let him lead you as you work through your heartaches and hard times. He will usher you into a place of abundant, complete healing. The result will be joy. Joy will replace your gloom and despair with warm radiant hope. You are offered a grace-filled, guilt-free life because of Jesus Christ. Each day the choice is yours. Reach out, take His hand and walk with Him – if you want to soar. This kind of truth transforms your behavior to reflect your belief about God. You will get back up and joyfully walk on in renewed hope.

Dear Lord, thank you for showing me your love. I John 4:9 - 10 say “This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”  
In Jesus name, Amen

Jan 6 - Belief Brings Relief

Ever feel like you're in exile? There was a time in my life when I felt alone in a strange place. We had moved from the beach. The cold, foggy days of winter season eclipsed my life, bringing on depression and a deathly sickness. I felt deceived by my husband and abandoned by God. I was angry and wanted to opt out of everything. Why would God allow this to happen to me? I believed the lie that bad things don't happen to good people. I had a lot to learn.

When things go wrong, we often lose our footing; we slip and fall. We question, “What have I done to deserve this?” For a control freak like me, it is very difficult to surrender the reins of my life to God. It takes trust to allow someone to help you up after a fall. But trusting God is to believe He knows better than us what is best. We must let go of our expectations, our plans, and allow God to take charge. God values us so highly, we can follow him without fear through any twist or turn life brings. Doubt is the opposite of belief. Belief is a conscious choice to put one's hope in

something worthy of trust. It is having faith in Someone who is reliable. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous run to it and they are safe," Proverbs 18:10. Won't you trust Him with your plans?

Dear Lord, thank you for an opportunity to give you control of my life. I don't understand what is happening, I am afraid and vulnerable. I commit my plans to you. Thank you for being my shelter and my strength in my time of need. In Jesus' Name, Amen

Jan 7 Let Go of Grudges

"How could church people be so mean?" I thought to myself. Just a few hours earlier, my pastor- husband had been told to turn in his resignation. Now, I was the sole supporter of our little family of four with only a part-time job. Bitterness and anger raged inside of me. I vowed, "I will never forgive the men who did this to us." All of us will have opportunities to forgive, but some of us will have many opportunities. Forgiveness is a choice, a decision, a crisis of the will. Jesus reminds us in Luke 6:36, "Be merciful, just as your Heavenly Father is merciful." God has shown us mercy that we don't deserve. When we show mercy through forgiveness, it is a way to keep the lines of communication open between God and us. In 2 Cor. 2:10,11 we are told, "We must forgive, so that no advantage is taken of us by Satan for we are not ignorant of his schemes."

If we want mercy, we are commanded to be merciful through forgiving those who don't deserve it. Jesus is our substitute, who literally became sin for us. John 1:29 "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." Jesus' crucifixion wounds belonged to us, He was punished in our place to satisfy God's requirement. His sacrifice provided for our righteousness. "Christ had no sin, but God made him become sin so that in Christ we could become right with God." 2 Cor. 5:21. Won't you choose to forgive your offenders, even if they don't deserve it?

Dear Heavenly Father, You know who hurt me, what they did, how it happened. Lord, you know I've carried this pain around for a very long time. I am thankful for the mercy you've shown me. I forgive them for hurting me

with their harsh words. I release them into your care. Thank you for healing my bitterness and anger. In Jesus' Name, Amen

Jan 8 It's Good for You

Did you know that you can train your mind to refuse to keep score of hurt, hate and wrongs committed against you? Seem impossible? This can only happen through the power of God's word. 1 Cor. 13:5 says "Love keeps no record of wrongs." We must not keep lists of anything that has hurt, angered, offended or wronged us. The only way to do this is by getting rid of bitterness God's way. Forgiveness is not only obedience to God but also beneficial to our overall well being

Letting go of a grudge is good for your health. Studies have indicated holding onto grudges increase tension and stress, deplete energy, cause isolation, and prevent old wounds from healing. Grudges also steal joy, disrupt sleep, and harden hearts and arteries. Such bitter emotions can even get in the way of prayers. Resentment keeps us in chains unless we recognize it as bitterness.

One of the most difficult steps of faith is to release the offenses we have suffered into the hands of God. God gives us the ability to do this. He is able to help us complete the process of letting go of our grudges. He first offered forgiveness to us when we did not deserve it. Now, we can offer it to others. It is a choice. Matthew 18:33 says "Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, even as I had mercy on you?" Martin Luther King Jr said, "Forgiveness is not an occasional act, but a permanent attitude." Remember Jesus' dying words from Luke 23:34, "Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing."

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of forgiveness. I am thankful you have not kept a list of my sins or my wrongs. Thank you that the love of Jesus has covered over a multitude of my sins. Because I want to love with the love of Jesus, I refuse to keep lists of wrongs done to me any longer. Help me to forgive and forget. Let forgiveness be my permanent attitude. In Jesus' name Amen.

Jan 9 The Power of Praying Women

Up most of the night with a sick child, I was physically exhausted. On top of that, my husband and I had a bad fight the night before. I was emotionally spent. Now on my way to the office, in the sanctuary of my car, I turned on the radio hoping to be soothed by Christian music. Praise songs settled me down some. Tears flowed as I prayed, “God how can I cope with the overwhelming needs?” Immediately I was reminded of a dear friend who once shared how prayer for her children with a small group of believing friends changed her life. I wondered if this would work for me.

I was amazed to discover other women had the desire to seek God. I found a prayer group. Not only did I discover how to get to know God by praising Him, I learned how to pray for my children and love them by praying for them. It transformed my mind when I prayed scripture aloud: Romans 8:35 – 37 “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”

Jeremiah 33:3 says, “Call unto me and I will show you great and mighty things which you do not know.” It was remarkable to me when I shared my family’s needs with other women, that they loved my children through praying for them. Won’t you allow God to love you and your family by sharing your needs with others?

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your love for me and my family. Your love never fails. Your love enables me to conquer my challenges. I commit my problems to you this day. Surround my decisions with your love. Direct me to others who are committed to prayer. I ask for a mighty prayer team to be raised up to cover my family in prayer. Thank you for the power of corporate prayer. Thank you that this type of prayer is the highest evidence of love. Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you are ‘seated at the right hand of the heavenly Father, interceding for us.’ I love you, in Jesus’ name, Amen.

Jan 10 Poor, Hungry, Desperate

Are you weak, bankrupt, starved, in despair? God is looking for people who are PHDs – Poor, hungry and desperate. If you are in this category, you are

just the type of person God wants. God's choice to empower weak people with his strength may not make much sense. God uses the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.

Difficult circumstances may make us feel weaker, but can also move us closer to God through dependence on Him. When under pressure or stress, we may be overcome with feelings of fear or uncertainty. We are not sure if God will come through. We must make the choice to share our needs with our brothers and sisters in Christ. God has provided the Body of Christ to care, bear and share your burdens. If we join with others in prayer, we allow others to enter into our circumstances. In doing so, God unites us as believers, and strengthens our faith as we see God's provision for our needs.

I believe one reason why the Body of Christ doesn't function as God planned is because the enemy likes to keep us isolated from each other. Have you ever thought "No one knows how I feel." It's risky to share our feelings and feel vulnerable when we are open with our needs. That's just the way God planned it!

Jude 1:20 sums it up well, "But you dear friends must build each other up in your most holy faith, pray in the power of the Holy Spirit, and await the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will bring you eternal life. In this way, you will keep yourselves safe in God's love."

Your brothers and sisters in Christ want to know how they can pray for you. Won't you take a risk, share your needs, and open your heart to those who love you? It will be a blessing to you and to them as they pray for you in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank you for the love you have for us. Thank you for providing the Body of Christ, my brothers and sisters, to love me, walk with me and pray me through difficult times. I am so encouraged by these burden-bearers. Let me do the same for someone in need. In Jesus' Name, Amen

Jan 11 – Walking in the Spirit

What does it mean to walk in the spirit? It means to submit ourselves to the control of God. Essentially, it is letting Him live through us. Have you ever wished you were more patient, more loving or more sensitive? For most of us, the answer is yes. We want to be kind and patient, we want to be polite, we want to perhaps even go the extra mile for a person we don't even know. Like allowing them to go ahead of us in line in the grocery store or being polite when we have been offended. But more than this, true unselfishness is showing honor to others, even if they don't deserve it. It's showing preference to those who are overlooked, especially those in our families – right in our own homes.

Those of us who have tried and failed to do this know the problem is not the rude people who push their way in front of us in line or cut us off on the freeway. It's our personal inner battle with our will. We can't change our feelings, but we can change our reactions. The fleshly struggle is real. It's not our first reaction to turn the other cheek, we want to get even. We don't want to be nice, we want to give people what they deserve. Romans 8:18 puts it plainly "For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out." Through the active power of Jesus Christ we can give up our selfish desires and show God's love.

To walk in the Spirit is a choice, daily, hourly, even moment by moment. It's a decision, a pro-active position to keep our minds set on what the Spirit wants. It's exchanging our selfish desires for spiritual delights. Romans 8:6 reminds us, "The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the spirit is life and peace." When we allow Christ to control our lives, we have his mind, but we must continually submit to his control of our mind, our choices and our decisions. When we choose to set ourselves aside and want to glorify God in the tough times, He will help us. Romans 8:1 says, "Therefore there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life has set me free from the law of sin and death." When we submit to Christ's control, we not only abide in peace, we invite the presence of Christ into everything we do and say.

Jan 12 – Call His Name

What's in a name? A lot, actually. Especially when it comes to the name of God. Ever hear God's name tossed around, carelessly? It's sometimes used in cursing or to make off-color comments, but that is not at all what God intended. God gave his name as a title to tell us something about himself. Psalm 105:3,4 says, "glory in His holy name, seek the Lord and His strength, seek His face continually." God wants us to know him. We can get to know him by relying on him, he wants us to call on his name. God wants us to praise His name, to seek his power and that comes through prayer.

Some of us might feel a little embarrassed, we haven't been faithful, God already knows everything about us. We are reminded about this in Psalm 139:1,2 "O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise, you perceive my thoughts from afar." Prayer is for our benefit. Prayer gives us the advantage.

There's power available to us by calling on the name of God. It's being comfortable and having confidence in the One we are asking. Our Heavenly Father loves us so much, He can't love us any more than He does right now. He wants us to run to him with every concern, problem and difficulty. God says, "Just call my name." Some people think of prayer as a formal meeting time. But prayer is as easy as calling out the name of Jesus. Jeremiah 33:3 says "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know." Try calling out God's name today. Just call it out – Jesus. He will be there.

Jan 13 – Send Revival

Ever felt distant from God? You may be in need of revival. Revival is what we need when we have trouble remembering how much God loves us. It's what will restore us when we are bored with the concept of grace. Revival is what will renew us if we have stopped believing God is capable of healing our pain. If you've ever watched your blessings fade and your joy wane, you need revival. We need to experience a refreshing touch of God's grace, that's revival.

Revival is believing God's power is what breaks 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. All

through history, the Bible records individuals and nations who needed revival. Such was the case of the children of Israel during the reign of King Josiah. 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.

Their story is found in the Old Testament, in 2 Chronicles 34. There were four steps to revival - Number one – the people had to humble themselves before God. The people had to realize they sinned against God by worshipping other gods. Number 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. Number three – they recommitted themselves to God. King Josiah called an assembly together with all the people in Judah and Jerusalem. Everyone was there, from the youngest to the oldest, they crammed into the temple. King Josiah read the covenant aloud before the whole kingdom. Together, everyone chose to do things God's way. Step number four: Revival came in to the hearts and minds of all the people like a flood. But revival had to start with one person. And that person was King Josiah. Revival starts with one person. Let that one person be you.

Dear Heavenly Father, we need revival. We need in our hearts and minds and souls. God send revival. We confess we have worshipped other Gods, forgive us. We remove all the other gods and recommit to worshipping only you. Lord send revival into our hearts. Lord send revival into our homes. Lord send revival into our churches. Lord send revival into our cities. Thank you Lord for revival. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Jan 14 – Good-Bye Old Self

Remember when you accepted Christ as your savior? Some 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 any one is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come!" We are made new in Christ, that's what he tells us. 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. Jeremiah 31:3 says "I have loved you with an everlasting love, I have drawn you with lovingkindness." God's love is unconditional, it has no strings attached. In fact, I 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.

Don't you wish it was that easy? To merely say, "Good-bye self." Well it can be. We must re-train our minds, to not be so self-centered. This can only be possible through an attitude of praise. 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, let all who are helpless take heart. Come let us tell of the Lord's greatness, let us exalt his name together."

When we speak out God's praises, we give him the honor, praise and glory due him. That's truly the way to say So Long to Self!

Dear Heavenly Father, thanks for forgiveness. Thank you for your love, your grace and mercy. Thank you that I am a new person In Christ. I want to walk in unselfishness thank you for the Psalms that help us give words to our prayers. Thank you for making it possible through the Holy Spirit. Thank you for your power. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Jan 15 – Let Go, Let God Lead

Life is a series of decisions. What should I eat? What should I wear? Who should I talk with? Some of our choices are habits. Choices can be minor, yet others have lasting impact. In the midst of our choices, we try to decide what's the right way to go. We must remember we are not our own. We belong to God. Since we belong to Him, we must allow Him to lead us and guide us. Many of us have discovered he is leading us in a different direction we had planned. It's hard to trust, but when we let go, we can be assured He is a better leader than we are.

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."

If you've ever rented a house, 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 walk in his will and 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."

To let go is submission to God's will. It is surrender to the love of a God who can be trusted with every aspect of our lives. God wants us to live dependently on him with the awareness that everything we do or think or say is to fit with His purposes.

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

Dear Heavenly Father, you are so good, so loving and so trustworthy. Thanks for directing my life. 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.

Jan 16 – Back to Bad Habits?

Have you felt yourself slipping lately? Maybe you’ve fallen back into a habit you gave up years ago. Remember how it happened, you 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.

Although you hoped it wouldn’t happen, you were surprised it did and now you are left with the consequences of our sin.

Sometimes the obvious is there once we look back over what led us to go to a place we never wanted to be again. It’s such a slippery slope, it’s one small step, that choice can happen when the tempter makes us feel like we are missing out. 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 always be on our guard. We must think about the ways we let our defenses down, the things that tempt us, encouraging us to compromise. We must remember 2 Chron 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 our selves from doing things that are not best for us. Even good is not good enough. There are many things vying for our attention. And we should remember, what John 3:30 says, "He must become greater and greater and I must become less and less." More of Jesus in us, it's a difficult thing to do but in doing it there is great blessing and peace.

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, verse 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.

Jan 17 – What If?

Ever felt like a failure? Ever said "I wish I could" or "If only" or "Too bad I can't do it over?" The question is; who hasn't thought this way? When we confess our sin, God forgives us. But our memory, often selective, it reminds us of our failures. The enemy, our accuser, loves this. Satan wants us to live with regret, guilt and shame. I Peter 5:8 reminds us, "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings."

God will make us into the best version of ourselves. It's when we are at our weakest God can strengthen us. When He strengthens

us, that's when he is glorified. 2 Cor. 12:9, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

With God's strength, we can do above and beyond what we expect. Remember the man who was paralyzed for 38 years? He sat on his mat by the pool for 38 years watching everyone else get healed. And then one day, Jesus asked him "Do you want to get well?" The paralyzed man realized he was talking to the power source and said "Yes." The man whose legs had been frozen on his mat for most of his life, got up and walked. Basically it's like saying God, "Yes, I want to get well." When we say "Yes" to God's power, he does amazing things. It's minimizing ourselves so that Jesus Christ can increase. Less of Sheryl and more of God. That's what gives God glory.

Ever felt patient someone cut you off on the freeway? Romans 8:9 describes the struggle, "You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you." When the spirit of God lives in us, we make a difference in all the lives we touch.

Dear Heavenly Father, Thank you for choosing my weakness to display your strength. Your specialty is healing, restoring, making dreams come true. Would you live in me? Jesus, could you really live through me? You gave your life for me. I give you full control. I lay my life before you. Thank you, Lord Jesus for sending your Holy Spirit to live in me, today. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Jan 18 – Chosen to Give God Glory

Ever wished you were someone else? Me too, I have wanted to be just like someone I really admire. Or I wanted to hang around them because they had it together in an area I didn't. When we

get dependent on others, instead of God, we should be reminded God doesn't want me or you to be dependent on this type of "hand out" from others.

We don't need compliments, flattery or to be noticed by others, we should be encouraged to rest in the fact that God loves us. God sent His only son Jesus to die in our place and he would have done this if we were the only person on earth. That's how much God loves us. Jesus' death was the only payment God would accept for our sins. Hebrews 9:6 says, "Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins." Jesus' blood covers a multitude of our sins. *John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."* Jesus had victory over death when he rose from the dead on the third day. His resurrection is proof that he is God. Literally, Jesus Christ took on our sin, He was our substitute, so that we might become the righteousness of God. When God sees us, he doesn't see our sin, he sees us through Jesus Christ.

Because of Jesus Christ's finished work on the cross, we have access to live life through his power. In Christ, we are new creatures. I Corinthians 5:17 says, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come!"

Each day we walk in fellowship with Jesus Christ, we proclaim his complete-ness. We allow him to live through us. 2 Corinthians 3:18 says, "And we who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."

Dear Heavenly Father, It's almost unfathomable that you have chosen us. Thank you for your love. Thank you that "it's all because of love I'm not who I was, I'm who I'm meant to be." Thank you for making abundant life in Christ possible for us. We fall on our knees, bow at your feet, and say thank you that we are complete in Jesus Christ. Glory to GOD! In Jesus' name, Amen.

### Jan 19 – What Are You Doing?

Ever felt out of sorts? Or had a day when you felt like everything you did unraveled? Some of us have had weeks, even YEARS like that. Sometimes its because God wants to remind us who is in charge. He allows us to experience difficulty so we seek his ways. When we get to the end of our capabilities and our resources, God helps us get things back into place and he has a way of 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. 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 used the situation to teach us how to turn our distractions with worldly stuff into desire for heavenly fellowship. When our lives seem to be careening out of control, the best thing we can do is to quiet our hearts and wait for God's will to be made known.

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. I will rescue you for my sake, yes for my own sake! I will not let my reputation be tarnished, I will not share my glory with idols.” God will glorify himself by refining us in the fire of loss, being wronged, misunderstood and many other types of adversity.

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 me re-evaluate who I am and who you are. Thank you that you will never let go of my hand. Thank you for guiding me. Thank you for the prayer of Job, “He gives and takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord.” God you are worthy of my trust, help me to trust you. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

## Jan 20 – God is Bigger than Our Problems

We all face problems. Sometimes they feel like mountains. These “mountains” are the obstacles that block our goals, successes, relationships and dreams. I’ve faced small mountains of despair, depression and discouragement. And other larger mountains of drug addiction, death and disease. God miraculously melted each and every one of them.

What mountains are you facing today? God is able to move any and all of the mountains in our lives.

In Joshua 3, General Joshua and all the Israelites were facing a “mountain of water” – the Jordan River – it was a VERY large body of water, a huge barrier between them and the Promised Land. This was no small feat, when the whole nation of Israel went across in Joshua 3:14, “As soon as the priests who carried

the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge, the water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away" Amazing – God showed his power by piling up water like a bunch of kids' building blocks.

The passage continues –“The priests who carried the ark of the covenant stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan, while all Israel passed by until the whole nation completed the crossing of the Jordan on dry ground.” As a memorial, they set up 12 stones to remind them that the hand of the Lord is powerful. They built a reminder of God saved them.

God is mighty to rescue, defend and save those who ask him for protection. Isaiah 25:4 says, “But you are a tower of refuge to the poor, o Lord, a tower of refuge to the needy in distress.” We find in Hebrews 7:25, “Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.” We can testify of God's power from Psalm 68:34,35 “Tell everyone about God's power. His majesty shines down on Israel, his strength is mighty in the heavens. God is awesome in his sanctuary. The God of Israel gives power and strength to his people.” Let's pray:

My God, you are mighty to save. Thank you for your power and might. You are the hope of nations. Thank you for moving the mountains in my life. Thank you for filling my life again with your power. Thank you for doing mighty things in your mighty way. Thank you for being mighty to save. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Jan 21 – Will You Just Wait?

Every day we wait. We wait in line at the grocery store. We wait for the traffic light to change. We wait for our children to be ready for school. We wait for God to answer prayer. Much of our time is

spent waiting. My friend, Erma says “We spend most of our lives in God’s waiting room.” And when we wait, the choice is ours about our condition in the waiting room. There are times when the one thing we want is the thing we don’t get. What if the request is delayed or even denied? How should we wait on God to answer our prayers?

Psalm 46:10 says “Be still and know that I am God” this is one of the hardest things to do – to be still and wait. How will you wait? Will you be impatient and anxious or prayerful?

Psalm 44:5 says “Only by your power can we push back our enemies, only in your name can we trample our foes.” Only by understanding our waiting is ordained by God, with his plan in mind, that we will be found prayerful, hopeful and faithful.

In Isaiah 37, King Hezekiah had a big problem, his kingdom was a target. One day a letter warned him a powerful army was on its way to demolish his country. King Hezekiah laid the letter out before God and prayed. This prayer, recorded in Is. 37:20 , “O Lord Our God, rescue us from this power, then all the kingdoms of the earth will know that you alone O Lord, are God.” Because the King waited faithfully in prayer, God answered. Almost immediately, the King got a message through the prophet Isaiah, “Because you prayed, I will defend this city and protect it.”

How will God find you waiting? Remember how King Hezekiah literally laid out the letter before God, will you lay out your problem before God?

Mark 11:24 says “Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours.”

Isaiah 30:18 says “Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you, he rises to show you compassion.” Blessed are all who wait for him!

Let’s pray: Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for helping me wait on you by faith. Thank you that I am blessed when I wait on you. Help me be prayerful, thankful and faithful. I give you praise and glory. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

### Jan 22 – Feeling Left Out?

Remember how it felt to be left out? Were you ever not chosen for a team? Or left behind when a group of friends were doing something fun? Rejection is on the rise and abandoned people are everywhere. Some are preoccupied with self and don’t pay attention to those who love them, this is a type of desertion. Families are fatherless. Divorce is rampant. Our news reports mothers and fathers who ignore their families to pursue their own interests. Drug and alcohol addiction provide a sort of escape that results in neglect and aloneness.

In the middle of the chaos of the hurt of desertion, neglect and abandonment we can find a God of love, peace and kindness. Our God is an “ever present help in a time of need.”

Lamentations 3:55 says, “I called on your name, O Lord, from the depths of the pit. You came near when I called you and you said, “Do not fear.” O Lord, you took up my case, you redeemed my life.”

We might feel alone in the middle of our problems or because people have left us or disappointed us. 2 Corinthians 4:8 says, “We are pressed on every side by troubles but we are not crushed. We are perplexed but not driven to despair. We are hunted down but never abandoned by God. We get knocked

down but we are not destroyed. Through suffering our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies.”

God is our haven, a place of safety. Psalm 9:9 says “The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you.” God will always be with us. He will never leave us or forsake us. Matthew 28:20, “And surely I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” With God’s presence, we are never alone.

Psalm 119:49 says “Remember your word to your servant, for you have given me hope. My comfort in suffering is this: your promise preserves my life.” Let’s pray:

Dear Heavenly Father, Thank you that although I am alone, with you, I am NEVER lonely. You have cared for me tenderly, wiped away my tears, held me close to your heart and encouraged my mind with your hope. Thank you for your presence. I am not afraid to face the future. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Jan 23 – Unmovable

Someone once said, “the only constant in life is change.” We change clothes, our minds and our tastes. Our children change classes, sports and friends. We change churches, jobs and worship music. Our world is in a constant state of change. But God stands firm when everything else moves.

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 trials. We can stand firm because

God never changes. One of God's character qualities, something that only can be attributed to God, is immutability. Which means – never changing, always the same, constant, reliable. Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever. "

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."

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. From Joshua 23:14, "Not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed."

God's love does not fail. From 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."

Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, Thank you that you never change. Thank you that I can stand firm on the solid Rock, My Lord Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Jan 24 – Jesus is the Answer

Jesus Christ is the answer for what ails us. Many of us don't even realize we need healing. Years ago, I was struggling with unforgiveness, hurt and hate. Something very unfair had happened to one of my family members, it was difficult to sort it out because I was not only offended, I also wanted to protect my family from being hurt.

One of the most difficult spiritual practices we face is offering forgiveness to those who don't deserve it. Maybe we don't have to forgive someone for murder, but to keep the lines of communication open between God and us, we must forgive. It's a command. 2 Corinthians 2:10, 11 says "We must forgive, so that no advantage is taken of us by Satan. For we are not ignorant of his schemes."

Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Forgiveness should not be just an occasional act, but a permanent attitude." What this means is forgiveness should actually begin the moment we are offended. Forgiveness is a choice, it's a decision, a crisis of the will. Jesus reminds us in Luke 6:36, "Be merciful, just as your Heavenly Father is merciful."

Our Heavenly Father granted substitutionary forgiveness through His son, Jesus Christ. In the Jewish temple, God required the Israelites to slay a lamb to satisfy the payment. When Jesus Christ was crucified, his wounds belonged to us, he took our place to meet God's requirement.

Because of his sacrifice, Jesus Christ is our remedy. Through Jesus, we can receive the righteousness earned by his crucifixion. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "Christ had no sin, but God made him become sin so that in Christ we could become right with God." When it comes to forgiving others, we bear the

consequences of the other person's sin. When we forgive, we choose to give up our hurt and hate.

I found the answer to healing my hurt and hate was to forgive and love with God's love. I experienced healing through my relationship with Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. I found out, "Forgiveness is not forgetting, it's about letting go of another person's throat." I could show mercy and even love those who wronged me because of the power of forgiveness.

Let's pray: Dear Heavenly Father, Thank you for providing your son as the Answer. You were there I was hurt. I forgive them for making us feel ashamed, unworthy and unimportant. I release them into your care. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Jan 25 – Just Praise Him

We live in a world of technology – instant messageing, cell phones, emails, texting, facebook, twitter. Yet communication with God is just as easy, even more simple because it is just a prayer away. In 2 Chronicles 16:9 it says, "The eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are completely committed to Him." God wants us to be dependent on Him when we call on Him.

There's power available to you by calling on the name of God. Try praying to your Heavenly Father. Essentially, it's being comfortable with the One to whom we are asking. Our Heavenly Father loves us so much, He can't love us any more than He does right now. He wants us to run to him with every concern, problem and difficulty.

When we pray using God's name and remind Him of the promises in His Word, we speak His language, we also gain strength, encouragement and stand firm. This choice provides power and

purpose to our prayer life. Exodus 20:24 says, “Wherever I cause My name to be honored, I will come to you and bless you.”

God says, “Just call my name.” Some people think of prayer as a formal meeting time. But prayer is as easy as calling out the name of Jesus.

Praise is fitting for the name of God, too. God loves it when we praise Him, there are lots of ways to praise Him found in psalms. From Psalm 145:1, 2, “I will extol you my God O king, and I will bless your name forever and ever. Everyday I will bless you. And I will praise your name forever and ever.

Just call his name - to pray or praise, either way God is waiting you.

Dear Heavenly Father, Thank you – your love for us is so alive. Thank you, for always being there when we call. Thank you for your presence and power in our lives. We praise you heavenly Father, In the mighty name of Jesus, Amen.