

## Transformed Through Truth March 2016

### #1 Think Your Thoughts 3/1, 3/26

Does your mind wander? Do you escape reality by going to your 'happy place?' Someone once said, "Where the mind goes, the man follows." That's why we must take control of our thoughts and avoid wasting energy. We must discipline our minds to think like God thinks. Rom. 12:2 says "Therefore I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer yourselves as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. 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." So how can our mind be renewed? We must draw near to God, express our trust in Him and tell Him we love him. We must choose to minimize worry. We can select a more positive option instead of worry. We can worship. Here's how it works: you realize you are worrying about something late at night, a time you can do nothing about it. Instead of obsessing, take action! Tell yourself: "not now!" and focus your mind on something else. When worry wakes me up in the middle of the night, I say, "Thank you Lord, for waking me up, I needed more time to thank you for this situation. I worship you and praise you for the solution you have coming. I trust you for the answer. In Jesus' name, Amen." Usually I have a praise song running through my head, that always helps woo me back to sleep as Jesus cradles me in His arms. Instead of 'stinkin' thinkin', choose to praise Him!

### #2 Ouch, That Hurt! 3/2, 3/27

Ever bumped your funny bone, pinched your finger or stubbed your toe? Our first response might be, "Ouch, that hurt!" Don't you wish we could admit that fact when we deal with our own hurt feelings? Someone misunderstands a comment, dishes you a sarcastic remark or criticizes your efforts at work. Our first response when we suffer emotional pain could be to lash out in anger, revenge or retribution. Yet we must let God neutralize the process by taking 'self' out of the equation. Instead of lashing out with a quick response or self defense, choose a discipline of silence by practicing prayer. This is not a weak way to escape a situation. It is a choice to trust God in the middle of disagreement that can be diffused. "The Lord watches over all who love him but all the wicked He will destroy." Psalm 145:20

"Hurting people hurt people," is a phrase used in counseling, especially true when it comes to solving painful situations. In times of painful conflict, it helps to remind yourself: "God loves me, God is watching over me, God will give an answer." This is God's promise of His watch-care over us, even during difficult days. Feel alone and unprotected? God watches over us like a shepherd watches over his flock. As I step back from a devastating situation and pour out my feelings, I pray, "Lord, that comment really hurt. Father, why did that hurt so much?" I might not have the answer right away but He hears, cares and heals. "Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us." Psalm 62:8

#3 Let God Guide 3/3, 3/28

I'm an avid wilderness hiker. I stay on the trail, abide by the markers and follow my map. I always plan ahead, even plan a couple of extra days into my schedule just in case I want to stay an extra night beside a luscious

lake. One trip, things didn't go as planned, our group was separated from our food supply and guide. We had to depend on God's direction and follow the stream to return to civilization. Sometimes we feel confused in life; we yearn to find our path. We try a lot of different things, we are hopeful, yet nothing works. All of our paths have led to a dead-end. "I guide you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths." Proverbs 4:11

The way of wisdom chooses to trust God no matter what happens. In the game called "Trust." With one person blindfolded, another person would lead them, using only their voice to tell them where to step and how to avoid falling. In the same way, God leads us with His voice through prayer and His word. As we let him take the wrong or even random ways we have departed from his path, He is able to fit them into a comprehensive plan for good. This is God's Master Plan. Let's pray from Rom. 8:28 (AMP), "Father, thank you for leading me and guiding me along your path. I am assured and know that all things work together and are fitting into a plan to and for me, who loves God and called according to God's design and purpose. Thank you Lord, that my steps are directed by the Lord." I will trust you, Amen."

#### #4 Praying Colossians 3 3/4, 3/29

God has chosen us as His precious possession. We are a chosen people. We are holy and dearly loved. We are anointed by the Holy Spirit. We are appointed to do good works God has planned for us to do from long ago. These facts should influence our daily choices. Every day we make choices about what we will wear, eat and do with our time. We also have the choice about what we think about. So for today, make the choice to put God's word into your mind. When you read God's word, allow your mind to be saturated

by truth, your thinking will be transformed, your actions will be a transference of God's grace to share His love. You will be set apart from the world to do more for God's kingdom. Here's Colossians 3:12 - 17

[12](#)Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

[13](#)Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. [14](#)And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

[15](#)Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. [16](#)Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. [17](#)And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

#5 I Adore You 3/5, 3/30

"I adore you" is a sentiment we might share with our sweetheart. On my first trip to Africa, this phrase was used lovingly and intimately in prayer to God. It touched me deeply to hear this not only from our African host, but again from his wife, our translators and other Nigerian friends. The people had few possessions and nothing of real monetary value, yet their walk with God was deep and obviously satisfying. I was inspired by their profound commitment to our savior and how they were not ashamed to show outward affection for God. The simple affirmation of adoration was pure, innocent and evidence of a heart of worship. When we worship God like this, it transforms us. It changes us to be more and more like Him. We

know something about His beauty when we are in awe of His created works, yet none of the beauty we see is perfectly holy. When we ponder ways to adore Him, in his creation, in his holiness, in his perfection, this delights us and fills us with awe. Authentic worship demands we know God as he truly is. We cannot understand Him perfectly or completely but we can strive to know Him accurately as He reveals Himself in His word. 1 Cor. 13:12 says, “Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.” Let’s deepen our understanding of Him, and be transformed as He is glorified in beautiful worship and awestruck adoration. “Give unto the Lord the glory due His name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.” Psalm 29:2

#6 Take Me Back 3/6, 3/31

If you’ve ever second-guessed a decision you’ve made, you are in like company. Henrietta Mears, the founder of Gospel Light was asked at the end of her life, if you could do anything different with your life, what would it be? She said, “Believe God more.” Have you looked forward to something for a long time, then when you finally got it, it wasn’t at all what you thought it would be. Did you feel deceived? You had faith in the object, not in the one it came from. “Our belief in God is not blind faith. Belief is having a firm conviction something is true, not hoping it’s true.” (Max Lucado) Is it any surprise some of us have a hard time trusting God? When bad things happen to good people, we second-guess God’s love for us.

How big is your God? There is no middle ground when it comes to believing God – either we operate in fear or faith. Prov. 3:5,6 says, “Trust in

the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and he will make your paths straight.”

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

#7 Who Am I? 3/7

“We are all products of our past but we choose whether or not we are prisoners of it,” says Pastor Rick Warren. It took two decades for me to allow God to break through the prison of guilt I had locked myself into. I didn’t know how to let go of my feelings of shame, blame and unworthiness. I didn’t know what it meant to literally let the blood of Jesus cover my sin, accept God’s forgiveness and learn how to walk in victory through my identity in Christ. I didn’t understand how to abide in the truth of what God says about me and act accordingly.”

There’s a big difference between who you are in yourself and who you are in Christ.

Eph 1:3 “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.”

In and of ourselves, we are nothing. In Him – you and I are complete, lacking in nothing. Complete: satisfied, finished, perfected, filled up, assured, confident, secure.

Eph 1:4 “For he chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight.”

If we know who we are in Christ, what you are or what you lack doesn't matter any more.

In Christ - You are LOVED, You are SAFE, You are IMPORTANT

Eph 1:11 “In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.” When you know who you are, it makes all the difference. You are free from your past, to live on purpose in the present!

#8 God, Do You Care? 3/8

1:00 am, I was wide awake. My mind flashed to the family issue which interrupted my sleep. “Why God, why?” I prayed, “Are you there, do you care?” Even during the times you might think “God – do you know about this?” We can be assured He knows, He cares and He is working.

Several years ago, I was given a diagnosis of stage 4 non-hodgkins lymphomain four places in my body – it was in my bone marrow. It was not only in the lymphnode of my lower left eye-lid, but in the bone marrow of my right arm, shoulder, elbow and the femur of my left leg. We prayed, some nights and days, we anguished in prayer for my healing. If it was God's will.

There were times I wanted to react in fear. The mistrust of God is deception. Deception is the choice to see God other than how he really is.

We chose to trust God's faithfulness and pray according to His will be done. So after months of chemotherapy and lots of prayer, I was gave God the glory. My doctor called and said, Sheryl, I can't believe it, there's no more cancer!

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. God is constant, unwavering, dependable and reliable. Faithfulness is his fiber; it is his being. He will not change. "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." Heb. 11:1 Thank you Lord, for the opportunity to strengthen my faith!

#### #9 Belief brings Peace 3/9

It's been a little over six years since my husband of 28 years was killed in a motorcycle accident. It's not the path I would have chosen for me or my family. It's been a time of healing, questioning God, and trusting God for our future. I never would have imagined I'd be a widow. It breaks my heart to watch my own children grieve this loss as we face the future without their father. As many of you have experienced, at times in our lives, God's will doesn't make sense – someday when my life seemed overwhelming, I remembered – with God NOTHING is Impossible: the word itself says, I'm Possible (Audrey Hepburn)“If you can’?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for him who believes.” (Mark 9:23)

I've chosen to believe God's character qualities of faithfulness, grace and love are wrapped around my circumstances. I am trusting the God who



loves, whose word never fails, to provide what we need during this time of healing.

Isaiah 57:1,2 says, "The righteous perish, and no one ponders it in his heart; devout men are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil. Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death."

We let God be God when by faith, we trust Him as the God of our future. We can walk into the uncertainties and the unknowns trusting He is already there, waiting for us. When we know God's Word, we can stand on His promises.

Let him to change your view from insecurity to confidence. Recognize God has your best in mind. "Remember - God's greatest pleasure is to be believed." Robb Thompson

#10 Overcomer 3/10

Don't think its easy to #overcome...it is hard work. "Accept what is, let go of what was, and have faith in what will be." What is bothering you? Nosey neighbors, invasive in-laws, picky employers, wishy-washy workers? Weight issues, money problems, marriage struggles, family strife, local robberies, world hunger, poverty, disease or war? You are not immune to any struggles. Don't lean on your understanding, lean on God's wisdom. For some of us this mind set is an uncomfortable reality check and remarkable paradigm shift. We need a new perspective. Choose the view that #Godisbiggerthanyourproblem Whenever you find yourself struggling to accept God's ways with you, stop and remember who He is. Submit your

mind and heart before God and worship Him, trusting His wisdom and infinite intelligence.

Phil 3:12-14 "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. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. 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 #Iwillnotgiveup Let's pray, "Heavenly Father, thank you for your love and grace. Thank you for the new resolve you've given me to look at my struggles from your perspective. Thanks for the new view. I ask you Lord, help me to view my obstacles as opportunities for your strength to help me press on. I want to be the person you have designed me to become. In Jesus' Name, Amen"

#11 App Interruption 3/11

As an avid runner, my favorite app for my Iphone 5 is Map My Run, it helps me track my running mileage, my pace and even tells me how many calories I've burned. Last week, I was enjoying my run, breathing the fresh air deep into my lungs, just getting warmed up. I had heard the woman's voice tell me: "Distance: 1 mile, pace 9.3 seconds, split 9.3 minutes." A few minutes later, in the middle of my second mile and a different woman's voice startled me with, "Hello Gorgeous, you are looking better all the time, your fabulous future awaits, find out more here." I thought, "Are you kidding me? My Map My Run app's was interrupted by an advertisement from a psychic app?" I couldn't believe it! And then it occurred to me that wherever technology is, there will be those who try to distract us from truth. I

reminded myself that “I am a child of God, the evil one cannot touch me, I am chosen and appointed by Christ to bear his fruit.” As I affirmed my identity “who I am in Christ,” I knew the evil one could not touch me. John Stott says, “In practice, we should constantly be reminding ourselves who we are. We need to talk to ourselves, ask ourselves, “Don’t you know you are enslaved to God and are committed to His obedience?” We must continue until we reply, “Yes, I do know who I am, a new person in Christ.” Ephesians 5:15 reminds us “Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise making the most of every opportunity because the days are evil.”

## #12 You Have to Go Back to Go Forward 3/12

For years I was embarrassed that I had been addicted to drugs or alcohol. I was married to a pastor, my pastor’s wives friends seemed to have perfect husbands, children, homes and ministries. It appeared that they had no problems. I felt like I struggled without progress in all of these areas. I wondered, what was wrong with me? One day, in the middle of a melt-down, I couldn’t stop crying, I was depressed and in anguish. In a meeting with a Christian counselor, we discussed how I didn’t know how to forgive myself. I found out by what means I could accept the forgiveness God offers, yet my condemning thoughts of blame, shame and unworthiness haunted me. These were meant to distract me and even take me out of serving God altogether. It was time for me to own up to my mistakes, and let my past disciple me. This choice to embrace my past gave me certain opportunities to learn and even unwrap a few gifts. But my ‘emotional baggage’ weighed me down, I felt extremely burdened because of my unresolved conflict, I couldn’t unpack it on my own. Through sound biblical

counsel and the faith of trusted friends, I became aware of my insufficiency to solve my problems. I accepted God's grace it as a gift, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God." Eph. 2:8 I had a difficult time accepting, yet once I responded to God's offer, I gave Him my gratitude. Now I can't stop thanking Him and telling others what God has done for me. "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift." 2 Cor. 9:15

### #13 The Power of Prayer 3/13

It was a Wednesday afternoon, Pastor Paul had just called the church office to fill them in on the results of my PET scan. I was diagnosed with stage four cancer, surgery and chemotherapy were prescribed. It was a very scary day. We arrived to church for the evening service, someone had already put an order in for a prayer quilt. The quilt ministry group got to work on my special blanket so it would be completed as soon as possible. We walked into the foyer on Sunday and noticed the quilt displayed on a table. Precious saints hovered over the quilt praying as they tied a knot to complete the quilt's preparation to aid in my recovery.

"Prayer is the key that unlocks all the storehouses of God's infinite grace and power," says R.A.Torrey "All that God is, and has, is at the disposal of prayer. Prayer can do anything that God can do."

Prayer is all about God. But prayer works when we talk to God about what is on our hearts. God wants us to ask Him. Jesus' parting words in John 14:12-14, "whatever you ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name I will do it." God wants to release His power; the resource of His strength is stored up,

available for our asking. “ I am thankful to God for the saints who prayed over the prayer quilt. God glorified Himself when he healed me of stage four cancer. Like the crippled man whose friends lowered him through the roof so he could see Jesus, my friends, showed me Jesus through their faithful prayers.

#### #14 This Thing is From Me 3/14

The first Sunday after I was diagnosed with stage four cancer, the saints prayer quilt ministry gave me a special blanket prayed over by our congregation. Another surprise was from a dear friend, who gave me a book by Dr. David Jeremiah called A Bend in The Road. I read chapter one the first week of my cancer treatments, which gave me a lot to think about regarding my perspective “Disruptive moments are divine appointments.” I asked God to teach me the lessons of lymphoma. I chose to accept the fact that God had permitted my trial to test me. I borrowed this prayer from Dr. Jeremiah, “Dear Lord, you have allowed this in my life. I don’t understand it, but I know that it couldn’t have happened to me unless it was filtered through your loving hands. So, this thing is from you.” I was encouraged by 2 Cor 13:9-10, “But he said to me, my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I will boast all the more about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” I wanted more power, more holiness and more fruit in my walk with God but I hadn’t expected He would teach me through stage four cancer. Yet, once I submitted to His loving hand, there were blessings along the way. I can

testify to others He is able to make you strong in any weakness! God had designed this trial for me and His presence was enough!

#### #15 Holiness=Obedience 3/15

“The problem with life is that it gets so daily,” says Chuck Swindoll. Does that mean a faithful, consistent walk with God needs to be boring? Absolutely not. It’s the little choices that serve as building blocks to complete big projects. We can rejoice in the fact that our daily selections really do have eternal significance. When we are alive in God, tapping into His strength, we are united with Christ in all of His power. We can trust Him in the opportunities he sends our way, even in adversity, we are given strength to respond in a way that results in Kingdom impact. You see, our response to circumstances is an important part of our walk with God. When we react gracefully to difficulty, instead of asking God why me? We can prepare our response in advance of the trial, now what? Jerry Bridges says, “Our reactions to circumstances are a part of our walk of holiness. Holiness is not a series of do’s and don’ts, but conformity to the character of God and obedience to the will of God. Accepting with contentment whatever circumstances God allows for me is very much a part of a holy walk.”

The apostle Paul explains it in Phil 4:11, “I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need and I know what it is to have plenty.” In gain or loss, contentment is a choice. Let’s pray, “Heavenly Father, thank you that we don’t have to face our trials alone. Come what may, Lord, we choose a “now what?” attitude. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.”

#### #16 Turn on the Power 3/16

God's specialty is transforming the impossible into the probable. Have you felt a circumstance was beyond fixing? Have you thought a person unredeemable? Have you determined your property loss irreplaceable? God wants to release His power; the resource of His strength is stored up, available for our asking. "This power is so rich, so mobile that all we have to do when we pray is to point to the persons or things to which we desire to have this power applied and He the Lord of this power; will direct the necessary power to the desired place," says Olan Hallesby in the book, *Prayer*. Phil. 4:6-7 says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

Petitioning God with His words reminds Him of the promises He has made. The promises God has made, He always keeps. Pray using God's Word to remind Him of His promises and apply the power directly to the desired place. God desires a clean, humble heart along with a submissive spirit. When we bring our requests and ourselves to Him, He will receive us and hear our prayers.

In Matthew 20:32, two blind men found the key to the storehouse of Jesus' power. Jesus asked them, "What do you want me to do for you?" Boldly, they answered, "Lord we want our sight." Jesus touched their eyes; instantly they could see. A strong belief in Jesus' power coupled along with the specific request gave God great glory. Want to unlock the storehouse of Jesus' power? Just pray.

#17 The Recipe for Relational Renewal 3/17

Family strife? Differences of opinion? Are you down in the dumps? Maybe a little depressed? You wonder if family harmony will ever be restored?

Restoration and revival in the relationships closest to you can be accomplished by following this five step recipe:

1. Dash of submission – James 4:7 “Submit yourselves then to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” When we surrender to God, we allow him to lead us and provide for our relationships.
2. 4 cups of communication – Eph. 4:26, “Be angry and sin not.” Be honest about what you are disappointed about. Share the things you are angry about. Talk it out. Listen.
3. A teaspoon of compromise – Song of Sol. 2:15, “Catch of us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards.” Meet each other in the middle, negotiate.
4. A pinch of understanding – Prov. 17:27, “A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, a man of understanding is even-tempered.” It’s a choice to want to understand people. We might not approve their unwise decisions, but to let them we want to empathize with them, we can walk alongside in their time of need.
5. A tablespoon of forbearance – Eph. 4:1-3, “Live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace.” We can offer love, patience and nurture a spirit of unity through the grace Jesus offers to us. Let’s pray, “Father help me to follow the recipe for



relational renewal. Blend the ingredients together with your presence, I pray for restoration, renewal and revival. In Jesus' name, Amen."

## #18 Moving from Fear to Faith 3/18

"Keep your eyes closed and hold very still," the x-ray technician said as the table I was laying on slid into the coffin-like MRI tube. Now velcroed onto the examination table, and on the outside, my body was motionless. But on the inside, my mind was exploding. "What if I have a brain tumor? They only do MRIs if they suspect something is really serious. I must have something life-threatening."

My mind raced through a gamut of questions. "God, what is going on? Why is this happening to me? What is the lump?" I knew I would have to get control of myself or the three-hour test might not be completed because this patient would go bezerk. I was full of overwhelming fear. My unsettled mind reached out, "Help me, Lord," I shuttered silently as the test drug on. I remembered studying Psalm 27:1 that morning, "The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?" God's truth and peace comforted me as I realized I had nothing to fear; not MRI claustrophobia, the mysterious tests, the uncertain diagnosis, the imminent treatment. Not even the unknown future. I moved through my fear and into the confidence of God's provision and protection that over-rides the feeling of fear. We don't know what our future holds, but God does. We let God be God when by faith, we actually trust Him as the God of our future. We can walk into the uncertainties and the unknowns trusting He is already there, waiting for us. Isaiah 12:2 says "Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid,"

## #19 Actions = Belief 3/19

“I can’t believe I did that! I don’t know where that came from – I don’t believe things like that at all.” We might catch ourselves behaving in a manner that is far from what we think we believe. Instead of rationalizing an action, it indicates we actually believe – only then are we able to come against the lie and painfully face the truth. As long as the thoughts and actions are merely written off as something external – Satan’s attacks – or some overwhelming darkness – we are held bondage to our own deeply held unconscious beliefs. *It is impossible to behave in a manner inconsistent with what you believe.* Says Dr. Neil T. Anderson.

In 2006, Ted Haggard was the most influential evangelical in the nation. President of the National Association of Evangelicals, pastor of a Colorado mega church, writer and speaker . Yet Pastor Ted Haggard struggled with the internal turmoil of homosexuality. His actions revealed his true belief system. In his letter of dismissal to his church, Pastor Ted Haggard wrote: *When I stopped communicating about my problems, the darkness increased and finally dominated me. As a result, I did things that were contrary to everything I believe.*

*Pastor Ted made two major mistakes:* First, he wasn’t honest, he didn’t take time for confession and personal accountability. Second, he wouldn’t admit that his actions revealed his heart.

In Psalm 51, we see how King David humbly submitted himself to God, wanted to know these hidden beliefs of the heart and asked God to reveal them to him. May King David’s prayer be our prayer, too, from Psalm 51:10 “Create in me a pure heart, O God and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”

## #20 Risk or Exist 3/20

*Believing God's plan is best is a crisis of the will. We are deceived when we feel we can't trust God with our situation and don't believe he can help us. Doubt is the opposite of belief. The only anecdote for unbelief is to accept the truth. Those who believe God can put their faith in Him in any circumstance.*

*"Likewise today, some Christians are content to merely exist until they die. They don't want to risk anything, to believe God, to grow or mature. They refuse to believe his Word, and have become hardened in their unbelief. Now they're living just to die." David Wilkerson*

*Do you believe God is able? God is the One who has sufficient ability and resources. What are you believing God to do for you today?*

*Are you in need of a job?*

*II Corinthians 9:8: "And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."*

*Are you sick?*

*Ephesians 3:20-21 "Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations."*

*Are you having a problem with your spouse?*

*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."*

God is not our own private magic genie, we don't command him to do what we want. But when we pray according to His will, He gives himself glory through His answer.

#21 Ideal vs. Real 3/21

"Great successes in the ministry are often followed by failure." Said Pastor Rick Warren

Every leader must learn how to deal with the tension between the ideal and the real.

Moses is an authority on how to deal with disappointment. The Israelites were complainers, whiners and criticizers. They wandered forty years to make the eleven day trip to the Promised Land. God gave them chance after chance to go in, but they were full of unbelief.

Moses led the people from miracle of the parting of the Red Sea, to the desert of Shur and for three days they traveled in the desert without finding water. When they came to Marah they could not drink its water because it was bitter. "Marah" means "bitter". This is no small problem. Think about it: three million thirsty people, one million thirsty animals. He's got a major problem. The Red Sea experiences are often followed by the Marah experiences. What is the Marah in your ministry? It is anything that is distasteful, that is bitter, uncomfortable, disappointing to you, upsetting to you

Why does God lead us to Marah's? In v. 25 it tells us, "*There the Lord made a decree and there He tested them.*" God allows Marahs in our lives in order to test us. God had just brought them through the great experience of the Red Sea and immediately, three days later, they're

without water and they're in a bitter experience. What is God asking you to trust Him with? Let's pray, "Heavenly Father, I'm feeling very disappointed in the people in my life right now. I ask you to help me through this test. Thank you, In Jesus' Name, Amen."

## #22 Christ is in Our Midst 3/22

"Christ is in our midst" is a greeting used in part of the divine liturgy in the Orthodox church. It's a welcome reminder that at the same time Christ is in the center of our relationships at church, he's in the middle of the solar system and our entire being. Amazing, the Mighty One who created the universe lives in us. Zephaniah 3:17 reminds us "The Lord your God is in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing."

Think about it. We have an amazing power source living inside of us. This power shows itself most effective in our weakness. Imprisoned and embattled, the apostle Paul said it best in 2 Cor. 12:9 "But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

We do well to remind ourselves, regularly, that the Powerful One lives inside of us. He is mighty. With this awareness of His indwelling presence, discouragement will be gone and we will be filled with great joy. "To Him

who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy.” Jude 24

The first part of the Orthodox greeting said by one person to another: “Christ is in our midst”. The response by the person greeted, “He is and ever shall be!”

“Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for being the center of everything. Thank you that you specialize in using the weak, weary and wounded. Thank you for being in our midst for ever more! In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

### #23 What Disappointment Says 3/23

How we choose to deal with disappointment tells us what’s inside of us, what our reactions are, what our motivations are.

Moses experienced this first hand, it was only three days after the Red Sea miracle. He was leading the children of Israel through the desert and at the very first sign of trouble they’re already doubting. v. 24 “*So the people grumbled against Moses saying, ‘What are we to drink?’*” They forgot the miracle of the parting of the Red Sea. They’re complaining, criticizing, griping, grumbling, murmuring. That was one of the reasons that kept them out of the Promised Land. One minute Moses is a hero, the next minute he’s a zero.

That’s true in life The greatest successes are often followed by failure and by forgetfulness. It’s amazing how quickly people forget what you’ve done for them, how you’ve given for them, how you’ve served them, how you’ve

helped them. Children forget what their parents have done for them. Bosses forget what their employees have done for them. Spouses take each other for granted. the average homemaker in a lifetime will prepare 35,000 meals and make 40,000 beds. We take it for granted. Great service in ministry is often followed by forgetfulness.

1. Don't curse it. Don't retaliate or get revenge, speak positively to those who are speaking negatively about you.
2. Don't rehearse it. Every time you review a hurt when someone has hurt you, it gets bigger.
3. Don't nurse it. Don't take it personally or allow it to make you negative. Ephesians 4:26-27 *"Don't let the sun go down while you're still angry and do not give the devil a foothold."* Dear Father, Keep me thankful! Amen

#### #24 Let Disappointment be Your Reappointment 3/24

"What do you do when you're offended in ministry?" Pastor Rick Warren says: 1. Don't curse it. Don't retaliate or get revenge. When people don't appreciate you, when they've disappointed you, let you down, don't strike back. When you retaliate, God stops acting on your behalf. Romans 12:14 says *"Bless those who persecute you. Bless and do not curse."* The opposite of blessing is cursing. That means speak positively to those who are speaking negatively about you.

2. Don't rehearse it. Every time you review a hurt when someone has hurt you, it gets bigger. If somebody offers a word of criticism, that hurts. It gets magnified every time you rehearse a hurt. Job 5:2 (good News) *"to worry yourself to death with resentment would be a foolish thing to do."*

Resentment is one of the great killers of effectiveness in ministry. When

you've got resentment, you're focusing on the past not on the present or the future. And you can't minister effectively. Ephesians 4:31 says *"Get rid of all bitterness, anger, slander along with every form of malice."*

3. Don't nurse it. Don't take it personally or allow it to make you negative. Ephesians 4:26-27 *"Don't let the sun go down while you're still angry and do not give the devil a foothold."* It's ok to be angry. Anger is a legitimate response to hurt, but when we hold on to anger it becomes sin because anger held on to becomes bitterness. Anger stored up becomes resentment. If you are a leader you must expect to be misunderstood. It's a fact of life, you will be misunderstood. Let's pray, "Lord Jesus, Help us settle into our new assignment. In Jesus' Name, Amen"

#### #25 The Link of Hope 3/25

Survivors of the Auschwitz holocaust say the only thing that pulled them through horrific years of torture and captivity in the German concentration camps was to hold on to hope. Our Christian hope is linked to the presence of Jesus Christ. The more aware we are of the presence of Jesus Christ, the more hopeful we will feel. We must not hesitate to ask for Jesus' help especially when we feel distant. We can pray simple prayers like "Jesus make me aware of you." Ever dragged through a day feeling alone? Ever limped along on a project, feeling unproductive and empty? Jesus is waiting for you and me to ask for His help. He says in James 4:2 "You do not have because you do not ask." We ask Him for help, with expectation;



we expect the answer to come. We are confident God is working. Because of who God is, we can live realistically hoping in a God who always fulfills His promises and loves it when we pray His word.

“Why are you in despair, o my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him for the help of His presence.” Psalm 42:5

Rick Warren watched one of his children struggle with mental illness for 27 years. When his son took his life, he said “What gives me the most hope every day is God’s grace; knowing that his grace is going to give me the strength for whatever I face, knowing that nothing is a surprise to God.

Heavenly Father, Thank you for hearing my cries. Thank you for your presence and your grace. In Jesus’ Name, Amen