

12/01/08

Ephesians 5:1-4 Give thanks instead of giving in.

If you want to stay strong against the temptations to sin, stay thankful to God! And in the midst of the temptation, SAY how thankful you are to God – over and over and over until the temptation leaves. Why? Because giving thanks empowers you to keep perspective when sin tempts you, and enables you to resist the pull of the flesh. Listen to Paul's list of sins to avoid. Fornication, all uncleanness, covetousness, filthiness, foolish talking, crude joke-telling – which he says are not proper or becoming for saints like you. But RATHER, give thanks! "Rather" means INSTEAD OF.... Instead of giving in to the sinful temptations, give God thanks! You'll be amazed at how effective this is in driving away the tempter!

Reflect on these statistics. "If you hold your head up with a smile on your face and are "TRULY THANKFUL," you're blessed because the majority can, but most do not. If you can hold someone's hand, hug them or even touch them on the shoulder for encouragement, "be thankful!" You're blessed because you can offer God's healing touch! If you can read this devotional today, "be thankful!" More than 2 billion people around the world cannot read anything at all. "YOU ARE BLESSED IN SO MANY WAYS! NEVER GET TIRED OF ACKNOWLEDGING THAT FACT BEFORE GOD! You'll be the stronger person for having done it!

12/02/08

Psalms 103:2 Don't forget his benefits today?

Each day when you get up, start the day in prayer, meditating on God's goodness in your life. No matter how busy your schedule might be, never allow the affairs of this life to entangle you (2 Timothy 2:4), and prevent you from doing this. In this one verse alone, you have enough listed to stay on your knees in worship and praise until Jesus returns! What is on the list? FORGIVENESS! HEALTH AND HEALING! PROTECTION! MERCY AND LOVINGKINDNESS! GOODNESS AND PROVISION! RENEWAL! Bless the Lord for all of this – today and everyday!

Thank God for all that's on this list! Psalms 68:19 says to bless God for all the benefits He loads upon you daily. And at the end of the verse, it includes the word "Selah", which means to "pause and reflect". It's a daily discipline that must be cultivated in your life. Before the day gets going and crowds out your time, take time to pause and reflect upon the benefits you enjoy from God everyday. Doing this protects you from drifting away from God with an attitude of ingratitude, and keeps your heart soft, pliable and thankful. No matter how "bad" things may get sometimes in your life, always remember His benefits – freely given, and loaded upon you DAILY! Everyday is a gift from God – walk in the light of that truth today, and everyday!

12/03/08

Romans 8:31 The greatest gift, Gods's love.

As Christmas approaches, people become more "gift" conscious. They think about what they want, and what others want as gifts. Yet when it comes to the giving of gifts, very few are aware of the greatest gift ever given to man - God's love! Many people say that Jesus was the greatest gift given to man – and that's true, but look carefully at what John 3:16 says. For God so "loved" the world He gave His only begotten son.... If it weren't for God's love for you, Jesus would never have come. Romans 8:31 says nothing can cause God to stop loving you! Nothing! Think about that! Even at your lowest point in life, He still loves you! Nothing you can say or do convinces God to stop loving you! Would to God men would understand this! Do you?

When Psalms 103:2 tells you to remember His benefits daily, start by remembering His love for you. For the next 9 days, we'll look at 9 ways this love is manifested in your life everyday. Here is the list of love benefits you enjoy everyday from God: 1) His PROMISES. 2) His PROTECTION. 3) His PROVISION. 4) His PEOPLE. 5) His POWER. 6) His PEACE. 7) His PRAYERS. 8) His PATIENCE. 9) His PRESENCE. When God loves you, these are things you get from Him everyday. Take the time to pause and reflect upon each of them, and once again, lift up your hands in thanksgiving and gratitude for all He's done for you!

12/04/08

2 Peter 1:4 God's love expressed: His Promises!

The Bible says the promises of God are exceedingly great and precious. Why? Because they represent the foundation your entire relationship with God is built upon. Without faith its impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6), but what is your faith based upon? One or more promises of God found in His Word. The promise has to be there before you can exercise faith in that promise! Adam sinned, and God promised a Savior. You're a child of God today because of that promise. You embraced it, received it, and accepted it. 2 Corinthians 1:20 says that in Christ, all of God's promises are always YES and AMEN! That means if the promise has been made, its ALWAYS for you – no matter what! Not "maybe", but definitely!

James 1: 17 says every good and perfect gift comes from God. The promises you're standing on in faith right now in your life -recognize them as gifts from the hand of your loving Heavenly Father. He didn't have to give them, but He chose to because He loves you! Whatever you face in life, there is one or more promises from God to cover it. Praise God for that! Even if you don't have answers for all of life's problems – God promises that one day all the answers will come – if not in this life, certainly in the next. So for now then, in this life, just be thankful the promises are there! Are you standing in faith for healing? Thank God for 1 Peter 2:24, which promises healing because of the "stripes" of Jesus! Standing in faith for your bills to be paid? Thank God for 3 John 2, which says above all God wants you to prosper and be health. Find the promise and exercise faith in that promise, but most of all, remember the promise itself reveals God's intense love for you! Selah!

12/05/08

Psalms 102:2 God's love expressed: His protections.

One of the ways God expresses His love to you is with His protection. If it weren't for God's Divine protection, only God Himself knows how many times we'd have ended up dead, or in some gutter someplace! How does He protect us? With His mercy, which is new every morning (Lamentations 3:22,23). With His forgiveness, which is available anytime we ask for it (1 John 1:9). With angels, who are sent to minister to the heirs of salvation (Hebrews 1:14). With the blood of Jesus, which sits on the Heavenly Mercy Seat (Hebrews 9:12). And who does God protect us from? From ourselves!

You need to know your worst enemy is YOU. James 4:1-7 lists the 3 enemies we must deal with in this life. 1) The devil. 2) The world system that Satan is in charge over. 3) The dead-to-sin flesh. Of those three, the flesh is by far the most formidable because we live IN it, and can't just leave it behind whenever it wants to sin. So of all 3 enemies, God protects us most from ourselves – from our unregenerate flesh. That's why His mercy and forgiveness is always available and new every morning. That's why the angels are constantly at work to protect us when we make bad choices, and why the precious blood of Jesus sits on the MERCY seat and not the JUDGMENT seat! Aren't you glad you can come to God when you sin or fail, and immediately get the forgiveness needed? That's called PROTECTION! The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), but with God's daily protection, we can stand

tall, and victorious – every day of our lives! Praise God for the love that makes this kind of protection available!

12/06/08

Philippians 4:19 God's Love Expresses: His provision

One of the ways God expresses His love to you is with His provision. He promises to supply ALL your need according to His riches in glory through Christ Jesus. Not most of your need – but ALL of it. That means whatever you need as far as provision is concerned – God has made it available for you to enjoy. Psalms 37:25 says that God TAKES PLEASURE in the prosperity of His servants. If you're a child of God, that means YOU! You don't have to wonder whether it's God's will for you to prosper. He has said it is in many verses like the one just mentioned. 3 John 2 says that ABOVE ALL ELSE, God wants you to prosper and be healthy!

God wants to provide your needs because He loves you. He wants to bless you, and fill your life with the joy that comes with an abundant supply. God is not holding back, or purposely preventing you from prosperity. He WANTS you to prosper! He WANTS you to be financially independent of your circumstances. He WANTS you to have more than enough so you can give abundantly to His work, and live off the overflow. So don't ever doubt God's will when it comes to prosperity. Jesus set the example. 2 Corinthians 8:9 says Jesus was rich – then become poor – to make us rich in Him! When did He become poor? On the cross. Was He poor in His ministry? Of course not! He had plenty of provision from His Heavenly Father, and with it, was able to run His ministry, and take care of all His disciples and their families left behind while they traveled with Him. Think about this; His clothes were so expensive, the soldiers were gambling for them at the foot of the cross. Would they be casting lots for His clothes if they were cheap and worn out? No! As God blessed His Son Jesus, so He's prepared to do the same for you. Why? Because He loves you! Ecclesiastes 10:19 says money answers all things. Bottom line: the more you have, the more you can do for God! That's why the provision is always offered, and why you should never be ashamed for asking for it, and receiving it!

12/07/08

1 Samuel 12:23 God's love expressed: His People.

God expresses His love to you through His people. Samuel's prayers for a backslidden Israel is a perfect example of this. He said if he didn't pray for them, it would be a sin laid to his account against God! Think about that! I believe that prayer is one of the greatest expressions of authority mankind has on earth, and therefore, understand why God wants His people to pray for one another. Right now people of God are praying for YOU! You may not know who they are or where they are, but that doesn't matter. Because God loves you, He's got people praying for you all the time. And many times, it's those intercessory prayers that keep you out of trouble or tragedy!

Read Acts chapter 12 carefully. 2 men were arrested by Herod – Peter and James. One was set free miraculously, the other was killed by the sword. Why? Was it because God "chose" to save one, and not the other? No! It was because the church PRAYED for Peter, and DIDN'T PRAY for James! It's that simple! Ezekiel 22:30 shows you the importance of intercessory prayer. God went looking for someone to pray for Israel so judgment would be withheld, but nobody answered the call. The result? Wrath and judgment was poured out on God's people – only because nobody was willing to pray for the nation! So next time someone tells you they've been praying for you – tell them how much you appreciate it! And even if you don't know whose out there praying for you, understand they're out there – and because of God's love for you, He'll continue to move upon them to pray for YOU!

12/08/08

Mark 16:20 God's love expressed: His power.

God expresses His love for you by making His power available to you. When you preach or share the Word, God's power is always there to validate your message. After all, if God's power isn't present to confirm what you say, your message is no better than that of any other religion. Every religion has a message, but the only one with confirming power is Christianity. This is what separates us from every other religion, and proves the love that God has for you, and for those you minister to. God loves the world, and WANTS to demonstrate His power to help them believe in the truth. Since you are commanded to go into all the world and preach, EXPECT the power of God to manifest through you to confirm the Gospel.

In Hebrews 13:8, God says that Jesus Christ is the SAME, yesterday, today and forever. That means He's the same miracle-working Jesus we read about in the 4 Gospels. In John 10:38, Jesus said to look at His miracles as proof about who He was, and what He was here to do. Nothing has changed, except His location. Whereas before Jesus walked on earth among men, now He sits at God's right hand in Heaven. But the power to confirm the Gospel is still available, and must be demonstrated if your witness is to be accurate and effective. So get comfortable around the power of God, and EXPECT it to manifest whenever you need it – for yourself or for others. God loves you – and trusts you with His miracle-working power. Embrace it, and thank God for it.

12/09/08

John 14:27 God's love expresses: His peace!

God expresses His love for you by making His peace available to you. Legal peace comes when you accept Jesus as Lord of your life (Romans 5:1). Your sins are washed away, and you become the righteousness of God in Christ. But once saved, you must come to the place in life where the peace of God guards your heart and mind daily (Philippians 4:4-8). Jesus said His peace was left as His gift to you – so find that place of peace and protect it every day. Don't LET your heart be troubled, don't LET it become fearful. Be at peace with the fact that God is madly in love with you, and with all men. Once you understand that, you'll never be afraid in this life again. You'll be able to live each day surrounded by God's peace, and that peace will become one of your best witnessing tools to further the Kingdom of God.

As we approach Christmas this year, be reminded of what Jesus came to provide. PEACE ON EARTH, goodwill towards men (Luke 2:14). If you're living on earth, and He's your Lord and Savior, His peace should be ruling and reigning in your life right now. Is it? God loves you – so be at rest and peace in that fact. If God be for you, nobody can stand against you (Romans 8:31). God is always there for you; He'll never leave you or forsake you (Hebrews 13:5). Jesus has left you His peace as a gift, and an expression of His love for you. Let that peace be your guard: spirit, soul and body. Today! Now! This moment! Take a deep breath, lift your eyes to Heaven, and let the peace that passes all understanding take control.

12/10/08

Hebrews 7:25 God's love expressed: His prayers.

When Jesus was on earth, He prayed for His disciples regularly (Luke 22:32/John 17). Today, He's still doing the same at God's right hand. Because God loves you so much, Jesus spends time in Heaven praying for you! Imagine that! The son of God is up in Heaven right now, interceding for you. He's our High Priest, and part of His high priestly duties includes prayer for the saints. He EVER LIVES to make intercession for you. That means for all eternity, Jesus will never stop praying for you. What a comforting and wonderful thought!

What is Jesus praying for when He prays for you? He's praying God's perfect will be done in your life. He's doing what He did when He prayed for Peter. He's praying for your protection from evil. He's praying for your success. He's praying for unity amongst brethren. In short, He's standing in the gap, interceding as your Heavenly High Priest. He prays for you because He loves you. He died on a cross because of His love for you, and now, His love continues to be expressed by the fact that He ever lives to make intercession on our behalf. Thank Him for those prayers today! You're not alone – He's standing with you.

12/11/08

Mark 16:7 God's love expressed: His Patience

Thank God for His patience with all of us! If it weren't for His patience, none of us would stand before Him to give a good report. A classic example of this is how Jesus dealt with Peter – the same Peter who openly denied Him three times during our Lord's passion. When the angel came giving instructions to the disciples, he made sure Peter was specifically mentioned. Why? Because God wanted Peter to know He wasn't finished with him yet. In spite of the failures and sins, God was still intent on working with him, and through him to others. What a comforting truth! When you look at 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, you see the first characteristic of Agape love is PATIENCE! Love is patient – and since God IS love, we can see that patience extended towards all of us time and again. Aren't you glad He's been patient with you?

So many times in my life, I have thanked God for being patient with me. How about you? Everyday, you should be on your knees thanking God for the fact He's patient with you. If it weren't for that patience, you'd no doubt be in some gutter somewhere right now, lost and undone in your sins. We'd all be right besides you too! If Jesus can be that patient with Peter, there's hope for all of us! How many times have you told the Lord you'll change, or never do something again, or make a promise – and then? You fail Him AGAIN! I've been there many times. Thank God He's patient. He doesn't throw us out just because we've failed Him. Instead, He nurtures us and continues to work with us, until the good work He started the day we got saved is finished and completed for His glory (Philippians 1:6). So today, stop and reflect on God's patience exhibited in your life. Thank Him for it, because its one of the most obvious ways He demonstrates His love for you.

12/12/08

Psalms 91:15 God's love expressed: His Precense!

When we're in trouble, God is always right there to strengthen, protect, instruct, encourage and help. If only we would acknowledge His presence, we'd be able to tackle our problems more quickly and successfully. God says He is your very present help in time of trouble (Psalms 46:1), and that's because He loves you! In Jeremiah 33:3, He promises that if you call on Him, He will show you great and mighty things – which you've never even seen before! Praise God for that, no? No matter what testing, trial or problem you're facing today, take courage in the fact your God is WITH you. You're not alone, and you don't have to fight your fights of faith alone. He will never leave you, or forsake you (Hebrews 13:5).

When Jesus was about to leave earth and go back to Heaven, He told the disciples that He would be with them (and us) always, even to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20). So it doesn't matter how you FEEL about it – Jesus is with you now, has always been at your side, and will always be there in the future. You don't have to try and tackle problems by yourself. You can ask for, and receive, God's strength, counsel, help, encouragement – whatever you need its available to you whenever you need it – 24/7. Why? Because He LOVES you! He's available because of His love for you, so don't ignore His presence, but rather, enter into it with thanksgiving, because in the presence of the Lord there is fullness of

joy, and the joy of the Lord is your strength (Psalms 16:11/Nehemiah 8:10).

12/13/08

Luke 1:37 The miracle of Christmas

For most people, Christmas is all about giving and receiving gifts. Even among Christians, very few of us really understand the power behind the Christmas celebration. If you look at the event as recorded from Scripture, you see its really all about the miraculous manifestation of God's power. The birth of Jesus was something totally miraculous. Virgin girls don't conceive and have babies – but in this case it happened. Why? Because everything about Christmas is about God doing something that can't be done. So don't let the shallow concepts of Christmas taint your understanding about what this event is all about. God did something that couldn't be done – and its from that point we embrace Christianity for what it is – an expression of God's love and power, manifested in supernatural ways no man can explain or understand. If you take time to meditate on this foundational truth about Christmas, you'll be encouraged all over again to believe God for the impossible – for the miraculous in your life. Never forget that God's power, manifested in our lives, is the one element that proves He exists, and that what He says about Himself in the Bible is true. Is the miraculous happening in your life? It should be! The same God who caused an innocent and pure virgin to conceive His son, is the same God available to you today! Today Jesus asks you the same question He asked blind Bartimeaus in Mark 10:51. "What do you want Me to do for you?"

When you're tempted to cave in spiritually; staring at the impossible situation you're facing, remember Christmas. Remember the virgin birth. Remember that everything we believe about Jesus started with a miracle, and will forever be testified with miracles!

12/14/08

Philippians 2:6-8 The great exchange of Christmas

When you think about Christmas, think about the great exchange that is was. Our God is a triune God – one God eternally existent in 3 persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And even though God, the 2nd person of the Trinity, was God from eternity past, He freely gave up His position in Heaven as God at the Father's right hand, and by the power of the Spirit, took upon Himself flesh like you and me. When talking about Jesus Christ, understand that Christ had no beginning, but Jesus did. Christ is reference to our Lord's divinity. Jesus is reference to our Lord's humanity. His divinity had no beginning, but His humanity did. Its at the name of Jesus, not Christ, that every knee bows. Why? Because it was in His humanity that our sins were forgiven, and their penalty paid. Since man had no way of paying for his own sins, God had to come down and do it for us as a man, and that's the great exchange! Jesus laid aside all the power and privilege of deity, and willingly lowered Himself to come, be born of a virgin, and live and minister on earth for over 33 years, fulfilling the Mosaic Law, and dying as our righteous sin-substitute.

What an exchange! Jesus exchanged deity for humanity, and then exchanged His righteousness with our unrighteousness. He came to be a man, so we could once again have hope for eternal life in Him. So when you're at home admiring your Christmas tree this holiday season, be reminded of what kind of exchange had to be made to make the Christmas event possible.

12/15/08

John 3:16 Christmas is all about giving.

The essence of Christmas is that of giving. God so loved the world He gave His son. Jesus so loved the world He emptied Himself of deity's power and privilege, and came to be in the likeness of men (Philippians 2:5-8). And yet, the best gifts are the ones that never draw attention to themselves. When

the greatest gift to humankind was given by Almighty God, who was there to see it? A few shepherds, Joseph, Mary and a bunch of barnyard animals. This is the way God's gifts are given. Not with pomp and fanfare, but with love and sincerity. Gifts given this way have a way of making a great impact upon the recipient, not only at the time the gift is given, but even more so as time goes by. This is how it was with the gift of Christmas. What was given in isolation and obscurity was eventually to turn the whole world upside down.

Next time God tells you to give something to someone else in His name, remember the essence of Christmas. Don't be concerned about who sees you and recognizes your generosity. It should be enough for you to know God sees what you're doing, and will reward you handsomely someday in Heaven. On that first Christmas night, when Jesus was born, all of Heaven knew what was going on, and rejoiced over it (Luke 2:11-13). However, very few on earth knew what was happening, except for a couple of shepherds and wise men. Even Joseph and Mary were in the dark concerning this great gift from God. Yet He gave Jesus anyway! Its not about who sees you when you give, but all about doing it as unto the Lord, and not as unto men (Colossians 3:23,24)

12/16/08

Matthew 2:1 Why were the wise men wise?

The Christmas story wouldn't be complete without the wise men from the East. Why were they called men who were wise? First, they were wise because when they came to Jesus, they came TO WORSHIP HIM (Matthew 2:2). I've seen Christmas cards with the wording: Wise men still seek him, showing a picture of 3 wise men. Well, why were they seeking Jesus? To worship! Is that the first thing you do when you approach God in your times of prayer? It should be! Never mind telling God about all the problems in your life. He already knows what they are anyway. Instead, come into His presence to worship first and foremost, and THEN you can talk to Him about the personal issues of your life. The blind man healed in John 9:31 knew this. People connect with God because of worship, and its that worship which makes them wise in God's sight!

Worship recognizes God for who He is. It places proper emphasis upon His Deity, and helps us remember how great He is, and how helpless we are without Him. And its in that place of relative awareness of God's greatness and our helplessness, that worship becomes the bridge to connect us with God the way He wants. That's why in John 4:23,24, Jesus said God is seeking men who will worship Him. Men and women who understand that – like the wise men in Matthew 2, will make worship the primary reason for coming to God. That's why those men from the East were called wise. Why? Because they knew Jesus was God, and as such, was worthy of their worship. Are you wise? You prove it by making worship the most important thing in your times spent with God. Next time you approach God, be wise like the wise men! Worship God!

12/17/08

Matthew 2:1 Wise men give gifts to God.

From yesterday's devotional, we saw the wise men were wise because they sought to worship God. Something else made them wise also – their desire to give God gifts. What did they do when found Jesus? They gave Him their gifts. Do you give God gifts? Most people don't, even Christians. It has been said that what we are is God's gift to us, but what we become is our gift to God. I believe that. Why did Jesus come to earth, and be born of a virgin? To pay for our sins, and give us the opportunity to re-establish relationship with God. That's His gift to us. In Christ, you are the righteousness of God. But from the day of your new birth, what have you given back to God? What are your gifts to Him?

God sent Jesus so you could have a future and a hope. His gift was your salvation – freely paid for through our Lord’s death and resurrection. But in return, are you like the wise men? Are you living your life as one big gift back to God? Do you give Him your time? Is He the most important part of your day, or is your time too pre-occupied with the cares of this world? Do you give Him your wallet? Is your money available to Him whenever He asks for it? Do you give God your talents or skills? Are you blessed in some particular area of talent or ability – naturally or through training? Are these things available back to God as gifts? They should be! Be wise like the wise men. Give back to God the life He gave you in Christ. In doing so, you’ll find a satisfaction with your life that can’t be found anywhere else.

12/18/08

Matthew 2:1 How many wise men were there?

If you’re like me, from the time you were little you heard about the 3 wise men whenever the Christmas story was told. But were there just 3 of them? Growing up Catholic as I did, I was even told what their 3 names were! But even though that’s the widely accepted belief in some Christian circles, I believe there were many more than just 3 – and I certainly don’t know what their names are! Notice in Matthew 2, at no time is the exact number of wise men given. It doesn’t say there were 3, or 33, or 333 – it just says wise men (plural) came from the east looking for the Messiah. “Men” could be 2 or 2,000 – how do we know for sure? Historically, traveling bands in the days of Jesus would travel in large companies – in part for protection, because the journey across deserts was long, and there was always safety in numbers. Consider that from the time they first saw the Prophetic star which they followed westward to Jerusalem, it took them 2 years to get there! And another thing – in a city the size of Jerusalem, 3 visitors from the east wouldn’t cause much of a stir, but when these wise guys arrived, it says all of Jerusalem sat up to take notice, including King Herod (Matthew 2:3). A band of just 3 men would hardly cause such a stir!

I believe many wise men came to worship and give gifts to Jesus. I don’t know exactly how many, but I’m well persuaded it was more than just 3. Its not going to affect our salvation one way or the other, but next time you look at the traditional nativity scene, and you see those 3 wise men next to the 3 shepherds, stop and consider what the Scriptures say – and don’t say! By the way, were there just 3 shepherds? Or more? Just a thought!

12/19/08

Luke 2:10 Do you celebrate Christmas?

How many people, each year, allow the “Christmas rush” to rob them of the joy that should rightfully be the outstanding emotion for the season? Are you one of them? If you’ve fallen victim to the “stress” of Christmas, don’t let it happen this year – or ever again! Its so easy to get caught up in the hustle and bustle of Christmas, forgetting what the whole thing is about – the birth of humankind’s savior in a lowly stable, surrounded with just a few people and stable animals. I encourage you today to just step back, take a deep breath, close your eyes, and reflect on the beauty, majesty, and awesomeness of this event. When you do, you’ll come to a place of true CELEBRATION in your heart, and that’s when you really discover what Christmas is all about.

When the angels announced the birth of Jesus, they said it was “good tidings of great joy!” Don’t let the joy be taken from you this Christmas! If necessary, fight the fight of faith to get it, and then once you get it, protect it! Protect it from the hoards of selfish, self-centered, inconsiderate people who seem to come out of the woodwork at this time of year. Remember its all about “good tidings of great joy!” Its supposed to be a time to CELEBRATE something, but look around in the check out lines at your neighborhood mall. 99% of those people don’t look like they’re celebrating anything! Don’t be like

them! Be different. Be focused! Celebrate your Lord's birth! Celebrate means joy, laughter, rejoicing, merriment. Not only will it be like a medicine for you (Proverbs 15:13), but will be a soothing balm to those around you too!

12/20/08

Luke 1:38 Let the world have its way!

When the angel told Mary about the virgin birth, she had enough sense to accept the statement at face value, even though she certainly didn't understand it. And that's the whole subliminal message of Christmas – that when God promises something, it WILL come to pass exactly as He says. Therefore we're smart to believe it, as Mary did, for when we take the promise at face value the power within that promise becomes available to us – whether we understand it or not. Mary's words are classic: Let it be unto me according to your word! Oh, how that must've pleased God when she said that! No, she didn't understand the promise – how could a virgin conceive? Nevertheless, let it be done! Let God's Word have its way with me!

God doesn't ask you to understand HOW He's going to bring promises to pass in your life. He just expects you to BELIEVE they will. Christmas is a great time to be reminded of that fact. The whole celebration is about a virgin girl accepting the word of God without question, believing that the impossible will become possible. This is the essence of Christianity, and of Christmas itself. The birth of Christ is a miracle. It was promised by God, and all it required was a willing, obedient and faithful servant, who in this case, was Mary. Today, whatever promise you're looking at in God's word, be like Mary, and say to God: Let this be done unto me according to your promise. I believe it and that settles it. Then get ready – those promises are coming your way, just like they did for Mary!

12/21/08

Luke 2:10 The great joy of good news!

Why was the birth of Christ an announcement of good news and great joy? Was it because our Savior had finally come? Yes, but more than that. Our Lord's birth was God's miraculous entry into our lives – yours and mine. It was a miraculous expression of God's love, and its in the miraculous aspect of the event that we can find the joy of the event! When you walk in the miraculous with God, joy is the inevitable by-product. When Christmas carolers sing the classic song "Joy to the world, our Savior's come...", do we really understand and appreciate the miraculous aspect of the event itself? Most of us do not, and that's why Christmas isn't as powerful, or as meaningful as it should be to most believers.

When I stop and ponder the actual event, I just marvel at God's love, power and majesty. When I look at the Nativity scene, I try look beyond the classic images we all so well remember. I don't just see a baby in a manger, surrounded by Joseph, Mary, a few shepherds and some stable animals. I see the miraculous! I see God doing something for us that is absolutely impossible, yet doing it nonetheless. A virgin giving birth to a baby? Not just any baby either – God's baby! Think about that for a moment. Christmas is not about trees, lights and decorations. Not about egg nog and cookies. Not about presents under our tree. Its all about the miraculous foundation to Christianity. Our faith is rooted in the miraculous doings of God, and it must never depart from that foundation. Remember that, and protect that truth all the days of your life.

12/22/08

Luke 2:11 God has already done miracles for you.

There are 3 things to remember about Christmas. Today we look at number one. First, realize that Christmas is all about the miraculous, and God has already done miracles in your life to get you to this

point in your life! He sent Jesus for you, born of a virgin woman no less. He was raised from dead for you, after having paid the penalty for your sins. So because of all that, the moment you cried out and asked Him to be Lord of your life, you were born again. The old spirit man inside died, and a brand new spirit man was created – having never existed before, totally free from all the old sins! I mean, if you stop right there, you have enough to shout about for the rest of your life!

So many times, we cry out to God for some miracle we think we need in our lives, without stopping to appreciate and draw strength from the miracles He's already done on our behalf. Of course God will do miracles for us today, but don't forget the ones He's already done, because those are the ones that provide a firm faith foundation for the miracles you're believing for today in your life. If God can cause a virgin to conceive His son so that He can eventually die as our pure sin substitute, then be raised from the dead triumphant over those sins, don't you think He can help you with whatever you need today? Relax! God has already done miraculous things for you, so never doubt His ability, or willingness, to do as many miracles as are needed to bring you through the challenges you face right now.

12/23/08

Luke 1:37 God performs the miracles you need today!

The second thing to remember about the miraculous aspect of Christmas is this: not only has God done miracles in sending Jesus to be born of a virgin, but He also extends that same offer for the miraculous today in your life. That means there is a miracle promised to you right now – for whatever you're facing that demands God's help and supernatural intervention. And remember, if God promised it, He not only can do it for you; He WANTS to do it for you! When the angel told Mary there was nothing too difficult for God, he was talking about miracle power. A virgin birth? No problem for God. A miracle today for you? No problem for God. Let Christmas be a time to reflect on this fact. If God did miracles for you in the manger, He's ready, willing and able to do them for you now! Believe!

God wants to do miracles for you today. He's got a promise that covers anything you are facing, and if fulfilling that promise means a miraculous breakthrough from Heaven to earth, then so be it! Christmas not only proves God's love for you, but also proves His power can do whatever it takes to deliver you, protect you and save you. So rejoice! That's what Christmas is all about – rejoicing! Why rejoice? Because of the miraculous! Every time Jesus did something miraculous, they went away running, dancing, shouting, rejoicing! How about you? Receive your miracle today!

12/24/08

Luke 1:38 God's miracles are in your mouth!

The third thing to remember about the miraculous aspect of Christmas is this: spoken words released God's miracle power for the virgin birth, and your spoken words will release God's miraculous power today in your life. What happened when Mary said, Let it be unto me according to your word? She released God's power on her behalf, and our behalf. Once she said that, the angel disappeared because that's all he was waiting for - her words of faith and agreement with God. Psalms 78:14 tells us that we can LIMIT God. How? With our words. The Christmas miracle could only have happened if the chosen virgin agreed with God's plan, and SAID SO! The same is true for you today. Your miracle is waiting for you, but it requires your spoken agreement with God's word to cause it to come to pass. Check up on what's coming out your mouth. Most of the time, there's where God's ability in your life is being limited!

The miracle of Christmas is really a miracle created with spoken words. God promise our redeemer way back in Genesis, but it took a virgin to speak words of agreement to actually bring the birth of Christ to pass. In the same way, God has promised you His miracle power, but you have to speak words of agreement in order for those promises to come to pass in your life. This is where most believers

fail. They have such an undisciplined tongue, God can't move in their lives the way they need Him to. We need to be like Mary. Agree with God, and say it! Believe God, and say it! Are you the redeemed of the Lord? Then say so! (Psalms 107:2)

12/25/08

Luke 2:13,14 Enjoy the beauty of this day.

Don't let the majesty of this day pass you by! Stop and meditate on it. Reflect upon it. Marvel over it! To think of what God did for us in sending Jesus to earth.... If that can't convince you of His intense love for you, nothing will ever be able to. Listen to the words of the angels as they announce the birth of Christ to the shepherds. They were praising God, singing about the glory of God, and of peace and goodwill towards men. This is the spirit of Christmas. Don't let the unsaved, or unrenewed cheat you out of the beauty of this day! Its great to spend time with loved ones, to enjoy the opening of presents and all that. But also, find a quiet place today and just stop your day long enough to say "thank you" to God! Hands up, face towards heaven. Let Him know you understand, and appreciate, the awesomeness and majesty of this day!

I never want to lose my appreciate for Christmas. No matter how busy my life may be, I must protect this day, and take the time to make sure I never take it for granted. You must do the same. Aside from our Lord's resurrection, this is the greatest day in the history of the human race. It set on course a man's life to fulfill a plan of redemption no devil in hell could stop, or no man could prevent. The second person of the Trinity came to earth, emptied of all the privileges of Deity, and took upon Himself the form of man – to die in our place and give us the chance at eternal redemption. Wow! What a day! Never mind the football games, the big holiday supper, the new movies at the theater you want to see – spend time this Christmas with God in prayer. Thank Him for this day! Its good you do that, and to let your family see you do that. It's a special day – so treat it as such!

12/26/08

Proverbs 11:24,25 Are you preparing for prosperity?

As we move towards the start of 2005, let us once again remind ourselves about the principles that govern the release of prosperity in our lives. This passage in Proverbs says it all. The more you give, the more God gives back to you. In God's operation, if you want to keep what you have, give what you have away! The more you do that, the more provision will find it's way to you. So, protect yourself from your stingy old flesh! Have a generous heart, and always be ready and willing to give as led and directed by the Spirit of God. Your level of prosperity depends upon it!

As we move through the Christmas season, many believers find themselves in debt up to their eyeballs. The giving of presents can be an expensive thing (I know this by experience!) And so, understand that as you stare at all those bills and credit card statements coming in, your flesh is going to tempt you to cut back on your spiritual giving. Don't yield to that temptation! In fact, if you're being confronted with a stack of unpaid bills due to the Christmas experience, look for ways to give MORE! It's the way of the kingdom of God. Whenever you're in financial trouble, give your way out. NEVER attempt to save your way out – because that's the way of the world, and that will never work the way God's system works. Meditate on this – now more than ever! Make 2005 the most prosperous year you've ever had. Its your choice. **THE GENEROUS SOUL WILL BE MADE RICH!** That is God's promise, and He's always good for what He promises!

12/27/08

Proverbs 11:30 Are you wise in God's eyes?

How do you know your wise in God's eyes? By looking at the level of evangelism and outreach in your life. As far as God is concerned, you're not wise until you're out winning souls – busy about the Father's business. Anything short of that is self-deception – believing you're wise when you're really not. Never forget that EVERYTHING revolves around winning souls as far as God is concerned. Nothing else matters to Him. Christians would do well to remember this, because when you take an objective look at how most believers handle their time, talent and resources (money), you see they don't really understand what true wisdom is, or how to get hold of it. Don't let that be you! As you move into 2005, purpose in your heart and life that you're going to be a wise servant of the Lord!

God has given us exceedingly great and precious promises (2 Peter 1:4), but ALL of those promises are tied to certain conditions. In other words, God promises to do certain things for us if we do certain things He asks of us. With that in mind, understand that God has never promised to bless what you DON'T DO! Rather, He's given many promises to bless what you DO in the Name of Jesus! This is where true wisdom is to be found. Mark 16:15-20 is what our life should be about. Nothing less. If you want to be called wise in God's eyes, get off the bench, get out on the field, and become a player – no longer just a spiritual spectator! God promises to bless all your hand set itself to DO, so get busy with outreach and evangelism, and not only will the wisdom of God come upon you, but the promises blessings that go with His wisdom will be yours as well.

12/28/08

Proverbs 11:17

The Bible says that as we extend mercy to others, we do good to our own soul. Why? Because of the law of sowing and reaping. Galatians 6:7 says that WHATEVER a man sows, that is what he will reap. If you want mercy then give mercy to others. In doing so, you do good to yourself. You position yourself to receive as much merciful protection from God as necessary, and that's a very important thing! The Bible says the mercy of God is new every morning, and that's because we NEED it every morning. But the more you extend mercy to others, the more of God's mercy becomes extended towards you! Remember that next time you're tempted to get angry with the failures of others in your life. Think about how often you have failed God, and yet His mercy is there for you! Be that way with others, and you can be sure God will continue to be that way for you.

Remember the story Jesus told – about the steward who owed his master a large sum of money (Matthew 18:23-34)? When the servant asked for mercy over the large sum he owed, he was given mercy. But what did he do? He found another servant who owed him a much smaller sum than the amount he has just been forgiven of, and demanded full payment. When the master found out about it, he was angry, and called the servant WICKED! Listen to that! When you choose not to be merciful to others the way God has been merciful to you, you become wicked in His sight! I'm sorry to say there are many wicked believers out there, thinking all is well with God with it isn't at all. Protect yourself. Be merciful! You do good to your own soul when you extend mercy. The more you do it, the more God (and others) will extend it to you. You reap what you sow!

12/29/08

Psalms 101:1 What are you singing about?

This is one of my favorite Psalms. There is so much to glean from this passage, but what I want you to see today is found in verse 1. When you sing, are you singing about God's mercy? You should be, because if it weren't for his mercy, you wouldn't be alive in Christ today, and your sins wouldn't be forgiven each and everyday. I watch so many people – they love to sing along with their favorite songs – whether it be on the radio, on the portable CD player, on the car tape player, or at home on the home

entertainment center. Very seldom do I hear them singing about the mercies of God! Do you? You should be – if you understand it and appreciate it for what it is in your life everyday.

Of all David had to sing about, he chose in this Psalm to sing about God's mercy and justice. What wonderful things to sing about! God's mercy, and God's justice. Yes, God is just, and demands payment for EVERY sin committed, but at the same time, He's merciful – and because of His intense love for us, chooses to extend mercy for what we don't deserve – which is forgiveness. No matter what you've done which you know to be wrong – and sinful – God's mercy is available to you if you ask for it! Now that's something to sing about! Never mind singing about some dumb worldly song about shallow love – I choose to sing about the love that no man can understand because of its depth. The love of God! Rejoice today! God is not against you – but for you! Sing about it, and rejoice in it!

12/30/08

Psalms 101:2 How do you walk in your house?

The man who wrote this Psalm knew the importance of walking within his own house with integrity. The mesh that ensued due to his infidelity with Bathsheba would never have happened had David exercised integrity within his own house. How about your house? What's going on there? Are you aware of what's happening, and are you on top of everything spiritually? You should be. God will hold you accountable for what goes on in your own house, so be sure you WATCH AND TAKE AUTHORITY when needed.

As you approach the New Year, be sure things at home are in order. With your spouse, with your kids, with yourself. Don't let the devil have any place in your home – ever! Diligently watch and stay alert and on-guard to protect your home and family from his attacks and strategies. Its your responsibility – God's not going to do it – you have to. As we move into 2009, stay sharp spiritually. Keep your heart filled with God's word, and keep your mouth filled with God's word. Don't let him have his way in your house, or with your family. Reject him, and repel him with God's word!

12/31/08

Psalms 102:1 Where are you going when you need help?

According to this verse in Psalms 102, the Psalmist understood the importance of going to God when overwhelmed with problems. Do you have this much wisdom and insight? Most believers don't! When most Christians face problems, they go to the world for help, advice, counsel and guidance. And then they wonder why things continue to get worse! Never mind the world – they don't understand the principles of God's kingdom. When you face problems and mountains too big to tackle – go to God! He's waiting for you! He already knows what you're facing – so why not ask for His help?

God's kingdom operates differently than the world. If you're facing problems, situations and circumstances too difficult to handle, go to God and ask for His help. David knew that when he faced problems beyond his control, he had to go to God. When he got overwhelmed, he poured out his complaint to God! And the good news is that God welcomes such encounters with His children! He WANTS to help, but he won't until His help is asked for! So what are you waiting for? If you need a miracle, ask for it! Quit trying to solve your problems without God! Ask for His help, and He will give it!