

THE BIBLICAL GUIDE TO TRANSFORMATION

DISCOVER HOPE • FIND HELP
EXPERIENCE HEALING



ANANIAS
FOUNDATION

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WELCOME

Several years ago, I was arrested for domestic violence. Twice. My wife and stepchildren moved out and I was prohibited from seeing them. It was, by far, the worst period of my life.

I knew I didn't want to be *that* person. I loved my wife and children and did not want to hurt them. I could see that my actions were putting all that I valued—my marriage, my family, my job, my reputation, and even my freedom—at risk. I wanted to change but didn't know how. Everything I'd tried fell short of the real, lasting change that I knew I needed.

During this time, I reluctantly began attending church. The messages I heard there were different than what I expected. Rather than a list of rules to keep, I heard about God's love for me. I also heard testimonies from people whose lives radically changed for the better once they accepted a relationship with God. I was curious but skeptical about this religion stuff.

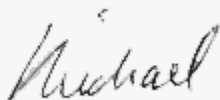
About a year later, I had particularly difficult week when it looked like my marriage was going to end. I prayed, confessed to God that I'd made a mess of my life, and asked him to help me change. I was immediately filled with a sense that God was there, giving me his first, gentle lesson. And he has continued to guide me and help me change since that time.

If you can relate to my story—hurting someone you love, wanting to change your behavior, but being unsure how to do it—I encourage you to get to know God. Don't just get to know him, but develop a relationship with him—one where you talk to him, and where you listen to what he has to say to you.

You might be wondering—how can I listen to God? It's not like he's going to text me or call me on the phone. The best way for us to know what God has to say is to know what he's already said, and we can learn that by reading and studying the Bible.

Because this life-giving relationship was such a huge part of my transformation, I want you to experience it too. That's why I put together this Bible study. It contains many of the passages that helped me understand who God is, how he sees me, and what he's calling me to do. I hope and pray you will find the same peace, hope, and joy that I did as you read and study God's love letter to you.

Peace and blessings for your journey,



Michael Clark, Founder
Ananias Foundation

ABOUT THIS BIBLE STUDY

This study is divided into four sections that align with our natural process of change:

1. **Getting Started**

Realizing and committing to the need to change

2. **Finding Hope**

Seeing and believing that the solution we're looking at is true, good, and can be trusted

3. **Allowing God to Change Us**

Actually doing the work inside of us, following God's guidance

4. **God's Vision and Promise**

Finishing off our transformation with new thoughts and behaviors that will make those changes permanent

Each section is made up of daily studies, which include a verse from the Bible, a short commentary, and some reflection questions for you to answer. You can work through each study on your own, or with a mentor or group. While it will make most sense to read the four sections in order, you can skip around between studies within each section if you prefer.

Even though they are brief, I recommend doing just one study per day. You will get the most out of this study, and your time, by digging deep into your soul and answering the questions honestly and fully. Allow the messages in each verse to marinate inside as you consider what God might be saying to you.

This is just a start in getting to know God and developing a relationship with him. I also encourage you to zoom out and take in the whole chapter or even the whole book that the verse is drawn from. That way, you'll learn even more about God's character and nature, what he thinks about you, and what he is calling you to do. Like me, you may find that a study Bible helps you better understand the context and how passages fit together.

Finally, I encourage you to plug yourself in to a church community. It is in community that we find guidance, encouragement, and even inspiration as we attempt to follow Jesus. We have the opportunity to learn, grow, and serve alongside other imperfect people who, like us, are being shaped and refined by God. This journey called life is not for the faint of heart. We need others, and they need us.

GETTING STARTED

Realizing and committing to the need to change



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*“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord.
“They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you
a future and a hope.” – Jeremiah 29:11*

For many Christians, these are tremendously powerful and encouraging words from God. They become even more meaningful when we learn about the context in which they were written, and for whom.

The prophet Jeremiah wrote this at a time when his homeland was falling apart. It would soon be invaded by an enemy nation and its people hauled off as slaves. He could see this disaster coming. But far from being innocent victims, his countrymen—the audience for this verse—were the people of Judea, who had wandered far from the kind of life God wanted them to live.

Jeremiah was also a man who had a close relationship with God. He knew that while God doesn’t always take away the pain we are going through, he never leaves us. He also knew that God’s ultimate desire is to restore and bless us, regardless of what we have done wrong.

Much of the book of Jeremiah calls on people to turn around—to change the way they think, so they can be restored into this right relationship with God. In this relationship, we listen to God, follow his instructions, and receive his blessings, rather than being left to the consequences of our own mistakes.

When I was in the middle of the mess I had created for myself, I found these words unbelievably hopeful. I could relate to the idea of wandering off the path God had laid for me, as I knew my actions were wrong. But the promise of a good future motivated me to discover how God wanted me to live, and especially, to develop a relationship with him. I hope you’ll find hope in Jeremiah’s words, too.

Reflection

1. What things in your life seem to be falling apart?
2. How might God be calling you to turn around or change the way you are thinking?
3. What do you hope your future looks like?

And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? – Matthew 16:26

As Jesus was talking to his friends, he warned them to be careful when choosing their values. He told them that by following him, doing what he did, and making what was important to him also important to them, they would find the most fulfilling life possible. But they would end up disappointed if they set their own direction and hung on to values that were inconsistent with his. We are Jesus's friends, too, and we would be wise to listen to his advice.

The world around us tells us to take care of number one—ourselves. Make as much money as we can, get ahead, and never let anyone else get the upper hand. This might seem like a good strategy now, but it will prove to be a disaster in the long run. Still, following Jesus and loving, caring for, and humbly serving others doesn't seem all that appealing as an alternative, does it?

Many things that Jesus taught appear upside-down compared to what we have learned about life from those around us. Or maybe it's that this world that is upside-down, and following Jesus is the only way we will turn our lives right-side up? It takes faith to let go of what we know and try a different way, but God promises us that we won't be disappointed.

Reflection

1. Up to this point in your life, what things have you valued?
2. Have those things brought you satisfaction and joy, or have they been disappointing in some ways?
3. When you think about a person whose highest values are to love and serve others, do you pity or envy them?

Jesus replied, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? As for you, follow me.” – [John 21:22](#)

Jesus was talking to his followers, and one of them (Peter) asked Jesus how another member of the group (John) would die. That may seem like a strange question, but at this point Peter knew that Jesus was God and that Jesus had the ability to know these things, even before they happened.

Jesus’ answer is epic and full of wisdom and great guidance, not only for Peter, but for us, too. “What is that to you? As for you, follow me.”

He tells Peter, and us, to not be concerned about how God sees others or the plans he has for them. Instead, we are simply to focus on following him. That means that when we encounter people that are doing wrong, it shouldn’t concern us. God will work with them in his own way and in his own time.

I know a lot of Christians, including me, get this wrong sometimes. Our human nature can be quick to judge and point out others’ mistakes. Maybe you’ve been on the receiving end of someone else’s judgment, and if so, I’m sorry. Remember our purpose is not to judge others—that’s God’s job.

What God wants you and I to do is focus on ourselves, our words, and our actions. Our job is to try to model our actions as closely as we can on those of Jesus. In other words, we are to follow him.

Reflection

1. When you compare yourself to others, how do you think you “stack up” with regard to being a good person?
2. Have you ever felt judged by other people?
3. How freeing would it feel to focus on following Jesus rather than worrying about what others are doing wrong?

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honor. – James 4:10

God wants us to be humble. Not so he can watch us squirm or feel bad, but because he wants us to be open to learning from him. When we think we know all the answers, we're not teachable. When we set our own direction, we're not going to discover the blessing of doing things differently.

It's only when we say, "Okay God. I give up. I want you to be in charge instead of me" that we are able to see and hear his instruction. Then, by listening and following in faith, we discover the better, much more honorable life that he was trying to lead us to all along.

Reflection

1. Have you ever done something your way, only to discover later that you did it wrong?
2. What's something that you have learned that really improved your life?
3. How easy or difficult is it for you to admit that you don't know something?

Weeping may last through the night, but joy comes with the morning. – [Psalms 30:5](#)

Many people wonder why God allows us to suffer. Isn't he supposed to love us? Isn't he all-powerful and capable of changing our circumstances for the better? Yes, and yes, but like any good parent, God sometimes allows darkness in our lives. In doing so, he teaches and motivates us to become the people he created us to be. He also promises good things for those who trust him and choose to follow him. For those that do, the light eventually breaks through, bringing joy and relief from suffering.

Reflection

1. What are some of the biggest problems you have faced in the past? What did you learn from them?
2. What might you learn from your current struggles?
3. What hopes do you think God has for your life?

Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires. – James 1:19-20

Sometimes God’s word comforts us; sometimes it challenges us. I knew God loved me, and I felt that love through his grace. Because of his love, I really wanted to please him. And I really wanted the good life that he promises.

Then I read James 1:19-20. I asked myself how I measured up to this guidance for receiving the good life. Was I quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger? Or was I more in the slow to listen, quick to speak, and quick to anger camp? I knew it was the second one, which was hurting my relationships and *me*, and that I needed to fix the problem.

This is called “being convicted” by God’s word. It doesn’t lead to punishment, however—it leads to focus and motivation. Like any good coaching, it helps us zero in on our weaknesses so we can make corrections and get better results.

God loves you and me too much to leave us where we are. When we follow his guidance, the way in which others see us, the quality of our relationships, and—*importantly*—the way in which we feel about ourselves all improve. We start “living right,” which is another way of saying we get closer to the *righteous* life that God desires for us.

Don’t be afraid of being convicted by God. It is always done gently and loaded with grace, so you can begin living a more righteous life.

Reflection

1. Would you say that you are more quick to listen, or quick to anger?
2. What have you felt convicted of (guilty about) in your own mind? What did you do about it?
3. How is it helpful to have God’s word as a measuring stick?

But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.
– [1 John 1:9](#)

Confession is not usually considered a positive action. Whether it is the kid who drew on the wall with her crayon, the employee who takes the blame for a business misstep, or the person who admits their crime to spare themselves a longer sentence, we tend to associate confession with shame and punishment.

But confessing to God doesn't work that way. Confessing to God simply means agreeing with him about our actions. He already knows the truth about all that we've done. We're just getting honest with him *and ourselves* about the ways in which we have fallen short, or sinned.

It also does not mean paying for our sins or earning forgiveness. We can't earn God's forgiveness, and we don't have to. Jesus has already paid the price, and we are *already* forgiven.

So why does John tell us that we need to confess? It's so God can work with us, teach us, and guide our thoughts and actions. Have you ever tried to help someone who kept insisting they didn't need help? If so, then you'll know exactly why God wants us to confess.

The good news is that God is not waiting to shame or punish us after we confess. He's waiting to help us. Admitting what we've done wrong to God starts us on a path towards a better life.

Reflection

1. Do you think of confessing as a positive or negative action? Why?
2. How does it make you feel to know that someone already paid the price for your sins?
3. What might you need to confess to God to get on the same page with him?

Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, “I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won’t have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.” – John 8:12

God, the creator of the universe and the creator of you and me, already knows how we can have a full life. The good news for us is he sent his son Jesus to show us that path. By giving up our own path and following his, we leave behind our own darkness and are led to the light of a great, fulfilling life.

Reflection

1. What do you think “walking in darkness” means?
2. How would you describe your life’s path up to this point?
3. What would a full or abundant life look like to you?

Better to be patient than powerful; better to have self-control than to conquer a city. – Proverbs 16:32

How important is emotional control? King Solomon wrote the words in the scripture above. He was the wealthiest, wisest, and most powerful person to have lived on earth up until that time. Pay attention to that combination—he had unimaginable money and power, yet in his vast wisdom, he knew that emotional control was more important than either of the other two.

Every time we become impatient or lose control of our emotions in some way, it costs us. We suffer a relationship loss. We pay the price in how others see us. It even takes a toll on how we see ourselves.

God wants good things for you and me. The Bible contains a lot of what’s known as “wisdom literature,” like the passage above, which teaches us what is important in life and how to put ourselves in a position to receive those blessings. Having good control of our emotions is part of this “how to” manual.

Reflection

1. Would you describe yourself as a patient person? Why or why not?
2. How does good self-control of emotions lead to a good life?
3. When you want some wise advice, who do you turn to?

Tune your ears to wisdom, and concentrate on understanding. – Proverbs 2:2

Wisdom is the ability to determine what is true, then properly apply that knowledge to your life and decisions. The best source of wisdom is God, because he created everything, and therefore knows how the world, relationships, and people work. Like any good father, he gives his guidance because he wants you, his beloved child, to be successful in life.

The key to unlocking the power of God's wisdom is to tune in. It might take some time, effort, and concentration. Sometimes God's word can be difficult to understand, so it helps to find a church with pastors and teachers that will help you make sense of it. God has a lot to say, and he wants you to be blessed by his wisdom.

Reflection

1. What's the most valuable thing you learned from your parents? What something you wish they would have told you sooner?
2. Is there a piece of wisdom that took you a long time to understand? What was it and why did it take a while to sink in?
3. What do you need to do to be able to tune in to what God has to say?

There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. – Galatians 3:28

There is no one exactly like you. God made you special. As we look around us at nature and the incredible variety that he created, it shouldn't surprise us that God would also make each of us unique, with different interests, talents, and characteristics.

At the same time, God sees all of us as the same. He loves each of his children equally, and he judges all of us by the same standards. God is not impressed with our money, job title, or social standing. He *is* impressed with the condition of our hearts and how well we reflect his love to others. Like the wise parent that he is, there is no fooling God.

While God will never love you or me more for the good things we do or less for the mistakes we make, he will reward us for the former and allow us to suffer the consequences for the latter. As you think about it, isn't that exactly what a good, loving parent does to teach their children?

God is your loving heavenly father. He made you specially, on purpose, for a purpose. He wants to show you how to live so you will be blessed. I encourage you to get to know him.

Reflection

1. How has God made you unique and special?
2. Why do you think God is not impressed with things like money, job title, or social standing?
3. Why do you think God cares about how well we reflect his love to others?

*So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. —
Matthew 24:44*

While most of us don't like to think about it, the fact is that we are all going to die someday. What happens to us then? God promises that we will be in heaven with him if we simply believe that he is who he says he is and put him in charge of our lives.

As they say in infomercials, "But wait! There's more!". He also promises that our life here on earth gets better when we get to know him and follow his ways. We find purpose. We feel less worry and more peace. We get guidance on how to live so we experience more joy. Our self-control improves, and so do our relationships. And as for making changes to our abusive behavior—you can bet it's much easier when we have a personal relationship with our creator.

We never know how long we'll be here. We must be ready. It would be a pity to miss the opportunity for an eternal life with God in heaven. It would be doubly disappointing to miss the good stuff that a relationship with him offers us now.

Reflection

1. What thoughts and emotions do you have when you think about dying?
2. How does the idea of transitioning from life on earth to life in heaven feel different than death being the end?
3. What do you think it means to live your life with purpose?

Control your temper, for anger labels you a fool. – Ecclesiastes 7:9

If I were about to embarrass myself, I'd want a friend to warn me. It would be fantastic if this person could also see the future and know exactly how my actions were going to end. Ideally that person would be someone who cared about my wellbeing and who wouldn't think poorly of me, even though I was about to use poor judgment.

God is that kind of friend. He knows the past, present, and future, so he knows where our actions are going to get us. He also loves you and me and wants good things for us. He doesn't want us to make a fool of ourselves, damage our close relationships, or lose our reputation.

That's why he gives us commandments like the one above. It's from one of the seven books of the Bible that are considered "wisdom literature." God wants to guide us toward a life that will bless us and others. All we have to do is to ask and open ourselves to that instruction.

Reflection

1. What's the most embarrassing thing you've ever done?
2. What do you do to develop and strengthen your relationships with your friends?
3. Have you ever thought about God as a friend?

Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away. – Acts 3:19

Repentance is a word that, for most of us, conjures up pretty negative feelings. We associate it with being shamed, punished, and forced to change. I was surprised, then, to learn that the original meaning of “repent” was simply to “turn around” or “change your mind.”

That’s a lot softer and less threatening than what I thought “repent” meant. And it is a lot closer to how God actually thinks about us and talks to us. Like a good friend who warns us when we are about to go down a dead end or walk into a dangerous situation, he simply says, “turn around.”

God does not always like what we do, because he knows that sometimes our actions hurt others and ourselves. But he *does* always love us. In fact, he cares so much that he warns us about the things that are going to hurt us in life, while pointing us to ways that will bless us. He even gives us directions so that by changing our minds, we can get to this better destination.

Here’s the best part: when we mess up and do things that he knows are not good for us, he forgives us. All we need to do is ask for forgiveness and then turn around and follow him. It’s that simple.

Reflection

1. Describe a “near miss” experience that you’ve had. Did anyone warn you about the danger so you were able to avoid it?
2. Have you ever done something wrong, but then been forgiven?
3. Why do you think God forgives us when we ask him to?

My yoke is easy and my burden is light. – [Matthew 11:30](#)

A relationship with God is far easier and way more beneficial than most people imagine. It's easy because in order to get this relationship, all we have to do is put our trust in him and invite him into our lives. Maintaining the relationship, like any good friendship, will never feel like work.

Then there is the benefit. The verses before this one say:

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

I've never struggled more in life than when I was facing legal trouble and the loss of my relationship as the result of my violence. I really felt weary and burdened. Maybe you can relate.

God promises to teach and guide us—*gently*—as we work to make necessary changes in our lives. In fact, a relationship with God will make that work a whole lot easier. Life is hard. Your circumstances right now might be especially difficult. A relationship with God will make it so much more effortless that you'll wish you invited him into your life sooner.

Reflection

1. What is something that makes you tired or weary?
2. If someone was going to correct you, how would you like them to do it?
3. Why is trust so important for a friendship?

So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. – Romans 8:1

If you're like me, it may be pretty easy to look at the things you've done and feel a lot of shame. When it comes to domestic violence or abuse, people around us are quick to heap even more guilt and shame on top of what we are already feeling. Would it surprise you, then, to know that God is not standing in that line, waiting to judge us for what we've done wrong?

That's not to say that God approves of everything we do—he doesn't. He knows some of our behavior harms others and hurts us, and he wants better for us. But God does not want to *condemn* us for those actions—he wants to *change* us.

God knows that we human beings are going to mess up. That's why he sent his son, Jesus, to die for our sins so that we could be forgiven and have a relationship with him. Through that relationship, he sends his Spirit to *guide* us and give us the *power* to change.

God is a gentleman, however. He does not come in and forcefully take charge of our lives. He waits for you and me to invite him in. All we need to do is say, “Okay, God. I'm putting you in charge”—and mean it. Then he shows up. Then we belong to him. Then the transformation we're seeking becomes a lot easier. How much easier could it be for you if you had God working inside of you?

Reflection

1. How do you see God—as a “gotcha” God, waiting to point out your mistakes and shame you, or as someone who is there to help you avoid making mistakes? Why?
2. Which would you consider to be more loving—a parent that has no rules, or one that puts boundaries in place to protect their children? Why?
3. Why do you think God waits for us to invite him into our lives?

FINDING HOPE

Seeing and believing that the solution we're looking at is true, good, and can be trusted



Jesus looked at them intently and said, “Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But with God everything is possible.” – [Matthew 19:26](#)

For a long time, I tried really hard to stop my big emotional reactions that led to abuse and violence, but my progress was slow and discouraging. Then I asked Jesus for his help. My self-control during conflict and stressful situations instantly improved. There’s no other explanation for this sudden change other than my relationship with him, which made all the difference. I encourage you to check it out for yourself.

Reflection

1. What habit or behavior have you tried unsuccessfully to change?
2. What have you tried to learn that seemed difficult until you changed how you thought about it?
3. What’s one step you can take today to “check out” a relationship with Jesus?

The Scriptures give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God's promises to be fulfilled. –
[Romans 15:4](#)

Are you feeling discouraged about where you are and the changes you know you need to make? Do you wish someone would speak up and say, “You can do it. I’m here to help you”? God is saying that to you right now.

We hear this message of encouragement in the Bible, where we discover how God has been there for people since the beginning. We see how he shows up and rescues them when they call on him, even though they often don’t deserve it. We find out that he makes promises about a better life and keeps them.

I don’t know about you, but I certainly didn’t feel like God was at all interested in helping me after I had been abusive to my partner. I was wrong.

Get to know God by reading his love letter to you: the Bible. I suggest you start with the book of [Mark](#). See if it doesn’t encourage you, help you feel supported, and make you want to get to know him even better.

Reflection

1. When have you had someone show up and help you out at just the right time? How did you feel about that person for doing so? Have you ever done that for someone else?
2. Who do you know that you consider to be dependable? What do they do to make you think of them that way?
3. Have you ever read the Bible or parts of the Bible? Have you ever thought of the Bible as a love letter?

Fear not; you will no longer live in shame. Don't be afraid; there is no more disgrace for you. – [Isaiah 54:4](#)

After I was abusive to my partner, I received a lot of direct and indirect shaming from other people. The last thing I wanted to do was face God's judgment on top of theirs. I was pretty sure he'd like to zap me with a lightning bolt for what I'd done. I was shocked, then, when I discovered that God wanted to have a relationship with me. What? How can that be?

Here's the truth. Regardless of what you've done (and we've all done many things wrong,) God looks at you with love. He sees you as his beloved son or daughter. He may not always like the things you do, because some of those things hurt his children (including yourself), but he still loves you. Does he want you to change and stop hurting the ones you love? Of course. In fact, he loves you too much to leave you where you are and not help you do so.

God's willingness to look past our sin, even though we don't deserve it, is called grace. What's so amazing about that grace is that it is offered to us for free. Not because it is free, but because Jesus already paid the price—his life—for us. All you and I have to do to get this grace is first, believe in God, second, ask him to forgive us, and finally, allow him to be in charge of our life.

The first two tasks are pretty simple. But to me, the third task seemed like a big leap of faith. Then I considered how badly I had screwed up my life when I was in charge. From that perspective, allowing a good God—who also created the whole universe—to be in charge didn't seem like such a big leap after all.

Reflection

1. Have you felt shamed by other people for doing something hurtful to your partner, or something else wrong at some time in your life?
2. What's the difference between guilt and shame?
3. What does it mean that God loves you too much to leave you where you are?

I will bless the Lord who guides me; even at night my heart instructs me. – Psalms 16:7

Have you ever thought about God as a coach or counselor? He has some pretty attractive credentials. First, he understands the human psyche, because he created you. Like a watchmaker who understands how all of the pieces need to work together, God knows how your mind and body work.

Second, when God became a man in the form of Jesus and lived on this earth, he faced all of the same problems, temptations, and challenges you will ever face. That means he understands how you feel: hurt, afraid, sad, angry, betrayed, or any other emotion you experience. He's been here and he knows what it is like to be human.

Third, he cares. I don't know about you, but I want to make sure that if I'm taking advice, I'm getting it from someone who cares about me and wants what's best for me. You can be certain God's guidance is good because *he* is good, and he loves you.

A relationship with God gets you access to the wisest, most understanding, and most caring counselor available. His guidance can come through Scripture, through sound teaching and preaching, and in the form of thoughts that come to you in quiet times and direct you toward the right way.

Reflection

1. If you are going to take advice from someone, what qualifications do you want him or her to have?
2. Does it surprise you when you think about Jesus facing the same challenges and emotions as you? Why or why not?
3. Have you ever sincerely asked God for his guidance? If you have, what happened?

Wise men and women are always learning, always listening for fresh insights. – Proverbs 18:15

If knowledge is having information, then wisdom is understanding and applying that information. It means having the ability to discern and judge which aspects of our knowledge are true, right, lasting, and applicable to our situation. We become wise by learning the truth and applying it to our lives.

God is the ultimate source of truth and wisdom. Why? Because as the creator of all things, he knows how it all works. He knows how you and I are made, what makes for successful relationships with others, and what leads to a joyful and satisfying life.

If we want to become wise, we'll do well to listen and learn the truth that God shares with us about life. We're most likely to enjoy meaningful, fulfilling lives when we follow his guidance. God doesn't expect us to always know, but he does call us to always learn.

So how about you? Are you open to learning? Are you open to learning from the ultimate source of truth and wisdom? God promises to share his wisdom with all who trust him.

Reflection

1. Who is the wisest person you know?
2. What makes them so wise?
3. Which part of the wisdom equation is limiting you the most: lacking knowledge, or applying it?

Moved with compassion, Jesus reached out and touched him. “I am willing,” he said. “Be healed!” – [Mark 1:41](#)

Leprosy is not common anymore, but in Jesus’s day, people with this infectious skin disease were considered untouchable and sent away. So when a man with leprosy came to Jesus for healing, it was remarkable that Jesus touched him. This true story tells us much about God’s character and how he sees us.

Jesus, who is God and who came to Earth as a person, touched this man that everyone else avoided. Not only did he touch him, but in the process, he healed him. He had compassion for him.

The same is true for you and me today. God has compassion for us, even when nobody else does. He wants us to enjoy a blessed life. That’s not to say he will bless our lives as they are, but that he will heal our brokenness and restore us into the life he created us to live. All we have to do is to go to him and ask to be healed, then let him restore us by putting him in charge of our lives. It’s that easy.

Reflection

1. Have you ever felt rejected by another person or excluded from a group of people?
2. Why does God want to heal us from our afflictions?
3. How does it make you feel to know that there is nothing about you, and nothing you have done, that makes you untouchable to Jesus?

Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. — James 1:2

This verse from the book of James is so counter to how we naturally think. We want life to go well. We desire comfort. We avoid “troubles.” Yet James goes on to tell us that when trouble comes and our endurance and faith are tested, it’s actually a chance to grow.

When we accept life’s challenges and allow for this growth to happen, we become a more complete person. We develop the ability to handle the other hardships that will surely come our way much more easily. Developing this resilience is a blessing that gives us great joy and peace in the long run.

If we didn’t go through troublesome times, it would be like a top athlete never having to compete in difficult, challenging races. They’d never really be tested, and never get the chance to build their mental and physical strength. If a big competition came along and things got tough, they wouldn’t be prepared to meet the challenge—no matter how gifted they were.

James is passing on a wise piece of advice from a God who loves you and wants good things for you. That doesn’t mean always having it easy, but rather, having the faith and endurance to face the troubles of this world.

Reflection

1. What is your natural reaction to troubles?
2. What do you think when you read that we are supposed to have great joy when troubles come our way?
3. Why do you think James tells us that trouble is an opportunity for great joy?

We can make our own plans, but the Lord gives the right answer. People may be pure in their own eyes, but the Lord examines their motives. Commit your actions to the Lord, and your plans will succeed. – Proverbs 16:1-3

I've always had lots of plans for my life. When I pursued them in my own way, however, I made a mess of it. It wasn't until I gave up my plans and put God in charge that things really started to get better. It turns out that God, our father who created us, knows what will really bless us. Through his son Jesus, he shows us a way to live that leads a successful, abundant life.

The key is to stop asking, "What do I want?" and start asking, "What does God want me to do? How can I make my actions line up with his plans for me?" Submission is a very unpopular concept in our culture. In this case, however, submitting our will to that of God is the path to much better results.

Reflection

1. Have you ever made plans and then had those plans fail?
2. How do you answer the question, "What does God want me to do?"
3. What action can you take to line up your life with those plans?

We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. — Romans 5:3-4

One of the best things to say about a person is that they have great character. We hold people of fine character in high esteem. We like them, honor them, and respect them. God knows this, and wants you and me to enjoy the benefits that come from having such qualities.

While God doesn't create problems for us—in fact, we often create them ourselves—he does allow them to happen to us, because they provide opportunities for us to build our character. When we have a relationship with God, the problems we face take on a new meaning. Rather than asking, “Why are you doing this to me, God?” we might ask, “What are you up to here, God? What do you want me to learn from this challenge?”

If we listen, God will often reveal the answer to our question. And we can be confident that God is working for our good through these trials, which makes them much more bearable. Who wouldn't want God on their side?

Reflection

1. Who is someone that you consider to be of fine character?
2. What is it that makes you think of them as someone of fine character?
3. What are some things that you can do to increase your perseverance?

So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him. – [Matthew 7:11](#)

The idea of God as our father might not be a good association if our experience with our earthly father wasn't good. Our biological or adoptive dads might have yelled at us, criticized or punished us too harshly, put us down, withheld affection, ignored us, abandoned us, or abused us when we were children. Do we really want another father in our life if that is what fathers do?

Earthly fathers, like all humans, are flawed. But God, our heavenly father, is not. He is everything a good father is meant to be: creator, provider, teacher, discipliner, advisor, counselor, supporter, and giver of unconditional love. A relationship with God gives us everything we need to live a full and abundant life: security, confidence, wisdom, and love.

Regardless of what your earthly father was like, any damage he did can be healed through a relationship with your heavenly father. I've learned a great deal about being a good parent by following God's example.

Reflection

1. How would you describe your relationship with your earthly father?
2. Have you ever thought of God as your heavenly father?
3. If you are a parent or want to be a parent someday, what characteristics do you want your children to see in you?

Dear friends, do not believe everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit. You must test them to see if the spirit they have comes from God. For there are many false prophets in the world. – [1 John 4:1](#)

God knows that not everything that is said is worth listening to. Sometimes what we hear comes from fools who think they know it all, but they don't. These people love to spout their opinions, but they really don't understand you or your situation. – see [Proverbs 18:2](#)

That doesn't mean, however, that we shouldn't listen to others. Or that we should just listen to people who agree with us or tell us what we want to hear. Thinking our way is right and categorically rejecting others' opinions makes us the fool. – see [Proverbs 12:15](#)

While these two verses seem to contradict each other, they really don't. What they tell us is that we can and should listen to others, but we must be discerning about what we hear.

Being discerning simply means asking ourselves if what we're hearing seems right, helpful, and consistent with what God says. If yes, then that person is on the right track and we would be wise to follow their advice. If no, then we would be smart to let their comments slide off of us.

The key to telling the difference is to get to know what God says. He is the ultimate source of wisdom. We can do that by studying the Bible, learning from wise teachers like pastors, and praying and listening for God's answer. Discernment is a valuable skill, and one that we build as we spend more time with God.

Reflection

1. What's the worst advice you ever received? Did you follow it, or did you know at the time that it was not good advice?
2. Why should we not just listen to people who agree with us or tell us what we want to hear?
3. What habit can you start today to get to know what God has to say?

But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. – [Galatians 5:22-23](#)

When a person has a relationship with God, they start to experience his presence. People often describe this as a feeling of calm when things are going really wrong. Or they report a sense of being valued, loved, and cared for by no one in particular, just for being themselves. Frequently they get some really great guidance on what to do or how to handle a certain situation in the form of a sudden and surprising thought that comes to mind. All of these are examples of experiencing God in the form of the Holy Spirit.

The writer of the passage above uses a metaphor of a fruit tree to describe the wonderful character traits (fruit) that are produced in people when they experience a relationship with God. Who doesn't want more love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control in their life?

Getting that kind of "fruit" starts by planting your roots in good soil. Tell God you trust him, want a relationship with him, and want to put him in charge of your life. Then, prepare to be amazed at the good fruit he produces through you.

Reflection

1. Have you ever felt like you were experiencing God's presence?
2. What fruit would you like to have more of in your life?
3. Why do you think a relationship with God might produce these "fruits" in your life?

God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him. – [John 3:17](#)

One of the big reasons why people avoid getting too close to God is the fear of judgment. It keeps a lot of people from attending a church worship service, talking to anyone about God, or seeking a relationship with him. This might especially be true if your life is, like mine was, marred by abuse, broken relationships, and legal trouble.

That's unfortunate. One of the important things I discovered and would like you to know about God is written in the passage above. He wants to save you from the things that are keeping you from experiencing an abundant life. He can do that if you enter into a relationship with him. And while God does not like it when we hurt others, he's full of grace for those who ask for forgiveness and choose to trust and follow him. That's really good news for you and me.

I certainly don't deserve to be rescued by a holy God. In fact, none of us do—we are all flawed, and we are all sinners. But thanks to his character and how much he loves you and me, he offers that salvation anyway. All we have to do is believe and receive it. That's all. There are no catches or fine print contracts. If you're feeling lost and hopeless, try calling out to him and listening for his reply. That's when you'll know that you are truly saved.

Reflection

1. What is your reaction when you hear that God wants to save you rather than judge you?
2. Why can't we save ourselves?
3. Have you ever been given grace from someone when you really deserved punishment?

*I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world. –
John 16:33*

The most trying time of my life was when I was arrested for domestic violence and my wife moved out. It was a real low point. One of the blessings of that trial, however, was that I finally stopped trying to be in charge of my life. I could see where it was getting me—and it wasn't a good place!

Around that time, I started attending church and I heard people talk about their trials and sorrows, but also how they discovered a personal relationship with God, and how that gave them peace. I could relate to the trials and sorrows, and the internal peace sounded like a welcome change from the turmoil I was experiencing.

What I've learned about God from the passage above and from other believers is that he doesn't promise our lives will always be easy or that they'll go the way we want them to. They won't. But knowing he loves us, is always with us, and that he has already taken care of the big stuff like our mistakes and what happens when we die, gives us a peace that is unimaginable to anyone who hasn't experienced it.

I'll tell you the same thing those witnesses said when I went back to church—don't take my word for it, but do check it out for yourself. Ask God to forgive you for all the ways in which you have fallen short. Invite him to be the central figure in your life, and commit to listening and following him. Then step back and find peace in the relationship that you develop with him.

Reflection

1. What was the worst, lowest time of your life?
2. What would it look like to have peace during difficult times?
3. What do you think Jesus meant when he said that he has overcome the world?

And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. – [Ezekiel 36:26](#)

Here's a short cut to change that a lot of people miss: a relationship with God. It changes our hearts, which makes it much easier to change our behavior in the ways that we want. Accepting this relationship means we experience God's love, and in turn, become more loving toward others.

Because we know God is on our side, we become far less self-centered and concerned with protecting ourselves or putting up our defenses. Instead, we become God-centered and are free to pursue his purpose for us here in this world. That means that we see others, including our partners, with more tenderness. We can respond to their mistakes, shortcomings, and frailties with compassion. In fact, it feels good when we do.

This fresh start is available to everyone, including you, no matter what you've done. All you have to do is sincerely ask God to forgive you for your past mistakes, tell him you want him to be at the center of your life, and open yourself to receiving his spirit. There's nothing like a heart transplant to create radical transformation!

Reflection

1. What is a stony, stubborn heart?
2. What is a tender, responsive heart?
3. Which kind of heart do you think would bring a person the most joy and peace?

*The Lord says, “I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you.” –
[Psalms 32:8](#)*

God wants to give us his wisdom and guidance. In fact, he longs to do it. He is the only being in the universe that has infinite knowledge and wisdom. He knows all things. He knows all possible outcomes. He knows what choices will bring blessing to our lives.

So when he freely offers to give this wisdom to those who seek him, we’d be fools to turn it down. The only requirements God puts on us are that we ask and then stay near him. He won’t force us to stay near, either. He gives us free will to choose.

What do we need to do to stay near him? The same thing we do to stay near to a friend or loved one. We spend time with him and share our authentic selves as we talk and listen to him.

Reflection

1. When you think about God having infinite knowledge, what advantages does that have over what we humans are able to know and understand?
2. What do we have to do to get God’s guidance?
3. How does it make you feel to know that God is watching over you and guiding you toward the best path?

Each time he said, “My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.” – 2 Corinthians 12:9

Want to know who’s okay with it when you mess up? God. Does that surprise you? It does a lot of people because they think of God as a rule enforcer—the heavenly watchdog who is just waiting to catch us doing wrong. That, my friend, is not at all the character of God.

Think of God as a loving parent who wants good things for us, his beloved children. Does he care about our mistakes? To the extent that they hurt us or someone else, yes. But that’s only because he wants the best for us all. He wants us to learn, grow, and do right because he wants us to be *blessed*.

Does he hold our mistakes against us? Not at all, if we ask for forgiveness and show a sincere effort to do better next time. In fact, he sent his son to die as payment for our mistakes, just so you and I could be forgiven. His grace truly is all we need.

But we are not only forgiven when we ask—we are also given the *power* to do better. God gives us better control over our emotions, shares his wisdom as we get to know him, and gently guides us back each and every time we get off course.

Need some grace? We all do. Now you know where and how to get it.

Reflection

1. Does it surprise you to read that God is okay with you making mistakes?
2. Why is the concept of grace so hard to understand or accept?
3. What do you think God means when he says, “My power works best in weakness”?

For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. – 1 Corinthians 14:33

One barrier that keeps people from seeking a relationship with God is that religion can seem so confusing. It is easy to feel that way when hearing how some religious people talk about their faith. But this is not God speaking.

The message God wants you and me to hear is so simple, a child can understand it. That message is that he loves us and wants to have a relationship with us. He hopes that we will trust him and know that he is working to make good things happen in our lives. When we accept his love and trust him to lead us, we feel peace and joy.

It's that easy. Don't be confused or distracted by the nuances of religion. Accept God's offer for a relationship first, and those other things will begin to make a lot more sense.

Reflection

1. Do you find some (or all) religious beliefs to be confusing?
2. What is the benefit of making religious practices part of your routine?
3. Why is it sometimes easier for a child to have faith than an adult?

But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. – Romans 5:8

Sometimes we don't want people to find out about our faults, because we're afraid they will think less of us. But we don't have to worry about that with God. He knows about all of our mistakes, and he knows that we are all sinners. Yet he *still* loves and accepts us.

Just look at the Bible story about David, who committed adultery and had someone murdered. Because David was willing to admit his sins and turn away from them, God forgave him—and used him to do great things. God promises to do the same for you and me.

We are able to live our life to the fullest when we're vulnerable and honest with God. When we ask him to examine our hearts, he reveals where we need to make changes. His goal isn't to condemn us, but to give us a joy-filled life. When we stop feeling like we have to impress God, we can start being changed by him.

God is safe and he loves you. Are you ready to be honest and vulnerable with him?

Reflection

1. Who knows your faults and still likes or loves you? How do you feel about them?
2. Why doesn't God wait for us to be perfect before he shows up in our lives?
3. How does admitting our mistakes clear a path for us to have a relationship with God?

Choose my instruction rather than silver, and knowledge rather than pure gold. – Proverbs 8:10

In life, we all have to follow someone or something. There is no such thing as not having guiding principles. So here's a decision we all have to make: will we pursue our own path, follow someone else's, or heed God's instructions?

Before you decide, it's important to know that God loves you and wants good things for you. He is also all-knowing, which means he's able to give pretty good guidance. He created you, me, and the universe around us. He knows how people and relationships work, and he knows how things will work out—both our good decisions, and our bad ones.

God is like a good, wise parent who loves his children. We'll do well to trust his guidance. In fact, we are blessed greatly when we get to know his character and nature, try to live like he shows us, and learn about the purpose he has for us.

My plans often don't work out. In fact, I often make a real mess of things when I'm in charge. How are your plans working?

Reflection

1. What's the best advice you ever received?
2. Why was that advice so good?
3. How do you feel when you follow some advice and it works out well for you?

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. – [Romans 8:28](#)

The year I was arrested for domestic violence was the worst year of my life. I was separated from my wife, put on probation for my offenses, and feeling very uncertain about my future. I was afraid I had messed up my life beyond repair.

Fast-forward to today, 15 years later, and my life has never been better. While I was unable to save the marriage in which I had been abusive, I am now happily married to a wonderful woman who is a fantastic partner and my best friend. I have a great relationship with my children and I'm doing extremely rewarding work. The best part is I feel a peace about my life, and myself, even when circumstances are not what I would prefer.

What I didn't realize at the time, but can see now, is that God caused everything to work together for my good. Yes, that period of my life was hard, but God needed to get my attention and motivate me. The work I did to stop hurting the ones I love did more than keep me from getting back into trouble—it changed me so I can now have better relationships with my wife and kids.

We want to be instantly rescued from our challenges. I've learned, however, that God's timing is not our timing. I've also learned that if I continue to trust him, follow him, and love him, he will faithfully turn all of the messes I make into something wonderful. I hope you will trust, follow, and love him too, because I want your life to be as blessed as mine is.

Reflection

1. How can God use hardships to get our attention?
2. When have you seen God take bad events and make something good out of them?
3. How can taking a longer-term perspective on difficult situations help us see what God might be doing?

Now *faith* is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. – Hebrews 11:1

Faith, by definition, means we are placing our confidence or trust in something or someone for some future, unknown event. We don't need faith if something has already happened—we already know the outcome. It's only when things are uncertain that faith is required.

Maybe “uncertain” is exactly the word you'd use to describe your life, and the changes and upheaval you may be experiencing right now. In truth, “uncertain” describes all of our lives all of the time. So who, or what, can we have faith in?

Other people, including our friends, family, and partners, sometimes let us down. I'd like to say I have faith in myself, but if I'm honest, I know how often I fail at something or fall short of being the person I want to be. Having faith in a political system, an ideology, or even a lucky number often just leaves us disappointed.

Let me tell you about someone we *can* have faith in: God. Many people don't believe in God because they can't see him or what he is doing in their lives. I'll admit, it is sometimes hard to see evidence of God. That's why it takes faith—as well as some awareness of what to look for.

Other people don't believe in God because he doesn't do what they want him to do. That would make God our puppet or personal genie, and that is just not who he is. He's way wiser and way more capable than the limits of your mind or mine.

I encourage you to get to know who God really is—the all-powerful, all good, all loving creator of the universe, *and* your heavenly Father. He wants good things for you. He can weave all of the pain, heartache, and brokenness you might be feeling into something beautiful, if you let him. That better future all starts with trusting him—having faith in something you might not be able to see just yet.

Reflection

1. Why is it so hard to believe in God?
2. What evidence do you “see” that God exists?
3. If God isn't our personal genie, what is he—and why is that better?

ALLOWING GOD TO CHANGE US

Actually doing the work inside of us,
following God's guidance



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This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! – 2 Corinthians 5:17

God is in the business of transforming lives. He starts by giving you a new identity as soon as you accept his invitation to follow him and have a relationship with him. You become a new person. You begin to see yourself, other people, and the world around you in a new way.

You begin to act and react differently, too—more like his son, Jesus. Not because you have to, but because you want to. The transformation is not instant and is never complete, but you'll notice a big change right away. Then, if you let him, he'll continue to shape you more and more into the person you were created to be.

Reflection

1. Why is our identity so important in determining how we behave?
2. How does the idea of getting a new identity free us to think and act differently in the future?
3. Who is the person that God created you to be?

Give your complete attention to these matters. Throw yourself into your tasks so that everyone will see your progress. —1 Timothy 4:15

A relationship with God was instrumental in helping me stop my hurtful behavior. But while some things instantly got better as soon as I committed myself to following him, other things did not. Although God *could* transform us in a flash, he mostly works slowly, in incremental steps.

The reason why it takes so long to change has more to do with us than God. Good habits take time to develop, while bad ones take time to unlearn—and we have a lot of them. So we must concentrate, go all in, and practice doing things differently, often for quite a while, before we get to the point where we stop slipping into our old ways.

God knows that it's hard work for us to remove and replace bad patterns of behavior. He also knows that it's unrealistic to expect them go away immediately. That's why he offers grace.

Grace is not a free pass to keep doing what we've always done. Rather, it's God's gift of forgiveness and support when we sin but want to do better. God doesn't turn his back on us when we mess up—in fact, he still loves us, still wants a relationship with us, and is still there to help us get better.

I can hardly believe that God is that good and that patient with you and me, but he is. Maybe that's what is meant by “Amazing Grace!”

Reflection

1. Why does God let us work on our changes over time, rather than stepping in and changing us all at once?
2. What does “giving your complete attention” to something mean?
3. How does God's grace motivate us to do better rather than continuing to do things wrong?

But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you. – [John 14:26](#)

In the passage above, Jesus is teaching his followers. He knows he is about to be betrayed and killed, and that he will no longer be around to guide them. Still, he assures them that they will be able to tap into God's wisdom through the Holy Spirit. What does this mean?

The Holy Spirit is one of those concepts that can be difficult to understand, even for practiced Christians. God shows up in this form as a thought that enters our mind—one that we know isn't our own. Other times the Holy Spirit visits us as something that someone says, or something we read, that applies perfectly to our situation. Sometimes he comes as a particularly powerful dream, or in the form of circumstances that send us on a course we would have never expected. All of these are examples of how God speaks to us through the Holy Spirit.

The best way to tell if what you're experiencing is divine guidance or some weird effect from last night's pizza is to test it. Is it good, not only for you, but also for others around you? Is it consistent with what God has already said (something we can find out by reading the Bible)? Do others who have a relationship with God agree that it sounds like something he would say?

Sensing the Holy Spirit is maybe one of the best benefits of having a personal relationship with God. By talking to God and humbly listening, we receive his guidance. No YouTube expert comes close to providing the wisdom that comes from the creator of all things. We also know that he is working for our good, even when our circumstances are difficult, and even when we can't see it.

Anyone can have this close friendship with God. All we have to do is to put him in charge of our life. Said another way, we just have to trust him.

Reflection

1. Have you ever sensed God's presence in your thoughts or circumstances?
2. Why is humble listening part of being able to sense God?
3. Have you decided to put God in charge of your life? If not, what is holding you back?

Don't sin by letting anger control you. – Ephesians 4:26

Anger is a natural emotion. It's not wrong to get angry. God knows that because he gave us anger, just as he gave us all our emotions. Note the passage above does not say, "Don't get angry." What is wrong is when we let our anger build to the point where it controls us, and then we do something that hurts others—and ourselves.

The good news about this commandment is that God doesn't just tell us what to do, or point to what we're doing wrong. He also gives us a way to change, as long as we listen and follow him.

I don't know about you, but I don't like being controlled by my anger. It's not fun. I can tell you that asking God to be in charge of my life, and asking him to help me see how to better manage my anger, was a game-changer. I encourage you to do the same.

Reflection

1. Have you ever done something in anger that you regret?
2. When is anger a good emotion?
3. How can we express anger in a way that doesn't hurt others or ourselves?

He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name.

– [Psalms 23:2-3](#)

When life's circumstances turn out differently than we planned, God may be taking us on a different path. He doesn't cause bad things to happen to us—the imperfect people and world around us provide plenty of opportunities for that without his involvement!

He does, however, use those situations in which we feel lost and humbled to get us to trust *him* instead of ourselves. Then, he calls us to follow his ways of thinking and acting. He doesn't do this because he wants obedience. He does it because he wants to teach us how to live a rich and satisfying life.

Reflection

1. Why might we need to rest when we've been pursuing our own plans?
2. Why might God *allow* but not cause bad things to happen in our lives?
3. Why is important for us to be humble in order for God to work with us effectively?

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. – 2 Corinthians 10:5

God gives those of us who trust and love him the ability to control our thoughts and emotions in a way that blesses us. He helps us do this by providing a measuring stick we can use to decide which thoughts and emotions are beneficial, and which ones are garbage.

To use this tool, we must first “capture”—or be aware of—our thoughts. Then, we must compare them to the lessons that Jesus taught in his ministry. When we obediently hang on to the thoughts that are consistent with his teachings and discard the ones that are not, our emotions, which come from our thoughts, stay on track.

For example, self-centered thoughts or a desire to get revenge on others who have wronged us are not Christ-like, and they don’t serve us well in the long run. On the other hand, treating people kindly and with respect, even though those people are not perfect, is like Jesus. When we act like Christ, our relationships benefit, our self-esteem grows, and we get more respect from others.

God wants you to have a full and abundant life—one where you have good relationships with others and feel at peace with yourself. He wants to teach you the thoughts and feelings that will lead to that life. All you and I need to do to use this tool is be aware of our thoughts, and compare them to his.

Reflection

1. What’s an example of a destructive, hurtful thought you’ve had?
2. How can you take that thought captive and make it obedient to Christ?
3. Why does adopting Christ’s way of thinking help us lead a good life?

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. – Romans 12:2

The world tells us that we can't let anyone get the best of us. It says that life should go the way we want it to, and when it doesn't, that we're justified in getting upset.

God has a better way for us to think about life, people, and the world around us. By getting to know him, we learn his will for us. That changes how we think about difficult and disappointing situations, and therefore changes how we respond to them.

Having a relationship with God allows him to transform our minds. It's like hanging out with a new friend and opening ourselves up to their influence. Unlike some people, however, this friend guides us into a life that is good and that blesses us.

Reflection

1. Why shouldn't we copy behaviors and customs that are so commonly seen around us?
2. How might God's will for you be different than what everyone else is doing?
3. How does changing the way you think transform you into a new person?

And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. – Philippians 4:8

God, your creator, knows how you work. The above “commandment” is useful because God knows that when your *thoughts* are fixed on what is true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and worthy of praise, *you* become those things too. Who doesn’t want that?

The wisdom in this scripture is clear, but less obvious is how much God loves you. Why would an all-powerful God take the time to coach you and me so that we could become “admirable” or “worthy of praise?” Only a loving father would do that.

Reflection

1. What do you find yourself thinking about most of the time?
2. How might changing the way you think change how you act and behave?
3. Why do you think God wants to coach us?

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life. – [Psalms 139:23-24](#)

One of the many benefits of having a relationship with God is that we get to receive his feedback. He is that small voice in our head, letting us know when what we're thinking about is leading us astray.

Getting our thoughts straight is such an important concept that it is used widely by counselors to help people overcome all kinds of issues, including depression, PTSD, addiction, and even domestic violence or abuse.

While being “corrected” is not generally something that we look forward to, God’s correction is gentle and good. God is not a harsh, “gotcha” god, waiting to catch our mistakes and make us feel bad for them. His guidance is like having a personal coach or loving parent who is there to keep us on track so we can receive all of life’s blessings. That’s a coach worth listening to!

Reflection

1. When have you received a tip about how to do something that made the task a lot easier?
2. What is an example of a circumstance or event that we can think about in two different ways? How might those different perspectives on something lead a person to take different actions?
3. Have you asked God to search your thoughts and point out those that are holding you back from the life he intended for you? If not, why not?

“Don’t be afraid!” Elisha told him. “For there are more on our side than on theirs!” – 2 Kings 6:16

Elisha was a prophet who lived some 2,800 years ago. During a war between Ancient Aram (now Syria) and Israel, the King of Aram sent an army of soldiers to capture Elisha, whose visions were helping Israel gain the upper hand.

The Aramaic forces surrounded the city where Elisha and his servant were staying. Seeing they were encircled with no escape, the servant was terrified. But Elisha told his servant, who could only see the earthly army there to capture them, to open his eyes so that he could see the angelic army that was surrounding and protecting them. “Don’t be afraid!” Elisha told him. “For there are more on our side than on theirs!”

Elisha trusted in God to protect him and his servant, and we can, too. We can’t always see how God is working in the moment, but we can see his works throughout the ages and in our own lives if we open our eyes. We can be confident that God will protect and provide for us, because he always has.

When bad things happen—and they will happen—he has it covered. He has already secured victory over the things we can’t defeat: our own sin, death, and the forces of evil. Trusting God’s promise sets us free to stop worrying about the future, and stop needlessly defending ourselves.

Reflection

1. What’s the scariest situation you’ve ever been in?
2. How does having faith in God “open our eyes” to his protection and provision?
3. How would you live differently if you were able to live without fear?

Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you. – 1 Peter 5:7

Worry is the result of our concern about the future. It is especially easy to worry when we can't control events and there's the possibility of a really bad outcome. We worry about the weather because if we're caught driving in an unexpected storm, our car could crash and we could be killed. We worry about hundreds of other things that are out of our control, too.

Giving up control is scary, especially when we remember bad things that have happened to us when we were not in control. But giving up control to God is different. When we do that, we give control to someone more capable than us. We surrender to the all-knowing, all-powerful creator of the universe. Because he is good and because he cares about us, we can be sure that he is using that knowledge and power to make things work toward our benefit.

That's not to say everything comes out like we want it to. Sometimes, God has a bigger, better, longer-term plan for us. It may take us a while to see that plan—it may even not make sense until we are in heaven with him. But we can trust that his plan is best.

Having a relationship with this all-knowing, all-powerful God who loves you and will work for your good is a great stress reliever. It is the great equalizer for all of the things we can't control. I hope you'll give him your trust so you can experience this peace.

Reflection

1. What are some things you regularly worry about?
2. What is something that you have confidence in?
3. Do you trust God? Why or why not?

Throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy. – [Ephesians 4:22-24](#)

The word “sin” often gets defined as a wicked or immoral act. But God sees sin as *any* way in which we fall short of what we were created to be. And the reality is *all* of us fall short of our potential to be the kind of people God had in mind when he created us.

Sometimes we do things that hurt others, and in the process, hurt us, too. Other times, we miss opportunities were sent to bless us. There are countless ways in which we sin and stop ourselves from experiencing our best lives.

The good news is, we *can* change. We don’t have to be stuck with old, sinful patterns of behavior. How does that change happen? By letting the Holy Spirit renew our thoughts. You see, it is our thoughts—or our attitude, if you like—that determine how we feel about our circumstances and the people around us. God wants us to see things like he sees them, and think about them in the way that he thinks about them.

The Holy Spirit is how God shows us his perspective. It comes in the form of better thoughts that enter our minds to replace toxic thoughts that aren’t working for us. It comes as “ah-ha” moments when we are reading the Bible, or listening to a pastor’s teachings.

We can create these transformative moments simply by asking God to show us a better way to think and act, listening for his voice in our minds, and then following his guidance when he speaks.

Reflection

1. In what ways do you feel you’ve fallen short of being the person God created you to be?
2. What is an example of something, or someone, that God might see differently than you do?
3. What’s one “ah-ha” moment you’ve had while reading the Bible or listening to Biblical teaching?

And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns. – [Philippians 1:6](#)

People who put God in charge of their lives frequently report very positive changes. They feel a sense of peace and confidence about their circumstances. As a result, they are far less likely to get upset when things go wrong. They are not as concerned about other people's opinions, but they care a lot more about how God views them. They see others with more compassion, and therefore are more tolerant of those people's mistakes and shortcomings.

Some of this transformation happens right away. As it continues and our relationship with God deepens, we get closer and closer to being the person he designed us to be. However, the transformation is never complete—it lasts a whole lifetime. Parts of our old nature still pop up on occasion, and we continue to make mistakes.

Personally, I was hoping God would make me perfect, but he didn't. He keeps us imperfect to remind us that we will always need him.

Reflection

1. What is an old habit that you have tried to change but have been unsuccessful doing so?
2. What is an old habit that you have successfully changed?
3. Who do you know that seemed to have their life transformed for the better—that they act like a very different person than they did before? What was catalyst for their change?

So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image. – [2 Corinthians 3:18](#)

A relationship with God makes all the difference in whether or not we can be transformed. Not going to church, not carrying out religious practices, but having a *personal* relationship. That means letting God be in charge of our lives, listening for his guidance, and trusting his wisdom enough to follow it.

A lot of people will write this off as a bunch of superstitious nonsense. I get it, because for years I was one of them. I didn't want to believe in something without proof. Most of all, I didn't want to be the fool who believed in some made-up story that I couldn't understand or explain.

Then, I got desperate. Nothing I'd tried to do to change was working very well. My wife had left me because she could see I wasn't making much progress and was mostly reacting to conflict like I'd always done—badly. I didn't know what else to try to save my relationship. Finally, I started praying and asking God to change me.

What happened next is that a veil was removed. I started hearing guidance from God in the form of thoughts that I knew were not my own (how did I know? They were too good to be mine!). I began to feel a sense of peace in situations that used to set me off. And I could completely understand how this relationship with God was making me into a different and better person. It wasn't magic, or a fairy tale, after all.

Here's what you should know about this. God requires us to believe in him and submit to his ways, in faith. This has to happen *before* we can receive his guidance, and before we get to experience the benefits of this relationship. Becoming more and more like God's image is wonderful and desirable, whether you are as desperate as I was, or not.

Reflection

1. How do you view God, religion, and faith?
2. What is the evidence that God exists?
3. What questions or objections do you need to have answered before you would feel comfortable putting God in charge of your life?

A person without self-control is like a city with broken-down walls. – Proverbs 25:28

This verse is from Proverbs, a book of “wisdom literature” in the Bible that is full of guidance about how to live our life to get the best results. Back when it was written, cities were surrounded by walls to protect those inside from harm.

I don’t know about you, but I feel crummy after I lose control of my emotions. I feel like a city with broken-down walls that has allowed invaders—my own negative thoughts and feelings—to completely overrun me. It also means I have to mend my relationship. If I keep letting my emotions run amuck, that task only gets harder and harder.

On the other hand, learning to soothe myself and *not* react every time I feel hurt, or believe that some injustice has been done to me, has greatly improved my relationships. My walls remain intact, and so does the relationship. I also feel much better about myself when I maintain control over my reactions.

This passage is one of several in the Bible that encourage us to practice self-control. God wants that for you and me because he loves us and knows it leads to a better life. How awesome is it that we have a life coach, whose advice is always available and free, to help us develop skills and habits that will greatly enhance our quality of life?

Reflection

1. Have you ever lost control of your emotions, only to regret it later?
2. If so, how did your actions affect your relationship or relationships?
3. Who do you know that seems to have good control of their emotions, even in difficult or stressful situations?

*In my distress I prayed to the Lord, and the Lord answered me and set me free. The Lord is for me, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me? –
[Psalms 118:5-6](#)*

One of the great relievers of stress and fear is to have an expert show up and help us out. It's like bringing in a top manager when a business is failing. Or recruiting a superstar coach to turn around a losing team.

Knowing that person is there, bringing all of their skills and working on our behalf, takes the load off of our shoulders. It gives us hope for a much better outcome than we feared. Circumstances no longer feel so gloomy. Our opponents no longer seem so unbeatable.

That is exactly the hope we can have in God. There is no one more capable—after all, he created everything. And we know he is on the side of everyone who loves and follows him.

But there's the key! Like any true friend, God is not going to be there for us if the only time we call on him is in emergencies. We have to cultivate a relationship with him and follow him. Then, he's available for us to call on, night or day.

Reflection

1. When have you witnessed someone turn around a struggling business, team, or community?
2. Some of the most common fears are fear of failure, loss, missing out, looking bad, being left out, not being liked or loved, being powerless, change/the unknown, and death. Of these, which are you most afraid of?
3. How does trusting that God is in control reduce your fear?

He heals the brokenhearted and bandages their wounds. – [Psalms 147:3](#)

You may have heard claims about God’s ability to heal wounds, including emotional wounds from the past. Some people think that means that if they say a particular prayer (or have someone pray it for them), the hurt will be magically gone. It sometimes works that way, but more often it does not. Does that mean that God has failed, that he is powerless, or that the whole faith thing is just wishful thinking? Not at all!

God more often heals us over a period of time in ways that help us develop new habits, new ways of thinking, and a closer, more trusting relationship with him. You see, God is more concerned with our character than our comfort, because he wants us to develop our character for eternity.

Think of it this way. If you injured your knee while playing sports, instant healing would only restore your knee to the way it was before. You would be just as susceptible to getting another injury. But if you healed your knee slowly and strengthened it at the same time, you would end up stronger and in better shape than you were before.

In the same way, God takes time to heal us, giving us a chance to learn new ways of responding to situations that we used to handle poorly. It takes us a while to develop new thought patterns so we don’t fall back into our old reactions. We often don’t trust that following God’s counter-intuitive and counter-cultural ways is for the best, so he gives us time to try them out and be convinced.

God *could* heal us in a quick and easy way. But he knows that a longer healing process will be more complete and permanent. We may think we are waiting on him to save us from our circumstances, but in reality, he’s waiting on us.

It’s your turn. God is willing, able, and waiting to heal you.

Reflection

1. What is the most serious injury that you have ever healed from? How long did that take? Was your healing complete or incomplete?
2. Do you believe God heals physical and emotional wounds? Why or why not?
3. Why is it so hard to think or act differently than how we see people thinking or acting in the culture around us?

For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him. – Philippians 2:13

One thing that often motivates us is pleasing the people we love. When you think about people who love you, who have taken care of you, and who have been loyal to you, doesn't it make you want to do things for them, too?

This is especially true of God, once we begin to understand how much he loves us, how much he has given us, and how faithful he is to us. For those of us who have a relationship with our heavenly father, this drives us to make peace with others, serve humbly, and do our best to follow his example.

God is pleased when we do these things, not because he wants to keep us in line or make us suffer, but because he knows we will experience joy in life when we do. He knows what's good for us, and he's pleased when we see it, too. Seeing God as he really is—a good God who wants good for us—is motivation to get to know him better, follow him, and please him.

Reflection

1. Who are the people in your life that you want to please?
2. Why do you want to please them?
3. How is a desire to please God different than being forced to obey his rules?

You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. – [Psalms 139:13-14](#)

How do you know that you are worthwhile, lovable, and valuable? What evidence is there if you wanted to prove your value in a court of law, or to yourself? This is what philosophers call a first-order question of life—it is of such primary importance that until it is answered, other questions about life don't really matter much. But while a solid answer to this question is key to finding meaning in life, getting that answer can be hard.

We could say, "Well, my partner loves me, so I must be lovable." Or maybe, "My friend thinks I'm worthwhile, so I must be worthwhile." But who or what says that your partner or friend is right? My wife also places a lot of value on the throw pillows on our bed, so I have to question her judgment—at least a little. And what happens to our value if our partner decides to leave, or our friend betrays us?

Believing in God, and believing God, are what makes a big difference in answering first-order questions about life.

Believing in God—that he exists, and that he is the creator of all things, including you and me—is the first part of our answer. When we look at the intricate details of the world around us, and the incredible systems and perfect balance designed to sustain life in it, it's impossible to conclude that what we see is randomness. Just as every painting has a painter and every sculpture has a sculptor, so too must all of creation have a creator. A very wise and powerful one, I would add.

Believing God—what he says about you—is the second part of our answer. God loves you. He wants you to be here. He has a purpose for your life. He made you unique and special, not like anyone else. As the verse above says, he knit you together in your mother's womb and made you wonderfully.

I've heard this verse interpreted as, "God doesn't make junk." Believe what he says about you: you are worthwhile, lovable, and valuable because he made you that way. Knowing what God, the wise and powerful creator of all things, says about you, and knowing that his view never changes, answers the question about your value like nothing else can.

Reflection

1. On a scale of 1-10, how worthwhile, lovable, and valuable would you rate yourself?
2. Why did you give yourself this rating?
3. How different is your rating than the "10" that God rates you? If there is a gap, how do you explain the difference?

So we can say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?”
– Hebrews 13:6

There is a lot we can't control in our lives: disease, the economy, even others around us. This lack of control can create fear. Our fear is unnecessary, however, because God is in control. He is good, and he is watching out for you and me.

Does this mean that nothing bad will ever happen to us? No, because we live in a broken, fallen world. But it does mean that God is with us through all of those challenges, helping us navigate them, if we let him. And it means that he ultimately wins out over things that we can't defeat on our own, like injustice and death. That means that we don't have to work so hard to defend or protect ourselves. What's the worst that people can do to you or me? God has it covered.

God encourages his followers to be unafraid over 300 times in the Bible. No other commandment is repeated so often. This is because he doesn't want us to spend our days consumed by our worry or driven by our fears. He knows how our fears can cause us to miss out on important opportunities and act in ways that keep us from the full and abundant life that he has planned for us. Are you ready to embrace that life?

Reflection

1. Why do you think there are so many references to fear in the Bible?
2. How does knowing in advance that even if something bad happens, the final outcome will be okay, change how you face the bad event?
3. What is the biggest barrier you have to trusting that God is in control?

Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. – Colossians 3:2

God, our creator, knows why we act the way we do. He tells us that if we want to get rid of our anger, rage, and other bad behaviors that are holding us back, then we have to *think* differently. In fact, he says that we need to think about the “things of heaven.”

So what are the things of heaven? Heaven is a really wonderful place. In fact, it’s perfect. Part of that perfection means that in heaven, our interactions with each other will be peaceful and free of hurt and hostility.

We all know that life on earth is far from perfect. The good news is we can bring some of the perfection of heaven into our lives right here and right now. We do that by thinking about others in the same way that God thinks about them (and us). We think truthful, compassionate, kind, humble, gentle, patient, forgiving, and loving thoughts towards others because God in heaven thinks in those ways about us. When we think like God, our actions change and our life on earth feels a lot more like heaven and a lot less like a hellish, exhausting battle.

Jesus demonstrated this behavior for us, and we are called to follow his example. It all starts with how we think, and whether or not we choose to think and act like Jesus. What will you choose?

Reflection

1. In what ways do our thoughts lead to our actions?
2. What are some things of heaven that you’d like to see more of on earth? What can you do to bring them here?
3. What is something you can do to begin to think more like God?

Love your neighbor as yourself. – Mark 12:31

Jesus taught that we are to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Most of us interpret that to mean that we should increase the love we have for others, so that we regard them as highly as we do ourselves. That's true, and one of the implications of what he said. Like so much of what he taught, however, this statement has a much deeper meaning than what first meets the eye.

It also means that if we do not love *ourselves* well, then we need to pay attention to that part of the equation. Many of us have more patience with others than we do for ourselves. After we've scolded ourselves for a good long time, our self-loathing builds and our tolerance for other people falls. Then, we end up taking out all of our self-hatred on them. What can we do about this?

A revelation for me was when I learned *and accepted* how much God loves me. If he was willing to sacrifice his own son so he could have a relationship with you and me, then he must really love us. And if the all-powerful creator of the universe loves you and me despite all of the ways in which we've messed up, then maybe we need to give ourselves a break.

Yes, we are called to care for and love other people. That starts, however, with loving ourselves well. If you're having trouble doing that, spend some time getting to know how God sees you as his beloved son or daughter. Then watch how being filled with his love for you overflows into how you love others.

Reflection

1. Are you more patient with others or yourself?
2. What past mistakes do you still “beat yourself up” over?
3. Why do we need to accept God's love for us in order to love others well?

Fools vent their anger, but the wise quietly hold it back. — Proverbs 29:11

The book of Proverbs is one of the books of “wisdom literature” in the Bible. Most of its contents are pithy quotes like this one, directing us to God’s truths. In this case, we’re reminded that quickly venting our anger, or allowing our first *reaction* to spew out, will often leave us looking and feeling like fools. On the other hand, it’s wise to hold our reaction back, allowing ourselves time to think and choose the best *response* to the situation.

But here’s the problem for some of us: it seems like our brains are just wired to react. We’d love to have better self-control in conflicts and stressful situations, but as hard as we try, we just can’t seem to change. How can we rewire our minds so we don’t continue to short-circuit and fly off the handle?

God knows how we are wired because he created us. He wants to share his wisdom with us so we can experience our best lives—the ones he created us for. Here’s something else about having a relationship with God: we don’t have to rewire our brain on our own. We can allow God to change us simply by putting him in charge of our life. If you haven’t already done so, I encourage you to tap into his wisdom and transformational power.

Reflection

1. When you feel angry, are you more likely to vent your anger or hold it back?
2. When have you taken more time to consider your response rather than reacting right away to the situation? Did that strategy work better or worse?
3. Have you ever tried to “control” your anger? How did that work out?

...let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us... – Hebrews 12:1

I remember sheepishly confessing in an email to my pastor that I had been abusive to my wife, but that I was working to change. Here, in part, is what he wrote back:

I praise God for your willingness to change! God did not create you nor is it his will for you to lose yourself and abuse your wife—he has a far better plan in mind. Keep the faith. You’ll never become perfect—I don’t mean that—but change has and will continue to happen in a very real and very permanent way. Keep pushing that door open—you’ll love the results! God guarantees it!

My pastor didn’t quote the verse above, but he could have. God wants us to throw off the things that hold us back, including and especially behavior that hurts others. He has a far better plan in mind for your life and mine.

It takes commitment and perseverance, but you and I have a good race to run. It’s right through that door—the one we have to open to let God into our lives. And I can confirm, you’ll love the results!

Reflection

1. What sin might be holding you back from a better life?
2. How can you throw that sin off?
3. Why do you think perseverance is necessary to make big changes in your life?

Plans succeed through good counsel; don't go to war without wise advice. – Proverbs 20:18

A quick search through the Bible reveals dozens of stories about people seeking counsel from others. Kings, leaders, and ordinary people turned to counselors to help them make important decisions and navigate new, challenging situations. Of course, when those people chose wise counsel, the results were better.

The wisest of all counselors is God himself. As creator of all things, including you and me, God is the ultimate source of truth and wisdom. We can tap into his wisdom by praying, listening to him, and reading and studying the Bible—which was written by people who were directly inspired by God.

Still, I'll be the first to admit that knowing what God wants me to do in any given situation is not always crystal clear. Sure, I know his overriding principles for living a good and fruitful life, but sometimes I'm still left with questions about the details. That's where the wise counsel of other people—especially those who get their wisdom from God and can draw on their experiences of trying to follow Christ—makes a difference.

You'll do well to get to know God and what he says about how to live life in the most blessed way. But you'll also benefit from connecting with a community of others who are on the same journey as you: learning about God's wisdom, applying it to this world, and following the example of his son, Jesus. Life can sometimes feel like a war, and I want you to succeed by being equipped with the benefits of God's good counsel, wherever it comes from and whatever form it takes.

Reflection

1. What are the blind spots you have that can be filled by wise advice?
2. How can we know what God wants us to do?
3. How can you get connected to a community of believers?

But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language. – Colossians 3:8

This statement won't surprise you: God doesn't like it when we hurt others with our actions. But he also doesn't like it when we hurt them with our *words*—whether we lie about them, say disrespectful things to them, or yell at them. Most of us know God wants us to be *kind* to each other.

One of the reasons God asks us to behave in this way is because the other person we're hurting is, as are we, his beloved son or daughter. He wants us to treat them well, even if we disagree with them or they're behaving badly too.

But the other, perhaps more surprising reason why he wants us to get rid of our bad behavior is because he knows that it hurts *us*. Whenever I fight dirty, it takes me a lot longer to rebuild trust and restore the relationship that I've damaged—if it's even possible to fix. That hurts *me* as well as my partner.

The good news is God gives us the power to act differently when we put him in charge of our life. Then, we conduct ourselves in the manner that he wants us to, rather than in the unhelpful way that our human nature tries to take. It's no longer me who reacts, but Christ in me—and he is able to take over and respond with patience, grace, and love.

That's the great thing about God. He doesn't ask us to *do* anything that he doesn't also give us the *power* to do. And all of the things he asks us to do are ultimately for our own benefit. It makes following his commands not only easier, but also more worthwhile.

Reflection

1. Have you ever damaged a relationship because of something you said?
2. What did you have to do to fix that relationship, or if it hasn't been fixed, what could you do now to repair it?
3. Why is it necessary to submit ourselves to Christ in order to start acting like him?

Now you are no longer a slave but God's own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir. – Galatians 4:7

We can't help but allow at least some external voices to shape what we believe about ourselves. You probably already know what your parents, friends, and partner think about you. But do you know what God thinks about you? Since he is your creator, wouldn't you like to know? Shouldn't you give his opinion *some weight*?

The scripture above is just one of hundreds of passages that talk about how God sees you: as his beloved child and heir, chosen and called to love and be loved, created on purpose, for a purpose. Is that different than how you see yourself?

Knowing and accepting God's truth sets us free. We are no longer slaves to the bad habits, thoughts, and behaviors of old, but able to change them into ones that will really bless us. I encourage you to learn more about how God sees you and let *that* define who you are.

Reflection

1. What different rights and privileges does a child or heir have verses a slave?
2. What are some of the things that you believe about yourself? Why do you think these things?
3. Is there a difference between how you see yourself and the beloved child that God sees when he looks at you? Which version do you believe?

Surely resentment destroys the fool, and jealousy kills the simple. – Job 5:2

Jealousy is not a new thing. The Bible is full of stories about people who were jealous: of siblings, other wives (back when having more than one was common), neighbors, other nations, people in power, people with more possessions, people with certain abilities, and of course, outsiders who gave their unwanted attention to spouses. None of these stories end well.

But God's word also offers a solution. It tells the story of how he created you and me uniquely and specially, how valuable we are to him, and how much he loves each and everyone one of us. When we start there and accept that truth, we feel a tremendous amount of contentment. We may still want companionship—someone to faithfully share our lives with—but we don't *need* it.

This sets us free from having to desperately protect or hang on to a relationship. We're content with what we have and who we are, whether or not we're "winning" in life and love. We're confident that God has created us to be valuable, and that others will see his goodness in us and want to be around it. Not everyone will like you or me, but someone wonderful will.

If you're not familiar with what God thinks about you, or you haven't experienced the confidence and contentment that comes with a relationship with him, I encourage you to check it out.

Reflection

1. Do you consider yourself a jealous person?
2. How can too much jealousy hurt our relationships?
3. How is jealousy related to fears we have about our own value and lovability?

As pressure and stress bear down on me, I find joy in your commands. – [Psalms 119:143](#)

It seems there's always a lot of bad news in the world around us. We experience real threats to our money, work, health, and even our lives. Our sense of wellbeing and progress is constantly disrupted, and there's never an end in sight.

Among all of this doom and gloom, there is some good news: God is in control, he promises to protect and provide for us, and we can trust him. He does not promise that everything in this life will be easy. In fact, he warns us that we will have troubles. But he is here to guide us through those hard times.

Knowing there is a good God who is in control of the many things *I* can't control gives me peace. I am confident in God's power and goodness, because of my experiences with him and how I've seen him work in the lives of others. Would you like to have the peace and joy that comes with a relationship with God? Seek him. He's waiting for you to invite him into your life.

Reflection

1. How does expecting hard times help us accept them when they happen?
2. How does seeing the ways God has showed up throughout the ages, and perhaps even in your own life, make you feel?
3. How can you have joy, even when the circumstances of your life are not ideal?

GOD'S VISION AND PROMISE

Completing our transformation with
new thoughts and behaviors to make these
changes permanent



Be still, and know that I am God! – [Psalms 46:10](#)

Ever have a conversation with someone who does all of the talking and you can't get a word in edge-wise? They will never know what you have to say. God sometimes feels the same about us. We'll never find out what he has to say to us, unless we are quiet and take the time to listen.

I know the idea of talking to an unseen superior being might seem ludicrous. Hoping to hear a reply might seem even more crazy. But this is called prayer. It has been practiced for centuries by billions of people, and is one of the main ways in which God connects with us.

I consider myself to be a rational, sane, and even scientifically-minded person. And while I can't explain how this happens, I can attest that I've sensed God's presence and experienced what it's like to receive his guidance. It comes to me, as it does to others, in the form of a thought in my head that is gentle, good, and truly helpful—a thought I can tell is not my own.

God is full of wisdom and he wants to share it with you. He also wants you to know how much he loves you. I encourage you to pause today to ask your heavenly father what he has to say, and then be still, so you can hear his answer.

Reflection

1. What has been your experience with praying?
2. Have you ever asked God what he wants you to say to you, then been still to listen to his answer? If not, are you open to trying it?
3. Do you know how much God loves you?

The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.
— John 10:10

Everyone follows something or someone in life. We can follow the ways of the world around us, and chase after money, status, or popularity. Or we can follow a path of compassion, service, and humility. We get to choose what, or whom, we follow.

Jesus taught about this choice. He likened living for ourselves and taking the easy way out to being a “thief”, stealing, killing, and destroying our own joy and fulfillment in life. On the other hand, following him and modeling our life after his leads to one that is rich and satisfying—in other words, thriving!

His teaching was, and still is, radical—because it’s the opposite of what the world says. Many people, including me, have discovered that what Jesus taught is true. Since he is God, and God created you and me, I guess he knows something about how we’re made!

Reflection

1. What is something that you really wanted, but then when you got it, ended up being disappointing?
2. Why is living for ourselves unsatisfying?
3. What would a rich and satisfying life look like to you?

I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. – Philippians 3:12

One of the great benefits of having a relationship with God, listening to him, and following his son Jesus' example, is that he helps us get better and better. It's like being an apprentice to someone who is a master in their field. In God's case, he is the master of how to live well—because he created life itself.

God knows that you and I are not perfect, but he loves us anyway. He continues to shape those of us who follow him, drawing us closer and closer to the perfection that he originally designed you and me to reach.

Reflection

1. Do you consider yourself a perfectionist? Why or why not?
2. Does something need to be perfect in order for you to like or love it? Why or why not?
3. How does knowing that we don't have to be perfect help us to focus on continuing to improve?

Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ. – Galatians 6:2

God created us to be in community with each other, helping and caring for one another. Not because he wants us to do his work of helping and caring for those in need, but because he knows that we are blessed when we do.

Caring about someone, by listening and expressing empathy or doing some sort of favor for them, builds a relationship with them. Investing in relationships like this is a wise thing to do, because we never know when we are going to need the other person's kind words or deeds in return.

But there's another reason why helping others is good for us. Whenever I start focusing too much on my problems and myself, it really drags me down. When I am busy helping someone else, I magically forget about my problems and start feeling good again.

Christ's "laws" are not there to catch us being bad. They exist to show us how to live and enjoy the blessings God intended for us.

Reflection

1. When have you done something to help another person out? How did you feel about yourself when you did this?
2. When has someone else helped you out? How did you feel about that person for helping or caring about you?
3. What happens to your mental state when you are busy helping someone else?

If the one who is not a Christian wants to leave, let that one go. The Christian husband or wife should not try to make the other one stay. God wants you to live in peace.
– [1 Corinthians 7:15](#)

God is pro-marriage. He is in favor of two people committing to one another and working through challenges when they arise, rather than quitting and moving on. Relationships are one way in which we grow and become who God created us to be.

But God also wants us to live in peace. He does *not* want us to be in relationships where we are hurt, neglected, or abandoned. That's not the way he designed relationships to be, and it's not the good life he intended for us.

So what happens when these two desires God has for us clash? What happens when there is abuse in a relationship or marriage? Or when one partner leaves the other, making no attempt to reconcile?

The answer is, God cares far more about the *people* in the relationship than he cares about the relationship itself. He hates to see his children hurt. If we have abused our partner, they have every right to leave. We've been given an important opportunity to heal, grow, and change for the better. Our job is not to cling onto the relationship, but to do the work so we will no longer hurt the person or people we love.

Even if we've done this work to become a safe, non-violent partner, if our partner can't see it, believe it, or forgive us, then we *still* have to let them go. Paul's God-inspired words, above, tell us that as badly as we may want the relationship to be restored, we are *not* to pressure a partner into staying. Forcing someone to stay will never create the loving, respectful, and peaceful relationship God desires for us.

Even if your relationship comes to an end, it is not the end for *you*. God still has wonderful plans for you. Maybe it is a new relationship, after you've had time to heal and change the behaviors that contributed to the end of your current one. Certainly it is the peace you'll feel when you put your faith in God. We can't always see what God is up to, but we can always trust that he's working for our good when we follow him.

Reflection

1. Why is it essential that our partner wants to be with us rather than feeling forced to be there?
2. Are you comfortable not being in a relationship? If not, what do you feel you need from another person that you are not able to have without them?
3. How does God's promise for a good future help you let go of a relationship, even if you don't want it to end?

A gentle answer deflects anger, but harsh words make tempers flare. – Proverbs 15:1

Sometimes, people wrongly assume that Christians are supposed to be passive. They think that following Jesus means they have to become doormats for the rest of the world. You know that “turn the other cheek” commandment, right?

But that’s not at all the model Jesus gave us. In fact, he spoke out regularly against injustice. A better way to describe his example would be to say that in each case, he decided exactly which response would be most effective, and then delivered it.

Sometimes, that meant he was silent and chose not to respond, simply “turning the other cheek.” Other times, he was assertive, speaking a well-directed truth in love. Occasionally, he used “righteous” anger, but this passion was not about vengeance or evening the score for some personal offense—it was about doing what’s necessary to stop injustice.

The key is that Jesus always chose how to *respond*, and never *reacted*. He calls us to do the same: to carefully consider what good, long-term result we desire, and then decide which response is most likely to achieve that end. This doesn’t make us a doormat—it makes us more effective at dealing with injustice and difficult situations.

Jesus knows we feel so much more inner peace when we take the high road. That sounds like a leader worth following, don’t you think?

Reflection

1. What’s an example of an offense that you could choose to let go of and not respond to? How would not responding make the situation better?
2. Why is getting vengeance a bad idea?
3. How does envisioning the desired end result help you decide on the best strategy to get there?

Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit. – [Ephesians 5:18](#)

God loves you and wants you to have a full and abundant life. That includes having friends and fun. Like any good father, however, God also warns us about things that will hurt us. One of those things is mind and mood-altering substances like drugs or alcohol. He wants us to stay in control of our words and actions so we don't hurt others or ourselves. That can be tough to do when drunk or high.

Fortunately, God gives us an alternative, and a better one at that. Think of the reasons why people commonly want to drink or get high: to relieve stress, lower their inhibitions, or just feel good. But these mood-altering substances also impair judgment, create anxiety or depression, and add to our stress as our body processes them.

On the other hand, being filled with the Holy Spirit by accepting a relationship with God provides all the same benefits, without the side effects. By turning our pressures and problems over to him, we feel relief with no downside. Knowing that God loves us helps our confidence and does away with our concerns about what other people think, lowering our inhibitions without the crash that comes later. We experience true joy in life—through both good and difficult circumstances—and there is no hangover.

Do you want the good stuff? Get to know God and what he has to offer you.

Reflection

1. How have drugs or alcohol negatively impacted your life, or the life of someone you care about?
2. Does it surprise you that God wants you to have fun? Why do you think that he does?
3. In what ways would your life be better or more fun if you didn't worry about common stressors or whether other people liked you?

*I am praying that you will put into action the generosity that comes from your faith as you understand and experience all the good things we have in Christ. –
Philemon 1:6*

God is a God of abundance, not scarcity. He provides everything we need and more when we put our trust in him. Maybe not everything we *think* we need, or everything we want, but everything we *need*.

Consider the balance God created when he made the universe. We have air to breathe, water to drink, food to eat, a climate we can survive in, and the materials and intelligence to make buildings and machines. Reflect on all the things we can *enjoy*, like the beauty found in nature, sweet tastes and smells, and music. These are truly good things we get to experience!

When we believe that God is generous and provides for us abundantly, we live differently. It changes our need to control money, possessions, or our lifestyle. Instead of worrying about not having enough, we can be generous with others, including our loved ones, knowing that he will provide for everything we truly need and then some.

God wants to provide for you. Will you accept his offer and trust him?

Reflection

1. What are some of the blessings that you have been given?
2. How does thinking about something as a want instead of a need reduce the pressure you feel to get it?
3. How could living with a sense of abundance rather than scarcity change how you live?

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. – 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

I frequently hear this passage read at weddings. It's such a wonderful description of what intimate relationships should look like. I'm guessing that it's often what the couple saying their vows envision for their life together. That was me, once. Maybe it was you, too?

Of course we want our spouse or partner to be patient and kind; free of jealousy, pride, and boastfulness. We hope that they will not be irritable, bring up our past wrongs, fail to tell the truth, give up on the relationship, or give up on us. We're convinced that their faith, hope, and love will spring eternal.

Then life happens. We find out that our partner is... not perfect. It turns out they are not always patient or kind. In fact, sometimes they are downright difficult and hurtful. When we look closely, we discover that they have baggage, and it affects how they relate to us. After the illusion of a fairy-tale relationship disappears, then what?

That's when this scripture's meaning and purpose is truly revealed. You see, it is not a description of an ideal-yet-impossible relationship between two people. Rather, it's a *standard* that we are called to strive for. And it's not about what our beloved is supposed to be doing—it's about what we are supposed to do.

Think of the words above as a mirror we can hold up to ask ourselves, "How am I doing, compared to this benchmark? Am I being patient and kind; free of jealousy, pride, and boastfulness? Am I regularly compromising, or do I demand that things always go my way? Am I keeping score of wrongs, or being irritable, dishonest, or unfair?"

When I look in the mirror and compare myself to these words, I know I fall short. Way short. But then I remember how full of grace God is, and I refocus on trying to become more and more like the criteria he set. That's how you and I get better: trying, measuring, adjusting, and trying again. And when we get better, our relationships get better, regardless of what our partner is doing. When both partners commit to loving and serving one another, a wonderful(ly imperfect) relationship emerges.

Reflection

1. What notions about dating or marriage did you have that have proved to be untrue?
2. Why is it so important to focus on ourselves as we work to improve our relationships?
3. When you hold up this passage as the standard for how you love, where do you see gaps?

Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. – Ephesians 6:4

There are many verses in the Bible about children honoring, obeying, and learning from their parents. The passage above stands out from the others, however, because it is about how parents are called to treat their children. Specifically, it says that we as fathers (or mothers) are not to exasperate our children.

How might we exasperate (provoke or frustrate) our children? Being hard on them and expecting too much, too soon is one way. Children are not miniature adults—they are inexperienced and immature humans that need to learn and grow over a couple of decades as they become young men and women.

Another way to exasperate our children is to ignore them. It's easy to forget that to be young, small, and inexperienced in this world is a frightening ordeal. We as parents must give them attention, care, and guidance if they are going to develop into secure and emotionally healthy adults.

Even if we did not receive this care and attention from our parents, God wants us to do better for our children. As hard as it might be to believe, he loves our children even more than we do. So first and foremost, he wants us to reflect his love for them through our role as their parents.

He wants us to provide our children with age-appropriate challenges and opportunities to learn and grow, but always backing these with encouragement and support as they try, fail, and try again. He wants us to protect them, which means placing reasonable boundaries on what they see, do, and experience. He wants us to provide for them—not extravagantly, but enough to meet their needs so they do not worry about their own survival. In short, he wants us to love and care for them, just like he loves and cares for us.

Get to know God. Learn and experience how he parents you. As you copy God the parent, you will become a better parent yourself. Your children, their children, and their children's children, for generations to come, will benefit from the blessings you pass on to them.

Reflection

1. If you are a parent, are you more hard on your child(ren) or easy on them? If you are not a parent yet, but want to be someday, which parenting style do you think you will have?
2. What are the pros and cons of providing too much, or too little, discipline for our children?
3. How could a child—yours or someone else's—learn about Jesus from you?

This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. – Joshua 1:9

The central story in the first part of the Bible (the Old Testament) is about God rescuing his people from slavery and delivering them to a promised land. They were not magically teleported—they had to walk from one place to the other. God performed miracles that allowed them to leave, gave guidance for their journey, protected them from enemies, and provided for them along the way. But they still had to participate and have faith that they would, indeed, reach the Promised Land.

In the same way, God wants to rescue us from behaviors that keep us enslaved and prevent us from enjoying the full and abundant life he intended for us. He's our most important ally as we make our journey toward change. Receiving his guidance directs our steps. Having him work on our behalf helps us overcome obstacles. Knowing that he loves us fills a place in our lives that nothing else can, and keeps us moving forward.

We still have to be strong and courageous as we take this journey, however. We still have to do *our* part of the work—God won't teleport us to the better life we want. And we have to trust that his promises are real if we're going to put him in charge of our lives.

Reflection

1. Where have you seen God work so far in your life's journey?
2. What strong and courageous acts do you need to do right now on your journey toward a better future?
3. How can the knowledge that God is walking with you make you feel about your journey, and the obstacles and challenges you come up against?

Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. – Psalms 23:4

David was the king of Israel around 3000 years ago. He was a very popular king, and his army was invincible. As king of the most powerful nation on earth at the time, he had access to everything the world could offer.

Still, he wrote the song found in Psalms 23, praising God for meeting his needs and providing peace, comfort, guidance, renewed strength, freedom from fear, and protection. God filled a role in David's life that the rest of the world could not. He can and will do the same for you, if you allow him to.

Reflection

1. What dark valleys do you currently feel that you are walking through?
2. Why are things like popularity, power, or money not very helpful when you face difficult circumstances?
3. What does it mean to keep God close beside you?

I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate. —
[Romans 7:15](#)

In my journey from being abusive to being able to maintain a good, healthy marriage, I give a lot of credit to my relationship with God for changing me. Here's the truth, however: he didn't make me perfect. That's a fact that anyone who knows me will confirm!

Early in his life, the Apostle Paul was a guy who persecuted those who followed Jesus and even had them killed. But after meeting Jesus, he went from being someone who tortured Christians to someone who suffered and sacrificed himself on their behalf. That's a pretty radical change! Still, Paul wasn't perfect, as he confessed in the words above.

Paul writes later in that same chapter ([Romans 7:24](#)), "Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death?" Do you ever feel like Paul—that you're trapped in this endless cycle of trying, falling short, trying some more, and falling short again? I know I sure do.

Then, he goes on to answer his own question in [verse 25](#): "Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord." That's our answer, too. God doesn't expect us to be perfect. In fact, he knows that we're not. That's why he sent his son Jesus to die for us, which covered all of our imperfections.

Here's the genius behind God's incredible gift to us—by making a way for us to become perfect in his eyes, he enables us to continue to work on changing, without worrying about messing up. Any time we are learning something, we're going to make mistakes. God says, "Don't worry about it. I've already covered it. Just keep trying." That, my friend, is what sets us free to become more like the person God meant us to be.

Reflection

1. Do you have good willpower?
2. When you make a mistake, do you tend to dismiss it or beat yourself up for it?
3. How can being free of the consequences of our mistakes set us free to try more?

Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. – Ecclesiastes 4:9

Here's another verse I often hear at weddings—because it points out an important truth about relationships, and especially those we have with a spouse or committed partner. Two people, when they form a good, healthy relationship, really are better than one.

Our partner's differences (and there will always be differences) give us more capabilities than those we would have on our own. My wife is a master at handling difficult social and work situations, and she helps me think through those so I'm less likely to do or say something I regret. I worry less than she does, so I often ease her stress by reassuring her. Our different abilities help us help each other to succeed in life.

However, all of this can easily be ruined by conflict, disrespect, and especially mistreatment. If we don't maintain closeness, respect, and trust, our partner's motivation to help us goes to zero. It may be a strange way to think of it, but a relationship is a little like an ATM machine—we have to keep making deposits into our account, or soon we'll stop getting anything in return.

Relationships are something to be desired and valued. God wants us to develop the skills we need to have good, healthy, respectful relationships, so that we can enjoy their blessings and benefits.

Reflection

1. What are some of the good things that you can or do bring to a relationship?
2. In what ways has a partner, past or present, enriched your life because of something unique they brought to your relationship?
3. What skills might you need to develop, or changes might you need to make, so that you can be sure that you are giving more to your relationships than you are taking?

Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone. — Romans 12:18

God wants you and me to be blessed by our relationships, including those we have with our partner, extended family, friends, neighbors, and even the strangers we encounter. In fact, he created us to live in a community. He created love, friendship, and fellowship, too.

As the maker of all of these things, he also tells us how we can get the most out of our relationships. His instructions are a lot like the use and maintenance manual we get from the manufacturer when we buy a car. He explains how we can take care of our relationships so we receive the maximum benefit, for the longest time.

God not only says “Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone,” but also gives us a number of specific actions we can take to protect and preserve our connections to others. In the chapter from which the above quote is taken, God calls us to be humble, accept differences, love genuinely, be patient, show compassion, give generously, forgive, honor, serve, and not seek revenge when we feel wronged.

Some of us may wonder if God made all of these rules to take the fun out of life. In reality, it is just the opposite. He is telling us how we can get the most joy out of life, including from our interactions with others. Getting to know God and following his commands is not a burden—it’s a blessing.

Reflection

1. Do you feel at peace with everyone you know? Why or why not?
2. Who do you have the most difficulty in getting along with? Why?
3. In the list of things to do (be humble, accept differences, love genuinely, be patient, show compassion, give generously, forgive, honor, serve, and not seek revenge), which ones do you do well? Which ones could you do better?

So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up. – Galatians 6:9

Making changes to our behavior is hard work. It requires a lot of time and commitment. And it can be frustrating and discouraging when we don't quite get it right the next time we find ourselves in a difficult situation.

Still, the work that you're doing and the effort you put in are good things. You've likely seen hundreds of inspirational quotes about the value of perseverance. They're all true. The apostle Paul tells us the same thing in the God-inspired words above: Don't get tired of doing the right thing.

Often we can't see the results to start with. Frequently it seems like no one is noticing our progress. God notices, however. And he promises blessings when we don't give up. It's taken me a few years, but since I started my change process I've been blessed with a wonderful new marriage, restored relationships with my kids, and inner peace when I face the inevitable challenges in life.

We don't know ahead of time what those blessings are going to be, which is why trusting God's promises is called faith. But I can tell you this—you won't be disappointed. Keep doing good work. Know that he is watching and wants to guide you when you ask him for it. Trust that you will be blessed if you don't give up.

Reflection

1. When have you stuck with something, then later been glad you did?
2. How do you motivate yourself when you're feeling discouraged?
3. What would a "harvest of blessings" look like to you?

*Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you. —
Philippians 4:9*

When a toddler first learns to walk, is their first try their best? Of course not! The same is true for anything we do, whether it is walking, driving a car, or writing a Bible study. We get better with practice.

Being a Christian literally means that we are *trying* to follow Jesus. Do we get it right all of the time? Of course not! In fact, we don't have to look far to find examples of people who claim to be Christians and yet act nothing like Christ.

So what do we do about that? We practice. We try our best to follow his instructions and copy what he did. When we fall short, we adjust and try again. We ask ourselves, "What would Jesus do?" and envision ourselves acting the same way.

One of the reasons Jesus came to earth was to teach us and give us a perfect example to follow. He knew we are not always going to get it right, no matter how hard we try. Still, he encourages us to keep practicing. When we practice, we get better. And when we get better, we experience the peace we feel from living life in the way he showed us.

Reflection

1. What can you do well today, that took time and practice to get good at?
2. What does it mean to follow Jesus?
3. Why does following Jesus give us peace?

ABOUT THE ANANIAS FOUNDATION

The Ananias Foundation helps people who have committed acts of domestic violence or abuse to stop hurting the ones they love. We offer a roadmap for change, share helpful resources, and connect you to a community of others who are traveling along the same road. We do our best to make these resources practical, easy to understand, and accessible, no matter where you are in the world. We know this journey is a difficult one, so we are here to encourage each and every person who seeks healing and transformation.

The Ananias Foundation accomplishes its mission through the generous support of individuals, churches, and organizations who share our passion and desire for safe, healthy relationships. Your [donation](#) can help us reach more individuals who are seeking change, and thereby transform more relationships, families, and communities for the better. We are a registered, 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, so all donations are tax deductible in the US.

Contact Us

www.ananiasfoundation.org

Ananias Foundation
P.O. Box 65141
West Des Moines, IA 50265

The Ananias Foundation helps individuals who have committed acts of domestic violence or abuse to stop hurting the ones they love.

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