



Curated from Nancy's best-selling books, *Revive My Heart* provides fresh opportunities to savor the Scripture and soak in the beauty and life-giving truth of Christ. As you seek Him, you'll be able to face whatever your day may bring, with a revived heart.

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## *The Spoken Word of God*

Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.

—GENESIS 1:3

There are many natural wonders on our planet. And man has designed and produced many scientific and technological marvels. But none comes close to equaling the wonder of those three words found in Genesis 1: “Then God said . . .”

The eternal God and Creator of the universe, the One who holds all the bodies of water on the earth in the palm of His hand, the One who uses the continents as His footstool, the One who measures the span of the universe with the width of His hand—that God has spoken to *us*.

In the spiritual realm, God has given us many marvelous gifts—divine wonders that make us stand in awe of His greatness, His power, and His love. The creation of the world, the incarnation of the Lord Jesus, the miracle of the new birth—each of these marvels is inextricably linked to the *Word of God*.

When God *said*, “Let there be light,” there *was* light. The mere spoken Word of God brought into being our entire universe.



### Make It Personal

*Make a list of some of God's divine wonders—  
and thank Him for His glory.*

## *The Master Storyteller*

All my days were written in your book and  
planned before a single one of them began.

—PSALM 139:16

**N**o one likes a dull story. We want it to have intrigue, action, conflict, and twists and turns.

But when it comes to our lives, we think differently. We want our story and the stories of those we love to have predictable endings where everything gets tied up neatly, the good people live happily ever after, and the bad people go away. So, when the unexpected, unwanted twist or turn happens, we may feel disappointed, betrayed, or even devastated.

But God rarely writes neat, tidy, sanitized stories. In fact, many of the accounts we find in Scripture are pretty messy.

This is no less true in our lives. Situations that seem confusing and chaotic to us are actually plot threads He is weaving together to create a story—a beautiful, compelling work of art. Incidents and events that make no sense at all now will one day make perfect sense—if not in this life, then in heaven—as we see the masterpiece He had in mind all along.



### **Make It Personal**

*How can you start to view the events in your life  
as part of the backdrop of God's ultimate story?*

## *Surrender Issues*

You are not your own, for you were bought at a price.

So glorify God with your body.

—1 CORINTHIANS 6:19-20

**S**ome people claim to be surrendered to God, and may even believe they are, but they're actually justifying attitudes or behaviors contrary to God's Word. It may sound like this: *The stuff I watch on TV isn't that bad. Or, I admit I have a chronic struggle with overeating and with controlling my temper. But none of us will be perfect until we get to heaven.*

If you claim to be a follower of Christ while living in denial about areas of your life that aren't pleasing to Him, you're not living a fully surrendered life—no matter how many people may think you're a "good Christian."

To some extent, we all find ourselves in this deceived condition. We may feel that compared to the world's standards we're doing fine. In fact, writing this has forced me to deal with several matters in my own life that I had been overlooking, tolerating, or excusing that are really surrender issues at heart. I challenge you to do the same.



### **Make It Personal**

*Are there any areas in your life where you're living in denial?*

*Ask the Lord to help you have a fully surrendered life.*

## *Choice Silver*

The tongue of the righteous is pure silver.

—PROVERBS 10:20

**T**he book of Proverbs refers to the tongue more than one hundred times, and twelve of those instances connect “tongue” with “heart.” Godly people speak out of the overflow of a godly heart. They are spiritually minded and don’t just speak about spiritual things on Sundays. They are restrained and think before they speak.

So, how do people get tongues of righteousness? Their hearts are connected to the Source of wisdom and grace—the One who reveals Himself in Scripture. I want to be a wise, godly woman, but I don’t always want to pay the price for a heart of wisdom. It takes discipline and effort to fill our hearts with God’s Word—and to have a tongue that is choice silver. Silver, of course, is a prized metal. The tongue of the righteous is excellent, superior, worthy—it has been carefully refined and is of the highest possible quality.

A heart that is rooted in the Word and character of God will bring forth words that are of superior quality. Those words will be of great value to those who hear them.



### **Make It Personal**

*Ask the Lord to help your words  
be of superior quality today.*

## *The Priority of Praise*

[Jesus] was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray.”

—LUKE 11:1

The Lord’s Prayer is much more than a way to pray. Jesus was teaching the way to live and think.

The prayer begins with, “Our Father in heaven” (Matt. 6:9). It starts with worship. In this model prayer, Jesus taught that praise should precede petition. This is the pattern of prayers all through Scripture. Prayer before petition; worship before asking.

Only after focusing on God and His glory did Jesus move on to His requests. There are no personal pronouns in this first part of the Lord’s Prayer because it’s all ultimately about our heavenly Father—His name, His kingdom, His will.

Before we pray for our own needs and concerns, we need to pray for God’s concerns. Our instinct is to start with requests that are urgent or foremost in our hearts. But according to the way Jesus taught, there’s a better starting place. No matter how urgent or desperate our petition, the starting place is our Father.



### *Make It Personal*

*What does your prayer life say about your priorities?*

## *The Reason Why*

“You have not heard his voice at any time, and you haven’t seen his form. You don’t have his word residing in you.”

—JOHN 5:37–38

**T**he Pharisees were renowned for their knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures. Yet one day Jesus looked them in the eye and said, “You have not heard [the Father’s] voice.”

I can just see those indignant, bedecked Bible scholars turning red in the face and spluttering, “He’s just a blue-collar worker! He’s never even been to seminary! And *he’s* telling *us* that we have never heard God speak? Why, we’ve spent our whole lives mastering the Bible!”

But Jesus wasn’t finished. He went on, “You pore over the Scriptures because you think you have eternal life in them, and yet they testify about me. But you are not willing to come to me so that you may have life” (John 5:39–40).

The purpose of getting into God’s Word is to meet Jesus. He *is* the Word! If we master the Bible but don’t end up knowing, loving, worshiping, serving, and being like Jesus, we’re really no better than the Pharisees.



### **Make It Personal**

*Before you read your Bible today,  
ask the Lord to help you truly meet with Him.*

## *Reflecting His Beauty*

So that they may adorn the teaching  
of God our Savior in everything.

—TITUS 2:10

I've never considered myself to be particularly beautiful. It's not that I think I'm unattractive. Instead, I've tried to focus on cultivating beauty of character and the heart. Yet I still remember the first time Robert told me I was beautiful.

Robert kept telling me I was beautiful—and he really seemed to mean it. Gradually I began to believe that he truly saw me that way. Our courtship and marriage have helped me realize in a new and deeper way that when we're adorned with another's love, we develop a greater capacity to reflect love and beauty to others.

God has placed us here on earth as ambassadors of the gospel. Our calling as His followers is to make His love and truth visible and believable—and beautiful—to skeptical observers.

Because they see it in *us*. Because they see it *changing* us. His love is making us beautiful. Adorning us. And, through us, adorning His gospel.



### **Make It Personal**

*Think about someone you know whose life adorns the gospel.*

*What is it about them that helps make Christ's love  
and truth believable?*



## *Breaking the Silence*

No creature is hidden from him, but all things are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give an account.

—HEBREWS 4:13

**I**t is for our good and by God's mercy that God reveals the truth about us, no matter how shameful that truth may be. The reason God discloses our thoughts, actions, and motives is to bring us peace.

God is not a bully; He is a Savior. He cannot be soft on sin. His justice requires holiness that we, in our humanity, do not have the capacity for. The demands of God's justice have been satisfied through the sacrificial, substitutionary death of Christ on the cross. However, we must come clean; we must confess. Silence only condemns by keeping us guilty. Confessing our sin and breaking the silence ushers in the forgiveness and cleansing of God.

So, why hide? Why remain silent? Is there something in your life that you know is displeasing to God, some attitude or past behavior? Are you trying to hide it from God hoping He'll overlook it? God is calling you to break the silence today.



### **Make It Personal**

*Come clean to the Lord about any sin in your life.*

## *We Need It All*

All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness.

—2 TIMOTHY 3:16

**I**t's true that not all parts of the Bible are equally easy to digest. This week I have been reading in 1 Chronicles and Ezekiel. Unlike the succulent passages we might discover in 1 Peter or the Gospel of John, there are some passages in those books that seem particularly tedious and even unnecessary. Even the great Puritan pastor John Bunyan admitted, "I have sometimes seen more in a line of the Bible than I could well tell how to stand under and yet at another time the whole Bible hath been to me as dry as a stick."<sup>1</sup>

Yes, we need the Psalms and the Epistles. But we also need the Books of the Law, the Historical Books, the Prophets, and the Gospels. We need the whole of God's Word.

It was for this reason that Paul reminded Timothy that "all Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable" (2 Tim. 3:16). That means we need a diet that includes *all* of God's Word.

### **Make It Personal**

*Are you reading all of God's Word, or are there sections you avoid?*

## *Not What You Ordered*

Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will help you.

—ISAIAH 41:10

**N**ot long ago, Robert and I were invited to eat at an upscale restaurant. When our entrées arrived, they were served on plates covered with shiny domes. At precisely the same moment, the silver covers were lifted, revealing exactly what we had ordered.

The problem is, when it comes to real life, what's on our plates is often something we didn't order and might not even want. We'd prefer to choose what looks good and then have the server return, lift the silver dome, and—voilà!—exactly what we wanted. Occasionally that may be the case. But often it's not. God's divinely apportioned sovereignty is usually a surprise to us mortals.

Yet imagine the peace, comfort, and hope that would be ours if we really believed God knows and sees everything that lies before us—and that He has already provided whatever we will need when we get there! What freedom from fear, anxiety, and dread that should give us.



### **Make It Personal**

*Take time to thank God for His providence and ask Him to help you trust His working in your life.*

## *The Promise of Forgiveness*

As far as the east is from the west,  
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

—PSALM 103:12

**F**orgiveness is a promise to never bring up that sin against that person again. It is a deliberate decision to deal with another's sin by doing away with it, pressing the delete button, wiping it off our slate. With the promise of forgiveness, we relinquish our "right" to punish the offender or to make him pay. His record has been cleared.

Sometimes a woman will come up to me and say, "I've forgiven my husband" or "I've forgiven so-and-so"—and then she'll begin listing all the hurtful things that person has done to her. While I can applaud her for recognizing what she needs to do, her own words reveal that she hasn't fully forgiven—because forgiveness is a promise.

It's a promise God has made to us. Yes, what we did to Him was real. What we *continue* to do against Him is real. But by the atoning blood of His Son, God has chosen not to remember our offenses. He has put them behind His back.



### **Make It Personal**

*Ask God to search your heart regarding those who have hurt you. Are you keeping the promise of forgiveness in your relationships with them?*

## *The Benefits of Scripture Memory*

Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

—COLOSSIANS 3:2

A valuable aid to meditating on Scripture is memorization. In fact, when I encounter someone who is battling discouragement or depression, I often ask, “Are you memorizing Scripture?” It can change our perspective and attitude.

“But I can’t memorize,” some will respond. Don Whitney points out that the issue is not so much our *ability* to memorize as our *motivation*: “What if I offered you one thousand dollars for every verse you memorize in the next seven days? Do you think your ability to memorize would improve? Any financial reward would be minimal compared to the value of the treasure of God’s Word deposited within your mind.”<sup>2</sup>

Scripture memory will bring about many benefits, including cleansing and renewing your mind; keeping you from sin; providing direction; strengthening your spirit; combating the attacks of the enemy; stimulating spiritual desires; and fixing your mind and affections on the Lord.



### **Make It Personal**

*Choose a section of Scripture to memorize  
and start learning it today.*

## *Keep Your Heart for the Lord*

Guard your heart above all else, for it is the source of life.

—PROVERBS 4:23

**I**n our fallen, sinful condition, before we come to faith in Christ, Scripture says our hearts are foolish, desperately wicked, and bent on sinning. Praise God, when we receive Christ as our Savior, God gives us a new heart!

But as long as we're in this fallen world, our hearts are vulnerable to being influenced by the world around us, by our flesh, and by indwelling sin. That sin won't be fully removed until we see Jesus and become like Him. That's why it's so important that our redeemed hearts be protected, guarded, and kept for God.

So, how do we guard our hearts? First, we need to watch out for negative influences that can corrupt our hearts. Second, we need to fill our hearts each day with the Word and by prayer and meditation on God's ways.

May these practices never become routine to us—may we see them as a way to get to know God personally and allow Him to keep our hearts clean and fresh.



### **Make It Personal**

*What does your heart specifically need to be protected from in this season? What practical steps can you take today to help guard it?*

## *Blessed Are the Beggars*

“Blessed are the poor in spirit.”

—MATTHEW 5:3

Jesus' first recorded sermon was about how to experience true joy—how to be happy. It begins, He explained, by being poor. In today's world, if we were asked to suggest ways to be blessed, I'm not sure we would have started there. We don't generally think of poverty as a blessing. But Jesus came to introduce a radically different way of thinking about life.

In the original language, Jesus could have chosen two words to speak of someone being “poor.” The first option suggests someone who lives just below the poverty line, someone who barely makes it. That isn't the word He chose. He used another word that means a beggar—a person who has no hope of surviving unless somebody reaches out a hand and pulls him up.

What is Jesus saying? Blessed are *the beggars*—those who recognize they have no chance of survival apart from God's intervening mercy and grace. Because of their need, they reach out to Him. Because they reach out to Him, He responds by lavishing them with the riches of His kingdom and reviving their hearts.



### **Make It Personal**

*Are you a beggar? Take time to praise the Lord for rescuing you and for the glorious riches that He gives.*

## *Growth Takes Time*

There are some things hard to understand in [Paul's letters]. The untaught and unstable will twist them to their own destruction.

—2 PETER 3:16

**A**s meaningful as Scripture has been to me, not every day or portion has been a spiritual feast, any more than every meal I eat is a scrumptious banquet. Some passages have tasted more like cardboard than honey! Some days, I've felt like I was trudging through mud rather than "walking on the King's highway."

However, the value and impact of the Word in our lives cannot necessarily be seen in one day's or one week's intake. When a child is growing up, you don't usually see evidence of physical growth on a daily basis. But gradually you realize that his pants are getting shorter and his arms are protruding out of his shirtsleeves. At the end of the year, you're amazed to realize how much he has grown.

Likewise, the value of a balanced, nutritious diet is not generally experienced in one day or one week; rather the cumulative benefits of eating right will be experienced over an extended period of time.



### **Make It Personal**

*How did you grow in your relationship with the Lord last year?*

*Make a list and keep it to compare to next year!*



## *Every Believer's Goal*

For he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world,  
to be holy and blameless in love before him.

—EPHESIANS 1:4

God's goal in saving you was not just to make your few years on planet Earth easier or more enjoyable. He had an eternal end in view. His intent was to make you holy, as He is holy, that you might perfectly glorify Him, that you might bring Him pleasure, and that you might enjoy intimate fellowship with Him for all eternity.

Your holiness is not secondary to whatever other goals you may have for your life—it is God's supreme purpose for you. It is something He desired, planned, and made provision for before He even created the world.

To be holy is your created purpose. It is our destiny. And it will be the outcome for every true child of God and for the entire body of Christ, according to that wonderful promise in 1 John 3:2: "We know that when he appears, we will be like him because we will see him as he is."



### **Make It Personal**

*Do you share the Lord's goal for your life?*

*Are you pursuing His eternal purpose to make you holy?*

## *All I Need?*

His divine power has given us everything  
required for life and godliness.

—2 PETER 1:3

Christ is all I need, all that I need.” It’s one thing to sing that little chorus when we’re sitting in a church service. But when we walk out the church doors and into the rough-and-tumble world, do we really believe He is *all* we need?

When it comes down to it, we often don’t believe God’s Word is truly sufficient to deal with our problems. Oh, it can deal with everyone else’s problems; but it doesn’t speak to *my* needs, *my* relationships, *my* situation. The way we live reveals what we really believe.

I need God’s Word *plus* these eight books from the Christian bookstore; I need God’s Word *plus* conferences and counselors.

Sure, I need God. But I need Him *plus* close friends; I need Him *plus* good health; I need Him *plus* a husband; I need Him *plus* a job that pays enough.

The truth is God is enough. If you have Him, you have all you need. Do you believe it?

### **Make It Personal**

*What difficulties are you facing right now? Ask God for His help and then trust that He is truly all you need.*

## *Wrestling with God*

Are you not from eternity, LORD my God?

—HABAKKUK 1:12

**W**hat comes to mind when you think of wrestling? You probably picture muscular athletes grappling in a gymnasium or stadium. The Bible presents a different image—one that takes even more strength and courage.

The name Habakkuk means “One Who Wrestles.” We don’t know what Habakkuk’s parents were thinking when they named their child, but their choice turned out to be appropriate. An Old Testament prophet, Habakkuk wrestled with God in candid conversation. He wrestled over unanswered prayer and injustice. He looked at his violent world situation and wasn’t sure he trusted God’s plan.

It could be that you’re staring across the ring at some challenges like doubt, confusion, guilt, unanswered prayer—all strong opponents in daily life.

Sometimes in the Christian world we act as if it’s wrong to have questions, and we should just put our minds to sleep. In contrast, Habakkuk says, “I’ve got honest questions. And I’m going to go to the One who can give me honest answers.”



### **Make It Personal**

*Are you wrestling with unanswered prayer and injustices today?  
Take your honest questions to the only Source of honest answers.*

## *A Family Prayer*

We who are many are one body in Christ  
and individually members of one another.

—ROMANS 12:5

Throughout the Lord's Prayer, we don't see the words "me," "my," or "I." Instead, nine times we read "our," "us," and "we." This is not a self-centered prayer. When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we're praying in communion and relationship with all other believers in Christ. He is *our* Father. We may pray alone or with other people, but we're never approaching God alone.

So, as we come to God, we want to not only be mindful of how something affects us. We can't express our own concerns, needs, or desires to God apart from consideration of our brothers' and sisters' needs.

That gives a whole new scope and magnitude to prayer. We're lifting up our own needs to the Lord as well as the needs of believers all over the world. We may not know who they are or what they're going through, but God knows, and we're coming together to His throne through prayer.



### **Make It Personal**

*How should knowing that each time you come  
before God you're praying with other believers  
around the world affect your prayer life?*

## *Supernatural Aid*

Make your ways known to me, LORD;  
teach me your paths.

—PSALM 25:4

God has been gracious to make the Word come alive to me as I take time to pray each morning with my Bible open. As I pray His Word back to Him, I'm acknowledging that this isn't an ordinary book I'm reading but a *supernatural* one, and, therefore, I need the assistance of its Author.

Jesus told His disciples He was going to send His Holy Spirit as a Helper to teach them and to guide them into all truth (John 14:26). First Corinthians 2:14 tells us the natural man cannot understand the things of God. Only the Spirit of God can open them up to us. James says, "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God—who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly" (1:5).

"Even the Bible," Samuel Taylor Coleridge is attributed as saying, "without the Holy Spirit, is like a sundial by moonlight."<sup>3</sup> We need the Holy Spirit, who inspired this book, to give us wisdom and understanding, to be our teacher, and to shed divine light on the Word.



### **Make It Personal**

*Ask the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom and  
understanding as you read God's Word.*

## *The Birds of the Air*

“Consider the birds of the sky: They don’t sow or reap or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

Aren’t you worth more than they?”

—MATTHEW 6:26

There are thousands of birds in my neighborhood, ranging from tiny yellow goldfinches to massive hawks, herons, and bald eagles. And early in the morning, my husband, Robert, will refill the bird feeders, just to be sure our little feathered friends have breakfast.

However, none of these creatures needs Robert in order to survive. Our good, wise, sovereign God cares for and meets all their needs. That doesn’t mean they never have problems. But Jesus assured us that even common, ordinary sparrows cannot fall to the ground and die apart from the “Father’s consent” (Matt. 10:29).

God does a more than adequate job of feeding birds. So, what does that mean for you? It means you have a God who cares deeply about you and who will meet your needs. He doesn’t just watch the birds eat. He is personally involved with their feeding. And what He does for these, He will do for you.



### **Make It Personal**

*Try to watch some birds today and give God thanks for His care for these small creatures . . . and His care for you.*

## *A Soft Answer*

A gentle answer turns away anger,  
but a harsh word stirs up wrath.

—PROVERBS 15:1

When you watch a TV show and listen to the way people speak to each other, you're likely to hear a lot of harsh, angry words. A soft or gentle answer can defuse a tense situation, but fighting words generally produce a fight!

This doesn't mean you avoid speaking the truth, however. Ephesians 4:15 commands us to speak "the truth in love." Sometimes it's not so much our words as the *spirit* in which they're said.

The men of Ephraim were easily angered and offended (Judg. 8:1–3). Yet Gideon defused their anger with a humble word. Likewise, we can create a calm climate in our homes by the way we respond to those around us, even if they're not acting as they should.

Soft, gentle words minister grace, strength, and encouragement. Try saying some of these gentle words to those around you today: *I love you. . . . I'm praying for you. . . . I'm so proud of you. . . . I'm sorry I treated you that way. . . . Would you please forgive me. . . . I appreciate you. . . . You're such a blessing!*



### Make It Personal

*Ask the Lord to help you use soft, gentle words with family, friends, coworkers, and anyone you interact with today.*

JANUARY 23

## *God's Final Word*

Your word is a lamp for my feet  
and a light on my path.

—PSALM 119:105

**J**esus Christ, the living Word, was active in creation, and He holds together the world He created. The Word is active in redemption and in illumination. He is the one who shines light on our steps.

Jesus is the eternal Word of the eternal God, the full and final revelation of God to all people. He didn't come just to give us the Word of God—He is the Word of God. When Jesus speaks, God speaks.

Jesus reveals the way to the Father. He is God's final Word. Are we listening? Are we filling our mind with novels, TV shows, and music, or are we filling our mind with Jesus?

Because of Jesus, we can know the Father. But we'll never know the will of God, the thoughts of God, the mind of God, or the heart of God any better than we know His Son. If you want to know God, you must know Jesus. If you want direction for your life, listen to Jesus. Let Him speak to you through His Word.



### **Make It Personal**

*How are you getting to know God through His Son?*

*Is there anything you need to get rid of to make room for Jesus?*



## *Being Honest*

If we say, “We have fellowship with him,” and yet we walk in darkness, we are lying and are not practicing the truth.

—1 JOHN 1:6

The apostle John had known the joy of deep fellowship with God through Christ, and he wanted his readers to experience it too. He reminds us that when we cover up or refuse to acknowledge sin in our lives, we deceive ourselves and cannot enjoy full fellowship with God or with each other.

In fact, the person who habitually covers his sin has no basis for assurance that he is a child of God at all! The willingness to be honest and confess our sin is evidence of genuine salvation and is vital to experiencing God’s forgiveness and restored fellowship when we sin as believers.

God wants to experience intimate fellowship with His children. That’s possible only if we’re honest with Him about the true condition of our heart as He knows it to be. No matter what you may have done, you can experience God’s great love and amazing grace.



### **Make It Personal**

*Pour out your heart to the Lord, being honest about your sin, and ask that you might experience intimate fellowship with Him.*

JANUARY 25

## *A Great Tapestry*

How can a young man keep his way pure?

By keeping your word.

—PSALM 119:9

This past year I've read through the Bible three times in order to get a bird's-eye view of the panoramic plan of God. The view was magnificent—much like the spectacular vista from a mountain peak. There are themes that run like rivers from Genesis to Revelation—at points they are just a trickle; at other places they become a powerful, gushing force.

Like threads in a great tapestry, those themes are woven together to form the matchless story of Redemption. God's plan to create and redeem a race for Himself; His unending love, mercy, and grace; His long-suffering toward sinners and yet His righteous judgment against those who refuse to repent; the wiles and persistent hatred and rebellion of Satan against God; Satan's never-ending attempts to persuade man to join him in his sedition; God's ultimate, decisive triumph over Satan and His eternal rule over heaven and earth and hell—these are some of the overarching views that have filled my vision as I have looked at the Scripture as a whole.



### **Make It Personal**

*What's one of your favorite themes that you see woven throughout Scripture?*

## *Filled with His Love*

“As the Father has loved me, I have also loved you.

Remain in my love.”

—JOHN 15:9

There are hundreds of commandments in the Old Testament, but when Jesus was asked to choose the greatest, He said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30). Then He listed the second: “Love your neighbor as yourself” (v. 31).

But we can't love God or others the way we're supposed to. The fact is we love *ourselves* first and foremost. If we want to truly love God and others, we need His help. We can't love God—or our family and friends (not to speak of enemies)—without God's love filling us and flowing through us.

We need to put our roots down deep into the soil of the love of God we've received through Christ. As He pours His love into us, we can become channels through whom He can love others. What will draw people to Christ more than all our arguments, books, and conferences is when they see us really love one another.



### **Make It Personal**

*What would it look like for you to really love others as He loves you? Whom do you find difficult to love that way?*

## *A Great and Precious Gift*

My God will supply all your needs according  
to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

—PHILIPPIANS 4:19

God's providence. The word describes His care and guidance of all things, but it also speaks to His wise, sovereign rule over every detail of His creation. Now, this is admittedly a subject that can stir up animated arguments. But there are basically two options.

Either God sovereignly causes and/or permits everything that happens in our lives and in this world or He stands by and watches passively and powerlessly, unwilling or unable to do anything about what happens.

I choose door number one. Where would we be without the certain knowledge that “He’s got the whole world in His hands” and that every detail of our lives and days is ordered by our all-wise, all-knowing, loving God? Far from being a crushing burden to be borne or diminishing our value, the providence of God is a great and precious gift. To be helpless victims of chance, tossed about on the storms of life—that would be forever disconcerting and tragic. Thank God it is not the case.



### **Make It Personal**

*How have you seen God's providence at work in your life?  
How does knowing He's in control help when things are difficult?*

## *Waving the White Flag*

Therefore, submit to God.

—JAMES 4:7

**W**e all begin life as members of a rebellious race, fighting our own personal war against the sovereign King of the universe. For most, that resistance unfolds into a life-long story that could be titled *No Surrender*.

Some express their resistance overtly, perhaps through a lifestyle of unbridled lust and perversion. Others are more subtle—they are upstanding citizens and community leaders; they may even be active in church work. But beneath the surface, every human being has an inborn determination to run his own life and an unwillingness to be mastered by Christ, the King of Kings.

The decision to give up the fight is no small matter, especially after years of resistance. Surrender means nothing less than a radically altered lifestyle. Surrender to Christ as Savior and Lord is life changing. Whether we first wave the white flag at the age of eight or eighty-eight, that surrender involves a transfer of allegiance and a transformation of perspective that ought to affect every aspect of our lives.



### **Make It Personal**

*How are you surrendering to Christ today?*

## *Why Be Holy?*

Be holy, because I am holy.

—1 PETER 1:16

**T**here are moments when I think, *It's so hard to have to "be holy" all the time! Why can't I just relax sometimes?*

To be honest, don't you find it easier to go with the flow of your natural desires than to deny your flesh and choose the pathway of holiness—every moment of every day for the rest of your life? Why make the tough, daily choices that holiness requires:

- To get out of bed in the morning and spend time in God's Word before you jump into your to-do list?
- To turn off that suggestive program or to put down that novel that glamorizes sensuality?
- To admit you have sinned and seek forgiveness for speaking roughly to that family member or being critical of that fellow church member?
- To eat and sleep and dress and go to work and play and give and pray and go to church—all for the glory of God?

One reason suffices—because you want to please the Lord.



### **Make It Personal**

*What are the daily areas of your life where you need to make a conscious decision to choose holiness rather than going with the flow?*

## *Power of the Word*

This is my comfort in my affliction:

Your promise has given me life.

—PSALM 119:50

**T**he Word of God has power to keep us from sin (Ps. 119:9, 11), to strengthen us when we are grieving (v. 28), to comfort us when we are suffering (vv. 50, 52), to grant us freedom (v. 45), to give us understanding and light for our path (v. 105), and to give us peace and keep us from stumbling (v. 165).

The Word of God will light your way; help you make right choices; heal your wounds and settle your heart; warn you of danger; protect and cleanse you from sin; lead you; make you wise. It is bread; water; a counselor; life. It is satisfying; sufficient; supreme; supernatural. The hymn writer put it this way:

*Holy Bible, book divine, precious treasure, thou art mine. . . .  
Mine to show by living faith, man can triumph over death.  
Mine to tell of joys to come, and the rebel sinner's doom;  
O thou Holy Book divine, precious treasure, thou art mine.<sup>4</sup>*



### **Make It Personal**

*How has the Word been a valuable treasure during times of trouble or stress in your life?*

## *A Great Benefits Package*

My soul, bless the LORD,  
and do not forget all his benefits.

—PSALM 103:2

I once interviewed a woman for *Revive Our Hearts* who had faithfully memorized and meditated on Scripture for more than fifty years. She talked about the many benefits she received as a result of hiding God's Word in her heart.

I was amazed when she mentioned that she had never really been depressed. She explained that whenever she finds herself becoming a bit down or blue, she begins to quote Psalm 103. At that point in the interview, she proceeded to recite the entire psalm from memory, thoughtfully, with heartfelt expression.

It was a moving experience for all who were in the room. When she finished, there was a holy hush. My first thought was, *How in the world could I ever give in to discouragement, if all these blessings are ours—and they are!*

As we recognize and identify the specific blessings we have received from God, we discover countless reasons for expressing gratitude. The psalmist took time to bless the Lord for specific benefits—he didn't want to forget even one!



### **Make It Personal**

*Ask God to reveal today just how great your “benefits package” in Him really is. Then take time to give thanks.*



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