

January 2012

Lighted Lamp Magazine



From the Editor

I am always excited by the start of a new year because it gives me a chance to review my life and decide on any new habits to try that will help me follow God more.

New Year's resolutions can be hard to keep, and I think the biggest discouragement is making a mistake. People make resolutions that they will read their Bibles every day or not gossip all year, and then about the end of January, just when they think things are going well, there will be a bad day and they will forget to read or tell their friends what happened to Lisa. At that point it's easy to give up and accept failure, but failure is never final unless we let it be. The person who decides on a hard resolution and makes a lot of mistakes is becoming a stronger person just as much as the person who is able to attain their goal perfectly.

This past November I decided to participate in Nanowrimo, which sets a goal of writing a 50,000 word novel in a month. I only made it a little more than half-way, but I learned from it and it helped me improve my writing. In the same way, New Year's resolutions can be beneficial whether or not they are actually realized.

God bless,

Priscilla

Contents

Articles

4 When You Feel Unworthy

Jesus calls us to serve him even though we're not perfect.

12 Putting Down Roots

There are great advantages to putting our confidence in God.

Fiction

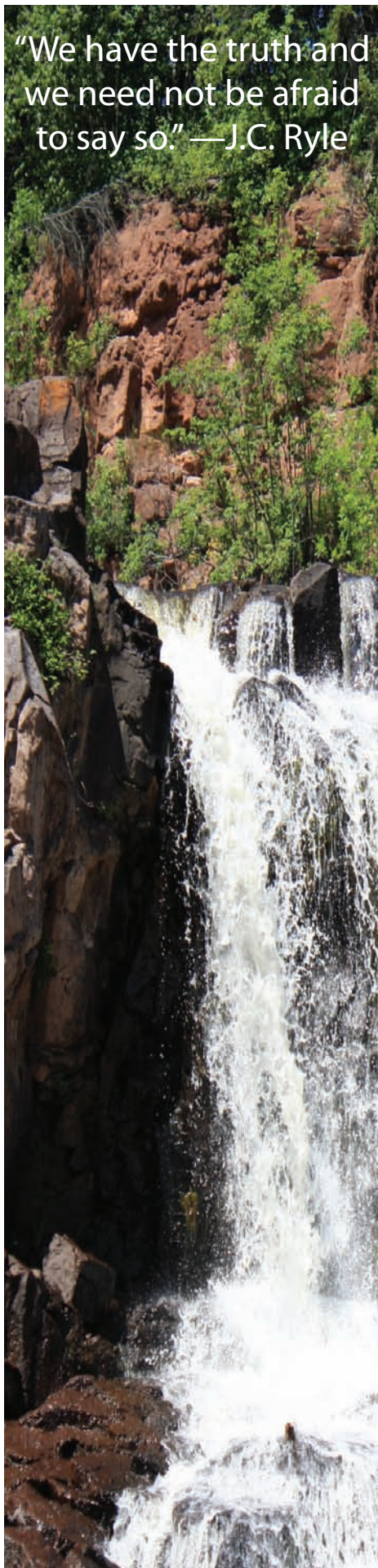
7 Double-Exposed

Sebastian realizes that he doesn't have to be perfect to be valuable.

6 A Giant Felled

Saul watches a boy depend on God to slay a giant.

"We have the truth and
we need not be afraid
to say so." —J.C. Ryle



Photography by Riley S.

Departments

10 Quiz

How Well Do You Know the Books of the Prophets?

16 Praying Hands

Daniel's Prayer

Editor:
Priscilla Carsten

Writers:
Anna Warkentin
Cassandra
Leanne Nelson
Margaret Neufeld

Photographers:
Isaac Swanson
Riley S.

Cover:
Scetty

Graphic Design:
Ashley Jones
Elizabeth J.C.

©2012 Lighted Lamp Magazine



When You Feel Unworthy



by Margaret Neufeld

Photography by Isaac Swanson

Have you ever felt God calling you to serve in a certain area, but thought you weren't worthy? As I've been seeking the Lord's direction at this point in my life, I've been battling with many doubts, questions and feelings of inadequacy. I believe that God has given me a message to share with others, but I often wonder if I can.

I suppose what is happening is I'm being weighed down by the regret of sin or I look at the many areas of my life where I fall incredibly short of His holy standard. God puts something on my heart, but I wonder "Who am I to share this with others? What right have I to share the Word of God?" I feel at times, that because I have failed or sinned in a certain area, I am disqualified. But when I look to God's Word, I see something very different.

Jesus didn't call people who were qualified or worthy. His disciples weren't perfect. Even in the early church, we get the impression that there were at times disputes between the disciples that caused them to part ways. Paul, one of the greatest apostles, at one time persecuted the church and put believers into prison, even consenting to their deaths.

I am reminded of Jesus' response to two individuals in scripture when they sinned. In Luke 7, Jesus is eating in the home of a Pharisee named Simon, when a woman of the city, who was a sinner, comes to Jesus and anoints Him, washes His feet with her own tears and then wipes them with her hair. When the Pharisee sees this, he can't believe that Jesus is allowing the woman to do this. After sharing an illustration, Jesus says in Luke 7:47 (ESV), "Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little."

A perfect person has no need for a Saviour, and therefore would have little appreciation for the gift of salvation that Christ offers. We're not perfect though, and we do have need for a Saviour, whether we have told one lie or committed a multitude of offenses against God. Jesus points out here that a person, who hasn't been

forgiven much, won't love Him much. It's as if our love for Christ is in direct proportion to how much forgiveness has been bestowed upon us. This woman came in desperate need, and worshipped at His feet. Her sin was great, and so was the forgiveness she received. Her love reflected that. The more we are forgiven, the more we will love God.

I am also reminded of Peter's denial of Jesus. Peter had a big mouth and it got him into trouble on occasion. In one instance, Jesus even had to turn to him and say "Get behind me, Satan!" (Matthew 16:23, ESV) Those are strong words!

I noticed something else interesting recently when I was reading the passage of the Last Supper in Luke 22:31, 32 (ESV), where Jesus foretells Peter's denial: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. *And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.*" (Emphasis mine)

Yes, Jesus knew that Peter would deny Him. But He also knew that He would repent and turn back to Him. His sin didn't disqualify him. It strikes me how Jesus says "strengthen your brothers." It almost sounds as if Peter would have an ability to encourage the disciples afterward that he didn't have before. That may not be the case, but it's enough to make me wonder. Yes, I have wondered recently about my ability to teach others when I have been lacking and falling short in so many areas of my life, but God's perspective is different. Maybe you have felt the same way. No matter what our past, or what our sin, even our struggles as a Christian, it doesn't disqualify us. Not in God's

book. Sanctification is a lifelong process. If we're knowingly living in sin and comfortable with it, then there's definitely reason to be concerned. But, if we have repented and received His cleansing, we have full right to speak up and do His work, no matter how ugly that sin. It's because of His blood, His work in us, that

we can share what He has given to and taught us.

Our sin doesn't need to be proclaimed to the world, but His power and glory must! He has clothed us in white and is the one who makes us worthy. That is enough!🙏

A GIANT Felled

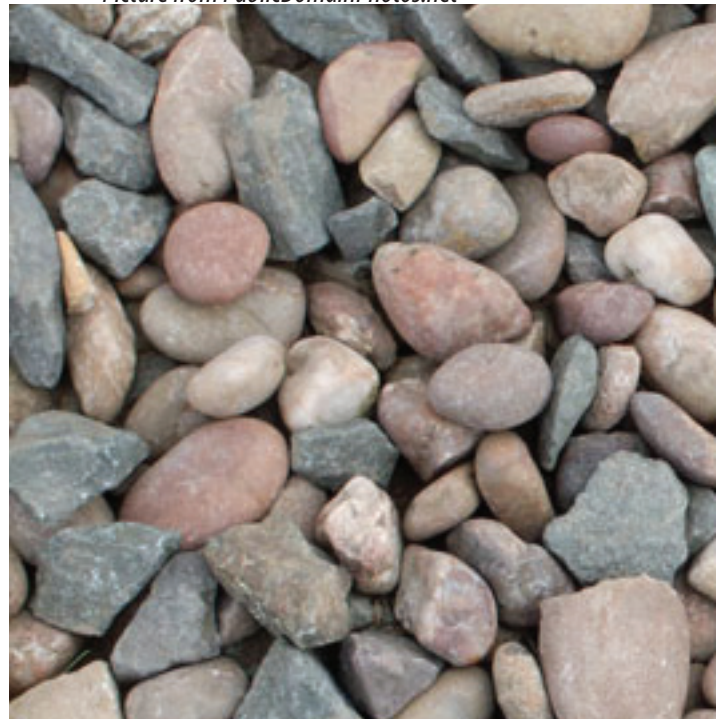
by Anna Warkentin

I was standing in front of my large, silk tent with my generals when the ground shook and a voice thundered from the philistine's camp. My men panicked and screamed racing and tripping in their haste to escape the horror emerging from the philistine's camp. As my generals and I tried to restore order, the giant thundered a challenge for a one on one battle. None accepted. I suffered many sleepless nights because I did not know what to do about the colossal soldier. Frightened and tired, we prayed for deliverance.

One day, when I was worrying over the giant problem, a boy came to see his brothers, and heard the huge warrior issuing his challenge. Boldly he marched into my tent and announced he would fight the giant. At first my generals and I laughed, but the stony determination on the boy's face told us he meant it. Refusing my armor, he took only his sling and a few stones, vowing to bring down the tyrannical giant. In breathless anticipation, both sides stood si-

lent, watching the giant jeer, then charge. David stood his ground, swinging his sling once, twice, three times before letting the stone fly. 'Thump,' the giant face planted in his own dust. With an elated shout of triumph, the Israelites charged the enemy and swept them away like chaff in the wind.🙏

Picture from PublicDomainPhotos.net





Double-Exposed

by Cassandra

She could hardly make out the image in the faded photograph. Ida Ford peered closer, frowning. “This photo... look at it, Seb, I can’t distinguish it.”

Her husband crossed the room. “We-e-ll, that’s an oldie.” Seb arched his greying eyebrows.

“Look, it’s double-exposed. The clearer picture is of me skulking in a corner at the Warden’s housewarming.”

“Goodness! That must be forty years ago. You were twenty then.”

Seb wasn’t listening. “I remember that kitten,” he murmured. Lightly superimposed over the first picture was one of Seb on his heels by a small girl holding a kitten.

Ida smiled. “O-oh. Yes.”

Seb didn’t hear. He recalled a sultry, summer day, when the crickets were drumming in the sparse grasses, and the leafy gums were spreading themselves over miles of shady gully...

Seb and Jessica Ford were riding home in a companionable silence. Moving easily to her mount’s rolling walk, Jessica felt the sun’s warmth through her akubra. She glanced sideways at her older brother. His shirt hung limply from hunched shoulders, yet his seat in the saddle was easy and firm.

“Inspecting my bad profile?” The voice was easy and deep, mildly amused.

“Se-eb,” Jess drawled reproachfully.

“Don’t ‘Seb’ me, Sis.”

Jess shook her head. Seb took his hunched back too much to heart. “Then why did you stick to the wall so stubbornly at the Warden’s housewarming? Ida was disappointed.”

“You know I don’t care for dancing.”

“Correction: You don’t like people looking at your back. Seb, our neighbours aren’t teasing school-children anymore.” Jess searched his deeply tanned face closely. His tawny hair was light and his eyes bright in his dark complexion. “You’re a handsome man, Sebastian... you know that.”

Seb grinned, dismounting. “Flatterer.”

Jess watched as he strode over to the fence bordering the track and picked up a gritty, crooked coin.

“How on earth did you see that?”

Seb shrugged, and remounted. “A sixpence.” He examined it critically. “Bent, but a sixpence. I promised little Christy Daniels I’d buy one of her kittens, but I forgot. She’s pretty keen

on selling them,” he added, “It’ll get her some pocket-money.”

“Why don’t you drop in now? I’ll go on home and prepare dinner—perhaps Ida would like to join us.”

“Alright.” Nodding to his sister, Seb spurred his horse down the track to the Daniels’.

Jim and Christy were in the yard when Seb rode up. Christy was a pert young thing, Seb thought, grinning. Her sister Ida was nineteen, ten years Christy’s senior. They were the daughters of Jim Daniels. A beaut stockman and diligent farmer, his wife was white and his girls equipped with both an aboriginal’s skill and a European’s beauty.

Now Christy skipped off to the barn for the kitten while Seb and Jim chatted.

“It’s got a bung leg,” said Christy cheerfully, returning to pass Seb the kitten. “But it’s a beaut mouser.”

Seb sat on his heels. “And how can a cat catch mice if it’s got a bad leg?”

Christy shrugged. “I dunno, but this one can. Dad says she’s got spirit. Bet it’s a bit like your back... you might be a bit hunched up but you can ride swell. Seb,” she added coaxingly, sitting on his knee. “Do you think you could give me a ride?”

“Sorry Christy.” Seb said, putting the kitten gently in his jacket pocket. “I’ve got to get home.” Christy sighed. “Oh, alright; but you’ve got to give me a ride next time.”

Seb grinned, dropping the sixpence into her hand. “I promise.” As Christy ran off he rose and looked at Ida, who’d come outside. “Would you join us for dinner?”

Ida nodded, eyes smiling and turned to Jim. “Da, may I ride Mirth?”

“It’s only a mile’s walk through the bush,” Seb objected, “And the sun’s not too hot in the shade.”

The dirt track wound through a deep gully; the ground was littered with dead leaves and shafts of sunlight streamed through the great leafy branches. They walked slowly, Seb leading his horse by the reins. He couldn’t erase those words from his mind “It’s got a bung leg... but - ” And, earnestly, “You’re a handsome man, Sebastian.” He glanced at Ida. She was a beautiful young woman, he realized, despite the pockmarks left from a former illness. The first time they’d met he’d seen only the blemishes; yet now...

“Ida!” called Jess cheerfully. “I was wondering if Seb was able to persuade you to return with him.”

“There wasn’t much convincing needed,” Ida countered, untying her bonnet as she stepped into the kitchen. “Besides the company, I love this old house.”

“Well, some of it’s old,” said Seb, stepping into the pantry. “This house has had a dozen additions if it’s had one. It started out a small hut.” He set the tiny kitten on the floor boards and returned to the kitchen. “I built a new woodshed the other week.”

Ida smiled. "It's a dear, twisted old building."
"Oh, that reminds me!" said Jessica, "I've run out of firewood, Seb."

He was carrying in an armload of the roughly hewn red-gum when Jessica, entering the pantry, screamed.

"You ought to have told me you put the kitten in here," laughed Jess reproachfully, as he and Ida came curiously to the door. "Look at that."

The kitten was glaring ferociously at a fat mouse huddled on the floor.

"Isn't it cute?" cried Ida. "Look, it's got a kink in its tail."

Grinning, Seb arched his eyebrows. "Well, the kitten seems to think it's cute." The mouse

moved, quivering, and waddled a few steps towards the grain bin; the kitten swatted at it with soft paws. "If that kitten can trap more than an obese mouse, she might turn out a little treasure... despite her leg."

Seb studied the photograph. Ida brushed her fingertips over the pockmarks on her cheeks. "We're none of us perfect."

Her reflective voice broke into Seb's thoughts.

"Come to think of it," Ida added, "That day was a bit like the nursery rhyme."

Seb snorted. "Which one? The Hunchback of Notre Dame?"

"No... that mouse... you, the kitten. You all lived together in this little crooked house." ☹

Picture from PublicDomainPhotos.net



How Well Do You Know the Books of the Prophets?

Guess which book the verse comes from. Each book is used only once.

1. "Yet even now," says the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments."

- a) Joel
- b) Isaiah
- c) Ezekiel
- d) Amos

2. And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord GOD, thou knowest." Again he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD."

- a) Hosea
- b) Ezekiel
- c) Nahum
- d) Jonah

3. Though the fig tree do not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

- a) Habakkuk
- b) Malachi
- c) Jeremiah
- d) Micah

4. Then the Lord said, "Behold, I am setting a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel; I will never again pass by them."

- a) Amos

- b) Joel
- c) Zechariah
- d) Obadiah

5. And all who look on you will shrink away from you and say, wasted is Ninevah; who will bemoan her? Whence shall I seek comforters for her?

- a) Zephaniah
- b) Jonah
- c) Isaiah
- d) Nahum

6. Then he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts."

- a) Zechariah
- b) Haggai
- c) Ezekiel
- d) Micah

7. You have looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? says the LORD of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while you busy yourselves each with his own house.

- a) Zechariah
- b) Amos
- c) Jeremiah
- d) Haggai

8. But the LORD said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a youth'; for to all to whom I send you you shall go, and

whatever I command you you shall speak.

- a) Isaiah
- b) Zechariah
- c) Jeremiah
- d) Obadiah

9. "I will stretch out my hand against Judah, and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off from this place the remnant of Baal and the name of the idolatrous priests."

- a) Nahum
- b) Ezekiel
- c) Haggai
- d) Zephaniah

10. He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

- a) Zephaniah
- b) Daniel
- c) Micah
- d) Nahum

11. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed.

- a) Malachi
- b) Isaiah
- c) Jonah
- d) Hosea

12. ..he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem; and he got down upon his knees there three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.

- a) Hosea
- b) Jeremiah
- c) Zechariah
- d) Daniel

13. Bring the full tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house; and thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you and overflowing blessing.

- a) Malachi
- b) Amos
- c) Ezekiel
- d) Obadiah

14. For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God, rather than burnt offerings.

- a) Isaiah
- b) Hosea
- c) Nahum
- d) Daniel

15. "I called to the LORD, out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and thou didst hear my voice."

- a) Haggai
- b) Daniel
- c) Joel
- d) Jonah

16. Thus says the lord GOD concerning Edom: We have heard tidings from the LORD, and a messenger has been sent among the nations: "Rise up! let us rise against her for battle!"

- a) Jeremiah
- b) Micah
- c) Obadiah
- d) Habakkuk

Answers: 1a, 2b, 3a, 4a, 5d, 6a, 7d, 8c, 9d, 10c, 11b, 12d, 13a, 14b, 15d, 16c,



Photography by Priscilla

by Leanne Nelson

This is what the LORD says: “Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who draws strength from mere flesh and whose heart turns away from the LORD. That person will be like a bush in the wastelands; they will not see prosperity when it comes. They will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives. “But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.” Jeremiah 17:5-8 (NIV)

Although this whole group of verses is a good one, I want to take the time to look at the second part, the one about those who are blessed in the sight of God. When I read through these verses, four things jump out at me. One: the tree is planted by water and sends its roots towards the source; two: this tree does not fear the heat; three: the tree does not worry in a year of drought; and four: the tree never fails to bear fruit. While it may seem that all the author is talking about is a tree at first glance, and that it doesn't really apply to us, I believe that these four ideas that the author included in these verses should be part of our lives everyday. Let me explain...



A Tree Planted by the Water

“Blessed is the one whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water” (Psalm 1:2-3).

Water is necessary for survival. Even without food, if you have water you can survive longer than if you don't. In John 4, Jesus is talking with a Samaritan woman at a well. Jesus asks the woman for a drink. She replies, wondering why He would want a drink from a Samaritan (Jews did not associate with Samaritans). I can picture Jesus chuckling a little here before He replies: “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink you would have

asked him and he would have given you *living water*” (John 4:30; italics added). Revelations 7:17 also mentions this idea of living water. “For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; He will lead them to a spring of *living water*. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (italics added).

When Jeremiah and the author of Psalm 1 write about putting roots near a stream, I believe that it means we are created to be fueled by Living Water - something that comes only through God. We are to put our roots of faith down in ground that is fertile; that is full of God. If we try to grow anywhere but where God is, we will wither and die like the bush that was planted in the wasteland.

Earlier in Jeremiah, the prophet writes the words of God, who says: “My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water” (Jeremiah 2:13). So often we try and substitute God with things from the world. But, just like a broken cistern, these substitutes will never fill us up. They will leave us wanting. C.S. Lewis once penned the line “What does not satisfy when we find it, was not the thing we were desiring.” Once we've had a taste of Living Water, nothing can ever compare.

Does Not Fear the Heat

When Jeremiah writes about heat, I interpret this like the fire that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were put into because of their faith. As if the heat is what the world does to us because we believe in Christ.

John 15:18-19 says: “If the world hates you,

keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.” God knows that you will be persecuted while you are on Earth, because Satan does not want us to succeed. But if we believe and trust in Him we do not have to worry because the Holy Spirit will give us the words we need in any and every situation (Mark 13:11).

It may mean that you are killed because of your faith, like many around the world; it may mean that you are bullied - persecution is persecution. But stand firm. God will never leave you or forsake you (Deut. 31:6). If you stumble, He

will pick you back up.

“Everyone will hate you because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved” (Mark 13:13).

Does Not Worry in the Year of Drought

Some of the biggest worries that occur in a year of drought is ‘how will we have enough money to get through?’ for those growing the food, and ‘how will we have enough food and water to get by?’. Our faithful God tells us time and time again throughout the Bible that He will provide for us. One story in the Bible that illustrates this very well is the story of Abraham being tested, found in Genesis 22. God asked Abraham to sacrifice his one and only son - did I mention that Abraham was really, *really* old? - to Him. Abraham, out of faith, took his son and made his way to the top of a hill to perform the sacrifice. Though Isaac was very important to him, Abraham was willing to give up everything because he knew that God would provide. God had promised that Abraham would be the father of many nations, and even though he might not have known how God would do this without Isaac, Abraham kept going. Abraham was ready to kill his son when an angel appeared and told him to stop. God had provided another sacrifice once he saw that Abraham was willing to give up everything for God.

Though we may not be asked to give up one of our family members, God still wants us to trust that He will provide what we need.

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at



the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you - you of little faith? —Matthew 6:25-30

When the year of drought comes into your life, turn to God. He will not let you go without.

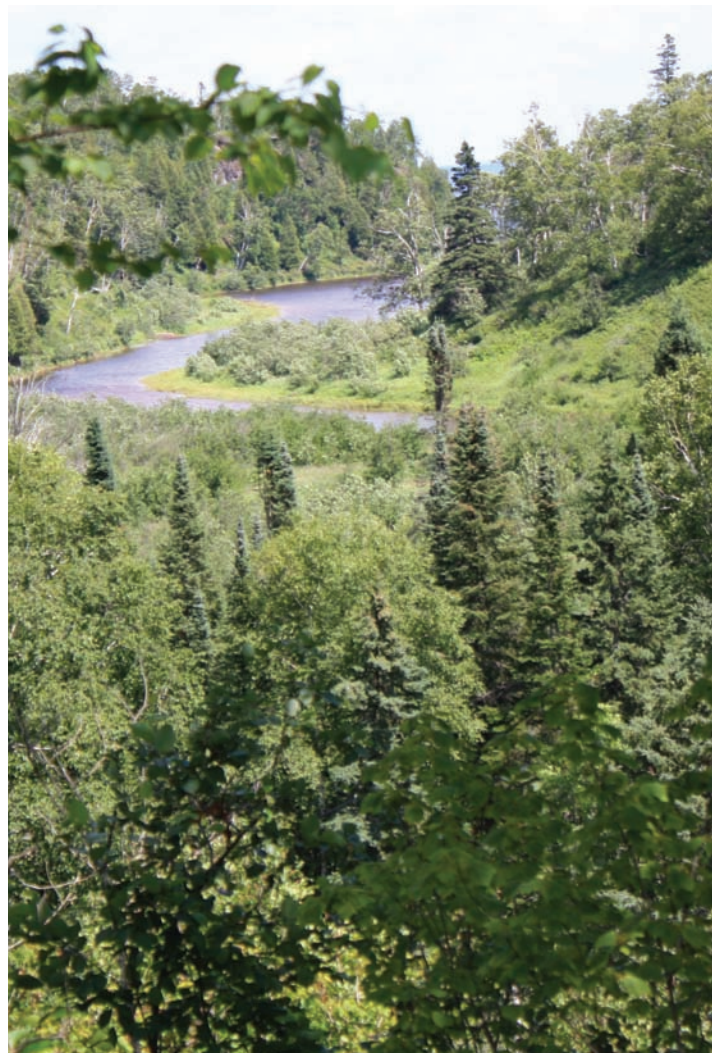
Never Fails to Bear Fruit

The first thing that comes to mind when I read this line are the Fruits of the Spirit. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Because this tree is planted near a source of water, it will never fail to have fruit growing on it, just like if we have our roots in living water. If we are full of Jesus, we will never fail to bear the Fruits of the Spirit. These Fruits do not come naturally to us because we are sinners, but with Christ we can overcome our sinful nature and we are able to bear these fruits.

I think that we all struggle to be full of the Fruits of the Spirit at all times, but I want to encourage you that if you are planted and rooted in Christ, you can turn to Him for strength when it seems like you can't be patient with that customer, or when you feel like you will never smile again. If you are full of living water you will always have the ability to bear fruit. As it says in Philippians, we can do all things through Him who

gives us strength.

As this new year starts, the day that Jesus comes back is drawing nearer and nearer. Don't sit around and be complacent about your faith. Seek to know Him more. He will be the living water you need when you are going through a time of heat; He will be your companion when you are in the midst of a drought; He will be the strength you need to bear fruit. Though God never promises that this life will be easy, He does promise that He will be with us every step of the way. If you have your roots planted firmly in God given soil, you will never have to fear. Do not be like the cursed who try to draw strength from themselves; take it from the well of living water that will never run dry. ☺





Daniel's Prayer

Daniel 9:4-19 (NKJV)

And I prayed to the LORD my God, and made confession, and said, "O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments, we have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments. Neither have we heeded Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings and our princes, to our fathers and all the people of the land. O Lord, righteousness belongs to You, but to us shame of face, as it is this day--to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those near and those far off in all the countries to which You have driven them, because of the unfaithfulness which they have committed against You. O Lord, to us belongs shame of face, to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, because we have sinned against You. To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him. We have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His laws, which He set before us by His servants the prophets. Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your law, and has departed so as

not to obey Your voice; therefore the curse and the oath written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against Him. And He has confirmed His words, which He spoke against us and against our judges who judged us, by bringing upon us a great disaster; for under the whole heaven such has never been done as what has been done to Jerusalem. As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us; yet we have not made our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand Your truth. Therefore the LORD has kept the disaster in mind, and brought it upon us; for the LORD our God is righteous in all the works which He does, though we have not obeyed His voice. And now, O Lord our God, who brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and made Yourself a name, as it is this day--we have sinned, we have done wickedly! O Lord, according to all Your righteousness, I pray, let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people are a reproach to all those around us. Now

therefore, our God, hear the prayer of Your servant, and his supplications, and for the Lord's sake cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary, which is desolate. O my God, incline Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies. O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name."

Daniel prayed this prayer when the Isrealites were in captivity. God had allowed them to go into captivity because they had rebelled against His ways. In this prayer, Daniel praised God for His faithfulness and confessed the sins of the people who had broken their commitment to Him. Then he asks God to forgive His people and stop being angry with them.

One key statement is in verse 13 "yet we have not made our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand Your truth." When a person, or a nation, in Daniel's situation, drifts away from God, the only way to get back into His favor is a change of heart to understand God and live His way. God's faithfulness never changes, and God never forsakes us, but when we don't obey His word, we build up a wall between ourselves and God. Daniel knew that the first step back to God was prayer.

First, Daniel acknowledged God's faithfulness. God had made a covenant with Abraham to bless the Isrealites if they would follow Him and to make them a great nation, and He had reaffirmed that covenant to Abraham's descendants. And God fulfilled those promises. He had greatly multiplied the descendants of a couple who were too old to have children. He had delivered them from slavery to Egypt and led their country to many miraculous victories over their enemies. God had kept His promise. As long as the Isrealites kept God's command-

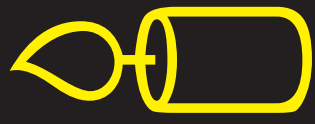
ments, He blessed them.

Then Daniel confessed the sins of Isreal. He didn't just point his finger at the kings who had disobeyed God, but realized that all the people had turned away from God, from the country's leaders to the average people. He agreed with God that what they had done was wrong, and that Isreal deserved judgement. God had sent prophets to warn Isreal about what would happen if they didn't follow Him, but they still turned away. Daniel didn't blame God for the disaster that had happened, because it was the Isrealites that had sinned.

At the end of his prayer, Daniel asked God to be merciful to Isreal. He made it clear that it wasn't because of his personal merit or that of the Isrealites that they were entitled to be rescued. He knew that they didn't deserve God's mercy, but he also knew that God is merciful. He not only asked for the Isrealites' sake but also because he wanted Isreal to glorify God's name. In the past, other nations had seen the miracles that God had done for Isreal: crossing the Red Sea on dry land, defeating stronger nations in battle when they entered the promised land, and becoming a great and successful nation. When Isreal followed God, not only were they blessed, but they also pointed others to God.

If you read the rest of Daniel 9, you will learn that God answered Daniel's prayer in a very special way. He actually sent an angel to speak to Daniel and tell him when the captivity would end and when the Messiah would come.

It is a blessing that this prayer has been preserved for us in the Bible, because it shows us how to pray effectively and how our fellowship with God can be restored even when we haven't been living for Him. ☪



LIL Magazine

Matthew 5:16