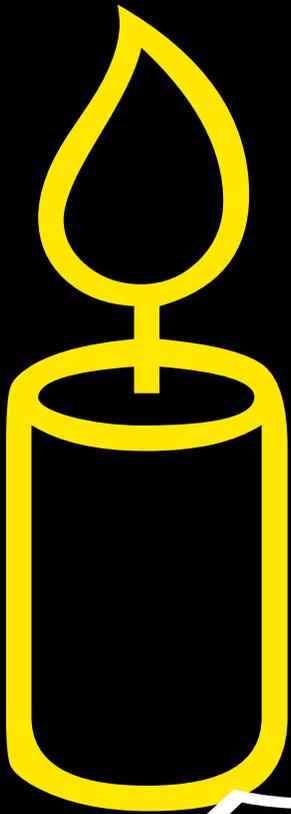
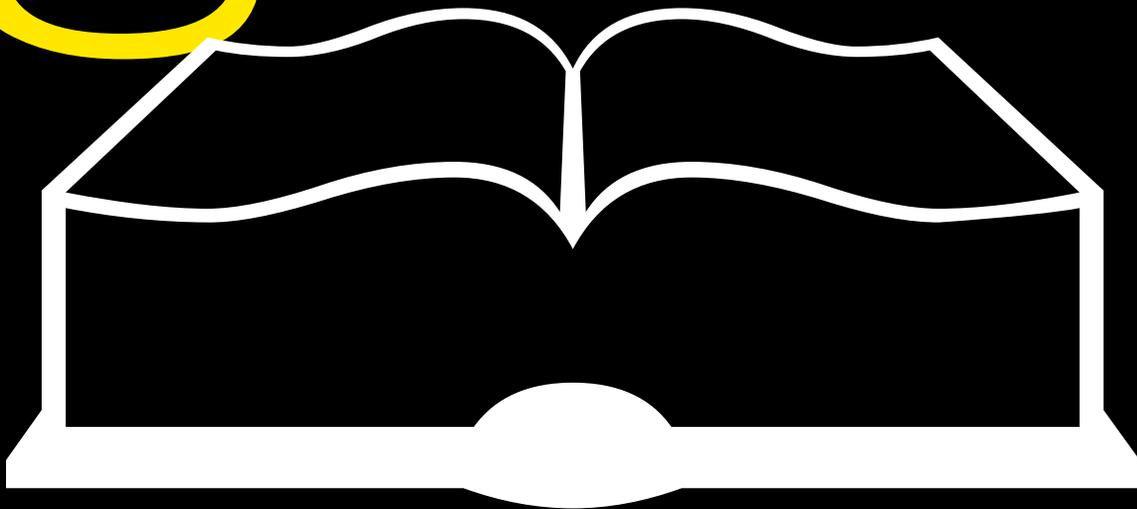


# Lighted Lamp Magazine



*Your word is a lamp to  
my feet And a light to  
my path.*

*- Psalm 119:105*



# From the Editor Contents

Welcome to the first issue of Lighted Lamp! I hope you find it encouraging and helpful in your walk with the Lord. With God all things are possible, and I am still amazed that this magazine is really happening! Without the help of all those who contributed their writings and photography it never could have. It has been a privilege to work with all the enthusiastic and dedicated people who gave their time and effort. It has also been a blessing to “meet” them through their work and know that they are serious about living out their faith. Thank you!

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"Butterfly Bush." Photography by Sarah Ericson

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### **Mission:**

To encourage and strengthen Christian teens to love and follow God with their whole hearts, souls, and minds; and to glorify God.

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# Demonstrating Your Faith Where You Are

*by Margaret Neufeld*

This past year, I have been learning the importance of living out my faith right where I am. Often it's easy to feel like you're not making much of a difference in the world or serving the Lord in the way you should. I'm prone to get discouraged when I hear of the impact other men and women are making in the world while I'm living a fairly ordinary life. But God has been showing me that anybody can make a difference right where they are.

We have a mission field right around us. It could be our family, classmates, co-workers or the homeless person on the street. The people we encounter on a regular basis need the Gospel and need to be shown God's love. We may be living ordinary lives but if we are faithful where God has placed us, serving and showing His love to those around us, we can make an impact.

Take some time to think about a few influential Christians. It's easy to imagine that they're the ones making a real difference. But the truth is none of them did it on their own. Behind them are so many people who shaped those individuals into who they are. There's the mother who spent many years raising and nurturing her child. There's the father who taught his son what it meant to be a godly man and take a stand for what is right. There were others that helped shape their character: mentors, youth leaders, pastors, teachers, or just friends who offered encouragement and support. So when you look at those influential Christians, what you really see is the result of all those other people's support and prayers. This reminds me that the work I do is by no means insignificant. Without knowing it, I could be pouring into a life that will one day make a huge impact for God's kingdom, and because of my service, I am a part of that.

Sometimes it helps to have some ideas to help us get motivated about making a difference where we are, so I came up with a handful of suggestions.

🕯️ If you're given to hospitality, you can have people in your home for food, fellowship, and encouragement.

🕯️ If you can sing, you can get a group together

and sing at a hospital or nursing home.

🕯 If you're good at making things with your hands, you can knit scarves or mittens for children who don't have any.

🕯 If you love children, you can make yourself available to babysit for a couple so they can have a night out on their own.

🕯 If you know someone who's had a baby, you can bring a meal or offer to help her out with household chores. This could also apply if you know a family who is experiencing illness or the loss of a loved one. Although you cannot take away their pain, you can pray for them and offer your services to make their load a little easier.

In all these things, you will be planting seeds and demonstrating God's love. In offering our time and talents in these ways, we're often doing hard things. We may be doing tasks that not many people want to do and that are often not recognized and appreciated. We won't be rewarded here on earth for doing these things, but God promises us a heavenly reward of far greater value.

Finally, one of the biggest things all of us can do right where we are is pray. Hebrews 4:16(KJV)

says, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

🕯 Pray for missionaries, teachers, and government leaders.

🕯 Pray for widows and orphans, and where God gives opportunity, care for them.

🕯 Pray for the lost souls of this world and that God would send out more laborers.

🕯 Pray about social injustices and that God would bring the unborn safely into this world and give freedom to those bound in slavery.

🕯 Pray for your pastor and his family and other leaders in your church family.

We may not see all the fruit of our prayers in this world, but I do believe that time spent on our knees will not go unrewarded.

God may not have opened a way for you to serve in a foreign land or to be a part of something that lots of people will hear about. But God does promise that if we are faithful in the little things, He will make us ruler over much. You can live out your faith right where you are, and in so doing, make a difference in many lives around you.🕯

# Three Challenges in Prayer

by Daniel Osborne

Prayer has always been a challenging topic for me. The Bible is filled with prayers that God answers in amazing ways. I am thinking specifically of Biblical characters like Daniel, Nehemiah, Elijah, David, Esther, Samuel, Moses, and many more. I think most of us have had times where we feel like our prayers are no more effective than talking to the wall; yet it is clear that God does answer prayer. My goal is not to give you words to say that will cause God to listen and always do what you want Him to. I couldn't do that even if I wanted to. However, what I can do is challenge you in the way that you pray. I challenge you to three things: pray His will, pray hard things, and pray persistently.

Praying His will is not difficult to do with your mouth, but it is difficult to do with your heart. It is not uncommon for me to pray things like, "God, I love You, but I clearly don't love You as much as I love myself. But, I want to love You above all else, so please, help me!" We know that God knows our heart (Psalm 139:1-3 NASV), so why do we try to hide our hearts from Him? We can't pray His will unless we truly want His will. This all comes down to submission! If you are wondering what His will

is, start reading a passage of scripture and you won't have to go very far to find it. Psalm 86:11 has been something that I pray often: "God, I need You to teach me Your ways through Your Word. I will be obedient, but I need You to teach me and to unite my heart to fear Your name. I can't do it on my own strength! You are the source of all good. My heart is desperately wicked but, I can do all things through Christ!" I might have gotten a little carried away there. However, if you look closely, you may notice other phrases from passages like 2 Chronicles 20:12, James 1:17, Jeremiah 17:9, and Philipians 4:13. The key to praying God's will is knowing His will; the key to knowing His will is knowing His Word; and the key to knowing His Word is reading and meditating on it. So, my challenge to you in praying His will is actually a challenge to spend time reading His Word and thinking about it. God will bring the passages you have read to mind as you pray. I even had to look up a few of those passages that I prayed because I didn't remember where they were other than they were in the Bible. It is not a matter of being "super spiritual;" it is a matter of knowing God's Word and asking Him to help you in specific ways in order to apply His truth to your life. The best part about this

is that He will answer your prayers. I just took a whole lot of words to explain a very simple thing that God explains much clearer in much fewer words. Take a look at John 15:4-11, for instance.

*Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.*

He makes it so clear that if we abide in Him and His Words abide in us and we let His Word define the way we live, the way we pray, then

we can ask anything and He will do it. But, before you get any bright ideas about asking Him for an expensive car, realize that I am not saying that. The key to all of this is that His Word is abiding in you. This means you are to pray things that are His will! It is in His nature to do His will; therefore, if you ask Him to do His will, He will do it! So, I challenge you to pray His will and know, with absolute certainty, that He will do it. He may not do it in your timing or in the way you want, but He will do it.

The second thing I challenge you to is praying hard things. I don't mean that you should pray He gives you a million dollars, but rather, hard things for yourself and for others. Let's face it; sometimes following His will is not easy. We need His help in facing the challenges of everyday life and keeping our focus on Him. Sometimes I am scared to pray what I pray. I'm scared that He will answer! For example, I pray that God would open doors of opportunity for me to minister to others. One time, I was telling God how I was disappointed that I had not felt my car being used to glorify Him. Originally, I thought the car would serve as a great opportunity with some young men at church and such. Well, within a couple minutes, there stood a young man asking for a ride. It was like God said, "Here is your chance." It is scary some-

times not knowing how He may ask us to serve Him, but I trust that when He leads, He will also provide the strength to obey (Philippians 4:13 again). This point is less theological and more practical: overcome your fears of praying hard things by praying hard things and trusting Him to support you where you are lacking.

The third and final thing I challenge you to is pray persistently. Pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17). This is a pretty big theme in Jesus' teaching on prayer. Here are some examples, including an Old Testament one as well:

Luke 11:1-8

*It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples." And He said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. 'Give us each day our daily bread. 'And forgive us our sins, For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.'"* Then He said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and from inside he answers and says, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been

*shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.' "I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs.*

Luke 18:1-8

*Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, saying, "In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. "There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me legal protection from my opponent.' "For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.'" And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge said; now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? "I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"*

Genesis 32:24-32

*Then Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. When he saw that he had not prevailed against him, he touched the*

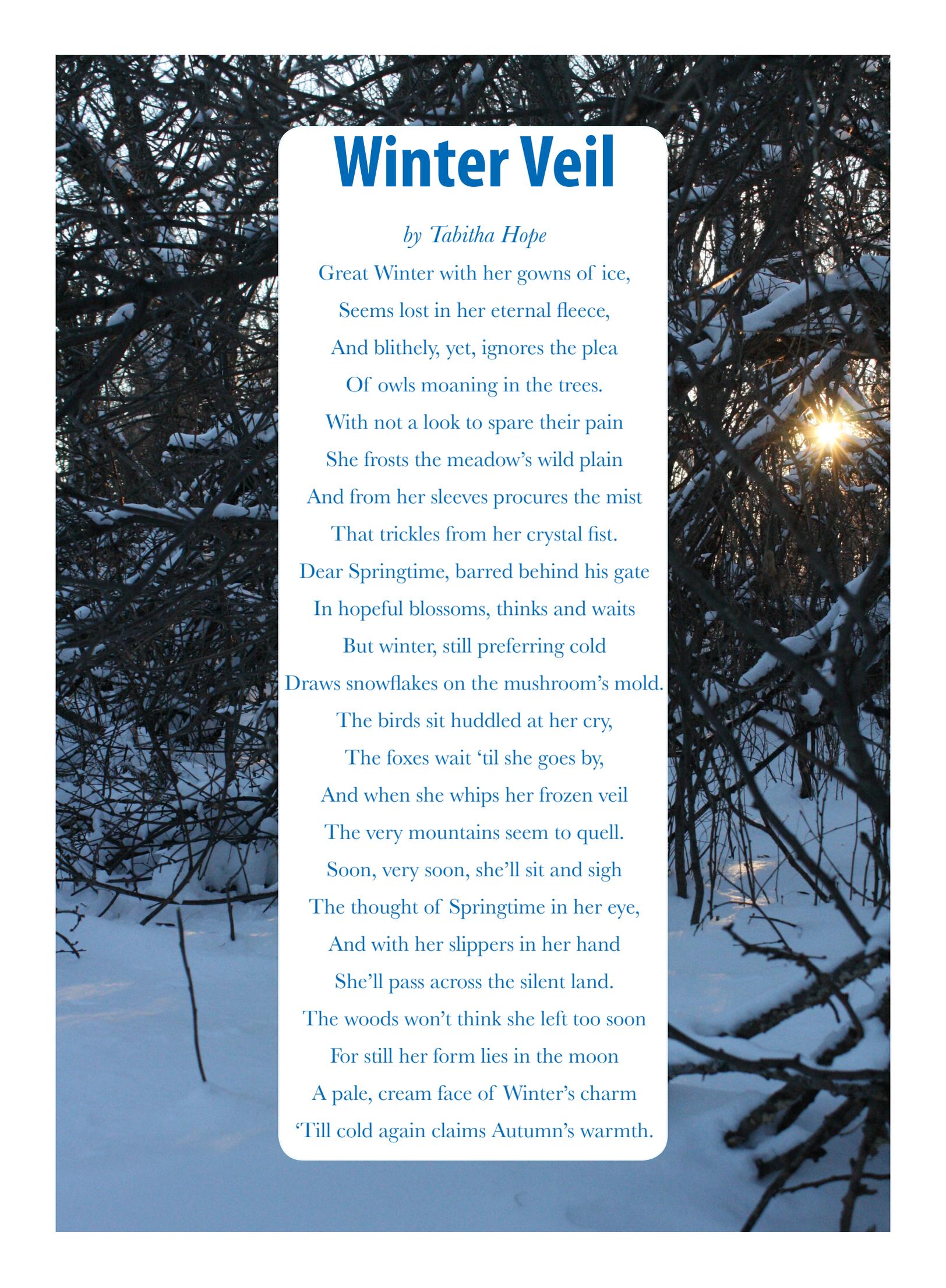
socket of his thigh; so the socket of Jacob's thigh was dislocated while he wrestled with him. Then he said, "Let me go, for the dawn is breaking." But he said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." He said, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed." Then Jacob asked him and said, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And he blessed him there. So Jacob named the place Peniel, for he said, "I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved." Now the sun rose upon him just as he crossed over Peniel, and he was limping on his thigh. Therefore, to this day the sons of Israel do not eat the sinew of the hip which is on the socket of the thigh, because he touched the socket of Jacob's thigh in the sinew of the hip.

Matthew 15:21-28

Jesus went away from there, and withdrew into the district of Tyre and Sidon. And a Canaanite woman from that region came out and began to cry out, saying, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed." But He did not answer her a word. And His disciples came and implored Him, saying, "Send her away, because she keeps shouting at us." But He answered and said, "I was

sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But she came and began to bow down before Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" And He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." But she said, "Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus said to her, "O woman, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed at once.

I know how easy it is for us to lose heart after praying weeks, months, or even years for something or someone. That is one of my favorite parts about the Luke 18 passage: He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart. If His disciples needed the encouragement to pray without ceasing and not lose heart, we need it all the more! Don't lose heart in doing good, for you will reap if you do not grow weary (Galatians 6:9). As you spend time in the Word, you will know how to pray His will. As you see Him answering those prayers, you will continually grow in trusting Him. As you trust Him more, you will prayer harder things and be obedient to what He calls you to do. And, when He doesn't answer how or when you would like Him to, pray with all your might, persistently! 🙏

A photograph of a snowy winter forest. The scene is filled with dark, snow-laden evergreen branches. A bright sunburst effect is visible on the right side, where the sun is shining through the trees, creating a warm glow against the cool blue tones of the snow and sky. The overall atmosphere is serene and quiet.

# Winter Veil

*by Tabitha Hope*

Great Winter with her gowns of ice,  
Seems lost in her eternal fleece,  
And blithely, yet, ignores the plea  
Of owls moaning in the trees.

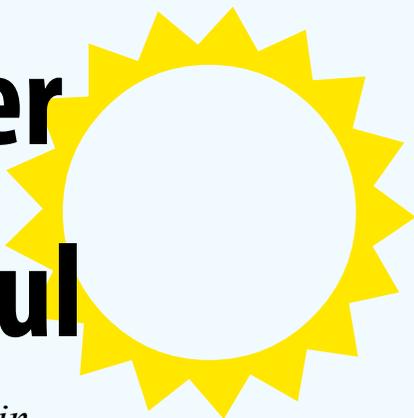
With not a look to spare their pain  
She frosts the meadow's wild plain  
And from her sleeves procures the mist  
That trickles from her crystal fist.

Dear Springtime, barred behind his gate  
In hopeful blossoms, thinks and waits  
But winter, still preferring cold  
Draws snowflakes on the mushroom's mold.

The birds sit huddled at her cry,  
The foxes wait 'til she goes by,  
And when she whips her frozen veil  
The very mountains seem to quell.  
Soon, very soon, she'll sit and sigh  
The thought of Springtime in her eye,  
And with her slippers in her hand  
She'll pass across the silent land.

The woods won't think she left too soon  
For still her form lies in the moon  
A pale, cream face of Winter's charm  
'Till cold again claims Autumn's warmth.

# Forever Faithful



*by RuthAnne Irvin*

Have you ever wondered if God is still listening? Do you ever whisper a prayer and wonder if He hears? I know that most of us have been there. Just remember that God is here and always will be. We can see His faithfulness clearly in the Bible and in everyday situations on earth.

He is faithful to bring the sun up every morning and to bring the moon out at night. He is faithful to feed the birds and other animals in the cold of winter. He is faithful to make it rain when the earth is parched.

God is faithful to His followers. Just think about the promises He made in Scripture to his people. He promised Noah that He would never flood the earth again and sealed that promise with a rainbow. He promised Zacharias and Elizabeth a son in their old age who would prepare the way for the Messiah. He promised that David's throne would always have someone on it... look who is sitting at the right hand of God

from that bloodline. He was faithful to His Son on the cross by raising him from the dead.

God is faithful to fulfill His promises and to hear us when we call. We expect God to answer our prayers immediately, but that is not how it works most of the time. Besides learning to be patient, we must train our hearts to know God's love and trustworthiness. We have so many examples in Scripture that prove that He is all-knowing, all-hearing, and all-seeing. He knows what is best for us and will in due time bring His plan into action.

Our duty then, is to practice trust in every area of our lives, from dating, to buying a car, to choosing a college. God is with us, He is faithful, and He will come through with His perfect plan. His love and faithfulness remain as long as the sun continues to rise and beyond. We have no reason to doubt or fear because He is the Ever-faithful Father, Friend, and Lover of Our Souls who will never leave or forsake us. ☮



# Lukewarm Christianity

by Leanne Nelson

*“I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.”* (Revelation 3:15-16 ESV).

Pretty harsh picture, right? But have you ever ordered a lukewarm cup of coffee (and this doesn't count those times when they've given you one of those by accident)? Probably not. We go out for ice cappuccinos or cold coffee, and hot coffee on a cold morning is a big part of a lot of people's schedules, but to be honest, lukewarm coffee sounds really gross.



Picture from Public Domain Pictures.net

Like lukewarm coffee, lukewarm Christianity isn't something our thoughts dwell on very often. Lukewarm Christians are those who are in

it for the better, sometimes the worst, but not for both. They like the idea of heaven, and having Someone to call out to in times of trouble, but don't live the lifestyle that comes with a commitment to Christ. Some of them start out with good intentions, or “hot” faith, but gradually the world cools them off, much like a few breaths over a piping hot mug of coffee. As Jesus puts it in Matthew 24:12, *“And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.”*

One reason people grow cold is that we are sinners and the world's fanciness appeals to our sinful nature. The Bible says, *“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”* (I John 2:15). You cannot love the world and love God. That is what Jesus meant in Revelation. You can either love God (a.k.a. being “hot”) or love the world and be “cold”, but you cannot love both. You can't opt for the easy way out and be lukewarm.

## Getting Hot

Perhaps you're going through the motions of Christianity in a lukewarm state. God doesn't

want us to live like that; He wants us to live life filled to the brim with Him. In fact, Jesus even said that if you are lukewarm, He will spit you out of His mouth.

There is an easy way to get “hot” again; the hard part is staying that way, but that’s why God says He will not leave us or forsake us. He’s there to get us through the rough patches.

*“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ”* (Ephesians 2:4-5a).

God offers us life; we just have to take hold of Him and never let go. Don’t wait until tomorrow though... don’t stay lukewarm! We don’t know when Jesus is coming back, and when you finally decide to get heated back up it might be too late. As King Solomon wrote: *“But it will not be well with the wicked, neither will he prolong his days like a shadow, because he does not fear before God.”* (Ecclesiastes 8:13). Either choose life or death, hot or cold, but don’t settle for lukewarm because it is the worst!

### **If You’re On Fire**

But maybe you’re at a time in your life where you’re on fire for Christ. That’s awesome! Remember, though, not to let your pride get the

best of you. Do not judge those “lukewarm Christians” because it is not your place to judge them, it’s God’s.

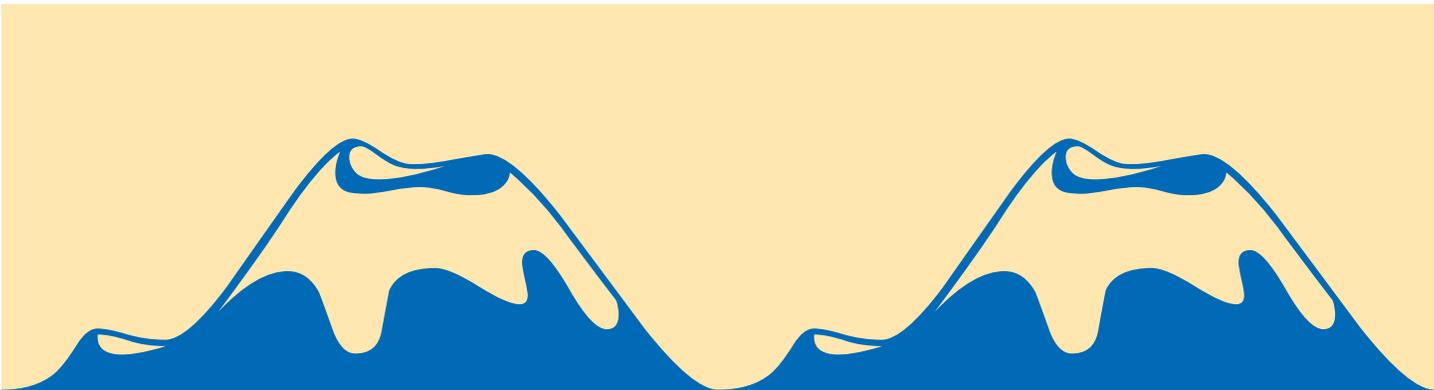
*“Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive and you will be forgiven; give and it will be given to you.”* (Luke 6:37-38a).

Instead of judging, let the love you have for Christ stand out in your actions. God can use our actions to bring people to Him. Who knows—maybe you loving them is just what they needed to get out of the lukewarm stage in their lives.

*“Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”* (I John 4:11). ☩

*O LORD, our Lord,  
How excellent is Your name in all the earth,  
Who have set Your glory above the heavens!  
Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants  
You have ordained strength,  
Because of Your enemies,  
That You may silence the enemy and the avenger.  
When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,  
The moon and the stars, which You have ordained,  
What is man that You are mindful of him,  
And the son of man that You visit him?  
For You have made him a little lower than the angels,  
And You have crowned Him with glory and honor.*

***Psalm 8:1-5 NKJV***



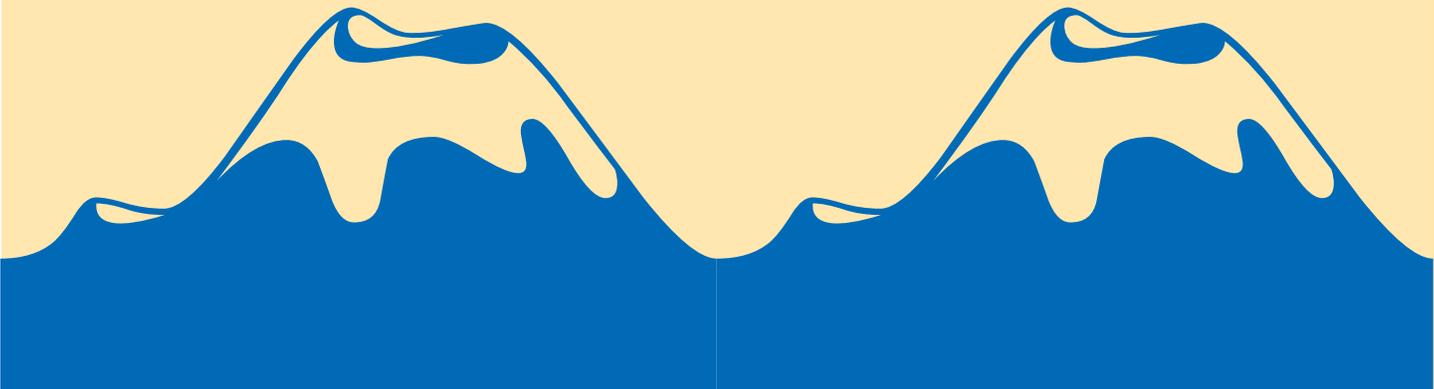
# The Mountain

*by Rachael F.*

At the foot of the mountain  
She stands alone  
Though far from the path she has been blown  
Her determination peaks  
For the treasure that she seeks  
Is at the top of the mountain

Its size is daunting that she knows  
But in life she's learned to face all foes  
For the road has been long  
But she is singing a song

As she climbs up the mountain  
Many times she slips and falls  
But with a strong heart she steadily crawls  
And when she feels like she can't go on  
She rests for awhile watching for dawn  
Halfway up the mountain  
  
And as the sun rises  
Herself she surprises  
To be near the top  
And seeing beauty that makes her heart stop  
She reached the top of the mountain



# Is our Focus on the Gospel?

by Michael Seifert

In our fast paced lives, we can easily forget about the things that are most important. Many times in our relationship with God, we tend to lose our grasp of the life, death, and resurrection of our savior Jesus Christ. Christians can get so caught up in the latest end-times book or the politics of the day that our focus is not on Jesus. Because the Gospel is the nucleus that holds biblical Christianity together, it is important that we have a strong grasp of it.

## What is the Gospel?

To start with, we need to be reminded time and time again of what the Gospel is. It starts with that fact that we are totally depraved sinners that need a savior. Psalm 53(ESV) says, “*God looks down from heaven on all mankind to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. Everyone has turned away, all have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.*” No one does good and no one is able to save himself. We have broken God’s law and we have to pay a penalty for it. That is why God the Father sent His son, Jesus, to

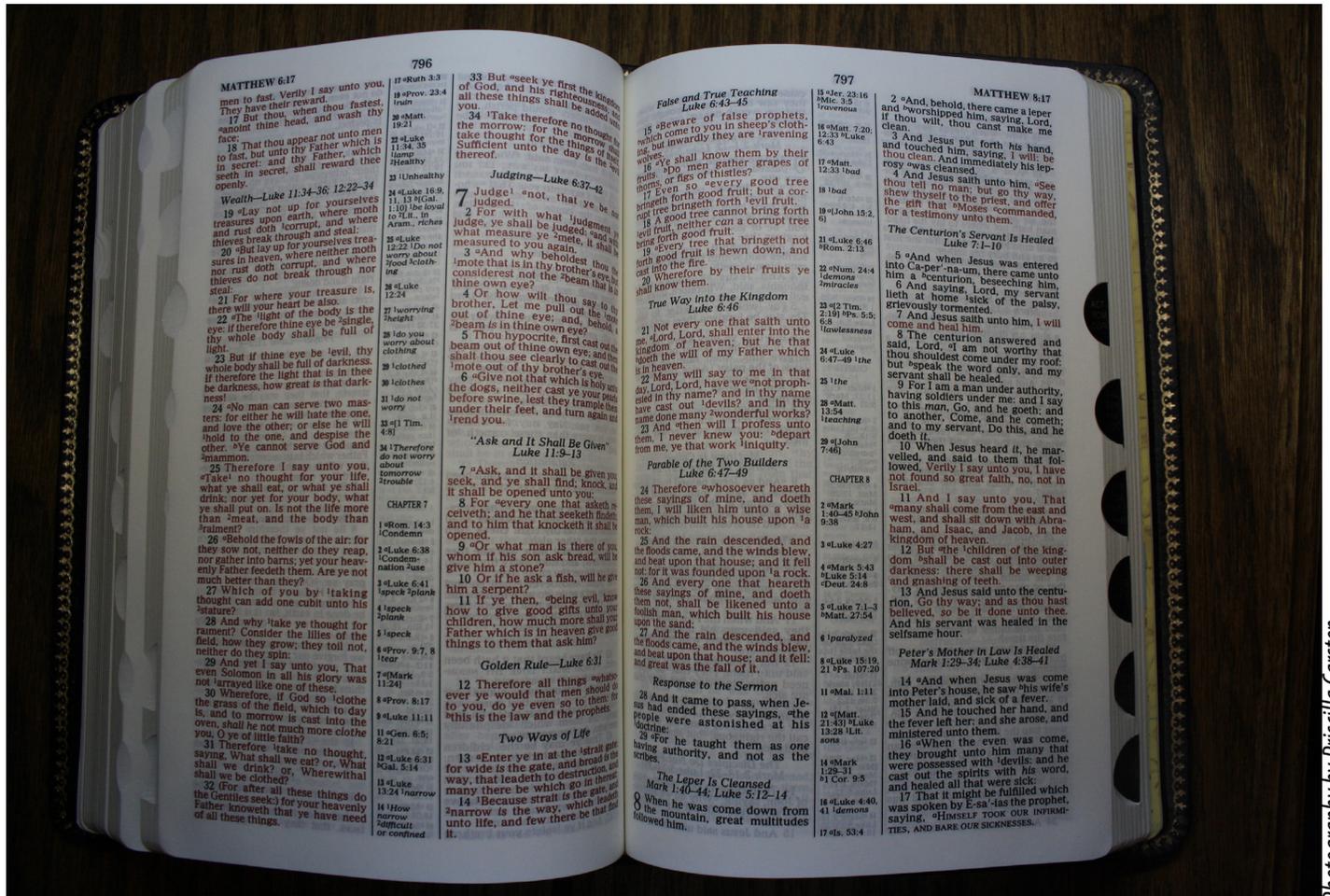
take the penalty we deserved by dying the most gruesome form of death imaginable. It was not just the most horrible form of death because he was whipped, had his hands and feet nailed to a piece of wood, and was severely beaten, but He also bore the wrath of God that you and I deserved. John Newton in his hymn, “The Look,” said, “I saw my sins His blood had spilt and helped to nail Him there. But with a second look He said ‘I freely all forgive. This blood is for your ransom paid. I died that you might live.’”

We were dead in our transgressions and sins, but through Christ we were made alive. Not only did Jesus die, but he also rose again from the dead. If Jesus had not risen, the Bible and the Gospel would be meaningless. He rose again and ascended into heaven and is reigning at the right hand of the Father. One day, Jesus will return to judge the world. Oh let us not show our filthy hearts on that day. If you are not a believer, I would encourage you to repent of your sins and get things right with God. You do not want God saying to you on that day “Depart from me, for I never knew you.” (Matthew 7) This is the Gospel in a nutshell. Never lose your focus on it.

## Applying the Gospel to Our Lives

Pastor C.J. Mahaney once said, “Never be content with your grasp of the gospel. The gospel is life-permeating, world-altering, universe-changing truth. It has more facets than any diamond. Its depths man will never exhaust.” Not only do we need to understand the Gospel, we

need to apply it to every area of our lives. Even though this article will not address the questions of government, the Gospel must be applied in those areas. We must place every area of our lives under the lordship of Jesus Christ. It is not



Photography by Priscilla Carsten

enough to just go to church on Sunday, we must be out there preaching the Gospel, taking back the universities and educational institutes for Christ, and ministering to others. Why should we do this? It is because the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ is so wonderful that we need to live it and show it to others. We need to proclaim that truth not only to ourselves, but to the whole world.

How do we apply this glorious gospel to our lives? First, we must preach it to ourselves every day. Read the scriptures and learn more about Christ and his work on the Cross. All other Christian doctrines have their foundation on the Gospel. Can you think of any doctrine that is not connected to the Gospel?

1. Consider the doctrine of total depravity. We

are sinners, unable to do any good, and we need a savior. That obviously relates to the Gospel.

2. How about the church? If Christ had not died, there would be no need for a church because the blood of the Lamb would never have been poured out. We would likely be sacrificing animals as prescribed by the Levitical laws rather than enjoying the Lord's Supper or embracing baptism. I am sure you get the point by now. The main theme of the Scriptures is the redemptive work of Christ. It has been predicted and hidden in the Old Testament and revealed and fulfilled in the New Testament.

3. Eschatology, the study of Christ's second coming, has roots in the Gospel. Eschatology is more concerned about the return of Christ to rescue His own and to judge those who refused to follow the Gospel than about the events during the end-times. One scholar put it this way, "eschatology is thoroughly Christological. It's about Jesus. Christ's return is like the hub of a wheel, and all the other stuff is like spokes coming off that wheel. And they only have meaning relative to the hub, relative to Christ's return." Eschatology is about Jesus. If Christ did not die, we would not have a glorious resurrection to look forward to and we would not be in heaven with Christ. Discussions on the Millennium, the Anti-Christ, and the Great Tribulation have become separated from Christ. Our culture is

obsessed with Eschatology, but not the reason why Christ will return or even His return itself. May that not be so for us.

Another way to apply the Gospel is to go out and tell it to others. This is a must for all Christians. If you do not have resources to teach you how to evangelize, look up "Way of the Master" (Led by Kirk Cameron, also known as Buck Williams in the Left Behind series, and Ray Comfort) or take a look at "Proclaim" (An evangelism program developed by pastors within Sovereign Grace Ministries). So now you do not have any excuses for not evangelizing! You need to get over your fear of man. People around the world get killed for proclaiming the Gospel. Here in America, the worst thing that can happen is that the person rejects the Gospel. People rarely get killed for evangelizing in the United States.

Thirdly, we as Christians need to take back all social institutions for Christ. Rather than withdrawing from the culture and forming a Christian subculture, we need to reach out and take the Universities, our government, the press, and the culture for Christ. We as Christians must work our way through these institutions and use them as a platform to spread the Gospel. If we do not do this, there can be severe

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# Grandma's No-So-Old-Fashioned Date & Nut Bread

Submitted by Sarah Ericson



Christmas cookies may come and Christmas cookies may go, but “Old-Fashioned Date & Nut Bread” is a treat from my mother’s, which has remained a long-standing tradition into my childhood. I’ve updated it a bit, adding 1 banana to the batter, for a little added sweetness, as well as moisture.

## Step 1

*3/4 cup water - heated*

*1/4 cup butter OR coconut oil*

*8-oz finely chopped dates*

Heat water and butter to a simmer; turn off heat.

Stir in dates.

Allow mixture to sit for 15-minutes; mix remaining ingredients while waiting.

## Step 2

*1 1/2 cups flour*

*1/3 cup sugar (greatly reduced from original!)*

*1 1/2 tsp baking soda*

*1/2 tsp salt*

Stir all together

## Step 3

*2 eggs*

*1/2 tsp vanilla*

*1 mashed banana*

Whisk together with a fork

## Step 4

Add egg and date mixture together.

Stir combined egg/date mixture into flour mixture, folding just until not dry

Do not over-mix.

Scoop into your favorite quick-bread pan

Bake 60-75 minutes on 350F until toothpick inserted comes out clean

Allow to cool in pan for 10-minutes, cut around edges, release and cool on wire rack.

Wonderful with freshly-made cream cheese or butter to slather all over lovely slices, enjoyed with a fresh cup of coffee or ice-cold farm-fresh grass-fed real milk. ☺

# Spending Time with God

*by T.I.*

Do you ever have that surge of pain in the pit of your stomach that you experience when you feel like everything is going right, but something is wrong or missing? I had this feeling about two weeks ago, and I went throughout my entire week feeling like the person who goes out of his house and knows that he is leaving “something” behind without knowing exactly what “it” is. He decides to ignore his suspicion and leave anyway, but ten minutes later when he is on the highway he realizes that he left his driver’s license at home.

However, last Sunday as I was cleaning my room and felt this “knock, knock” on my heart, I decided to grab my iPod and Bible, and get on my knees. Over the next 45 minutes I experienced more peacefulness and satisfaction than I had over the course of my entire prior week.

Think about this. You have 24 hours in a day. Well, whatever is filling up your time is what you are living- in other words, your life is based upon what you spend your time on. (e.g.

If you’re a pro football player then your time is spent on working out and preparing for your next game. If you’re a doctor then your time is spent mostly on working in the hospital, etc.)

In the same way, you are influenced by and make decisions based upon what you spend 24 hours doing and thinking about. Let’s say you spend your day watching TV and listening to music. The TV shows you choose to watch and the music you choose to listen to will end up being what influences your thoughts and thus your actions.

As Frances E. Willard said, “Sow an act and you reap a habit; sow a habit and you reap a character; sow a character and you reap destiny.” Whatever “habits” you are developing in the time you have each day will end up being your destiny. Once you start looking at life this way, you realize that there are really only two sources you can use to fill your time: the Word and the world.

The speaker I was listening to started breaking this down during his talk and explained that the world tells you that “you are not good enough.” He then went on to explain that the Word tells you that “you are MORE than good enough because of what Jesus has done for you.”

Seriously, look at all the things the “world” gives you:

You go to the mall and you find out you’re not “cool enough” because you don’t have the newest brands. Then you realize you can’t buy it, so you are not “rich enough”.

The TV tells you that you are not “popular enough”.

The music we are given basically is telling us we are not “sexually active enough”.

No wonder I was not feeling satisfied!

However, look at the Word.

(1 Peter 2:9-10 NIV)

*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

One word: WOW!

You are MORE than enough according to this passage; this is only one example of many in the Word of God that lift you up. As the speaker I mentioned earlier asked me, I am now asking

you – who are you listening to? The Word, or the world?

God put us here for a reason. Yes, we do live in a corrupt world but, as my mom used to tell me when I was a little boy, “*No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.*” (1 Corinthians 10:13.)

God called his people to be “in the world”, but not “of the world”. He supplied all our needs and gave us grace so that we can successfully live as He did – flawless and glorifying to God. In order for us to complete this mission we have we need to spend time with God. We all fall short of the glory of God, so we need Him to be in our lives. How can that happen if we don’t spend time with Him?

As I learned, no matter how much you seem to be getting “all the good things in life”, all is vanity without giving your time and life to God. As the Bible says, “*Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere.*” (Psalm 84:10a.) I’m not saying we should read the Bible 24/7

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# Emptied to be Filled

*Margaret Neufeld*

Late one cold, dark night, a young woman came before the Lord. Her feet felt heavy as she approached His majestic throne. At first, she couldn't find the words to say, nor could she bring herself to look up into His face. But His loving gaze quietly prompted her to speak her heart. She struggled but for a moment before the floodgates of her heart opened.

"How long, oh Lord, how long?" she pleaded. "When will I ever come out of this darkness, this place of restlessness? I thought you were a God of joy and peace."

"I am, child, I am," He gently replied.

"Then why can't I feel it? God, my life is a mess and I just don't know what to do anymore. Why won't you help me?"

"I will help you, if you are willing to be helped," He said.

"What do You mean, if I'm willing to be helped? Is that not what I asked You for?"

"Are you willing to let go and surrender everything I ask you to? Are you willing to submit to Me and be obedient, no matter what the cost? Are you ready to let me cleanse your life and make you like Myself? It will not be easy."

What could He possibly ask her to do, she wondered? Was she not already living for Him? She wavered momentarily and then desperately said, "I think so. I will do anything; just help me out of this place!"

At once He began to show her things in her life that she had done to hurt Him and others. She saw acts of sin and selfishness, words spoken that cut and hurt. She saw chains of bondage called Fear, Guilt, Shame, Regret, and Insecurity. She remembered all the times God had asked her to do something and she had said no out of fear of what could have happened. Although she had repented of

all those things and received His forgiveness, she still felt guilt and shame. Where was the healing God always promised? Where were the freedom, the joy, and the peace?

Knowing her thoughts, He looked at her and said, "Until you let go and submit and obey whatever I command you, you cannot know the fullness of these things- My freedom, joy and peace."

She shook her head violently. "No," she reasoned, "I can't. Think of what will happen to me if I obey? I mean, I know I can trust You, but what about my reputation? What if the things I do will not be accepted and I will only be hated and put to more shame? I can't do it God. I can't."

"Oh, my child," He said sadly, "unless you surrender your entire life, with all of your plans, hopes, dreams, your fears, guilt, shame, insecurities, unless you make My will your will, I cannot truly help you. I need your whole life, with

nothing held back. Then I can make something beautiful out of it.”

“Beautiful?” The word sounded strange and almost foreign to her ears. “How can my life possibly be beautiful?”

“What you see is only a portion of the bigger picture. I’m painting a beautiful masterpiece with your life, but you will not see it clearly until I’m finished. It will take Me many years yet to finish, but I promise you it will be beautiful.”

By now tears were streaming down her cheeks. “No. It’s way too painful. I can’t handle it. It hurts too much.”

He looked at her with tears in His eyes. “It hurt me too.” With that, He showed her His nail-pierced hands and pointed to the cross where He had hung, stripped and beaten, where blood had flowed from His wounds and crowds mocked and ridiculed Him to pay the price for her sin.

The very Son of God, Creator of the universe, cared enough for her, a poor, wretched sinner to endure such agony and death. How could she do anything but submit to Him?

Slowly, she felt her heart soften as she let go of all the things that had enslaved her for so many years. She watched it all fall down at His feet. All of her hopes, dreams, plans, and deepest desires. All of her joys, tears, fears, guilt, shame.

Several times she came across something that she felt she could not let go. “Anything but this,” she would say. It was too much. She looked up at His sad, compassionate eyes. “Everything?” she choked.

“Yes. Everything.” He watched as slowly every last thing in her life slipped through her fingers. Then, she looked around her and despair seemingly flooded her soul. Again she looked up at her Lord as tears

once again made their way down her cheeks and dropped to the ground. “It’s all gone. Every last piece of my life is gone. I’ve given it all to You. There’s nothing left.”

Slowly a smile spread across His face. “Oh, but you’re wrong, my child. Now that you’re empty, you are ready to experience the fullness of Myself, the fullness of joy and peace that I give and no one can take away. Now that you are empty and broken, you are ready to be made complete. You are ready to experience My best plans for you and a life so fresh and exciting beyond anything you could ever have imagined. Yes, hard times will still come, but you will experience My nearness like never before. Don’t you see it now, My child? You were emptied so you could finally be filled.” She smiled, and in her heart, she knew that it was enough. ☩

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This article has been reprinted from Margaret’s blog with her permission.

# Insights through Hebrew

The two most important facts about the Hebrew language are:

1) Hebrew is written from right to left, horizontally.

2) The Hebrew Alphabet has no vowels. Sometimes vowel pointings (little dots) under the letters are used to indicate vowel sounds, but a native Hebrew reader would be able to read without the vowel pointings. Think of Shorthand or SMS (text messaging shorthand) language.

“C U Tday.” or “Rmbr to brng.”

When you want to write the word “Ahead” in SMS Language, you write, “Ahd”, not “hd”, as “A” is a syllable. It is the same with Hebrew.

The word we are learning today consists of 5 letters.

תִּרְחָא

א This is the first letter in the Hebrew Alphabet. Its name is ALEPH, pronounced

“AH-Lepf”. It makes an “ah” sound, as in “ah-choo”

כ This letter is HETH. It is pronounced with a deep guttural sound (from the back of your throat), like the “ch” in “Bach”. It’s kind of gruff and throaty.

ר This is RESH, pronounced raysh. It makes an “R” sound, like in “Rachel”.

י This is “yod”, pronounced “yoht”. It makes a “Y” sound, like the “Y” in “Yeshua”.

ת This is TAV, pronounced as “Tahv”. It makes a “T” sound, like in “Tobiyah”.

The English equivalents of the letters are A-CH-R-Y-T, and the word is pronounced, “achăriyth”, or “akh-ar-eet” (The “h” at the end is pronounced only slightly, or perhaps not at all.)

According to Strong’s Concordance, the word means “the last or end, hence the future; also posterity.” It is translated as (last, latter) end (time), hinder (utter) -most, length, posterity, remnant, residue, or reward. Acharit comes

from a word that means “the hind part.” Because of this, acharit can mean “reward” or “latter end”; basically “what comes behind.”

Let’s look at this word in context:

*Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day long. For surely there is an **end**; and thine expectation shall not be cut off.* (Proverbs 23:17-18)

*Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my **last end** be like his!* (Numbers 23:10)

*Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy **latter end**.* (Proverbs 19:20)

*My son, eat thou honey, because it is good; and the honeycomb, which is sweet to thy taste: So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul: when thou hast found it, then there shall be a **reward**, and thy expectation shall not be cut off.* (Proverbs 24:13-14)

*He that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child shall have him become his son **at the length**.* (Proverbs 29:21)

(Note: Balaam speaking to Balak) *And now, behold, I go unto my people: come therefore, and I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the **latter days**.* (Numbers 24:14)

We youth don’t seem to live very circumspectly. Teenagers often say by their dress, attitude, posture, and countenance that they will do whatever they want. They are described as rebellious, irreverant, unkempt, careless, and mindless. Forethought is not a common characteristic of today’s youth. We don’t pay attention to the acharit. How many of us would sit down to ponder the deep “philosophical” questions of life that have troubled man throughout the ages? “What is man?” “What am I?” “Why am I here?” “What am I going to with my life?” “What is the end of it all?”

Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, pondered these very questions in Ecclesiastes, and from the wisdom God bestowed upon him, he could only make one conclusion:

*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.* (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14.)

Like it or not, you and I will have to stand before God one day. The final acharit will be before us. We may still be young, but we must not take anything for granted. It is better to reckon ourselves daily before God, to love Him, seek Him, hear Him, receive Him, know Him, serve Him, and live in awe of Him while we are still young than to regret it in our acharit (latter days) and suffer for all eternity.

Take the Word of God, the utter and unquestionable truth, and reckon your life. God, - do I really love you as much as I say I do? God - am I walking in You? God - do I bring glory to You? God - are the desires of my heart the desires of Your heart?

Search Scripture. Seek God. Cry out to Him. He will answer you from His highest heaven. He loves you, and that is why He does not let you remain as you are. Faith and truth must change you, and God must change you into His likeness and the likeness of His Son, Yeshua the Messiah.

In a letter to Rudiger Scheleicher, written on April 8th, 1936, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote: "So now I read the Bible in this way, I ask in every place: What is God saying to us here? I

ask God to show us what God wants to say... we seek the will of God who is entirely strange and contrary to us, whose ways are not our ways and whose thoughts are not our thoughts, who hides under the sign of the cross at which all our ways and thoughts come to an end... I also want to say to you quite personally that since I have learned to read the Bible in this way - and that is not so very long ago - it becomes more wonderful to me every day."

Don't we all want to read the Bible in such a way? Don't we all want it to be so real, so delightful, and so meaningful? Don't we all want God's Word to be living, not just living to us, but living in us? Today, look beyond your own circumstances, your own life, your own needs, your own circumstances, your own ideals and goals and ambitions - look beyond yourself. Look at God, who is great! Then you will be ready for the acharit.

You must be a voice today, a voice to the youth and to the church. We must live in total surrender to God, being possessed entirely by God, being apprehended by God, living and speaking not out of our own selves, but against our own will and natural inhibitions, and according to the words of God Himself.

*Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, (Ecclesiastes 12:1 NKJV)*

*Baruch Attah YHWH, eloheinu melech ha-olam,  
asher natan lanu et derekh ha yeshuah,  
baMashiach Yeshua, baruch hu, Amin.*

*Blessed art Thou, YHWH our God, King of the Universe (Ages),  
Who gave to us the way of salvation through the Messiah Yeshua.  
Blessed be He. Amen. ☞*

#### **Focus Cont.**

consequences. This mission will not be easy and it may take a couple hundred years to accomplish. These things are what Christians are called to do.

In closing, the Gospel is central to our faith. Without it, all that we do will be meaningless. If Christ had not died, we would be lost and running as far as we could from God. Rather than getting focused on nonessential things like end-time charts and predictions, we must put our focus on the One who has the end in His hands. He is the reason for our existence. We should be thankful for the One who died for the sins of His people. ☞

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#### Footnotes:

1. Purswell, Jeff. "The Last One". Sovereign Grace Ministries. <http://www.sovereigngraceministries.org/blogs/cj-mahaney/post/2010/07/16/The-Last-One-Jeff-Purswell-Eschatology.aspx>

#### **Time Cont.**

because I know this is not practical – we are not in Heaven yet, and we are still living here on Earth- but on the same token, in order to survive we need time with our Maker.

Where are you spending your time and energy? Are you spending enough of your time and, thus, your life and destiny – with God? ☞

