

June 2011

Lighted Lamp Magazine



From the Editor

Words have a tremendous impact on people's lives. There have been times when I felt stressed and overwhelmed but someone's encouraging words cheered me up. The people who spoke those words probably did not realize what an impact they made in my life. Often a passing comment that someone makes and forgets about a minute later can be remembered by another person for months, or even years.

Not only can other people's words make a difference in our lives, but our words can make a difference in theirs. Our enthusiasm, appreciation, admiration, or sympathy can show that we care.

Is there someone whose life you can brighten with kind words today?

Priscilla

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Photography by Riley S.

"Is prayer your steering wheel
or your spare tire?"
—Corrie Ten Boom

Photography by Rebekah M.



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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Dealing with Trials

by Becca Collier

1 Peter 4:12-19(ESV) says, “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share in Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the out come for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And ‘If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?’ Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.”

Christians are refined by fire. There are two reasons for this. One is that we have many impurities that must be burned off, and two is that our trials are used in our testimonies to reach out to Christians and non-Christians alike.

Do you know how gold becomes as beautiful as we view it in stores? It is heated up in a blazing hot fire until the impurities melt. That sounds a little crazy right? To heat something up just to melt a tiny impurity sounds like overkill, but if you were going to spend hundreds of dollars on one small piece of pre-

cious metal you would want it to be perfect. We aren’t metal, but God “melts us” time and time again.


Because God is the Master Goldsmith, He created us and wanted us to be in His image. Then we chose to sin and developed impurities, but the amazing thing is that God is also the customer. He bought us back even though we have impurities. Then He melts us over and over to rid us of those stains. He then “finishes” us with Christ’s perfect gold so God doesn’t see us as imperfect. We have to endure the melting process to become complete. James 1:2 tells us to count it all joy as we go through various trials. If we trust God to help us see ourselves through the painful meltings, we become complete in Him. I long for the day when we are completely pure and without deformities. I understand that trials are hard, but looking back I see that afterwards I am closer to Christ.

Other people are watching as Christians go through trials, and if Christians give up, they do not have as effective of a witness or ministry. As people go through trials, they have others they can minister to during the hard times. Also God gives us those who are in our church to minister to us. Plus, unbelievers are watching us at all times. Therefore, we must be joyful during the hard times. James 1 says to “count it all joy, my brothers when you meet trials of various kinds.” Our joy in the painful, hard times shows that God is working in us and through us.

If the gold were alive, then the heat would hurt. It's not fun to go through a burning furnace, but it is necessary. In James 1 it says that we are blessed if we go through trials. When I hear "testing" or "trials" I think about pain. God knows they are painful, but He uses them for us to grow. He brings them into our lives to complete us. If we do not go through a test, then we do not grow. As you grow in Christ, the tests become harder.

I believe that God works through us the most during trials. This is because we cannot endure the trials on our own. We must run to God as we experience the trial. Another word for trials is test. This is a test we must study and prepare for. God's Word is our study guide. But even though we study for it, we cannot make the grade on our own. The Teacher gave us the

Study Guide that covers all of the tests. Why don't we use it? On top of the Study Guide, He also gave us the answer during the test, which is to turn to and trust in Him. He brings us through it. The only problem is that we are tempted to "cheat" by giving into temptation. The problem with that is the person we cheat off of is Satan, and he deliberately gives us the wrong answers! So why do we ignore the true answer? It is because Satan looks like "the smart kid" offering us an easier solution. He is, but he is wise in the ways to destroy us.

Christians should remember that they can run to God because they cannot do it on their own. Trials will come. We can minister to others through the trials, and trials bring purity. The Bible is here for Christians to use in their daily lives. There is hope because God will lead us through. 

Regular Features:

18 Insights through Hebrew

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14 Quiz: What Are You Trusting In?



Which Bible character do you most want to be like, and why?

Email your answer to priscilla.carsten@gmail.com. Answers will appear in the next issue.

Eleanor

by Cassandra Hooimeyer

Enclosed in the gloomy shadow of the castle walls a young clerk stooped over his books. The dull tapestries hung unmoving, the yellow sun tried desperately to creep through the deep narrow windows.

A dull thud echoed in the stillness as the boy slammed the heavy account book shut. Dust swirled from its pages. Thrusting it from him he leapt up, pacing the small room cluttered with Latin writings. Finally he dropped into the chair and pulled the book towards him again, sighing heavily.

His eyes had not followed the script a half-minute before a small boy peered around the tapestry leading into the study.

“Uhhhh...Hugh? Lady Eleanor wants you,” mumbled the child. His tunic was the brown and white ordinary bend of Sir James of Crawley’s coat of arms.

“What now?” growled Hugh irritably, swinging out of the chair. His scabbard scraped on the floor as he buckled on his sword belt.

The boy hesitated. “She’s waiting at the gatehouse,” he volunteered, and scuttled away.

If Sir James was not in Oxford he would not have to play squire to Cousin Eleanor all the time, thought Hugh irritably, stepping down steep curling stairways. There was still that letter Lady Alice

wanted written, as well as a fortnight’s accounts to transcribe. He shouldered past the butler in the passageway, then strode into the bustling courtyard.

Sunlight rebounded off the worn cobblestones and he shielded his eyes, glancing around. Yes, there was Eleanor, standing in the shade of the gatehouse.

As Hugh approached, the girl nervously fingered a stiff, long plait, clutching her basket handle with the other. She looked up. For a moment she saw a tall boy, dark and irritated, jaw sullen and eye contemptuous, then she ducked her head and started quickly across the drawbridge.

He fell in easily beside her as they strode the drawling river path. Could he carry her basket? No? Hugh sighed within himself. How sullen she was! And no wonder. For two white candles protruded from beneath the basket cloth. But then, she was always travelling the river road to the village with salves, or candles to offer for the souls of the departed.

“Another death,” he commented civilly.

Eleanor kept her eyes on the ground. “I do not know,” she said quietly.

“Probably,” Hugh observed. “Those peasants always die.”

The hands on the basket handle were white-

knuckled, the small face rigid. "I do not see why you so despise escorting me," said Eleanor tightly. "You never get much done anyway."

"*That's* only because you're always nagging at me to help you translate the Holy Book."

"It isn't," said Eleanor. After a pause she added, "I can't help that I'm unable to read Latin. You might teach me, cousin."

"That's for the priest to do."

"The priest is in the village," observed Eleanor.

After that Hugh fell behind, for her manner pleased him ill. The fields were bright with the harvest, dotted with brown where the peasants worked the broad stretches. The river swung gently around the wide curves between the banks, drawing at trailing leafy boughs. Ambling along, Hugh unsheathed his sword and tossed it lazily from hand to hand. He didn't especially mind the village trips. The reeve's son had access to uncommonly fine ale. Hugh lunged at an invisible enemy, and recovering the stroke blocked another with an imaginary shield. With a bit of luck, the peasant *would* die, and Eleanor would stop at the church a half-hour or so, giving him more time. The blade gleamed in the sunlight.

Ducking out of the squalid cottage, Eleanor strode through the scrawny fowls scattered about the yard, eyes blurred. Pausing at the stick gate, she brushed her finger-backs across her eyes. An ache drew unbearably at her throat.

The elderly priest moved up behind her and moving forward again, Eleanor passed through the gate. Together they walked the crooked cart road between the tofts* scattered like playing cards

cast to the floor.

"You will want to go to the church?" suggested Brother Peter.

Swallowing, Eleanor nodded.

As she stepped down the dim nave to the chancel, Eleanor's feet echoed lightly. Many times—oh! so many times!—she had heard this same lonely echoing, the spindly claws scratching on the roof as the birds landed on the ridgepole. A familiar cold seeped through her skirts as she knelt before the altar, watching as the priest soundlessly lit the white candles. The new wicks darkened as the dancing flame took hold, turning the wax from white to liquid gold. Swallowing, Eleanor closed her eyes on warm tears, hands icy in her silk lap. An image crept before her closed eyes; the pallid face of a child, lips parted, eyes staring. She inhaled deeply, tremblingly, wishing—oh! wishing!—that God knew English, that she could be certain He heard her prayers... hoping that He would answer favourably. She felt Brother Peter's bony hand rest fleetingly on her shoulder.

"Shall I say some of the Requiem?" His voice echoed slightly in the stony silence.

Twice words would not come to her lips. She moistened them carefully, then quavered, "The—T-Tract."

Softly the priest's voice rolled through the church.

"Absolve, Domine, animas omnium fidelium defunctorum—"

*toft—the medieval villein's yard, encircled by a fence including the cottage, a shed, privy, stable/barn and garden.

Eleanor closed her eyes on gathering tears.

A tiny ball of liquid wax trembled on the candle edge, then slid down its slender face. The flame flickered in the draught. Through the window the sky grew darker, and the sounds of rumbling wheels and cheery voices mingled with the cooling air.

Eleanor stared dully at the flickering candlelight on the silken sheen of her skirt and the shadows cast on her hands.

Behind her, the door suddenly swung open. It screeched in the stillness and banged against the wall. Hugh stepped beneath the lintel. "Are you coming or not?"

Slowly Eleanor rose, gathered up her basket, and moved down the nave. Neither answering nor looking up, she passed out into the dusk.

Hugh drew the door shut and drew up behind Eleanor as she turned onto the river path.

"You know how long you were?"

Eleanor gazed at the greenery huddled along the river as she walked; the exquisite shades of green, gloomy and bright, the white of the heather blossoms... the darkening sky reflected in the drawling water.

"*Three hours.* They'll be worried at the House you know."

She knew the eyes on her were dark with contempt, but she was swathed in too deep a misery to care.

"Do you really think it works?"

Fear thrust a cold shaft into her chest. Eleanor looked swiftly up. His face was mockingly curious. "What?" Her question was quick and scared. In her throat, the blood throbbed swiftly, loudly.

"Well, everything: candles, prayer, masses. What if the peasant stays in Purgatory for ev—"

"No! Oh, stop! *Stop*," Eleanor gasped, sobs breaking in her throat. And then she was stumbling down the path ahead, hand pressed to her mouth, weeping.

"P-R-I-N-C-I-P-O," murmured Eleanor, marking the word with her finger. "Principo." She looked from the great book to a sheaf of papers on the table beside her. "Ah, there. Latin for 'start'. So, 'In principio' means 'In the start'." As her eyes turned back to the great vellum bound book she put a hand to her throbbing head, trying to ignore the vicious ache. "Now, 'verbum'—"

She stiffened. For mounting the twisting stairs came footsteps, rapid and hard, as if someone leapt them two at a time.

"Cursed girl," muttered Hugh, thrusting past the tapestry. "Gets me in trou—" he stopped in confusion at the sight of a small rigid figure at the table.

Head carefully bent, Eleanor stared at the parchment, nose suddenly itchy with pending tears. Stillness. Hugh swallowed, and slowly crossed the floor and sat, eyes averted, rustling awkwardly through his papers. After a moment Eleanor continued with her translation. If she remembered right, 'verbum' meant 'word'. So, 'In the start was the word'—

“Didn’t think you’d take it so,” mumbled Hugh resentfully.

Eleanor didn’t reply.

With a sudden curse, Hugh thrust himself back in his chair. “I don’t know why you set so much on such things. Honestly, I don’t understand. After all, we don’t know if anything happens.”

Eleanor’s soul shrank within her. She said: “It—it is wrong to doubt.”

Hugh snorted. “You’ve got to question things, Eleanor. You shouldn’t have to believe things unless they’ve been proven true.”

Carefully Eleanor looked up from her papers, putting down her quill. How could she explain to this boy that inner yearning for some certainty... that Someone she could not find?

“I know—I know God is there,” she said finally.

Hugh arched an eyebrow. “If He wasn’t, how did the earth come about?”

“Yes. And from what I see, I believe He is good.”

“Good?”

“The birds,” said Eleanor, “The spine of a leaf... in creation I see that Hand of a God who loves.”

Silence.

Slowly Eleanor rose and moved about the room, fingering the silken cuff of her sleeve. Finally she turned back to Hugh. “I believe that though we can understand things about God, we are too

small to understand exhaustively,” she said. “Yet what we do understand must make sense.” She wet her lips. After a moment she said, “God has give us so much in creation... its like a gift given to someone dearly loved. The cross, too, demonstrates such love. It is just that I cannot find love in the priests’ demand for money... in indulgences. I cannot see love in Purgatory for the repentant. I—” she turned abruptly, walking to the narrow window. Through blurred eyes she saw a yellow and green sky, the orange globe setting in the west. The cool night-scent came to her nostrils. “I cannot—” she choked on the unbearable ache tearing at her throat. “I cannot see love—in a God who distances Himself... and who does not speak to me in my own language.”

Eleanor closed her eyes, her hands over her mouth. “Cousin—truth makes sense. This does not.” She turned back to him, and he felt in her gaze the despairing tears of nights of agony. “In all integrity I should not cling to my belief that God *is* love,” she said tearfully, “yet I do—for I know that though I cannot find the answer, there must be one.” Again she averted her eyes, trying not to cry... pain throbbed in her forehead. “I—I cannot bear having sought, and not found.”

Oil lamps squatted among the parchments, shedding golden circles on their scrawled surfaces. Gold flickered on the silk gown, on the faces of clerk and lady. From time to time Hugh’s eyes would wander from his accounts as he glanced aside at the girl’s dark head, watched her eyes following the close script of the Holy Book, her fingertips at the English words on her translation papers, her lips move. Many times she would glance at him for guidance. Hesitantly she would glance, but Hugh, with some understanding, was less grudging in his assistance.

The flames wavered. Eleanor drew a wrap around her shoulders. Hugh paced the room, restless, then sank into his chair once more, sighing.

Down below in the courtyard came the faint clatter of many hooves on cobblestones. It went unnoticed. The castle bustle never disturbed the thoughtful girl, neither the reluctant clerk. Only when footsteps, heavy, urgent footsteps, mounted swiftly the twining stairwell did Eleanor look up, face bright with recognition. Then a heavy knight, fresh with the evening breeze, thrust past the tapestry, breathing hard. Hugh started up. Eleanor leapt with glad welcome to her father's side.

"Eleanor!" The knight swept her up. Her cheek was pressed against his cold tunic, joy bubbling in her heart, the great chest heaving beneath with heavy running.

"Oh, you're early!" she cried eagerly. "Did you see Dr. Wyclif? How was Oxford?"

The eyes that met her questioning gaze were deep with joy. "Oh, Eleanor—!" he broke off, breathless. "*Look.*"

Taking his wallet from his back he swept aside the parchments scattered upon the table. The large hands trembled as gently he laid the wallet upon it and unclasping the buckles, drew from it a book.

It was a large book, bound with some cheap stuff. Lamplight danced yellow on its rough cover.

Eleanor looked bewildered from the book to her father. A sudden hope leapt painfully to mind. Oh, did she dare believe—"Father, what...?"

Gently Sir James took her hands in his great cold

ones. "Eleanor, Dr. Wyclif believes that God wants all people—ploughboys, alewives, squires, everyone!—to read the Holy Book for themselves," he said gently. "All across the country men are bringing the Word to the people. This is it—this is what we've been searching for!" A quick moisture leapt to his eyes. "Eleanor, its the Gospel of Saint John— *in English!*"

Eleanor's heart was not where it was supposed to be. It was in her throat... it was somehow blocking her ability to breath. Eyes fastened on the book, her mind moved sluggishly. She moved towards it, her fingertips brushed the cover, opened the cover and touched the inky pages. Mechanically she read:

"In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and God was the word. This was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was made nothing that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men; and the light shineth in dark-nesses, and darknesses comprehended not it."

Hugh watched her lips move, whispering the words. Yet he never heard them. He watched as she looked up at the great knight before her... watched as her face twisted, then began to glow as if lit within by a golden lamp.

"Oh—oh, *Father,*" she breathed. Suddenly her eyes grew wet and with a sob-laugh she threw herself into the knight's embrace, arms clasped tight around his neck, tears streaking her face.

"He speaks my language," she sobbed, and her voice broke beneath the sheer pain of utter joy. "*God speaks my language!*"^o

He's Bringing Change

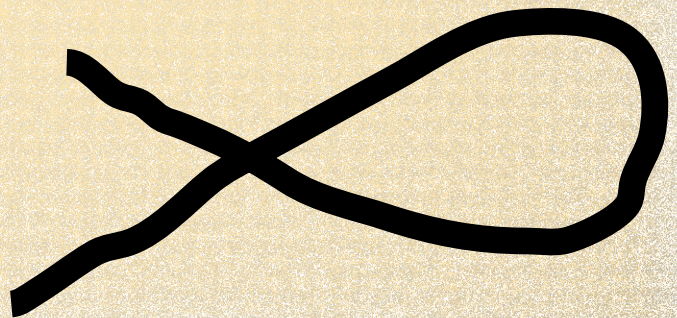
by Joy B.

*You've engraved my name on the palm of your hand
I've engraved my pain on the sands I walk
You've written your love on the sun above
But the stars hold my scars and each day brings new shame*

*How much must I give to live?
How much did you love to die?
A new year, a new high
A new pain, a new price*

*Yet God's the only one who stays the same
Only he can bring us change
He's bringing change in every way*

*He's bringing change
Every day*





Friendship: Two Different Sides of the Coin

by *Leanne Nelson*

“A true friend is the gift of God, and He only who made hearts can unite them.” - Robert South.

Friendship is significant in our lives. God created us to want to interact with those around us, and we do ... a lot!

The Non-Christian Side

Having non-Christian friends is something that a lot of Christians debate about. Some say that we shouldn't yoke ourselves to them in friendship, just like in love, and others say that we need to reach out to those who don't know Christ and we can't do that without befriending them. In my experience it goes both ways. Let me explain...

Though I have grown up a Christian and have gone to church my whole life, most of my closest friends are non-Christians. I go to a secular high school and non-Christians are the people I spend the most of my time with. Being that school runs 5 out of 7 days a week for 6 hours,

it's only natural that I would become friends with some of those around me. While I find hanging out with them great (most of the time), I find that there are a lot of topics of conversation that are avoided when I'm around them. Most of these topics have to do with God and His love. And while I am close with a lot of them, I've found over the years that you can never be as close with a non-Christian friend as you can with a Christian friend. This is because there is a huge part of life that you can't share with them. Christ is supposed to be everything to us, so often there is something lacking in a friendship between a Christian and a non-Christian because we don't share that common faith.

Despite that one big difference, I think that having friendships with non-Christians is important. Jesus befriended those around Him, though they didn't believe in Him (yet), and as we are to be like Christ, we should follow His example. People are not going to come to Christ if all they see are Christians who don't want to interact with those around them.

A danger of these friendships is that they might start affecting your relationship with Christ in a bad way. That is why you need to pick your non-Christian friends wisely. If you're around others who constantly do bad stuff, sooner or later you will start going that way too, whether you want to or not. We are told not to conform to the world, and if friendships with non-Christians are causing us to lose sight of God, then we need to ditch them no matter how hard it might be.

The Flip Side: Christian Friends

On the other side of things, being friends with other Christians is also a great thing. As C.S. Lewis said: "'The next best thing to being wise oneself is to live in a circle of those who are.'" When you surround yourself with people who love God just like you do, encouragement and prayer are quick and easy to find. It's easy to create a deep friendship quickly because you share the biggest thing in your lives in common.

Having friends that share your faith also helps deepen your own. Solomon wrote in Proverbs: "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." Christian friends can encourage and admonish each other, helping as we run this race together. We are to fix our eyes on Jesus, and having Christian friends can allow us to do this.

Heads or Tails

While both types of friendships can help us to grow as a person, it's a personal thing as to which type of friendship is right for you. Maybe you're like me and you find yourself with a mixture of the two, or maybe you're at a place in your faith where you need to be surrounded by those who have the same goal in life - to

love God with all their hearts. Whatever the case, you need to be looking for wisdom in your choices of friendships through prayer and reading the Bible. Only God is totally tuned in to what you need at this moment, so He is the one to go to. While our human friends may fail us or reject us, God will never do those things. He is always there for us, which makes Him the ultimate friend. ☺

What are You

You have just had a major disagreement with your best friend. Do you... (See Psalm 62:8)

- a. Complain to your teacher that your friend is being mean to you?
- b. Talk to your other friends about it and ask them to help you settle the argument?
- c. Ask God to help you solve the disagreement or to help you treat your friend with respect despite the disagreement?
- d. Go on the computer and blog about it?

You are about to graduate from high school and do not know what career to choose. Do you... (See Psalm 143:8)

- a. Choose the career which would earn you the most money?
- b. Ask all your friends and family what they think you would be best at?
- c. Choose the career which would give you the most prestige?
- d. Study the Bible to find out which choice would honor God most?

A close family member becomes sick with cancer. Do you... (See Matthew 9:22)

- a. Pray to God, Allah, Buddha, and all the saints to make sure you will be heard?
- b. Pray to God and trust that He will take care of your loved one?
- c. Look up all the best doctors and the newest medical knowledge to ensure his or her recovery?
- d. Have confidence that you have saved up enough money for successful treatment?

You are anxious and concerned about all the natural disasters occurring around the world. Do you... (See Isaiah 26:3)

- a. Start raising money to help the victims?
- b. Complain about the world leaders who are not doing enough to help people?
- c. Feel better when you read about what other people are doing to help the victims of the disasters?
- d. Pray about it?

Trusting In?

You recently moved to a new town and lied about a lot of things to your classmates to make them like you better. Looking back, you realize it was sinful and feel guilty. Do you... (See Acts 26:18)

- a. Ask God to forgive you and give you courage to make it right?
- b. Distract yourself by watching TV or reading a book?
- c. Realize that no one is perfect and resolve that next time you will try harder to do the right thing?
- d. Talk to your new friends about it and why you did it so they will feel sorry for you?

You read a news story about a situation where the poor people are being oppressed by a stronger group. Do you... (See Isaiah 26:4)

- a. Write a letters to all your government representatives telling them that something ought to be done to help the oppressed people?
- b. Send out a chain e-mail to spread awareness?
- c. Pray that God will change oppressors' hearts or allow the people to escape from their power?
- d. Donate money to a group who pledges to alleviate the situation?

A bully at school continually makes fun of you for standing up for your faith. Do you... (See Psalm 25:2)

- a. Ask God to help you not to give in?
- b. Recruit a bunch of friends to defend you?
- c. Make sure the bully finds out that you are cooler and more popular than he is?
- d. Excuse your actions to the bully?

You are fishing in a boat with a friend and it becomes stormy. The boat is about to tip over, the water is cold, and you're not a very good swimmer. Do you... (see Mark 4:40, Psalm 56:3)

- a. Tell yourself that you and your friend are up for any challenge and will make it to shore?
- b. Assure your friend that your parents will soon come get you with their larger boat?
- c. Stop worrying because your boat has all the latest safety equipment?
- d. Pray for safety as you head for shore?

Results:

The color of each answer corresponds to one of the categories below. There are many ways, good and bad, to respond to the situations we encounter, but the best is always to rely on God.



God:

Psalm 40:4

Blessed is that man who makes the LORD his trust, And does not respect the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.

Psalm 20:7

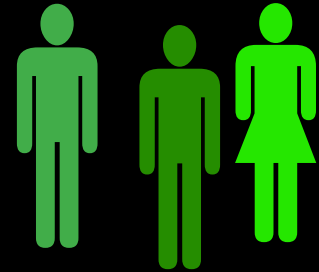
Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; But we will remember the name of the LORD our God.



Idols:

Psalm 115:4-8

Their idols are silver and gold, The work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak; Eyes they have, but they do not see; They have ears, but they do not hear; Noses they have, but they do not smell; They have hands, but they do not handle; Feet they have, but they do not walk; Nor do they mutter through their throat. Those who make them are like them; So is everyone who trusts in them.



Other People:

Micah 7:5

Do not trust in a friend; Do not put your confidence in a companion; Guard the doors of your mouth From her who lies in your bosom.

Jeremiah 9:4

"Everyone take heed to his neighbor, And do not trust any brother; For every brother will utterly supplant, And every neighbor will walk with slanders.



Self:

2 Corinthians 1:9-10

Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us,



Riches:

Psalm 52:6

"Here is the man who did not make God his strength, But trusted in the abundance of his riches, And strengthened himself in his wickedness."



Government or Other Leaders:

Psalm 118:9

It is better to trust in the LORD Than to put confidence in princes.

FIRST AND LAST

FOREIGNERS SERIES

by Priscilla Carsten

Mark 9:35(NKJV) - And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."

This is backwards from the way the world thinks. In the world if someone wants to be first, he puts himself first, but God wants us to put ourselves last. First, let's look at why people put themselves first in the world. If they don't, they might be taken advantage of. They might not get all the possessions or achievements that they want. People put themselves first for self-preservation and self-gratification.

Does this mean that God wants us to not take care of ourselves at all? No. Philippians 2:4 says, "Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others." Instead of focusing solely on what we need, we should pay just as much attention to what others need.

If this sounds difficult, and to me it does, think about Jesus. If He had acted only in His own interest, He would have stayed in heaven with all His praise and glory and no hardships. But He didn't. When He came to earth, He healed people and helped them and taught them how to live eternally. Then He took the punishment for our sins. He put Himself last. Jesus is our example of how we ought to live. He didn't spend His life on His own comfort and advancement, but on other people and on advancing the kingdom of God.

Besides, and more important than, putting ourselves last among other people is putting ourselves last in our relationship with God. Matthew 6:33 says, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." The verses that come before it are talking about worry. People wonder where they will get food and clothes, and they seek these things. They seek to take care of themselves. They seek their own good. But God says that we need to seek Him before all these things. That means that when we wake up, instead of thinking, "I need to go to work and earn money," or "I need to finish my homework so I don't get a bad grade," we should think, "I need to spend time with God today. I need to read my Bible today, and pray, and try to learn more about God." That should be our focus instead of our own selfish good.

The second part of that verse is a promise. It says that when we put God first in our lives, He will take care of us and provide the things we need. But what about when bad things happen to Christians? What about missionaries who are killed because they are seeking first the kingdom of God? Doesn't God provide for them? Jesus says in Matthew 19:29, "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life." This life is not all there is. Remember that we are going to a heavenly country, and in heaven, everything will be perfect. ☺

Rebekah M.'s Insights through Hebrew

THE TENSION OF THE AGES

Talk has been going on for quite awhile in the church about “the end times” and “the last days”. What exactly are the end times and the last days? How do we know for sure where we are on the Biblical calendar? And how are we youths supposed to live our lives since time is so short?

“End times” is not a phrase found in the Bible at all. The phrase used in the Bible is “last days”. Jacob prophesied over his sons over what would befall them in the last days (Genesis 49:1). Isaiah 2:2 and Micah 4:1 speak of YHWH’s house being established and all the Gentiles flowing towards it.

In the New Testament scriptures, the first mention of the last days is at Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit fell (Acts 2:7). The fact is, the “last days” and “end times” began 2,000 years ago. The early church was very conscious of Jesus (Yeshua’s) return and lived soberly and in vigilance. Hebrew 1:2 speaks of “these last days”. 2 Timothy 3:1 says, “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.”

The Hebraic and Biblical understanding of the times is that there is this present evil age and the age to come. Last month, I mentioned the Hebrew word “olam”, meaning age or uni-

verse. The Olam Hava is the age to come, hava meaning come. (Baruch hava b’shem Adonai means “Blessed is he who comes in the name of YHWH.”). Olam Hazei literally means “this world”. As the Scriptures say clearly, this earth was created by God (Elohim). The world in which we live in today is temporal and sinful. The Messiah comes to usher in the eternal Kingdom of God.

We know that Yeshua the Messiah of Israel has come. The last days have already begun, because with His coming, He brought the Kingdom of Heaven into individual lives. “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand (within reach)”, Jesus preached. We know that Yeshua is the Messiah because He has fulfilled, is fulfilling, and will fulfill all the word of the Tanakh (Old Testament). The olam hazei is passing away and the olam haba has already come.

Jesus taught us to pray, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” The Kingdom of God is already established, the feast has been prepared. We are living in the overlap of the ages, between Jesus’ two comings. The tension between the ages must be a part of our Christian life! The literal, physical, worldwide, and total bringing in of the Kingdom will come when Jesus comes again, but it is our duty as sons of God who has entered into the Kingdom to preach the Gospel to every creature (Mark 16), bringing the good news of

the Kingdom of Heaven.

Peter warned us in 1 Peter 3 that in these last days scoffers will come, that deny that God created the heavens and the earth, and also deny that Jesus will come again. (One common objection is that the church has been waiting for 2,000 years already and He still hasn't come). Actually, as Peter says, it's because God is very patient and doesn't desire any should perish. The New Testament scriptures are full of exhortations to the church to live soberly and be vigilant in these last days.

"But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace,

without spot, and blameless. And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen." (2 Peter 3:7-18 KJV)

It is our duty to store up our treasure in heaven (Matthew 6) and set our minds and hearts on things above (Colossians 3). It is our duty to be watchful and vigilant. It is our duty, as Jesus commanded, to go into all the world and preach the gospel.

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. (Matthew 24:14 KJV)

Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man. (Colossians 4:2-6 KJV)

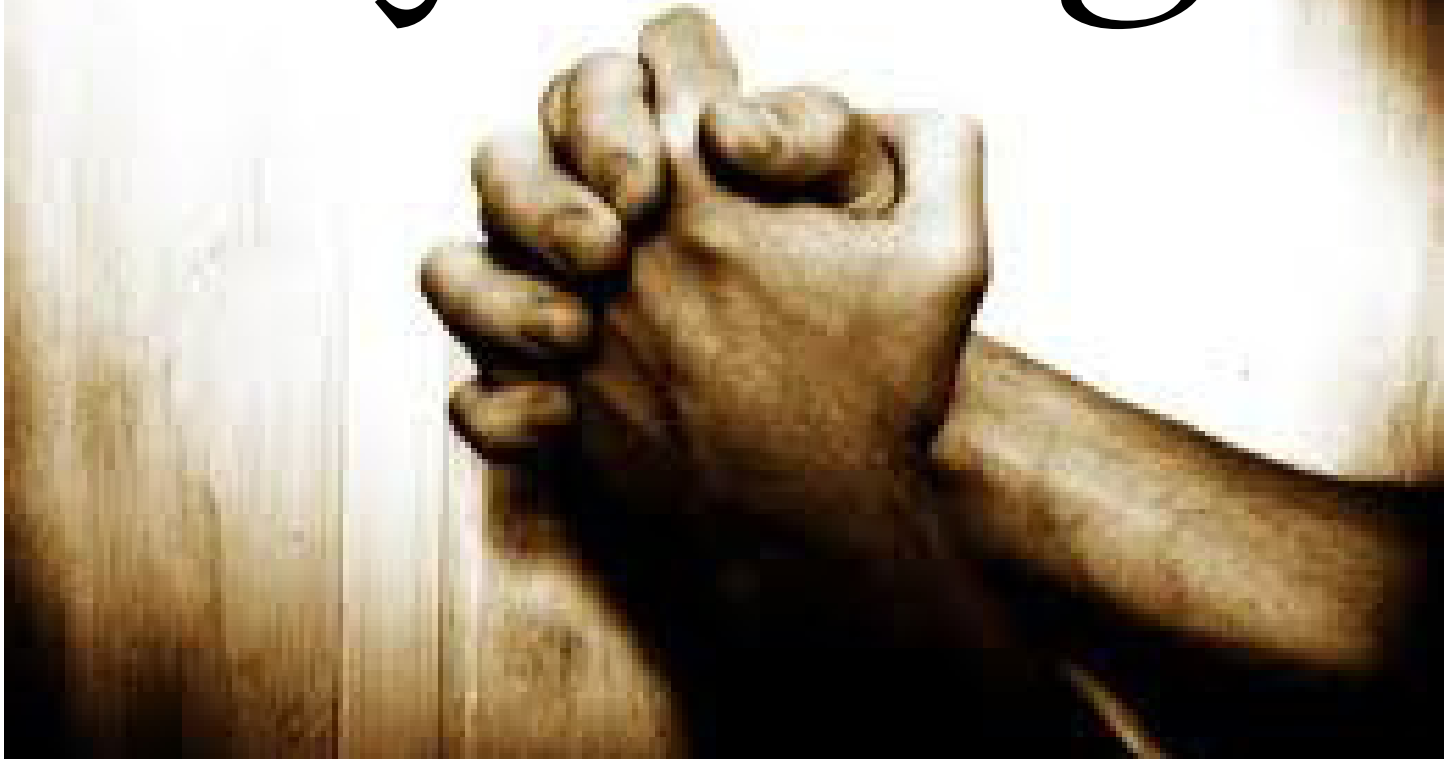
Let us live godly lives and pray for the salva-

tion of the peoples of this world and for our governmental authorities. Let us pray and preach the Kingdom of God to the lost peoples of this world. Let us remember the words Jesus spoke in Matthew 24 and 25 about watching and praying, staying awake. Don't be like the virgins who fell asleep. The reason why we still have time is to bring souls into the Kingdom of God in the harvest of these last days, not to idle away and spend our lives on the things of this world. Let us not be distracted by the cares of this life, the pursuit and vanity and riches. Let us pray for laborers in the harvest fields of the kingdom! Let us never lose hope in the promises of God found in the Prophets.

Let us have faith in Jesus that will stand no matter what fiery trials and tribulations come our way. Let us have peace in our hearts, the true shalom of YHWH, that will stand sure and strong on the Rock of Ages, YHWH the God of Israel. Let us stand with Israel and bring the gospel back to Jerusalem where the Holy Spirit was poured out 2,000 years ago!

Let us live every day of our lives in eager anticipation, expectant hope, watchful preparation, sober vigilance, and solidarity as a body, for the coming, returning, glorious King Messiah and His Kingdom (of which there will be no end), the fullness, completion, and beginning of all, for He is all and He is in all of His! Amen. ☩

Prayer Page



When someone you know is sick, it can be a helpless feeling, because nothing you can do will make that person well. But God can! He knows all about what is causing the sickness, and He can make the person well. That is why praying for those who are sick is the way we can help them most.

The New Testament tells of many times that Jesus healed people. In fact, He cares for those who are sick even more than we do.

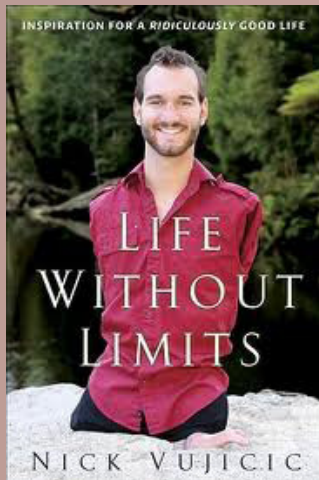
The following verses tell about one time that Jesus answered a request for healing.

Matthew 8:5-9, 13(NKJV)

Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, saying,

"Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented." And Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him." The centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. "For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." ¹³Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you." And his servant was healed that same hour. 0

Book Review



Life Without Limits by Nick Vujicic Reviewed by Margaret Neufeld

Nick Vujicic is a man who has been a great source of inspiration to me through his videos so I was really excited when he published his first book *Life Without Limits: Inspiration for a Ridiculously Good Life*. He certainly did not disappoint. Nick was born in Australia in 1982 without arms and legs and his parents were given no warning or any medical explanation. He has overcome countless challenges in life. Today, he's a motivational speaker and evangelist sharing God's love and hope with the world.


Throughout this book, Nick shares his story, how he dealt with challenges in different stages of life, how he adapted,

and where he is today. The book is filled with uplifting personal experiences, stories of his travels around the world, scripture, humour and stories of how countless others have overcome challenges and made a difference in the world. It's a book that truly leaves you inspired to live a good life.

Nick encourages readers to dare to dream, hope, and maintain an optimistic outlook on life. He explains the importance of self-acceptance, having a positive attitude, how to use fear as a motivator, how to respond to failure, how to adapt to change and most importantly, reaching out to other people. He includes an excellent chapter on relationships, investing in others and the importance of having role models and mentors to guide you in life, including many practical tips to improve your relationship skills. He teaches you how to embrace opportunities and evaluate them in order to make wise decisions. He even throws in a chapter on having fun and being ridiculous where he shares his overhead compartment story.

One of the things I absolutely love about this book is that the whole focus is outward. The ridiculously good life that Nick talks about is not at all a self-serving one but a selfless one that finds fulfillment in reaching out to others and making their lives better. He's living such a life and he makes you want to do the same.

I started reading this book saying "WOW!" and I finished it saying "WOW!" Some of Nick's ideas challenged my way of thinking and made me look at things from a different perspective. This beautiful hardcover book also includes eight pages of colour photos, which is an extra bonus. Life Without Limits is a fantastic read cover to cover and it will leave you inspired to live a ridiculously good life.

"When you step outside of yourself and your own concerns and reach out for others, it will change you. You will be humbled. You will be inspired. More than anything and more than ever, you will be overwhelmed with the feeling that you are a part of something much bigger than yourself. Not only that, you will also realize that you can make a contribution. Everything you can do to make someone else's life better makes your life more meaningful." 

The Lion

by Rachel F.

I like to hear the lion roar
On those notes my heart will soar

I like to hear the lion sing
New creation it will bring

I like to hear the lion's heartbeat
It gives me comfort in face of defeat

The Lion's breath warms my heart
From his gaze I'll never part

When I know that he is near
Gone is every thought of fear

I long for him yet even more
To hear that glorious lion roar.

[The following text is a dense, continuous block of illegible characters, likely representing a redacted document or a corrupted scan. It contains no discernible words or structure.]