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Lighted Lamp Magazine



From the Editor

In life, there are many journeys that we undertake, and many of God's promises that we look forward to, but some days it looks like they will never be fulfilled. On the Isrealites' journey to the promised land, they became discouraged. They had traveled for a long time and they still had not reached the promised land. They complained to Moses that God had brought them out into the wilderness to die. But God's timing is not our timing. The Isrealites did eventually reach the promised land, and God will also fulfill the promises that He has made in the Bible to us.

Several years ago, I really wanted to start a magazine for Christian teens, but it seemed impossible. Finally one day I read Psalm 37:5, "Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass." So I prayed about it and said I was committing this idea to God. Even though it was a long time between my idea and the result, Lighted Lamp, during that time I learned how to put a magazine together and that it was possible to distribute a magazine online rather than by mail. When we have plans that we think are in line with God's will and they still aren't happening, we shouldn't complain, but have faith that whatever God's will is, it will be done.

This thanksgiving, I'm thankful for Lighted Lamp Magazine, for all of you, and for a God who keeps all His promises and who loves us!

God bless,

Priscilla

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Photography by Rebekah M.

“The primary qualification for a missionary is not love for souls, as we so often hear, but a love for Christ.”
— Vance Havner

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.

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

-Matthew 5:16

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A Way Of Life

by RuthAnne Irvin

It's almost that time of year again. Pilgrims come out to play on our dining room tables and fall smells fill the air. As leaves change colors and pumpkins make their appearance, families gather together to celebrate life and God's goodness. Thanksgiving visits us once a year and generally we tend to be more thankful around this holiday. You will see pumpkins with thankfulness carved into them and pilgrims and cornucopias galore. We celebrate thanksgiving as a reminder of all we've been given as Americans and as Christians. What if thanksgiving was a way of life for our hearts instead of just one food and football filled day a year? I believe that it should characterize our lives and throughout scripture I've found a few reasons why.

Thankfulness should invade every season of our lives. As we go through droughts and times of pruning and sunshine with plentiful harvest,

we should have a thankful heart. During the times of sunshine and harvest we are swift to praise God for his blessings but when drought or pruning comes we question his goodness and become despondent. When this happens, our hearts have lost sight of what it means to be thankful. Thankfulness should be a characteristic that our heart knows well and should be a virtue we strive toward. In the Bible, Job had everything stripped away from him that we could imagine. His wife turned against him and his friends weren't much help either. Job could have easily fallen on his face and pitied himself for all he had lost. Instead, Job chose to bless the Lord (Job 1:21). Job was confident in the Lord and his plan and he chose to praise the Lord for his goodness instead of wallowing in self pity.

Our lives should be characterized by thankfulness because we trust in God's provision. God

is good and will take care of his children. Our job is to decide if we're going to praise him and learn what he's trying to teach us or wallow in the mire of self pity.

Thankfulness should also characterize our lives because it makes us stand out. In a society where greed and discontentment run rampant, thankfulness is counter-cultural and creates a curiosity in others around us. When our hearts are focused on the good in life and how God has worked for our benefit through mountains and valleys, people notice. Paul challenged the Philippian church to do all things without grumbling or complaining so that 'in a crooked and twisted generation they shine as lights in the world' (Philippians 2:15). We have an opportunity to shine as a light in a dark world and thankfulness is a great place to begin.

Thankfulness should be our natural response to God's graciousness in giving us salvation through Christ. It is not natural, though, because of the fall in Genesis. Thankfulness may not be our natural response but we can, and should train our hearts to praise God more than we grumble. It's easy to become focused on our wants or struggles and forget God's faithfulness in the past. A good way to cultivate a thankful heart is to remember. Remember how God chose you before the world began and how he worked in your life to bring about salvation. Remember how he's worked to clean the depths of your heart through Jesus' blood and how he is preparing a place for us in heaven. We need to get used to being thankful because it will be the center of our lives in heaven. We will worship and praise Jesus forever (Revelation 4:11). Thankfulness should characterize our hearts and lives because praising our Creator is what we were made to do.

Is having a heart characterized by thanksgiving easy? By no means! It is a continual work in progress that requires the help, encouragement and accountability of others and includes many days where we fall before God's throne and admit that we are helpless on our own and need his grace and guidance. In his amazing grace, God has given us the best helper of all in our walk to become more thankful: the Holy Spirit. We have to keep in mind that it is not in our own power that change happens but with the help of the ultimate Helper who is Christ himself. That is where the true change and aid starts. God promises that he will finish what he begins in us (Phil. 1:6) and this includes the cultivation of thankfulness. So as the pilgrims come out to play and family gathers around your table and as the food you wait all year long to eat finally makes its way out of the oven, think on how you can cultivate thankfulness everyday of the year. May thankfulness grace our hearts and begin to invade our lives as we grow in Christ-likeness and may it be a way of life that changes the world around us. ☺

Movie Review: *Courageous*



by Margaret Neufeld

I went to see “Courageous” in theatres this past weekend. I had heard a lot about this new film for a long time, so I was growing impatient for its release. I had enjoyed Sherwood’s previous films, and although I wasn’t quite as impressed with “Fireproof” in some areas, “Courageous” certainly won my approval.

The story is about four police officers in Albany, Georgia who may be able to do their jobs well, but when they go home, they’re struggling to be the fathers their

children need. Javier’s family is also brought into the story. Javier is a man who is struggling to find work, but trusting in God’s providence, he gets a job building a shed for Officer Adam Mitchell (Alex Kendrick). As a result, he ends up becoming a part of their “group.” When tragedy strikes Adam’s family, he begins asking what God expects of him as a father. After a few weeks of studying, he forms a resolution, which he discusses with his partners and Javier. They eagerly join in to ceremoniously sign this resolution, a commitment to be

courageous, godly fathers, to love and serve their families, as well as their communities.

Overall, “Courageous” was an excellent film, full of action, humour, and tear jerking moments. It communicated the need in our society for fathers involved in their children’s lives. It was realistic, with the characters coming from different backgrounds that also each responded differently to their commitment. It didn’t give you the idea that if you signed a resolution, your life would be fixed and you would be a perfect father. It showed the trials as well as the triumphs. The movie touched on many different subjects, and also contained a salvation message that didn’t make you feel like they put the story on hold to preach at you.

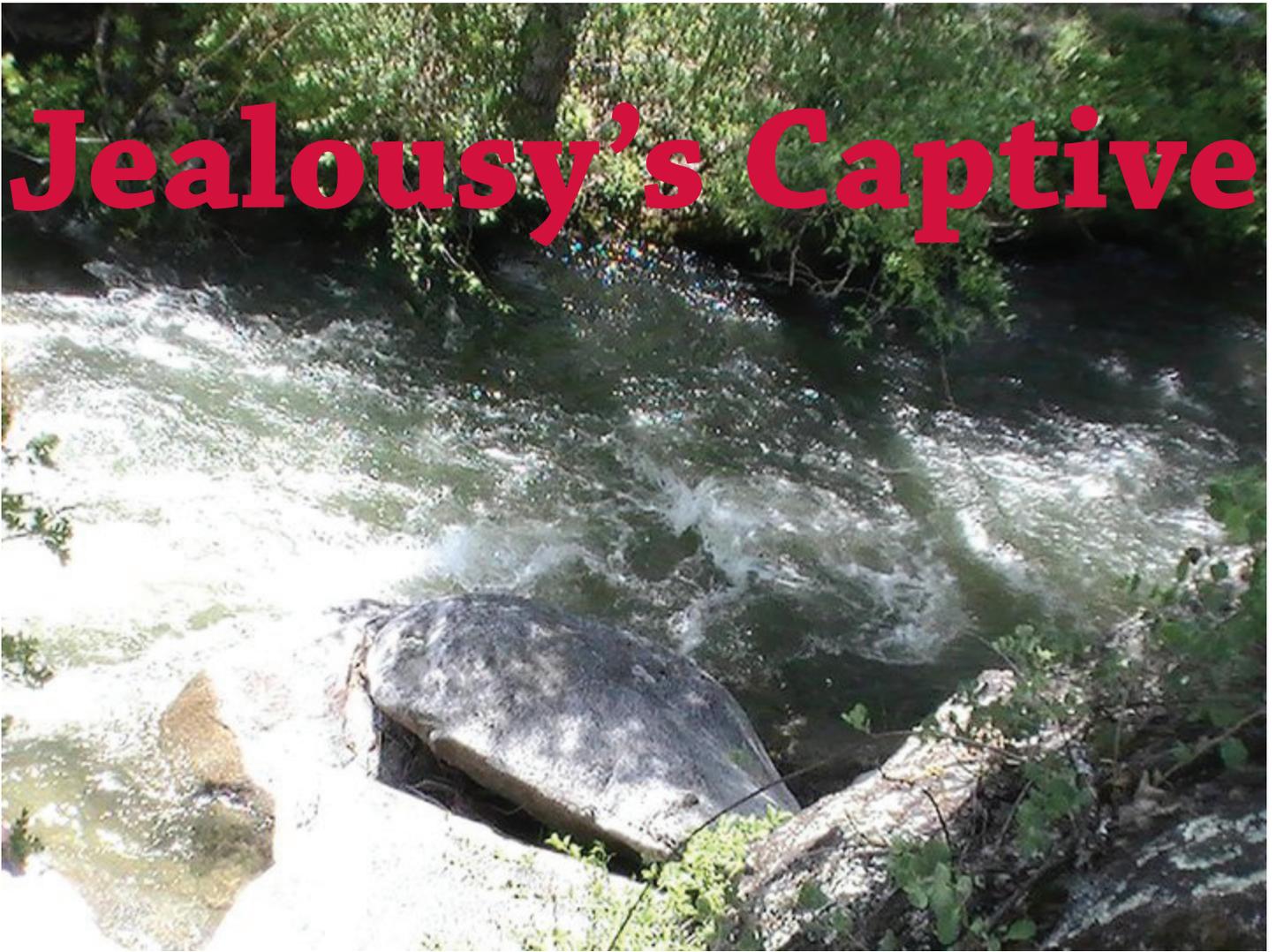
On the downside, the acting was a little weak in a few places, but definitely a great improvement. I felt that in some points, the mood changed to abruptly and they didn’t give you quite enough time to enjoy the happy moments. One of my greatest disappointments was the fact that they left the theme song all the way to the end of the credits. Casting Crowns did an excellent job on the song “Courageous” but few viewers will actually stay around until the end of the credits to hear it. I wish they would have

been able to work it in earlier.

No, this movie wasn’t directed at me, but there were many things I could learn from it. I walked away reflecting on my own life and where I needed to demonstrate more courage and honour. It left me wanting to hold out for a courageous man and be a godly young woman deserving of him. I left desiring to pray more consistently for my future husband, asking God to prepare him to be a courageous leader of our home. The fact is, we all need to be more courageous and take back the fight in some area of our lives.

“Courageous” was an excellent movie I would encourage everyone to see. It makes a good family film, although some of the action and content may be too intense for younger children. Either way, it was a movie I believe we can all benefit from in some way and would definitely recommend. ☺

Jealousy's Captive



by *Bridget Maxwell*

Jasper set down his suitcase at the top of the stairs and looked around the familiar living room. It was a comfortable place with bookshelves framing the large TV, lamp stands in every corner, and a long, blue couch in the center of the room.

His father and brother reached the doorway downstairs with their bags. Jasper clenched his teeth as his father, Arthur Dalton congratulated his older brother. “You’ve done an excellent job, Derron,” Mr. Dalton was saying, “Graduating from college with a GPA of 4.0 and with honors. I am certainly impressed.”

“I graduated with honors too,” Jasper

Photography by Haley

put in, looking up suddenly.

“Yes, and I’m proud of you as well,” his father acknowledged with a nod toward him, “But your GPA was only 3.5.”

Jasper lowered his head, allowing his black hair to fall across his oval glasses. Ever since kindergarten, Derron had always beaten him at everything. He had gotten better grades on every report card, higher scores on every game, and greater success in every undertaking. But worst of all, Derron had gained more of Mr. Dalton’s approval than Jasper ever had. At first, Jasper had contributed this discrepancy in skill to the fact that Derron was a year older than him. However, as both brothers grew older

and the difference of a single year became less significant, Jasper's cause for frustration was confirmed. The younger brother even skipped a grade of school to keep up with Derron, but he still felt he was unable to outdo him in anything.

"Jasper! You're home!" cried a voice behind him, and he turned to see his sister running down the hall to meet him.

"Hi, Kylie!" he greeted her, then asked, "Uh...why is your hair light pink?"

The sixteen-year-old girl stopped in front of him and grinned. "I dyed it for an anime convention. Can you guess who I'm cosplaying?"

"You're pretending to be Bulma from Dragonball Z, right?" Jasper guessed, referring to the only female anime character whose name and anime he could remember.

"No, baka!" Kylie made a teasing face at him that he had seen in a few of her animes, "Bulma's hair is usually blue. I'm Miyuki from Lucky Star!" She chuckled and pushed her circular, half-rimmed glasses up her nose so they caught the light. "I'm a meganekko."

"Er, right. I can't keep all your anime stuff straight anymore. So what's with the uniform? Is it another part of your costume?"

"No, it's my new school uniform," Kylie replied, looking down at her green-collared white shirt, red tie, and knee-length, green skirt, "Mom and Dad transferred me to a private Christian school. I've liked it a lot so far. I feel less shy there. Anyway," she grinned again, "this uniform makes me look like Mutsumi from Kobato, doesn't it?"

"Yep, I...guess it does," Jasper returned, not having a clue what she was talking about, but smiling anyway. It had been so long since he left for the final semester of college that he had forgotten all his sister's little anime obsessions. She had probably picked up a lot more while

he was gone, but she would expect him to know them anyway.

"Well, Mom already has dinner on the table—you're a little later than we expected. Come on, let's go!" She ran back down the hall calling out the news of her brothers' arrival to Mrs. Dalton.

Derron and Mr. Dalton reached the top of the stairs right after she disappeared around the corner, setting down their luggage beside the couch. The three walked down the hallway to the dining room where Mrs. Dalton and Kylie were already sitting at the table. Mr. Dalton greeted his wife with a kiss, and then he sat down at the head of the table. Jasper and Derron sat beside each other, opposite Kylie.

The family said a short prayer over their lasagna and cranberry sauce, then passed the dishes around, piling food onto their plates. Once that was done, Mr. Dalton spoke. "Now that you've both graduated, I have one more test to decide who will be the next owner of my company." He immediately had both his sons' attentions, and Jasper even unconsciously set down his fork.

When both brothers were in their sophomore year in high school, Mr. Dalton, who was the owner of an accounting company, had announced to them that he would give his company to whichever brother proved more worthy of it. He made it very clear that only one brother could be the primary owner of the company, and he had good reason for this decision. Mr. Dalton started his business as a partnership, but while it was still small, he had a major fight with his partner. After a while, the partner withdrew, leaving Mr. Dalton as the sole proprietor of the company. For a long time, Mr. Dalton struggled to keep the business alive, almost going broke because he had to take all the necessary funds from his own budget. This had happened re-

cently after Jasper was born, so it was an even greater struggle for Mr. Dalton to support his family as well. Finally, he managed to revive the company, and as soon as he was able, he made it into a Limited Liability Company with one owner. To prevent another failed partnership like the one he had experienced, he set forward in the operating agreement that the company would always have one primary owner.

Mr. Dalton smiled and continued, “I have decided that the best way to determine who is most worthy of my company is to have you both hired. I will set an impartial supervisor over you, so whichever one of you reaches his rank first will become the next owner. Will you do this?”

“Yes!” Jasper burst out, a little more ardently than he had intended. If I could just get that company, he thought, then I could finally prove myself. At last I would be able to surpass Derron.

Derron laughed at his enthusiasm, but he agreed as well.

“Good,” Mr. Dalton rejoined in approval, “I will hire you tomorrow.”

“Cool!” Kylie exclaimed, “Hey, Jasper, you’re kind of like Kyoya from Ouran High-school Host Club!”

For the rest of that month, Jasper and Derron worked every weekday at their father’s company. Mr. Dalton explained that their supervisor knew nothing of the test. In fact, he did not even know that they were brothers or sons of the owner. It was the only way they could be certain of his impartiality. In addition, Mr. Dalton invited both Jasper and Derron to stay at home with their family until either one or the other of them gained ownership of the company. No matter who became the next owner, they would both have steady jobs by then with which they could launch themselves out into the

world. In addition, it would provide for a better test because Mr. Dalton could keep a closer eye on his two sons.

Though Jasper was initially only set to the simple task of filing papers and running errands, he worked it with all his might. He didn’t enjoy the job, but he was determined to do it better than Derron. Accordingly, he acted cheerful, though he only felt tense and competitive. He came home each night, exhausted and bored of his work, but again, he didn’t show it. I have to do this perfectly. It’s my last chance, he told himself over and over again, motivating himself with the words.

Derron acted just as cheerful, but Jasper could tell, with some annoyance, that his enthusiasm was genuine. He was calm and laid-back, really seeming to enjoy even the most boring of tasks. Jasper couldn’t understand how Derron could be so interested in paperwork and filing. Admittedly, however, he envied his older brother’s enjoyment just as much as he envied everything else about him.

It would be so much easier for me if I enjoyed the work as much as Derron, Jasper thought, But I must be outdoing him this time! He’s having too much fun—he’s just not taking it seriously enough.

But despite Jasper’s struggles and hopes, by the end of the month, Derron got a promotion. Over dinner, he excitedly told his family of it. All Jasper could do was stare silently at his food until Kylie hopefully queried, “Did you get a promotion too, Jasper?”

“No!” Jasper snapped, “No, I didn’t!” He stopped suddenly, realizing that everyone had fallen silent, staring at him.

“Hey, don’t worry about it—” Derron began.

“I’m sorry,” Jasper interrupted in a low voice. Standing, he turned and strode from the

room.

Jasper stayed in his bedroom until everyone was asleep, hoping with all his might that no one would come in and try to talk to him. He hadn't meant to release such an outburst, and though it had been short, he feared it would make his family suspect his true feelings. Nearly all his life, he had hidden his jealousy and frustration. He wasn't certain why. Perhaps he was ashamed of it. No—not ashamed, it wasn't wrong. He was merely afraid of what they would think—that they might misunderstand.

After a while, his mind turned back to the cause of his outburst: Derron's promotion. How could it have happened that way? he thought angrily, I've been working so hard. I've put everything I have into that job. Surely I was putting more effort into it than Derron! But then, I've always put more effort into it, haven't I? And he's always beaten me anyway.

Restlessly, he stood up and moved over to the door, opening it a crack and peeking out. It was 11:00, and the halls were dark and empty. Everyone was in bed. Silently, Jasper opened the door all the way and stepped out, closing it carefully behind him. He paced down the hallway to the front door and stepped outside into the cool night air. This neighborhood was peaceful at night, mostly inhabited by elderly people who didn't stay up past 9:00.

An idea came into Jasper's head, and he immediately followed it, stepping down the stairs of the patio and briskly following the sidewalk until he came to the old chapel at the end of the street. Jasper's family didn't own a piano, but there was one in this chapel. Before he had gone to college, he had come out nearly every night to play it. There was a piano in college, but during his two years there, he had steadily become too busy, too focused on surpassing

Derron. He had forsaken his piano playing completely.

But now he wanted to do nothing else. Opening the door of the chapel, he hurried down the aisle to the wooden, upright piano against the wall. He sat on the bench, wondering if he could remember any of the pieces he had become so fluent in before he went to college. The old pastor of this chapel had taught him to play and given him sheet music, but Jasper had not played in front of anyone but him. The pastor had praised his talent, calling him a virtuoso, but he didn't think his family knew that he could play piano at all.

I'll just play whatever piece comes to me first, he decided, placing his fingers on the keys. Thinking again of Derron's promotion, he began to play a rapid piece by Chopin, pouring out all his frustration into it. He hardly noticed how well he was playing. For now, it was just him and the music that filled the chapel. After a while, he even forgot his own frustration, slipping into a more peaceful melody by the same composer, calming himself with the sound.

At last, he began to feel like he should be getting home, so he finished the last song he had moved to and left the chapel. When he arrived home, he saw that it was already 1:30 in the morning. "I guess I'm going to regret this tomorrow," he groaned.

As the days went on, Jasper continued to work with all his strength, pushing himself harder and harder each day. Finally, he got his first promotion, but that was only after Derron had gotten his second. By the end of the summer, they were both low-ranking accountants, but Derron was still ahead of Jasper.

Jasper continued to go to the chapel at night to play the piano, most often when he was feeling especially frustrated and needed to calm himself. Yet sometimes he was too tired by the

end of the day, and he knew that when he went to the chapel, he would often stay up far later than he intended.

It seemed that Jasper's family had forgotten his outburst at dinner, or else they had just decided it wasn't a real problem. He was glad for that. Perhaps they had simply thought he was having a bad day.

But Jasper's envy of his brother grew more each day, much faster than it had in the past, because he was convinced that this was his last chance to prove himself. Finally, he found he could hide it no longer.

One day in October, Derron told his family that he had received another promotion, and Mr. Dalton seemed so happy at the news that it made Jasper's heart ache. Derron needed only one more to reach the rank of his supervisor, and then he would be the next owner of Mr. Dalton's company. Jasper, on the other hand, had fallen behind so far that he was three ranks below Derron. Things looked hopeless to him. He had been trying as hard as he could, and it seemed impossible that he could gain four ranks before Derron could gain just one more.

The family finished their meal and did the dishes, then Kylie ran off to the living room to watch an episode of anime before bed, Mr. Dalton went to finish some paperwork, and Mrs. Dalton bustled off to move a load of laundry to the dryer. Derron turned and went to his room.

For a while, Jasper stood silently in the middle of the kitchen, then, on impulse, he strode up to Derron's door and knocked.

"Hi Jasper," Derron said, standing up from his desk where he had been reading a book on economics. He smiled welcomingly. "What did you want to talk about?"

"Don't you know?" Jasper returned, his voice a trifle sharper than he had intended.

"No..." Derron started to say, but then he stopped and guessed, "Is this about our jobs? I hope you're not feeling discouraged. You're really good at your work, you know."

"But not as good as you, huh?" Jasper retorted.

"Well, I wouldn't say that," Derron rejoined uneasily, slightly put off at Jasper's tone.

"You're the one who keeps getting promotions, right? Why don't you just say what you've been thinking this whole time? You know you're better than me!" Jasper ranted, feeling himself lose control. He hadn't meant to go this far.

"Hey, I haven't been thinking that at all. I didn't know you felt that way," Derron stammered. He looked shocked at the news, but it didn't make Jasper feel sorry for him, it only made him angrier. They were both silent for a moment, then Derron made another attempt to amend the trouble, "Listen, it's not like I've been trying to beat you. I just enjoy accounting. I know that's sort of unusual, since most people find it boring, but that's the only reason I want the company. I'm not doing it to put you down or anything."

Again, Derron's words only fueled Jasper's rage. "Am I really that hopeless?" he exclaimed, "I can't believe you're not even trying to surpass me! I can't even beat you when you're not being competitive!"

"That's not what I meant—" Derron started to say.

Not giving his older brother a chance to finish, Jasper turned and stalked out into the living room. Kylie was still watching her anime, so he sat down on the couch and stared at the screen for a while. There were two old men with long hair, long beards, and long Japanese robes standing on the top of a hill and talking to each other. One of them was holding an em-

broidered, blood-soaked handkerchief to his shoulder and telling the other how he had tried to surpass him all his life but had never been able to do so. Then the uninjured old man suddenly turned into a glowing young man, and Jasper completely lost track of what was going on.

“That old guy with the wound on his shoulder is sort of like me,” Jasper remarked. “I’ve always wanted to outdo Derron somehow, but every time, he’s surpassed me.”

Abruptly, Kylie paused the video and turned to Jasper, an unusually serious expression in her eyes. “Jasper, you are not like Enjun Sa,” she told him solemnly, “Enjun Sa was so jealous of Advisor Sho that he ended up kidnapping Shurei, knocking out Seiran, and almost killing Ryuki.”

“Er...how in the world did that happen?” Jasper queried, not seeing how just wanting to surpass someone could cause a person to do all those things.

Kylie launched into a long, complicated explanation of Enjun’s motives, leaving Jasper even more confused than before.

“Forget it,” he sighed. Standing up again, he went to his room and closed the door.

Jasper woke up the next morning, more determined than ever to surpass Derron. I still have a chance, he told himself, I can still work harder, more efficiently, more successfully.

He went out to the kitchen and found that Derron was still there, finishing a bowl of Honey-nut Cheerios. He glanced up when Jasper arrived, but immediately looked down again, an uncomfortable expression on his face.

“Hey, about last night,” he began, “You didn’t really mean all that, did you? It was just a spur of the moment thing, right?”

This time, Jasper restrained himself. “Sure,” he lied, “Yeah, it was.” He sat down

at the table and poured himself a bowl of the same cereal.

Over the next month, Jasper continued in his determination, but he quickly grew discouraged. He felt as though he was trying harder every day, efficiently balancing budgets and filling out tax forms, even finding time to take his supervisor a cup of coffee every morning. Despite all this, he still had the sense that Derron was gaining even more approval. What more can I do? Jasper thought, What will it take for me to do better than Derron?

After a few days, Jasper began going out to the piano every night in a desperate attempt to relieve his stress and frustration. Yet as the fear of Derron’s final, decisive promotion grew, Jasper’s tension became so high that even the piano offered little remedy. In addition, playing the piano every night caused Jasper to stay up late far too often, and it was all he could do to

Picture from Clkr.com.



keep from showing his exhaustion.

As Christmas approached, Derron and Jasper both received a week off to celebrate the holidays. Jasper hoped to spend the time as restfully as possible so he could start work on the New Year with renewed energy.

He and Derron walked home together, but Derron was unusually silent. Jasper liked how he didn't have to muster the energy to converse with him, but he did find it strange. Derron was usually the sort to talk amiably all the way home.

The two brothers entered their house, took off their heavy coats and boots, and climbed the staircase which was just inside the door. Jasper was about to depart to his room when Derron broke the silence.

"Hey, Jasper..."

Jasper turned back to face him. "Yeah? What is it?"

"I'm sorry for not telling you this earlier," Derron began apologetically, "But, just before we left work...I got that last promotion."

"You what?" Jasper exclaimed, despair setting in as he realized what his brother was saying. All his hopes and struggles, all his life, had been for nothing.

"I'm sorry," Derron repeated, "I know you wanted that company too."

Jasper took a step toward him, clenching his fists. "You don't know what I wanted!" he yelled, "You've never understood how much this means to me! Never! You just ruined my life!"

Derron frowned. "Hey, it's not like you lost your job," he returned, "You reached a really high rank, too."

"But I didn't surpass you, did I? Not once!" Jasper retorted.

Derron's eyes widened. "Is that what this is about?" he gasped. "Listen, Jasper, it's not all

that important." As he was talking, Kylie came in, just back from school, but neither brother noticed her.

"Not all that important?" Jasper shouted, "All my life I've lived in your shadow, and now I'll never be able to live any other way! That was my last chance! You ruined it!" Blinded by fury, he impulsively took another step forward and shoved Derron roughly.

The older brother stumbled back. At that moment, Kylie reached the top of the staircase. Derron crashed into her, and she toppled backwards down the stairs with a shriek, tumbling all the way down until she finally came to a halt at the bottom. She did not get up again.

Jasper's heart stopped. What had he just done? He stood there, paralyzed by horror until Derron, who had caught the railing to keep himself from falling as well, shook him by the shoulders. "Snap out of it, Jasper!" he exclaimed, still too shocked to be angry, "We have to go see if she's all right!"

Jasper nodded dumbly, and the two hurried down the stairs to their sister. Though he was terrified that Kylie's neck might be broken, Jasper gently turned her over. He bit his lip. Her right temple was covered in blood. Fearfully, he wondered if the injury was as bad as it looked. "She's not dead, is she?" he stammered.

Derron checked for a pulse, then shook his head shortly. "She's alive," he said, "But we'll have to get her to the hospital." Looking up at Jasper, he demanded, "You meant for this to happen to me, didn't you?"

"I wasn't thinking!" Jasper choked, "I didn't mean to hurt either of you!"

"You keep saying you've been jealous of me all your life. Isn't that the real cause of this?"

He's right, Jasper realized. He took Kylie's hand and held it tightly. In light of this, all his attempts to surpass Derron had begun to

seem petty and unimportant.

Just then, Mr. Dalton came in. He stopped short, staring down at the scene. “What is this?” he queried sharply, “What happened?”

“Go call the hospital,” Derron instructed Jasper before standing up and beginning to explain the situation to their father.

Jasper stumbled up the stairs, found the telephone, and quickly dialed 9-1-1. There was no doubt in his mind that Derron was telling their father everything, and a new fear rose in his chest. How will Dad react to this?

Finishing the phone call, Jasper returned to the scene of the accident. Derron had gone to get their mother, and Mr. Dalton was kneeling beside his daughter.

“The ambulance will be here soon,” Jasper faltered.

Mr. Dalton didn’t reply or even look up. He simply nodded shortly to confirm he had heard.

Jasper sat anxiously in the waiting room with his family, staring down at the floor. No one had spoken a word to him, and the longer their silence lasted, the worse he felt.

At last, a nurse came in and summoned Mr. and Mrs. Dalton to the emergency room. They quickly followed her. Glancing at Derron, who sat with his face in his hands, Jasper stood quietly and left the room, longing for a way to release his anxiety over his sister. He had stayed a few nights in this hospital when he was young, after getting surgery for appendicitis. One of those nights, he had left his room because he was bored, and he had discovered a piano in the hospital’s chapel.

Finding that the chapel was empty, he hurried up the piano and sat down at the bench. He hesitated. He wanted to play something relevant to Kylie, something to express his worry for her, but which could also soothe his

fear. Then he remembered an anime she had shown him before he went to college. It had been about season fairies, so he hadn’t been particularly interested, but the main character, a schoolgirl, had played one of the most beautiful piano songs he had ever heard. Somehow, he had managed to find the sheet music, titled “Memory of Mother”, and learned to play the song.

He began to play it now.

It was a gentle song, heartfelt and lovely with rolling chords. It calmed Jasper and seemed to paint a picture of Kylie in his mind. As the song progressed, Jasper began to think, How could she forgive me? Will my family forgive me? After what I’ve done, how could anyone forgive me?

Yet that word—forgive—struck a chord in his heart. He had grown up going to church and praying over his meals, but what he remembered most now was what the pastor who taught him piano had always said, “Jesus will forgive you no matter what you do.” Every moment that the pastor wasn’t giving Jasper piano lessons, he had talked about Jesus. Jasper hadn’t minded. He had believed in Jesus, at least intellectually, but he had been so absorbed in surpassing Derron that he had never stopped to pray on his own.

But now, as the piano song continued to flow from his fingers, he prayed, Please forgive me, Jesus. Forgive me for hurting Kylie, and let her be all right. I didn’t mean to hurt anyone, but—he realized that there was more he needed to be forgiven for—but my real problem was my jealousy. Forgive me for that too. Please forgive me for it. I’ve been carrying it around all my life.

Jasper was still playing the piano, but his mind and heart were turned fully toward Heaven. The gentle song he was playing ended, and

he subconsciously switched to a song the pastor had insisted he learn: "Be Thou My Vision". Silently, he continued to pray, and his prayer began to flow into the words of the song. At last, as the song came to a close, he prayed, Heart of my own heart, whatever befall, still be my Vision, O Ruler of all...

An exclamation of, "Jasper!" jerked him rudely from his concentration. Abruptly, he lifted his hands from the piano keys and turned around on the bench to see Derron and Mr. Dalton standing in the doorway of the hospital chapel. Derron looked thunderstruck, but Jasper couldn't tell what his father was feeling.

"Where did you learn to play the piano so well?" Derron asked in amazement.

Before Jasper could respond, Mr. Dalton cut in, saying, "Derron, go back and tell your mother that we've found Jasper. We can talk about this later."

As Derron hurried off, Jasper nervously asked, "How's Kylie?"

"The doctor says she's going to be all right," Mr. Dalton replied, "But it was a close call. They're allowing visitors now."

Jasper immediately stood up and headed for the door, anxious to see his sister, but Mr. Dalton stopped him.

"Jasper," he said, "I will give you enough time to find a new job, but after that, you're fired."

Jasper's breath caught in his throat. He hadn't enjoyed his job, but the fact of the matter was he hadn't been trained to do anything else. Whatever job he changed to certainly wouldn't be a good one. But it's what I deserve, isn't it? he realized.

"I-I'm sorry," was all he could say.

"Tell me," Mr. Dalton continued, "Are you still jealous of your brother?"

"No," Jasper replied truthfully, and de-

spite the circumstances, he smiled, "No, not at all." After asking Jesus forgiveness for everything, he had lost not only his guilt but also his jealousy.

Without another word, Mr. Dalton turned and strode out the door. Jasper followed him.

When they entered the hospital room, Jasper was relieved to find Kylie sitting up in bed. Her head was bound in a bandage, and one of her wrists had a cast on it, but otherwise she appeared to be fine.

"...I don't even remember anything between falling down the stairs and waking up here," she was telling Derron and Mrs. Dalton, but the moment Jasper came through the door, she stopped, looking up solemnly.

"I'm so sorry, Kylie," he said.

"I'm sorry, too, Jasper," she said.

"For what?" Jasper stammered, taken aback.

"When you said you were like Enjun Sa, I should've taken you more seriously," Kylie replied. "I didn't realize you were that jealous of Derron. Maybe if I had understood then, I could've said something to stop you."

"It's not your fault," Jasper told her, "Everything's my fault, and now you're the one who was hurt for it."

Kylie's expression brightened unexpectedly. "You know what, Jasper?" she began, "I think you're actually a lot more like Erenfried from Neo Angelique Abyss because you're about his age and you have glasses too. And that would make me Angelique!" She looked very pleased at the prospect.

Jasper laughed shakily. She was incorrigible.

Derron turned to Jasper. "Dad told me about firing you. Do you know what you intend to do?"

“I don’t know,” Jasper sighed, sinking down into a chair. “I don’t have any talents, and I haven’t worked at anything besides accounting.”

Derron sat down as well. “That’s nonsense,” he asserted, “God gives everyone talents. Remember? I told you that everyone has something they’re best at. You’re no exception. Isn’t there something you enjoy doing?”

Jasper gasped. “What do you mean, ‘something I enjoy?’”

“Your talent is usually what you enjoy the most.”

“I can play the piano,” Jasper said suddenly, lifting his head.

“That’s what I was hoping you’d say. When I heard you playing just now, I knew that must be your talent.”

Jasper’s heart leapt. My talent, he thought, So I do have a talent after all. Then he stopped, looking back at the floor. “But I won’t get very far with that, will I?” he sighed, “I can’t turn it into a career.”

“How come you never told us you could play the piano?” Kylie exclaimed, looking excited again, “You can’t say you can’t turn it into a career! You could be a pianist like Tsuchiura from *La Corda D’oro*, or you could be a piano teacher like Shirakawa from *Piano: The Melody of a Young Girl’s Heart!*”

“Do you have an anime character for everything?” Jasper asked incredulously, but as she grinned and happily replied that she did, he began to think about what she had said. “I could be a pianist, huh?” he murmured and found he was smiling at the prospect. To him, playing the piano had just been a way to relieve his anxiety over his job, but the thought of actually making it his job was simply wonderful.

“Do you love playing the piano?” Kylie pressed.

Jasper nodded. “Yes,” he realized, “Yes, I do.”

“I can’t play the piano,” Derron informed him, “I’ve never been able to play an instrument in my life.” Jasper hardly noticed that this gave him something he could do better than his older brother; he didn’t care about that anymore.

Mr. Dalton stepped forward and placed a hand on Jasper’s shoulder. “Since no one was seriously injured, and everyone seems to have forgiven you, I won’t take this to court,” he said, “Derron tells me that you hadn’t intended to harm him, and if you are no longer jealous of him, I can be assured that this will not happen again. Jasper, look at me.”

Jasper looked up at his father, and for the first time since Kylie’s injury, Mr. Dalton smiled at him.

“I want you to know that I didn’t fire you as a punishment,” he continued, “When I saw you playing the piano, I finally understood that you’ve been pursuing the wrong career all this time, and I feel responsible for putting you into competition with your brother. I only wanted to see you reach your highest potential.”

Jasper’s eyes widened in amazement, and he managed to say, “You mean you haven’t been more concerned for Derron’s success than for mine?”

Mr. Dalton’s face grew solemn. “I had never intended to give that impression,” he replied, “I’m sorry. I did not mean to show favoritism. But now, I will pay for you to go back to college and get a degree in music. You have my full approval and support to pursue a career as a pianist.”

Jasper smiled gratefully, feeling as though all the weight he had carried his whole life had just been lifted from his shoulders. Everything was resolved. He was freed from his jealousy. ☺

Not A God

by Cassandra

photography by Isaac Swanson

A man challenged God.
He swept in his chariot to the edge of the sea
Behind him a host—shentied, sun bronzed and free:
The Pharoah and the army of Egypt.

The man gazed ahead.
Minute in the distance was a great multitude
Rushing between walls of towering blue:
The Israelites, walking the sea bed.

Deep blue was the sky, sun blindingly white
Glittering on spear points, harsh on his sight.
As he watched Israel flee, sun hot on his cheek,
What did he think, this Pharoah of Egypt?

Did he remember a land shaken by plagues?
A thick, red Nile? A lad, dying and vague?
How somehow an unknown power disrobed
Him of his god-ship before of the world?

The man clenched his jaw.
Above the hard eyes gleamed the crown of the god-kings
Behind him was Egypt. Before, slave and their offspring.
He signalled. The army advanced.

A man defied God.
He plunged in his chariot down a path through the sea
And the One who had etched it let the waters go free.
The god-king is dead. The slaves live.



Wisdom Unlocked

Proverbs 8:32 (NKJV) says, “Now therefore, listen to me, my children, for blessed are those who keep my ways.”

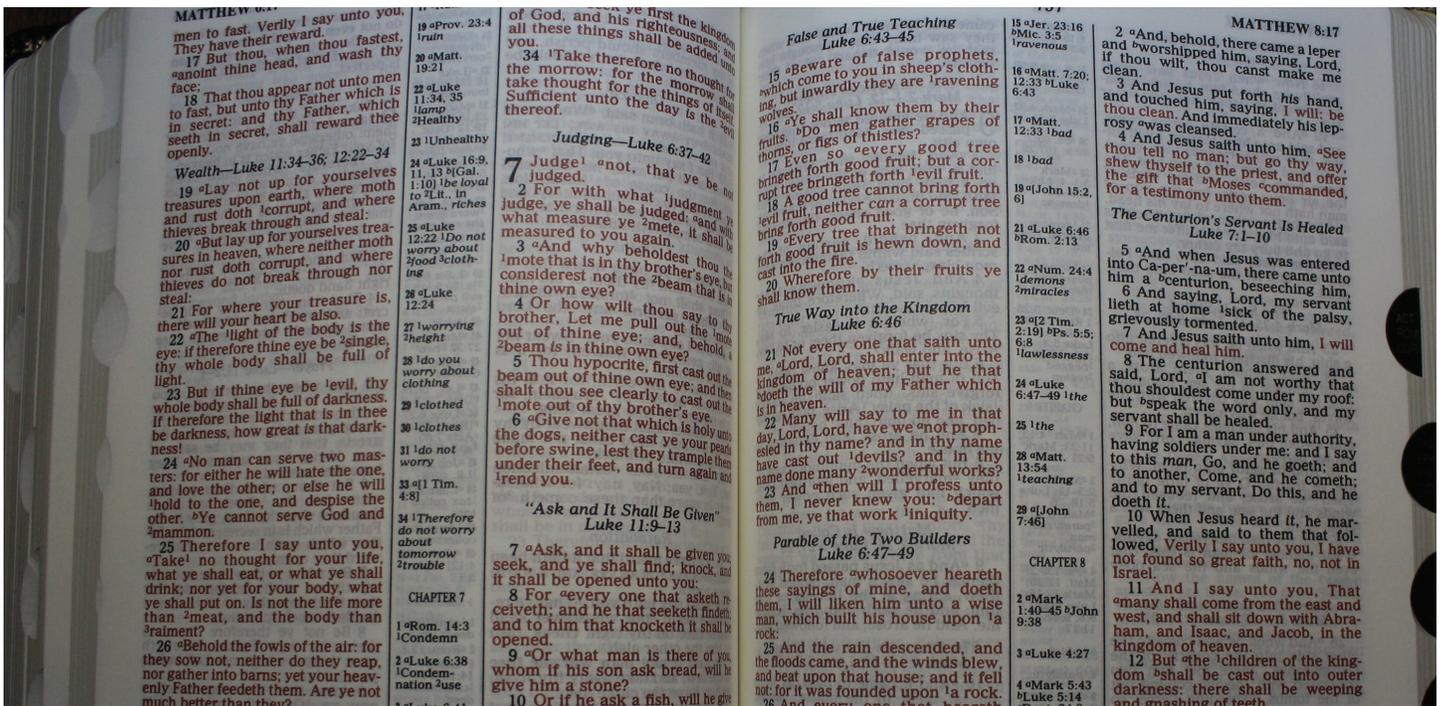
Two things are needed for wisdom. The first is knowing what is wise. This is what Mary, the sister of Martha, did when she listened to Jesus instead of getting caught up in daily living. She set listening to Jesus as her main priority and set aside the other things in life to be near Him and hear His words of wisdom. Proverbs 8:24 says, “Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.” The time we spend reading the Bible is crucial to gaining wisdom. Just like we can’t learn in school without a teacher, neither can we learn wisdom without one.

The second is doing what is wise. Solomon is an example of a man who knew what was wise, moreso than anyone who’s ever lived, but he didn’t do what was wise. He knew God’s commands, yet he married foreign women who turned his heart away from God. He knew that he should only worship God, but he ended up turning his heart away to other gods. James 1:22 tells us that we are to be doers of the law,

and not hearers only.

Think about it this way. If one of your teachers tells you that class participation will help you get a good grade, in order to get that good grade, you have to listen and you have to participate in class. If you neglect either one, you won’t get the good grade. As Christians, God has made many blessings available to us, but they are often contingent on us. To receive His salvation, we had to hear about it and choose to give our lives to Jesus. To receive His peace, we have to know that He is willing to carry our burdens and we have to choose to tell our worries to Him and let Him deal with them.

Proverbs 8:25 shares a warning. “But he who sins against me wrongs his own soul; all those who hate me love death.” The consequences of not following God’s wisdom can be devastating to our lives. Knowing wisdom didn’t help Solomon when he chose to disregard it. God’s commands were given to bless us and give us the best life possible, and when we both know and obey them, we will experience His blessings. ☺



9 Strategies for Studying the Bible

by Priscilla Carsten

Have you ever wished that your devotions were more interesting or had a greater impact on your life? I know it has happened to me, so I decided to share some of the ways I have learned the most from my Bible reading and gotten closer to God.

1. Do a word study. If you're interested in learning more about a particular topic, like joy, try looking up all the verses that contain that word. A quick way to do that is to use the Blue Letter Bible website, at www.blueletterbible.org. All you have to do is type in a word, and the site will bring up all the verses in the Bible that contain that word. You can even choose which version you would like to use.

It also helps to look up related words. When doing a search on thankfulness, I found many applicable results that included the words thanksgiving, thanks, and thank. Once I even gained insight from the difference between similar words. I discovered that the word envious was used to refer to wanting what someone else had, but jealous was used either in the context of marriage or in the context of man's relationship with God.

2. Look up the cross-references. At the end of each verse, most Bibles list references, in small print, of related verses. Sometimes when I'm reading through a chapter I look up all those references and circle the ones that I find especially interesting. For instance, when reading through Ruth, I discovered that Deuteronomy

25:5-10 tells about the tradition of redeeming the inheritance of a man who died. Knowing that helped me to understand the culture Ruth lived in and to know why the close relative handed his sandal to Boaz.

3. Pay attention to prophecies and fulfillments. Especially in the Gospels, there are a lot of fulfilled prophecies, and it can be an interesting study to look up the places where the prophecies about Jesus were made and learn about the context they were made in. For example, in Matthew when Jesus asked God why He had forsaken Him, He said the same thing David had asked in Psalm 22:1.

4. Read books of the Bible that are written about the same events at the same time. For example, when I read through Ezra, I noticed that chapter 5 verse 1 mentioned the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, so I read those books also, and realized that they were written about the same time in Israel's history. Reading them helped me better understand the context of the events in Ezra.

5. Use a Bible Dictionary. If you don't own one, try the one at www.biblegateway.com/resources/dictionaries/. Bible dictionaries are a great way to get an overview of a person, a group of people, or a place. When reading about the Amalekites in 1 Samuel, a Bible dictionary can be a great way to get a condensed overview of who they were and what else is recorded about them in other parts of the Bible.

6. Look for a common theme. I have found this strategy particularly helpful when reading through the whole Bible, or a whole book of the Bible. When I'm reading a lot of text about a lot of different topics, I pay attention to a particu-

lar theme, like God's goodness. Then as I read about a variety of events, they all relate to each other, and work together to show me something new about God. I can see God's goodness in any Bible events from the rescue of Noah and his family from the flood to the transformation He accomplished in the life of Paul.

7. Make a list. The book of Proverbs is a huge collection of wisdom, but one time I read through it, I decided I wanted to look for wisdom about what kinds of things I should say. Every time I came across a verse that related, I wrote it down and summarized what it said. At the end I had a helpful overview of what my speech should be like, whereas if I had simply read through the book I would have forgotten some of the verses and lost the focus of my study.

8. Use the Bible as a pattern. I have often done this with prayers in the Bible. If I find a prayer that relates to what is going on in my life, or a situation that bothers me, I just borrow the prayer and pray it, changing some of the words to make it fit the situation that I'm in, but keeping the general pattern of what's written.

9. Record what God is doing in your life. When you come across a verse or passage that helps you through a problem you encounter, write it down in the margin or in a notebook. In the future you can look back and remember God's faithfulness to you, and it can also make a helpful verse stand out if you are experiencing a similar trial later. This also works when you pray about something, or claim a promise. ☺

Prayer Page



November is a great time to put our blessings at the top of our prayer lists. Everything we have is from God: our lives, our health, food, clothing, and safety. He has blessed us by giving us family and friends, and with spiritual blessings like salvation, forgiveness, hope, and a personal relationship with Him. There's an old song that says, "When I'm worried and I can't sleep, I count my blessings instead of sheep." What a wonderful way to end the day, by thinking of all the ways God has demonstrated His love and care for us.

Psalm 107:21-22 (NKJV)

Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works

with rejoicing.

Psalm 100 (KJV)

A Psalm of praise.

Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands. Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and this truth endureth to all generations. 

Am I Daily Thankful?

by Alice

photography by Katie Prescott

Captured Photography

Am I daily thankful
for what Christ did for me?
Do I really care a lot
that He so cares for me?

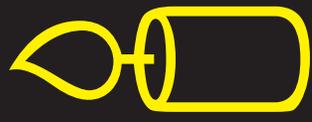
I wonder if I get so caught
up in my daily life
That Jesus gets forgotten
in the rush and in the strife.

My Jesus, He so loves me
that I could never find
Another, oh so loving
of my heart and soul and mind.

He cares if I am happy
or if I'm rather sad.
I know that I can trust Him
'cause He's my heavenly Dad.

So when the tough times happen
and I feel turned around,
I know that I can turn to Him
and comfort will be found.

For this I'm really thankful
and I want Him to know
I want to spend more time with Him.
I need to tell Him so.



LL Magazine

Matthew 5:16