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1. Too Late for Me, a Sinner?

Some people believe it is too late for them to be saved and/or they can't be saved because they are a sinner. I don't believe that to be true for anyone.

Let's look at scripture referring the criminals crucified with Jesus (**Scripture 1 – Criminals Crucified with Jesus**):

One of the criminals being crucified alongside Jesus hurled insults at Jesus. The other criminal alongside Jesus repented and admitted he deserved to be crucified, but Jesus didn't and he asked Jesus to remember him. Jesus told that criminal he will be in paradise.

The second criminal repented just before he died, and he was saved. This criminal must have done something really sinful in his life since he was judged to be crucified. He admitted that he deserved to be crucified. There wasn't an opportunity for him to turn his life around and make things right first. He simply repented to Jesus and was saved.

So, you don't have to change your life first and stop sinning. You can come to Jesus as you are. If there is a sin that has a strong hold on you, Jesus will help you get past it. We are all sinners. No one deserves to be saved. Just because there is a sin you can't beat, don't let that stop you from repenting to Jesus. Jesus wants to go through the process of healing with you and help you.

Look at the Apostle Paul. Before he was saved, he was a Pharisee. His main goal in life was to take Christians to prison where they would most likely be executed (**Scripture 2 - Paul's Mission for Christians**). Yet Jesus forgave him and used him greatly for the kingdom of God.

It may seem unfair that a very bad person (like a serial murderer or rapist) can repent at the end of his/her life and still get to heaven; yet a good person who never repented to Jesus does not. But let's remember God knows everything. We don't know what's going on in anyone's heart and we don't know what happens in someone's heart just before the moment of death. So let God be God and don't question Him.

I have a family member (my Dad) who lived a long life (over 90 years) thinking that people who went to church were all hypocrites. He also would say "it's too late for me, I'm a sinner". It was in his last years of life when he actually agreed to occasionally attend service at my church. He eventually told me he had been wrong; not all church people are hypocrites. He really liked my pastor and his sermons, and learned a lot in just those few times he attended to my church service. Just a few days before he died, my pastor visited him in the hospital and my pastor told me that my Dad genuinely repented to Jesus.

As long as we have breath, it is not too late. Don't let a stronghold stop you from being saved. Let Jesus help you. Don't put off the best decision you will ever make because of a childhood belief or a stronghold sin. Reach out to Jesus as you are. Don't wait!

Scripture 1. Criminals Crucified with Jesus

Luke 23:39-43 One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at Him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" but the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

Scripture 2. Paul's Mission for Christians

Acts 9:1-2 Meanwhile, Saul (later called Paul) was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.

2. Why Did They Crucify Jesus?

If Jesus didn't do anything illegal or immoral, why did they crucify him?

To better understand, Let's put ourselves in the place of a Pharisee.

You, the Pharisee, have studied and practiced Jewish law your entire life. (**Scripture 1 - Paul as a Pharisee**) You are well respected in the Jewish community. People admire you greatly and you are an avid spiritual leader. People look up to you for guidance. You've worked hard all your life to obey all the Jewish laws and traditions. You often pray boldly. You are the picture of godliness and righteousness, which is well earned and deserved.

You hear that there is a man named Jesus, from Nazareth, that is preaching and stirring up people. Though he is just a carpenter from a low income family, you are hearing that he is performing miracles and is attracting a lot of people. He is claiming to be the messiah. There is a significant number of people following him. So it is your duty to go and check him out. You believe he is a fake and you want to stop him.

You find him and listen to what he is teaching. He is teaching horrible things about you (Pharisees in general). He is humiliating you and he is going as far as to tell the crowd of people that you are snakes, and hypocrites, condemned to hell. (**Scripture 2 - Jesus Spoke About Pharisees**). You are so insulted. He must be stopped!

You struggle with catching this man in an unlawful act so you can arrest him. He has so many followers that hang on his every word. You are afraid that the large crowd of followers will attack you if you try to arrest him (**Scripture 3 - Pharisees Plot to Arrest Jesus**). You must find a way to catch him alone, with only his few disciples, so you can arrest him.

You finally get a break when one of Jesus' disciples agrees to turn Jesus in for money (**Scripture 4 - Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus**). You were finally able to arrest him, but now you have another problem. You must somehow convince the government officials to crucify him. Much to your delight, all of Jesus' followers and disciples scattered and denied him. You were able to round up a crowd of people that would protest to crucify Jesus. It took some time and effort, but you did succeed and Jesus was crucified.

Finally, you got rid of this thorn in your side. Jesus is dead. You thought your problems were over. But now that Jesus is dead, you have even worse problems. Jesus' followers and disciples are gathering and preaching and performing miracles in Jesus' name. Now even ordinary people suddenly have this power. And this movement is moving so fast. Thousands of people are joining this movement every day (**Scripture 5. Believers of Christ's Resurrection Grew Fast**). It is out of control. You (the Pharisees) put forth a lot of effort to stop this to no avail. It's too strong; too big; too powerful.

So the Pharisees missed it. They didn't realize that loving and serving is so much more important than following and obeying the laws. They let their pride and self-righteousness get in the way. What about you? Are you prideful? I know I struggle a bit with that and I see a lot of pridefulness in people these days.

Scripture 1. Paul as a Pharisee

Philippians 3: 3-7 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh—though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

Scripture 2. Jesus Spoke About Pharisees

Matthew 23:1-4 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: “The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.

Matthew 23:13-33 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of hell as you are.

“Woe to you, blind guides! You say, ‘If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gold of the temple is bound by that oath.’ You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred? You also say, ‘If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gift on the altar is bound by that oath.’ You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred?

Therefore, anyone who swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. And anyone who swears by the temple swears by it and by the one who dwells in it. And anyone who swears by heaven swears by God’s throne and by the one who sits on it.

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. And you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. Go ahead, then, and complete what your ancestors started!

“You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?

Luke 16:14 The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. He said to them, “You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in God’s sight.

Scripture 3. Pharisees Plot to Arrest Jesus

Matthew 12:14 But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus.

Matthew 21:45 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they know he was talking about them. They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.

Mark 3:6 Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

John 7:32 The Pharisees heard the crowd whispering such things about him. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees sent temple guards to arrest him.

John 11:57 But the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that anyone who found out where Jesus was should report it so that they might arrest him.

Scripture 4. Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus

Matthew 26:14-16 Then one of the Twelve—the one called Judas Iscariot—went to the chief priests and asked, "What are you willing to give me if I deliver him over to you?" So they counted out for him thirty pieces of silver. From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

Mark 14:10-11 Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

Luke 22:1-6 Now the Festival of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover, was approaching, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some way to get rid of Jesus, for they were afraid of the people. Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. They were delighted and agreed to give him money. He consented, and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present.

Scripture 5. Believers of Christ's Resurrection Grew Fast

Acts 4:1-4 The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. But many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand.

3. What is Stopping You?

The story of the Apostle Paul is compelling and speaks to us today.

So let's look at Paul's situation. He was raised from a child to be a pharisee. Paul describes himself as a Pharisee (**Scripture 1. Paul as a Pharisee – Philippians 3:3-7**).

Paul (aka Saul) as a Pharisee was very successful and well known. Pharisees did well financially and had all the finest things (**Scripture 2. Pharisees loved money - Luke 16:14-15**). People all over the land knew who Paul was and what he was all about. He had a mission in life to take Christians as prisoners, which would probably lead to a horrible death (**Scripture 3. Paul's Mission – Acts 9:1-2**).

Jesus spoke about Pharisees as being prideful, selfish, and condemned to hell. Though they followed all the Jewish laws and traditions, they totally lacked in service, love, and humility (**Scripture 4. Jesus Spoke of Pharisees – Matt 23:27-28 & 33**).

So Paul was not only a prideful Pharisee, but he was a Christian killer, very strong and proud in his beliefs.

But God touched Paul in a miraculous way. Jesus struck him blind (**Scripture 5. Paul blinded – Acts 9:3-12**). God knew it would take something miraculous to get Paul's attention. The Lord touches each of us the way that we need to be touched in order to believe the truth and be saved.

Paul had a lot to give up and to be afraid of. If he turned to Christ, he would gain enemies of his former fellow Pharisees and chief priests. Surely, they would want to find him and kill him. He also had significant wealth and possessions as a Pharisee which he'd have to give up. And certainly, Christians wouldn't trust him, being that they knew him as a Pharisee seeking to kill them. As a Pharisee, Paul obeyed all the Jewish laws and traditions, but following and serving Christ is a completely different way of life that he would have to learn and adjust to. It was an extremely difficult transition for Paul.

But even with all that, Paul grabbed the bull by the horns and was a powerful Christian leader. He started so many churches, which included bringing in the Gentiles to Christ. Most of the New Testament is letters that Paul wrote to churches. Paul performed many miracles (**Scripture 6. Paul Performed Miracles - Acts 19:11-12**). The Lord used Paul in such a powerful way.

I was in my 40's when I finally turned to Jesus. I was a realist and needed proof before I believed anything. Thankfully (thank you Jesus!), the Holy Spirit touched me (so powerfully, I could not deny it) when I was at my lowest point of my life. The Lord was patient and waited for the perfect time and place, touching me the exact way I needed.

If you haven't yet made that step to make Christ your lord, what's stopping you? Is there something you don't want to give up? Are you concerned about persecution? Do you just feel you don't need a lord? Do you think you're a good person and that is enough? Do you just not believe all this Jesus stuff? It sure looks like the Apostle Paul had good reason to consider all these things. But thank God, he still chose Jesus and made a big difference in the world. Why don't you choose Jesus today!

Scripture 1. Paul as a Pharisee

Philippians 3: 3-7 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh—though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

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Scripture 3. Paul’s Mission

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Scripture 4. Jesus Spoke of Pharisees

Matthew 23:27-28 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

Matthew 23:33 "You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?"

Scripture 5. Paul Blinded

Acts 9:3-12 As he (Paul, aka Saul) neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!"

"Yes, Lord," he answered.

The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."

Scripture 6. Paul Performed Miracles

Acts 19:11-12 God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.

4. Are You Under Attack?

I've heard several people say, "I'm under attack from the enemy". Some people believe that when one bad thing after another happens to them, that it is the devil attacking.

I do not believe that is how the enemy (the devil, Satan, Lucifer) would attack. I think that the devil would attack with temptations that would cause us to turn away from Jesus. Why would he attack with trials and hardships when trials and hardships cause us to cry out to God and get closer to Jesus? It would make more sense for him to use temptations like money, fame, sex, and power; that make us prideful and feel like we don't need a savior. Therefore, falling away from God.

Jesus taught a lot about money. He made it very clear that the love of money can separate us from God and that we have to be very careful not to fall into that temptation. In Luke 16:13, Jesus explained that we cannot serve both God and money (**Scripture 1. Cannot Serve Both God and Money**). It's either one or the other. He (Jesus) also explained how hard it is for a rich person to get to heaven (**Scripture 2. Hard for Rich to Enter Kingdom of God**). Jesus said It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God. The eye of a needle is not referring to a needle that we sew thread with, but a small narrow opening made for just one person. It is possible for a camel to get through one, but the camel may break a few bones to do it. So Jesus wasn't saying that it is totally impossible for a rich person to get to heaven, but rather it is extremely difficult. The more money we have, the more prideful and further away from God we tend to get.

God spoke to the prophet Isaiah and told him that He (God) brings all things – good and bad (**Scripture 3. God Brings Good and Bad**). It may feel like we are under attack when God brings us bad things, but God probably has a good reason for what He does. Maybe He's trying to get you to a higher level of spirituality or just trying to get you to cry out to Him.

That's what happened to me. It took a lot of bad for God to finally reach me. I was at my lowest point ever when I finally cried out to God; giving Jesus the opportunity to prove Himself to me.

So, is one bad thing after another coming to you? Then great, God is probably bringing you closer to Him. But are you being blessed with fame and fortune? Uh oh, best be careful – you may be under attack!

Scripture 1. Cannot Serve Both God and Money

Luke 16:13 (Jesus said) "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money".

Scripture 2. Hard for the Rich to Enter the Kingdom of God

Mark 10:25 (Jesus said) "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

Scripture 3. God Brings Good and Bad

NLT (New Living Translation) Isaiah 45:7 I create the light and make the darkness. I send good times and bad times. I, the Lord, am the one who does these things.

NIV (New International Version) Isaiah 45:7 I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the Lord, do all these things.

KJV (King James Version) Isaiah 45:7 I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things.

NCV (New Century Version) Isaiah 45:7 I made the light and the darkness. I bring peace, and I cause troubles. I, the Lord, do all these things.

5. Can You Pray Wrong?

Does God answer your prayers the way you want Him to? Has anyone ever told you that you pray wrong? Praying is just talking to God, so how can you do that wrong?

But the Bible does tell us we can pray wrong, especially if we only pray for ourselves and our own desires and needs.

We should not always come to God with just our list. I know that's not easy. It's comes naturally to pray for stuff we want and need.

But we should pray with good motives. We should pray that God's will be done in our situations. Not to pray only for ourselves and for our own pleasure. See **(Scripture 1. Wrong Motives - James 4:2-3)**. This scripture explains that we ask but don't receive because we ask with wrong motives, that we may spend what we get on our pleasures.

Asking for the Lord's will to be done during a stressful situation brings peace in our hearts and helps us get through any trial or storm we face.

In every situation, we should try to ask God for wisdom of what His will is in that situation. God tells us in scripture **(Scripture 2. If You Lack Wisdom - James 1:5)** that God gives wisdom to those who ask Him for it.

We can also ask God for wisdom of what we should pray for. Sometimes when you ask God to pray for things that He wants you to pray for can change the way you pray. Certainly not every time, but Jesus knows when and how to touch our hearts with perfect timing.

Personal example – A friend requested prayer for his young adult son. His son just found out he had cancer. Later, when I started to pray for his son, I thought I heard the Lord say, "Don't pray for him". I thought maybe it was my imagination, but when I started praying again, the same thing happened. So, I did not pray for my friend's son. The next time I saw my friend, he told me that his son was lying and was just trying to hurt his dad. He did not have cancer.

Also, If we're trusting God, we won't be as worried or anxious when bad situations come our way. See **(Scripture 3. Do Not Be Anxious - Philippians 4:6-7)**. This scripture tells us not to worry or be anxious about anything, and to pray our petitions with thanksgiving.

Jesus himself taught us how to pray. **(Scripture 4. This is How You Should Pray - Matthew 6:9-13)**. First recognize God as God and that He is your loving father. I try to always start prayers with giving thanks. When we thank God for all the good stuff in our lives, we are recognizing that everything comes from Him and that He is God and a good father.

Next Jesus taught us to ask for His will to be done in our lives. Then once you are in the mind frame of recognizing God as God and a loving father, and wanting His will to be done through you, then you ask for things on your list.

So bottom line, we shouldn't make our prayers about me, me, me – rather about God, God, God. Praying isn't all about getting stuff we want or think we need. It's about getting closer to God and living for Jesus.

Scripture 1. Wrong Motives

James 4:2-3 You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

Scripture 2. If You Lack Wisdom

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

Scripture 3. Do Not Be Anxious

Philippians 4:6-7 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Scripture 4. This is How You Should Pray

Matthew 6:9-13 "This, then, is how you should pray: " 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. '

6. Do You Show Favoritism?

Favoritism – a very ugly thing. It destroys families. It breaks hearts and causes horrible conflicts.

So much pain comes from favoritism. It not only hurts the ones not favored, but can hurt the ones favored as well.

Look what happened when Israel showed favoritism to his son Joseph. It caused so much pain in the family that Joseph's brothers wanted to kill him, but ended up selling their own brother as a slave! (**Scriptures 1. Joseph Sold as a Slave - Genesis 37:3-28**).

The Lord instructs us not to show favoritism (**Scriptures 2. Do Not Show Favoritism**). In our church, we should not treat those with wealth better than those without. Scriptures even say that if you show favoritism, you sin. So not only are you hurting people and causing pain and conflict, but you are actually sinning against God.

God does not show favoritism (Thank you Jesus!). His wonderful salvation and Holy Spirit are for everyone who reaches for it (**Scriptures 3. God Does Not Show Favoritism**). It doesn't matter how you have lived your life, or what you have done. Nor your race, sex, age, or bloodline. Jesus loves us all.

Wounds from favoritism run deep. As a child, I experienced an extreme case of favoritism and I was definitely not the favorite. Growing up seeing one of your siblings get almost all the love and attention is seriously hurtful. It's like the parents saying, I don't care about or love you, I only love that child, and you are insignificant and unimportant. I still have issues over that today. For me, it's not something you can just get over. It stays with you. Certain things can happen that brings all this to memory and then go through it all over again.

I am so appreciative that Jesus doesn't show favoritism. God's love is one thing no one can take away from us. He will never fail us or leave us.

Of course, we get along with different people at different levels, and some kids are easier than others. And we tend to be closer to certain family members than others. But still, we should be courteous and kind to everyone. We should treat all our children the same and show love and respect to them all.

Especially if you are a born again Christian, you absolutely should not be showing favoritism. The Bible makes it very clear; God does not want us to show favoritism in any situation. It can be hard. Temptation to show favoritism can be strong, but we need to rise above that and never show favoritism in any part of our lives.

Scripture 1. Joseph Sold as a Slave

Genesis 37:3-28 Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made an ornate robe for him. When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.

Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it."

His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.

Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."

When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, "What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?" His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

Now his brothers had gone to graze their father's flocks near Shechem, and Israel said to Joseph, "As you know, your brothers are grazing the flocks near Shechem. Come, I am going to send you to them." "Very well," he replied.

So he said to him, "Go and see if all is well with your brothers and with the flocks, and bring word back to me." Then he sent him off from the Valley of Hebron.

When Joseph arrived at Shechem, a man found him wandering around in the fields and asked him, "What are you looking for?"

He replied, "I'm looking for my brothers. Can you tell me where they are grazing their flocks?"

"They have moved on from here," the man answered. "I heard them say, 'Let's go to Dothan.'"

So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan. But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him.

"Here comes that dreamer!" they said to each other. "Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams."

When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue him from their hands. "Let's not take his life," he said. "Don't shed any blood. Throw him into this cistern here in the wilderness, but don't lay a hand on him." Reuben said this to rescue him from them and take him back to his father.

So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the ornate robe he was wearing—and they took him and threw him into the cistern. The cistern was empty; there was no water in it.

jenaministries.com – Part 2 6. Do You Show Favoritism?

Scripture 1. Joseph Sold as a Slave - continued

As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt.

Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood." His brothers agreed.

So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.

Scripture 2. Do Not Show Favoritism

James 2:1 My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism.

James 2:9 But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.

1 Timothy 5:21 I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favoritism.

Exodus 23:3 And do not show favoritism to a poor person in a lawsuit.

Scripture 3. God Does Not Show Favoritism

Acts 10:34-35 Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.

Colossians 3:25 Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism.

Romans 2:11 For God does not show favoritism.

Ephesians 6:9 And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

7. Does Jesus Love You?

Do you believe Jesus loves you? Have you felt or experienced His love for you?

First let's look at what scriptures say (See **Scriptures 1-5 Jesus Loves You**)

- 1) In John 3:16 and Romans 5:7-8 - scriptures explain that Jesus died for us even when we were sinners. And yes, He died for you. To be willing to die for our loved ones takes a special kind of love.
- 2) In Matthew 11:28-30 - Scriptures describe that we can find rest in Jesus and give our burdens to Him. He is gentle and humble in heart and is always there for us.
- 3) In John 14:18 and Deuteronomy 13:6 – Scriptures say Jesus will never leave you or forsake you. He will always be there for you.
- 4) In John 14:27 - Scriptures explain that Jesus leaves us peace. He does not give us as the world gives. He gives peace.
- 5) In Romans 8:35-39 - Scriptures say that nothing can separate us from the love of God – not even trouble or hardship, or persecution or famine, or nakedness or danger or sword, or death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I didn't believe or feel that Jesus loved me for at least 5 years after being born again. I can remember being in church and saying that I believed Jesus is Lord worthy of all praise, but didn't believe He loved me. I'm sure that growing up with no visible love had a strong effect on me and always will.

The first 5 or so years of my salvation was Jesus bringing all the hurts in my past up to the surface and dealing with them. I was taught never to cry and I held everything in. Jesus taught me how to cry it all out. I can see now that He made me go through that for my own good, but I surely couldn't see that then.

I can't name a particular moment when I realized Jesus does love me. It was a long and difficult process. But I can say that now I do know Jesus loves me. He has proven it over and over again.

If you don't believe Jesus loves you, rest assured there will come a day when you do. You may want to try not looking at your worldly life, but look at your spiritual life. JESUS DOES LOVE YOU! Don't give up on that fact. Be patient and allow Jesus to prove that to you.

Scriptures 1-5 Jesus Loves You

1) Jesus Died for Us

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Romans 5:7-8 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

2) Find Rest in Jesus

Matthew 11:28-30 (Jesus said) "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

3) Jesus Will Never Leave You

John 14:18 (Jesus said) I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

Deuteronomy 13:6 Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."

4) Jesus Leaves Us Peace

John 14:27 (Jesus said) Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

5) Nothing Can Separate Us from God

Romans 8:35-39 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

8. How Can We Forgive?

Forgiveness can sometimes be a very difficult thing. Sometimes we struggle and try to forgive, but it just seems impossible. We need God's help. That's the key to forgiveness – Let God help you.

The definition in app WordNet3.0 of "forgive" is – 1) to cease to feel resentment against, on account of wrong committed; 2) to give up claim to requital from or retribution upon an offender; 3) to absolve; 4) to pardon.

Let's look at what scripture from the Holy Bible says about forgiveness (**Scriptures 1. What the Bible Says About Forgiveness**).

Jesus said in the book of Matthew that if we do not forgive others their sins, then our Father in Heaven will not forgive us our sins. Even if the sins against us are relentless and continual. Yikes.

There are some things we can do that can help us to forgive.

- Putting the past behind us and focusing on today and moving forward to the future helps. When we dwell on the past hurts, we can get stuck and not be able to move forward (**Scriptures 2. Put the Past Behind Us and Move Forward**).

The Apostle Paul wrote in Philippians that forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, presses on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Even before Jesus was born, the Prophet Isaiah prophesied the Lord said to forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. That the Lord is doing a new thing!

- Concentrating on God's will and on spiritual things, not our own Earthly desires and needs can help bring us to forgiveness also (**Scriptures 3. God's Will, Not Ours**).

Fixing our eyes on Jesus allows Jesus to lead us and makes our faith complete. When we set our minds on things above (not on Earthly things), the Earthly problems can fade.

- Last but certainly not least is praying for our enemies. When we pray for our enemies (for good things to our enemies), we give the Holy Spirit a chance to touch our hearts about those enemies. Sometimes God reveals to us how He (God) feels for that enemy. God can give us a different perspective about that person which can allow us to be able to understand more and to forgive (**Scriptures 4. Pray for Our Enemies**).

Jesus made it very clear in the book of Matthew and Luke that we should love and pray for our enemies and do good to those who mistreat us. Let the Lord lead you on what you should do.

Praying and reading God's word is key. Remember you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you, including forgiving. Forgiveness helps us more than it helps the ones we are forgiving. Holding anger and resentment in is seriously unhealthy. Jesus wants what is best for us. He doesn't want us to damage our well-being.

Just because you still feel hurt about what someone did, doesn't necessarily mean you have not forgiven them. There will be triggers that remind you of your pain. Feeling hurt doesn't always mean you still have resentment to that person. Forgiveness also does not mean that we have to allow the abuse (or hurtful acts) to continue. We need to set boundaries. The Lord has led me to cut certain people out of my everyday life, and also has led me to just love others.

The worst thing you can do is decide on your own how to handle the situation. Let the Lord help and lead you. You may be truly surprised how the omnipotent Lord leads.

jenaministries.com – Part 2 8. How Can We Forgive?

Scripture 1. What The Bible Says About Forgiveness

Matthew 6:14-15 For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Matthew 18:21-35 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

"Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. "At this the servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.' "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt.

When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened. "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

Scriptures 2. Put the Past Behind Us and Move Forward

Philippians 3:13-14 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Isaiah 43:18-19 "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.

Scriptures 3. God's Will, Not Ours

Hebrews 12:2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.

Colossians 3:2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

Scriptures 4. Pray for Our Enemies

Matthew 5:43-44 (Jesus said) "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

Luke 6:27-29 (Jesus said) "But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."

9. Is Your Tongue a Weapon?

Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me. Such an untrue saying. Words can hurt deeply. The tongue can be a powerful weapon.

People can have a good heart and really care for others, but still cause a lot of grief with their tongue. It doesn't matter if they do all kinds of good works; if they can't control what they say, trouble will surely come their way and someone will get hurt.

Not to say we should never speak up when necessary. Jesus spoke very harshly about the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. But He spoke as a teacher and out of love (**Scriptures 1. – Jesus Spoke Harshly**).

There are times when it is proper to say something that may not be well received. Setting boundaries sometimes hurts people's feelings, but we must do it. You may be accused of not forgiving or not being a good Christian when you set boundaries, but don't listen to that. Let Jesus lead you when setting the needed boundaries in your relationships.

Also, we are taught in the Bible that we should keep each other in check. If someone is doing something that is separating them from God, we should speak up (**Scriptures 2. – Keep Each Other in Check**).

The tongue is spoken of many times in the Holy Bible (**Scriptures 3 – The Tongue**). James explains that the tongue is like the rudder of a boat. Even though the rudder is a small part of the boat, it controls which way the boat will go. Such is the tongue. It is a small part of our body, but can cause so much grief and trouble.

The Bible also talks about deceit and lying. That may be the worst thing that can come out of our mouths. Criticism and hurtful words are bad enough, but deceit is totally unacceptable. Once I know a person is prone to lying, I will never believe a word that person says again. Dishonesty brings distrust.

I used to be pretty outspoken and angry all the time. But since I've come to know Jesus, I've gotten better. The Lord has helped me be more patient and to see things differently. He has also helped me with setting boundaries and not allowing others to cause harm.

If people get angry at you for being too outspoken, let Jesus help you with that. I know it's not easy to change the way you talk, but with God's help, you can do it! Living a Christian life changes the way you think, which in turn changes the way you express your thoughts.

Scriptures 1. Jesus Spoke Harshly

Matthew 23:1-4 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: “The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.

Matthew 23:13-33 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of hell as you are.

“Woe to you, blind guides! You say, ‘If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gold of the temple is bound by that oath.’ You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred? You also say, ‘If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gift on the altar is bound by that oath.’ You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? Therefore, anyone who swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. And anyone who swears by the temple swears by it and by the one who dwells in it. And anyone who swears by heaven swears by God’s throne and by the one who sits on it.

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. And you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. Go ahead, then, and complete what your ancestors started!

“You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?

Luke 16:14 The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. He said to them, “You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in God’s sight.”

jenaministries.com – Part 2 - 9. Is Your Tongue a Weapon?

Scriptures 2. Keep Each Other in Check

Matthew 18:15-18 "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector. "Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Scriptures 3. The Tongue

Proverbs 15:1-4 A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of wise adorns knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly. The eyes of the LORD are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good. The soothing tongue is a tree of life, but a perverse tongue crushes the spirit.

Psalms 50:19 You use your mouth for evil and harness your tongue to deceit.

Psalms 64:3 They sharpen their tongues like swords and aim cruel words like deadly arrows.

Psalms 37:30 The mouths of the righteous utter wisdom, and their tongues speak what is just.

James 1:26 Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless.

James 3:4-12 Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. Can both fresh water and saltwater flow from the same spring? My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

1 Peter 3:9-10 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech.

10. When Are We Too Proud?

Sure, it's good to have pride in your achievements and in who you are. But at what point does a person become too proud?

The definition of the word "proud" in iPhone app WordNet3.0 is – Having or showing arrogant superiority to and disdain of those one views as unworthy.

When we think we are superior above everyone else and become arrogant is when it has gone too far. This is when we can get into a pattern of only thinking of ourselves and getting what we want, not caring about the consequences or wellbeing of other people.

Jesus worked hard to teach us to be humble servants and to not get trapped into pridefulness (**Scriptures 1. Jesus Taught Us to Be Humble Servants**). Jesus also spoke about the Pharisees. How they followed all the Jewish laws, but they were proud. He warned us not to be like them (**Scriptures 2. Don't Be Like the Pharisees**).

Pharisees thought they knew it all. They loved money and had expensive things and wore fine clothing, not caring about the welfare of other people. Everything had to be done their way and they were quick to condemn people for wrong doings. When they prayed, they prayed loudly in public so everyone could see how great they are. They were arrogant and thought they were superior to everyone else.

During my childhood and young adult days, I was told practically everyday (in one way or another) that I was unimportant. Everyone else on this planet was more important than me. And no one cared if I was hurting or needing something. I wasn't worth the bother to help or love. I knew deep inside that wasn't true, but still somehow, I lived my life as though it was. I always considered other people's wants and feelings over mine. So, I actually had to learn how to have pride in myself and to do some things that were good for me, even if other people didn't like it. However, being careful not to become too proud as some other people I have seen and/or known.

For me, a proud person thinks they are always right and they know it all. They put people down if they dare to disagree. They think they are more important than anyone else and everything has to be done their way. They often put themselves at center of attention, even if a gathering is about someone else. They can also tend to be bossy and controlling and they don't care how other people feel.

So where do we draw the line? At what point are we too proud?

Jesus taught us to have a servant mindset; to care about and help other people. He also taught us to be humble; to know we too are sinners and are not even close to being perfect. If we have that humble servant mindset, we will not be as tempted to become arrogant or proud. Once we start living life just for ourselves (and our family), and not thinking of other people is when we run into trouble. When we believe we deserve all that we have because we worked hard to get it can lead us to pridefulness too. Yes, you should be proud of all your hard work, but remember, not everyone has had the health, opportunity, and ability as God has blessed you with.

Remember, it's not all about you. Be a humble servant. Care for others and follow Jesus!

Scriptures 1. Jesus Taught Us to Be Humble Servants

Luke 18:9-14 To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable:

“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’

“I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

Matthew 18:1-5 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”

He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

John 13:14-15 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

Matthew 20:25-28 Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Luke 14:10-11 But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

Scriptures 2. Don't Be Like the Pharisees

Matthew 23:1-4 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.

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"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

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"You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?"

11. Does God Really Lead Us?

Does Jesus really lead us in our life? Does He get involved in our decision making and way of living? Absolutely yes, if we allow Him. Not all the time and maybe even not most of the time. But the Lord knows when we are heading down a wrong path and will turn us around onto the right path.

Of course, the Holy Bible gives us guidance and has many scriptures about God leading us (**Scriptures – God Leads**). We can always count on the Bible to give us guidance and wisdom. But what about the unique individual paths we find ourselves on or the decisions we need to make? Sometimes we need to hear from God to find our way.

For me, Jesus doesn't usually lead me which way to go with things that I consider important in my life. I pray about things like buying a house, or what to do for a living; and I get no direction from Him. But then when I come to the Lord with my everyday stuff, He'll sometimes turn me around and head me a different direction.

An example is when my son was 17. He was getting into trouble and hanging around friends that I believed were not good for him. I just knew that if he got a job, things would get better. He would feel better about himself, make some new and better friends, and see that having some extra cash feels good. So I started telling him to fill out job applications and I would help him get a job.

But that wasn't what he wanted and he fought it. I just knew a job was what he needed, so I continued to be persistent about it. That brought a lot of stress between us, and one day we had a really intense argument about it.

I went to the Lord that day and told the Lord how frustrated I was with my son. The Lord told me not to talk badly about His child (my son) and to go ask my son what he wanted and whatever it was, give it to him. Well I certainly didn't feel that would work. Surely he'll ask for a new car or a million dollars or something I could not give him. But ended up my son said he just wanted to be a kid a little while longer. Our family had been through some hard times and my son felt cheated from his childhood. That's it, that's all he wanted, and I was able to give that to him. I was also able to give my son an awesome testimony about what God did for him.

In my experience, that's how the Lord leads. I wasn't asking for guidance, and I felt I was doing the right thing. But I can't see people's hearts and what other people (even my own children) feel. It changed the way I thought. It taught me how to have patience and to just love no matter what is going on. This experience did change the way I lived my life.

If we don't go to the Lord with our everyday life, we won't give the Lord the opportunity to lead us. Even if we go to Him with things that we consider important, and get no guidance, doesn't mean He doesn't lead us. He knows when we need direction. But if we don't come to Jesus with everything, we may miss out on His wonderful guidance. He does provide a path of which way to go. We just need to follow Jesus. Every day, every chance. Follow Jesus.

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Scriptures - God Leads

Isaiah 48:17 This is what the Lord says - your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who leads you in the way you should go.

Psalms 17:5-6 My steps have held to your paths; my feet have not stumbled. I call on you, my God, for you will answer me; turn your ear to me and hear my prayer.

Psalms 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet, a light to my path.

John 8:12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Psalms 27:11 Teach me your way, LORD; lead me in a straight path because of my oppressors.

Acts 2:25-28 David said about him: " 'I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest in hope, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, you will not let your holy one see decay. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.'

John 8:47 Whoever belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God."

12. What is Your Ministry?

Do you have a ministry? It doesn't have to be anything big. You don't have to be a preacher or a missionary traveling the world to have a great ministry. Though those ministries are awesome, we can have our behind the scenes personal ministries. Sometimes these ministries can feel small and unimportant, but if that's where Jesus put you, it is very significant and valuable.

The Lord has given each and every one of us gifts in the spirit for certain ministries (**Scriptures 1 – We All Have Our Gifts**). The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 12 that different people have different gifts. Whatever gift you have been blessed with; you should use in your ministry. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

Your ministry doesn't necessarily have to be a great sacrifice, though any sacrifices you make for your ministries pleases God.

Jesus wants us to do good work for His glory (**Scriptures 2 – Do Good Works and Serve Others**). Everything we do in our ministry should be for God and about God. If all you're doing is good deeds (just to be nice), and not doing it for Jesus, then it might not be considered a ministry. It's just good deeds. Our goal in our ministries should always be to lead people to Jesus.

I have an example of one of my personal ministries the Lord blessed me with. I was working full-time for a municipality. Through the years, I managed to save up a lot of leave time. When fellow employees would run out of all their leave time (usually a serious illness was involved), they could send out a notice asking for donations of leave time. The Lord blessed me with the ability to donate some hours. And as I filled out the donation forms, I would pray for that employee. So it turned into a ministry of giving, helping, and praying.

After I retired, I started this website (jenaministries.com). I can express my ideas and testimonies much better in writing. Giving testimonies in person face to face is not a gift the Lord has given me. This website has been an awesome way for me to express my beliefs and give my testimonies. And it also helps keep me in study of His word and my relationship with Him in my mind. In my website, I can see every day which articles were viewed and what City/State/Country the visitor was in when they viewed the article. I try make it a point to pray for all the visitors each day according to what article they viewed. I have an average of a couple views every day, so I'm praying for someone almost every day; and I'll probably be praying for you and your personal ministry soon.

So, what is your ministry? What gifts has the Lord blessed you with? What good works do you do for the Lord? Does your way of life please God? Could you maybe do more?

jenministries.com – Part 2 - 12. What Is Your Ministry?

Scriptures 1 – We All Have Our Gifts

Romans 12:3-8 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

1 Peter 4:10 Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

Scriptures 2 – Do Good Works and Serve Others

Hebrews 13:16 And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

John 13:12-17 When he (Jesus) had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

2 Timothy 4:5 But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

13. Will I Know What to Say?

Has the Lord ever nudged you to go speak to a person about Jesus, but you didn't know what to say? Those are the best testimonies. The ones that we have to rely on the Holy Spirit for guidance.

These days, we don't even have to approach a person physically. We can speak through email, social media, texts, and many more. But even so, if we're led to give testimony, it sometimes is difficult to know what to say.

The Apostle Paul explained in 1 Corinthians (**Scripture 1 - Paul Relied on Holy Spirit**) that he came to their people in great fear and trembling. And his message and preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that their faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power. So even Paul didn't always know what he was going to say, but trusted the Holy Spirit to lead.

The Holy Spirit is our connection to Jesus and God the Father (**Scriptures 2 – Holy Spirit Teaches and Reminds Us**). Jesus explained that the Holy Spirit, who God the Father sends to us, will teach us all things and will remind us of everything Jesus had said (for us, that would be everything we read or studied in the Holy Bible).

I'm so thankful that I don't live in a country where it is illegal to witness or teach about Jesus. From what I've heard, there are people in this world today who face executed for that. Jesus spoke about that in Mark 13 and Matthew 10 (**Scriptures 3 – Don't Worry What to Say**). Jesus said not to worry about what to say before the authoritative people, for the Holy Spirit will speak through you.

When I first started this website, I wrote about past experiences for my personal testimonies. I didn't rely on the Holy Spirit to give me what to say since they were all from memory. But now that I am on my 28th article, I am at the point where I write about my present and I now rely on the Holy Spirit to guide me. My goal is to write two new articles every month, and so far, I have accomplished that. I am now continually praying for a new idea and testimony to write about. And the Holy Spirit has not let me down.

If you're afraid or feel uncomfortable to approach people about Jesus, let the Holy Spirit guide you with strength and wisdom. The Holy Spirit is real and is alive today, working through all who believe and trust. God faithfully gives the Holy Spirit to everyone who asks for it. You can trust Him. The more you walk with Jesus, the more you learn to trust Him, for He is faithful.

jenaministries.com - Part 2 - 13. Will I Know What to Say?

Scripture 1 – Paul Relied on Holy Spirit

1 Corinthians 2:1-5 And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.

Scriptures 2 – Holy Spirit Teaches and Reminds Us

John 14:26 (Jesus said) But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

Acts 1:8 (Jesus said) But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Acts 4:8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people!

Acts 10:45 The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles.

Scriptures 3 – Don't Worry What to Say

Mark 13:11 (Jesus said) Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 10:18-20 (Jesus said) On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time, you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

14. Can We Always Be Content

It's easy to be content when we have everything we want, but how often does that happen? There is always someone that has it better than us. The grass is always greener on the other side.

But the Lord wants us to be content (**Scriptures 1 – Be Content**). No matter what little we think we have, or how we feel; we should always strive to be content with what the good Lord has given us. I believe that's part of the process of serving and getting close to Jesus.

We should not be envious of what other people have (**Scriptures 2 – Do Not Envy or Covet**). If we covet, we can easily become prideful and egotistical. We can get to a lifestyle of constantly trying to keep up with our neighbors. What we have or don't have can become our main focus in life. But the Lord wants to be the main focus and that's what we should strive for.

Always being content may not be possible. At one point or another, you may find yourself having a hard time with even the basic needs. It's not a sin to not be content. 1 Timothy 6:8 says, "But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that." So the Bible does state there is a limit to our being content. If you don't have the basic needs, it may be impossible to be content. If you're in a season of severe pain and struggle, and you just cannot be content, that's ok. Just pray for help and don't feel bad about asking others for help either.

I didn't come to know the Lord until I hit rock bottom. Everything was going wrong and I didn't know how I would survive. Definitely did not feel content. But the Lord was still there for me. Even though I was so angry at God and told Him so every day, He was still there for me. Even though I hated my life and would pray for years to go by without me having to have to live through them, He was still there for me. Those were my worst worldly years, but my best spiritual years. I saw miracles. I heard the Lord's voice and received guidance and healings from Him. He did eventually teach me how to be content, but it took several years. I have been content ever since.

Being that that was my experience, I would say that if you're going through a horrible time and you just can't find contentment, don't be too hard on yourself. Though the Lord tells us to be content, it is ok to have a season of healing and learning. The Lord is not going to stop loving you or stop being faithful to you no matter what state of mind you are in. Let the Lord heal your life and lead you. If you surrender to Him, He will bring you to a place of contentment. It may take a little while, but you will get there.

jenaministries.com – Part 2 -14. Can We Always Be Content?

Scriptures 1 – Be Content

Hebrews 13:5 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”

Philippians 4: 10-13 I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

1 Timothy 6:4-8 They have an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between people of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain. But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.

Scriptures 2 – Do Not Envy or Covet

Proverbs 19:22-23 What a person desires is unfailing love ; better to be poor than a liar. The fear of the LORD leads to life; then one rests content, untouched by trouble.

Proverbs 14:30 A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.

Exodus 20:17 “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

James 3:16 For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

15. Why Should I Tithe?

Tithing is all part of giving to the Lord. It's not for a church or church staff to get rich. It's not people taking advantage of you. It is simply a gift from you to the Lord. Think of all the gifts the Lord has given you. Tithing is giving back.

Having a bad experience with a church or evangelist can turn a person against tithing. If a church or evangelist pressures you to dig deep into your pockets, in order to receive blessings from the Lord, something may be seriously wrong. I've seen evangelists say that if you give all the money you possibly can to them, then God will bless you financially (like make you rich!); but if you don't give generously, then God won't bless you at all. And people have told me that after visiting a church, someone from that church came over to their house and asked them to donate significantly towards a new building.

Churches and evangelists should be distributing their funds to organizations and missionaries to help those in need. Yes, they have their bills to pay, but they also should be giving to those in need as God sees fit. If a church or evangelist is trying to pressure you to generously give to them, I suggest you stay away and find somewhere else to worship.

One tenth was a percentage decided a long time ago around the time of Moses (**Scriptures 1 – Offer One Tenth**). It wasn't something a person made up, but it came from God. Moses actually met with God and when he would return to his people, his face would be radiant. So radiant that it scared the people. Therefore, Moses had to cover his face after meeting with God, so the people wouldn't be afraid.

So what did Jesus teach us how to live? He wants us to be compassionate and giving to those in need. Most of all, He wants us to be humble servants. To think of others as ourselves. To not be prideful like the Pharisees (See web page **Why Did They Crucify Jesus?**). Tithing is all part of being that humble, giving servant.

It should bring us joy to give to God (**Scriptures 2 – Give Cheerfully**). And you should give how much you decide for yourself to give. Today, we don't have to follow all the old Jewish laws. We can decide for ourselves how much we should give to God. It should bring us joy when we give.

When I first came to know the Lord, finances were extremely stressful. So for the first couple of years, I decided to give \$20 a month to the church. I know that's a ridiculously small amount, but that's all I could afford at that time. Through the years, the Lord blessed me and I was able to give more.

I believe the Lord wants us to pay our bills. If you're facing collection agencies and/or bankruptcy, maybe you can just give what you can, if anything. That's not to say if you have a good income but have had excessive spending habits, that you shouldn't give to the Lord. In that case, you should probably sell some stuff or downsize and get your income/debt ratio more on track, ready to give to the Lord appropriately.

So, why tithe? That's easy. Tithe to give back to God and help others in need. Just think of all the Lord has done for you. Wouldn't it make you happy to give some of it back? Have joy in that and be generous.

Scriptures 1. Offer One Tenth

Leviticus 27:30 “ ‘A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD.

Numbers 18:26 “Speak to the Levites and say to them: ‘When you receive from the Israelites the tithe I give you as your inheritance, you must present a tenth of that tithe as the LORD’s offering.

Deuteronomy 14:22-29 Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year. Eat the tithe of your grain, new wine and olive oil, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks in the presence of the LORD your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name, so that you may learn to revere the LORD your God always. But if that place is too distant and you have been blessed by the LORD your God and cannot carry your tithe (because the place where the LORD will choose to put his Name is so far away), then exchange your tithe for silver, and take the silver with you and go to the place the LORD your God will choose. Use the silver to buy whatever you like: cattle, sheep, wine or other fermented drink, or anything you wish. Then you and your household shall eat there in the presence of the LORD your God and rejoice. And do not neglect the Levites living in your towns, for they have no allotment or inheritance of their own. At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year’s produce and store it in your towns, so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the foreigners, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

Exodus 34:29-31 When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him. But Moses called to them; so Aaron and all the leaders of the community came back to him, and he spoke to them.

Scriptures 2. Give Cheerfully

2 Corinthians 9:7 Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

2 Corinthians 9:8-15 And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written: “They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever.” Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord’s people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!