

Do You Really Trust God? Take This Quiz to Find Out

We in Florida, as well as other states on the East coast, are breathing relief: We're at the end of hurricane season.

No more spending hours monitoring the Weather Channel. No more dashing to get the last bottled water at the local store. And no more comments like this one:

"I don't know about you, but I'm sick and tired of these broadcasters. One minute we hear Dorian has lessened in its force. Next, we hear it's heading our direction and we need to prepare. And then they tell us it's coming but with less force. I'm fed up with the stress these people cause. Can't they get anything straight?"

Forgive the cynicism, but her problem isn't the hurricane. Her stress isn't the uncertainty of the storm. It's not even the danger that lurks. Her real problem is that she believed, trusted and counted on every word the weather forecasters said. And what they said dictated her frame of mind, attitude and determined her emotions.

Who can blame her? When facing danger, we all do the same—allow others to define our emotions. Sadly, hurricanes of life don't have seasons. They come anytime. Some arrive with force. And others lurk around, stirring our anxiety.

You may be in an emotional hurricane right now. The winds of pain just increased and they are about to destroy your shelter of security.

But safety comes when we choose to trust in the one who forecasts our future. God is the only one who can hide us in the shadow of His wings (Ps. 91).

Here's a quiz to determine the level of your trust:

1. Jesus promises the rest we need in Matthew 11:28-29.

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me. For I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." *Do we believe that rest is ours and do we relax in that promise?*

2. When the storms drain our strength, in Isaiah 40:29-31, God promises:

"He gives power to the faint, and to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint." *Do we believe in that strength and, rather than walk like defeated chickens, do we soar like eagles?*

3. When we lack what we need, do we believe what God promises in Paul's words in Philippians 4:19?

"But my God shall supply your every need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." *Rather than lament what we don't have, do we believe we already possess His riches?*

4. When fear attacks, God announces in Romans 8:37-39:

"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities nor powers, neither things present nor things to come, neither height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." *Are we counting on the world's kind of security or relying in the safety of God's love?*

5. When life's troubles become too much, God reassures in John 14:27:

"Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." *Do we walk through life troubled, or do we boldly speak His peace into our situation?*

6. Finally, God promises in Proverbs 1:33:

"But whoever listens to me will dwell safely, and will be secure from fear of evil." *Do we doubt in His protection because we cannot see? Or believe in His promise of His powerful protection?*

Storms might rattle our security, hurricanes may blow winds of destruction and earthquakes may shake our foundation, but if we believe in God's announcement on the channel of His faithfulness, fear melts in the truth of each of His promises.

Let's pray.

Father, often I have said You're my Lord, believed in You and trusted in Your Word, yet subtle fear rose in me. I thank You for Your patience with me as I learn to embrace and declare that I truly, truly believe and trust in Your promises. In Jesus' name.

Are you focusing on the dark side of your situation or counting on the power of God's promises? {eoa}

This article originally appeared at .

How You Can Find the Perfect Fit for Your Soul

"C'mon, girlfriend, we're going to the mall."

"Whoo hoo!" I hung up the phone with a huge smile. Any chance to hit stores and come home with bargains stirred girlish excitement. Since I lost my eyesight, these trips gave me a chance to get out, catch up, laugh and come home with crazy stories.

Anticipating a great time, my friend took me by the arm, and we strolled through crowded store aisles, headed to the petite department.

"I see a perfect outfit for you," she said, "and I think it's on sale!" Our steps quickened.

Once in the dressing room, she handed me the fitted top. "The colors are perfect. They'll look great on you."

I slipped my arms through. "Hmm ... a little tight." I tried to poke my head through, but got stuck midway. "I think I need a bigger size," I muttered.

"No way. It's your size," she said. She tugged first on one side, then the other.

The top wouldn't budge, on or off. My arms pressed against my ears, and my words of panic muffled by the blouse that smashed my face.

"No pain," she said as she yanked with all her might, "no gain."

My head poked through, jack-in-the-box style, and while catching my breath, I stared into space.

My arms hung limp at my sides, and my mind imagined this

garment, never to come off again.

Moments later, my friend gasped as she ran her fingers to one side. "Oh, I can't believe it ..."

"What?"

"It has a zipper."

A zipper? She's got to be kidding.

"Sorry. I just didn't see it."

Another Crazy Story

But this one mirrored a difficult dilemma in my own life. I battled, trying to decide whether I fit into the world's pattern or fit into the mold tailored by God.

Initially, thinking it'd be a perfect match, I carefully chose goals, dreams and expectations in line with the world's standards. But when adversity swept through, the struggle began. I tugged, yanked and pulled on various styles to find a way out of difficult situations. I wore myself out trying to make my own solutions fit my problems.

I even battled with the correct order of priorities. In my role as a wife, mom, friend or church member, I desired to please everyone. Often anxiety visited reminding me of my inability to please even myself.

But did I change? No. I stubbornly continued to use my values, beliefs and choices to overcome and find satisfaction.

But when the effects of losing my sight crushed my world, it became real, painfully real, that my own ways to solve my problems were not sufficient. My solutions were not a match for a tragedy of this magnitude. Nothing I tried brought comfort, reassurance, encouragement or hope.

And empty of hope, I began shopping for a dose of

comfort—through fortune tellers, psychics, New Age healers and more. They successfully increased my frustration and decreased the balance of my checking account.

My whole life was off-balance. And when almost ready to tumble in defeat, I found the zipper—the opening. It was the entrance designed in my heart for Jesus to come in.

Freedom

When He did, He provided freedom from the world's deceptions.

Once I received Him into my life, I made Him my Lord, my God, my all.

His faithfulness, compassion and guidance offered a perfect garment for my soul. The price tag read, "Free."

This incredible gift, complete with the jewels of His trustworthy promises, adorns my renewed life.

A new beginning, leaving behind unnecessary struggles when facing difficulties. A newfound reassurance, knowing He created me and thus knows what will fit my soul. He knows the size of my needs, the color of my pain, the fabric of my fears and the fashion of my insecurities.

Christ knows yours, too. Trusting in the pattern He custom-designed for you, surrender happens. Fear, anxiety and doubt no longer fit a new life in Christ.

All becomes new. Redirection begins. No more desperation to be free from setbacks big or small. Christ is the one who gives eyes to see a new world—one of renewed hope, confidence and peace.

And it's that profound peace that filters through when God turns blindness or any other setback to joy. And with a new outlook, we can hold on to His healing Word as it dances in our soul. "I will rejoice greatly in the Lord, my soul will

exult in my God; for He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland” (Isa. 61:10, NIV).

Let's Pray

Father, thank You for giving me the spiritual garment I can wear as I live the life, abundant and rich, You promised. In Jesus' name, amen.

God has the perfect garment for your soul. Will you try it on?
{eoa}

Janet Perez Eckles is an international speaker and the author of four books. She has helped thousands conquer fear and bring back joy.

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3 Spiritual Stop Signs to Help You Steer Clear of Sinful Rage

Road rage is on the rise. It's heating up. And it's fanning the flame of stress. Even when car keys are put away, the tension remains.

This might be the reason. Studies show that irate drivers have a reason for that behavior. It has nothing to do with the

highway, but everything to do with the heart.

Way before drivers sit behind the wheel, stress, tension, discouragement and fear have already settled way deep inside. And when someone cuts them off on the road, look out! All those negative emotions come tumbling out. The result? Murmuring under the breath. Shooting such dirty looks so hard they crack the windshield. And oops, our kids better not see that gesture. They're learning firsthand how we display our anger.

And what does anger do? It feeds ulcers and brings on headaches that ruin our day. The same thing happens when on the road of life. Glitches push us into the ditch of unhappiness, and we're stuck in the mud of discontentment.

Let's start over. Before beginning the trip through the events of the day, consider these three stop signs:

Stop Sign No. 1: Love the Unlovable

Huh? Lord, do you see those crazy drivers on the road? And those who wronged us so deeply? Love them? Don't think so.

Hard? No, it's not hard. It's impossible to love those who cut you off; make illegal, dangerous turns and put you and your family in danger. And how about others who inflict emotional wounds? We want to hang them, not love them.

God hears that complaint. And with patience only He has, He still says: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have?" (Matt. 5:43-36a).

Recently, a man was interviewed after his imprisonment and torture because of His Christian beliefs. As he was beaten, he had a prayer, “Lord, I don’t want to be in two prisons—this one and the prison of anger and resentment. Help me to love those who are torturing me.”

Eventually, as he walked out of that prison, wounded and broken, he carried the power of forgiveness that restored him, healed his wounds and made him strong enough to carry on with his ministry.

Stop Sign No. 2: The Power of Our Words

Did you ever hear the boomerang power of our words? The curses we speak toward others come right back to us with tension into our own muscles. Ranting about others’ mistakes fuels our own stress. Rage toward others comes back to us with added negativity. And with an angry attitude out of control, we bring peace to a screeching halt.

“He who has no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down and without walls” (Prov. 25:28).

“He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city” (Prov. 16:32).

In self-control, there’s power. In self-restraint, there’s strength and there’s health because “Pleasant words are as a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and health to the bones” (Prov. 16:24).

Choosing to live healthier lives, we embrace a different approach. When others don’t deserve it, we dish out kindness. When others don’t care, we still do. And when others bring us down, we stand on the power of God.

Stop Sign No. 3: Humility Brings Freedom

Blushing a bit, I confess. Foolishly thinking I possess more wisdom and have more experience, I’ve elbowed my way in the

crowd and declared my thoughts. Happy the day when God spoke to me and said, "Let nothing be done out of strife or conceit, but in humility let each esteem the other better than himself" (Phil. 2:3).

We want to do that; we really do. We desire to be humble, honorable. But how can someone who is so wrong, so foolish, so outrageous in their actions be better than we are?

Thinking they're not, we prepare our attack, stand in position and make our point. We speak our mind and assert our position.

But that's when God asserts His own position, calling us to have a gentle spirit, a humble attitude and to be loving in our response.

Considering others better than ourselves requires humility in our approach, wisdom for our thoughts and obedience to God's commandments. The book of Matthew records this account of a lawyer who asked Jesus about which was the greatest commandment: "'Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law?' Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Matt. 22:36-39).

Loving others no matter what isn't a sign of weakness. Rather, it's a display of a valiant, courageous warrior holding the flag of triumphant victory.

Who has wronged you today and needs your loving attitude?

Let's Pray

Father, thank You for showing me a way out of angry thoughts. I praise You for the path You showed me to a calmer life and a loving approach to others. In Jesus' name.

Who has wronged you today and needs your loving attitude?
{eoa}

Janet Perez Eckles is an international speaker and the author of four books. She has helped thousands conquer fear and bring back joy.

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3 Steps to Moving in Bold Prayer That Brings God-Sized Results

Did anyone tell you there's no right or wrong way to pray? They're correct. But there is a wrong sense of conviction as we pray. When we ask God for blessings, we often use a mousy attitude. We request limited blessings. And we imagine only what our human minds can hold.

But when we change the way we pray, the results are different. Putting pride aside, our prayers need to be bold, sure and expectant.

I tried that. Recently, in my prayer time, I asked the Lord to grant me favor on this particular day. Not sure what that favor would be, I didn't focus on the specific blessing. Instead, I asked, with an expectant spirit and an anticipating heart.

Later that day, my mom and I stopped at a Christian bookstore.

We walked in, and the woman behind the counter recognized me. In an angelic voice, she said, "A group in my church is doing the Bible study in your book."

My book? Among all those popular books by world-renowned authors, her church chose my book? I did a cartwheel in my head and thanked God for that sweet encouragement.

You may not be looking for your books to be read. But instead, you need huge solutions. No matter what the request, here are three steps to pray more effectively.

1. Discard doubt and express the authority we have in Jesus.

The words can be few, but the faith has to be deep.

John and Peter show us the simplicity of a powerful prayer. They encountered a man crippled from birth who begged for money.

"Then Peter said, 'Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.' Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk" (Acts 3:6-8).

2. Never stop declaring what God will do.

Persistence and perseverance are the vehicle to answers. Keep on knocking expectantly. and the door will open.

The reason we never stop is because God said, "You do not have because you do not ask God" (James 4:2b, NIV).

3. Expect the best God has for you.

Be prepared for a greater answer. And declare in advance praises for what God has prepared, thanking Him in advance for the gifts He has stored in the warehouse of His love. He's willing, ready and longing to make the delivery according to

His schedule.

Here's His promise: "Which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!" (Matt. 7:9-11).

God, who created the universe and who knit us together in our mother's womb, knows what we need. He's aware of what we lack. He observes our desires and knows what we desire at this moment. He knows what your heart longs for as you read these lines. And He sees the tears that wet your pillow.

That's why He repeats His promise, "At the right time, I, the Lord, will make it happen" (Isa. 60:22, NLT).

And as He prepares His answer, He's curling His finger, calling you to step into His will as you place your prayers before Him, sure of His timing and with certainty of His answer.

Let's Pray

Father, thank You for the boldness You gave me to come before You and express my requests. With patience, I will wait, and with hope, I will praise You. In Jesus' name.

What changes do you need to make as you pray? {eoa}

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This article originally appeared at .

How to Remove Your Blindfold of Doubt and See God's Victory

My granddaughter blew her birthday candles out on her 12th birthday. It seems like only yesterday when fear attacked me. At 3 months, she was hospitalized for ailments that puzzled doctors.

They ordered tests and more tests, but no answers. We paced back and forth from worry, then prayer, then back to apprehension, then faith. Then once again, worry came back.

Until ...

Have you ever traveled through that merry-go-round of emotions? You know, the kind where you're sure of your faith, you have God's Word hidden in your heart, you've shared it with others over and over again, and you've applied it diligently, too.

But when a loved one is being threatened in any way, all wisdom woven together in your soul begins to unravel. Your mind knows, but it's not in sync with what burns in your heart.

Until ... until God, in His awesome wisdom, nudges you back to the right track. He did that for me, in a strange way—through this story:

The Legend of the Cherokee Indian's Rite of Passage

His father takes him into the forest, blindfolds him and

leaves him alone. He is required to sit on a stump the whole night and not remove the blindfold until the rays of the morning sun shine through it. He cannot cry out for help to anyone.

Once he survives the night, he is a man. He cannot tell the other boys of this experience because each lad must come into manhood on his own.

The boy is naturally terrified. He can hear all kinds of noises. Wild beasts must surely be all around him. Maybe even some human might do him harm. The wind blew the grass and earth, and shook his stump, but he sat stoically, never removing the blindfold. It would be the only way he could become a man!

Finally, after a horrific night, the sun appeared and he removed his blindfold. It was then that he discovered his father sitting on the stump next to him. He had been at watch the entire night, protecting his son from harm.

With heart pulsating, I, too, sat on the stump in the darkness, trembling at the possibilities I could not see, imagining the worst regarding my grandchild. Foolish, right? God was beside me and her as well.

He's With You, Too, No Matter What You Face

Though not by choice, you're on that stump of life—there you are, shaking. Fear came because of bad news, or unexpectedly, life turned upside down, and sleepless nights are long.

But during the night, when you feel alone in the darkness of pain, God is beside you. He's watching your worry that has no reason, your fear that has no merit and your anxious thoughts that shouldn't be there.

Time to remove the blindfold of doubt. When you do, you can rest in the reassurance that He's with you during the night.

And during the day, He'll walk with you to a triumphant victory.

"Who will rise up for me against the wicked? Who will stand up for me against those who do iniquity? Unless the Lord had been my help, my soul would have lived in the land of silent death. When I said, 'My foot slips,' Your mercy, O Lord, held me up. When there is a multitude of worries within me, Your comforts delight my soul" (Ps. 94:16-19).

Let's Pray

Father, thank You for the joy of knowing I'm not alone in my troubles. I'm not left to make all the decisions, or to figure it all out. I'm not abandoned or forgotten. Thank You for the reassurance that with You, I can endure anything. In Jesus' name.

If you're on a stump of life, feeling alone, will you trust in God's presence? {eoa}

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5 Supernatural Steps to

Facing Life With Divine Wisdom

Being blind is sometimes yucky, especially when you end up with weird stuff in your mouth.

A while back, I took a bite of bread that tasted moist, really moist, more than usual.

“This tastes funny,” I murmured.

With a swift move, my mom grabbed it from my hand. “Don’t eat that! It’s all moldy.”

Ugh!

Just last night, I took a bite of a delicious pear. And when a piece refused to disintegrate between my teeth, I realized I was chewing those pesky round labels. Why do they put them on each piece of fruit?

But my foolishness didn’t begin with eating strange stuff.

Before I knew Christ as my Lord, my problems were bigger. I chewed on ideas that weren’t sweet such as “I can do it all on my own.”

I bit on sour insecurities, reminding me I didn’t measure up.

It continued. I tasted unpleasant notions that suggested my blindness defined who I was.

And I had a plate full of lies that said my visual limitations would kill my dreams and gloom would fill my days.

I know it’s different for you.

Maybe blindness isn’t the problem you face. Instead, some other heartache or disappointment left a bitter taste in your

mouth. That's why from your lips comes the complaint that life is cruel and unfair.

You're right; it is. That's why, In Proverbs 3, God gave us these five steps so we can taste His goodness served on a silver tray called *His wisdom*.

They're five areas where wisdom becomes the only path, the only option to make life more pleasant, easier and dare I say, delightful.

1. Embrace God's wisdom in order to live a long life and enjoy prosperity. "My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments; for length of days and long life and peace will they add to you" (Prov. 3:1-2).
2. Take a deep breath and stop trying to please others. If you first love God above all and are faithful to Him, you'll gain favor with Him and favor with others too. "Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man" (Prov. 3:3-4, NIV).
3. Going around in circles, looking for answers, searching for direction? Try this instead: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and he will make your paths straight" (Prov. 3:5-6).
4. Seek God's wisdom, not your own. "Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones" (Prov. 3:7-8).
5. Emotional indigestion attacks when money dwindles and bills that pile up. But better than a hefty savings account, God has the only option to true abundance. "Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine"

(Prov. 3:9-10).

No Matter

No matter what tastes bitter right now, no matter how unfair life has turned or how much pain has invaded your days, embracing God's wisdom sets us free. It releases the toxins of doubt, worry and fear. When they're conquered, you can taste and see His goodness. The goodness of His promises that repeat: When you're down, He will lift you up. When you're frustrated, He will bring back peace. And when all seems hopeless, He will restore your faith to believe, truly believe, that triumph is yours.

Let's Pray

Father, how often I chewed on the wrong things—misconceptions, insecurities, foolishness and even hopelessness. Thank You for reaching down to rescue me with Your wisdom. In Jesus' name, I thank you.

Are you facing life with God's wisdom or your own these days?
{eoa}

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This article originally appeared at .

When You Feel Abandoned, Remember This Key Truth

“I can’t remember anything lately,” my friend said. “I think I’m losing my mind.”

Have you ever said that? Sometimes I’m tempted to think that getting older is a good excuse for all that begins to fail.

But the good news is that no matter how many years go by, there’s something that never fails, never loses its power or diminishes its impact, and that’s God’s promise that He knows you and me inside and out.

He knows you’re reading this. He’s aware of your thoughts, He observes your anxious moments and your days of sorrow.

God explains it here:

Your Name

“Quite a thought isn’t it? Your name on God’s hand. Your name on God’s lips. Maybe you’ve seen your name in some special places. On an award or diploma ... or maybe you’ve heard your name from some important people—a coach, a celebrity, a teacher. But to think that your name is on God’s hand and on God’s lips ... my, could it be?” (Max Lucado)

I know you by name. “See, I have written your name on the palms of my hands” (Isa. 49:16, NLT). You are that precious to Me. I care about every detail of your life. Start today by reading My Word: “Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine. When you go through deep waters, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you” (Isa. 43:1-2).

I see your tears. I know your thoughts. I have not forgotten your requests. When you call out My name, I am always available. "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27).

I know your name. You are not a number to Me, or a symbol, or someone lost among all the other people in this world. You belong to Me, and I know your name. Because we have such an intimate relationship, "I will give you hidden treasures, riches stored in secret places, so that you may know that I am the Lord, the God of Israel, who summons you by name" (Isa. 45:3).

(The above section entitled "Your Name" is an excerpt from Carol Kent's release, He Holds My Hand.)

Let's Pray

Father, in my moments of heartache, I know You hold my hand, and in Your hand is my name, engraved. Thank You for knowing me so personally and intimately. You know my deepest secrets and my constant worry and each longing. Thank You for knowing how to resolve it all. In Jesus' name.

How will your outlook change, knowing God is aware of every detail? {eoa}

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For more about God's loving care, check out Hope in the Desert: 3 Stories of Handling Spiritual Drought and Silence, a Charisma e-book, available for just \$.99 at this link.

Man in Near-Fatal Wreck Offers Secret to Truly Happy Life

Looking for happiness in the wrong places?

The answer is in this true story that comes from Lou Vickery's book, *Reach Beyond: How to Jump Over Hurdles and Land on Success*.

Peter Nondemand is the kind of person who makes many people feel uncomfortable. You see, he is always upbeat and positive. His optimistic thinking has led to optimistic outcomes.

Study after study shows optimistic people have more energy, make better decisions, are more productive, are less stressed. are happier. live healthier and live longer than their pessimistic counterparts.

Peter, the Optimist

Even around the office, Peter is a noted encourager. He is rarely critical, focusing on cheering others to perform better. He makes every effort to demonstrate what it means to be a positive thinker and what it takes to maintain an optimistic mindset.

On April 11, 2004, Peter was put to a test. He was involved in a terrible automobile accident where three people lost their lives.

Many broken bones and severe internal bleeding threatened his life. As medics struggled to remove him from the wreckage, rather than lament, Peter encouraged them as they went about their duties.

Soon the ambulance was at the hospital. As the medics rushed him into the emergency room, still aware of his surroundings, Peter displayed his optimistic self.

But while the doctors attended to his wounds, Peter noticed a worried look on the face of one of the nurses. He suspected that his condition was not good; her look confirmed it.

Before he was put to sleep for lifesaving surgery, these were Peter's last words, "Treat me like I'm going to live, not die."

Peter lived. And went forward with his life, being his very optimistic self.

Be Like Peter

Can we all be like Peter? Optimism is tough when, let's be real: Life stinks sometimes. How can we help but complain?

Sometimes we curse and, in our mind, and with our words, over and over again, repeat the negative details, being somewhat reckless with our tongue. But God says, "The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing" (Prov. 12:18, NIV).

Peter chose his own healing even before his accident by his ability to choose. He had the same choices you and I have—the choice to see the worst, or find the best. The choice to complain, or to comment on the good. The option to sink into the problem, or step into God's promise.

Peter's choice for optimism took him to see good things, making this verse come alive: "From the fruit of their lips people are filled with good things, and the work of their hands brings them reward" (Prov. 12:14).

Peter chose life even before his accident. He chose to live with edifying words, thoughts and attitude. We can too because "The tongue has the power of life and death" (Prov. 18:21a).

We have the power to invite happiness or sadness. A happy life is not one that's filled with positive things, but one that's empty of negativity.

Let's Pray

Father, thank You for granting me the wisdom to choose words that edify, encourage and praise You in all circumstances. In Jesus' name.

When facing adverse situations, what words come from your lips? {eoa}

Janet Perez Eckles is an international speaker and the author of four books. She has helped thousands conquer fear and bring back joy.

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How God Moved This Blind Nana From Jealousy to Joy

Shame on me. Rather than enjoying my friends' company during lunch at our favorite restaurant, traces of envy and self-pity attacked me.

"Oh, he's adorable. He looks just like his dad," one of them said. The other pulled out her cell phone, "Look at him; cake icing all over his little face. First birthdays are so much fun."

They all gushed over each picture of their grandchildren.

“He loves the books I read to him,” a friend said, “and you should see how excited he gets when I take him to the park.”

Read books? Take them to the park? I faked a smile. Inside I cursed the retinal disease that robbed my sight decades ago. Unable to see, I was destined to miss all the delights of being a grandmother.

The day soon came when I was about to find out. Hubby and I received the phone call from our son. “It’s a girl. She weighs 8 pounds, 9 ounces and has lots of black hair.”

I jumped to my feet, my heart beating fast at the good news. Hubby and I rushed to the hospital. He held my hand as we walked down the long corridors. And although he was guiding me, my steps went ahead of his.

Once in the room, I could hardly contain my squeal. “Can I hold her?”

I leaned toward the bed and my daughter-in-law placed the warm bundle in my arms.

She didn’t move, and as her tiny head rested on my arm, with gentle strokes, my fingers found her small forehead. I brushed my fingertips across her silky hair, then down to her velvety cheek.

A Thunder of Emotions

I’d never know what she looks like. I’d never see how her smile makes her face shine. I’d never know if she’s looking at me, or reaching for me.

How will she react when she learns her grandma is blind?

Tears burned my eyes. And as they fell, all in the room thought they were of joy, but the sudden reality that my

grandmother days would be filled with frustration crushed me.

Months flew by, she cooed, and giggled—a delight to my soul. Then just as she was about to turn 1, her steps began. Her daddy leaned toward me. “She’s taking one or two steps toward you.”

I extended my arms in her direction and her little hand grabbed my index finger. I drew her close, hugged her tight and twirled her in the air. “Good job, you did it!”

Weeks later, those steps multiplied, and running became her favorite thing. But when she tumbled, her whimpers tugged at me to rush over and rescue her. But without sight, I couldn’t.

‘Lord, How Will I Do This?’

And as I fought tears, God’s promise echoed in me: “Now to him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or imagine, according to the power that works in us” (Eph. 3:20).

Would His power be enough to overcome my blindness? As her whimpers came from across the room, I extended my arms toward her direction, “C’mon, sweet girl., Nana will make you feel better.”

I couldn’t go to her, but she could come to me.

When she did, I brushed her tear off her cheek. As I gave her a tight squeeze, I also embraced God’s promise that His power was indeed at work in me to do more than I imagined.

I decided to test this promise. I looked toward my son and his wife. “If you ever need me,” I hesitated, “I can keep her and take care of her.”

Would they trust me? Would they trust my care with my sight limitations? I held my breath. But their enthusiastic acceptance made my heart smile.

A Richer Life

But what made my life richer were the days I had her all to myself. I found ways to keep track of her.

I took her by the hand and sat her on my lap. "Sit still, sweet thing," I said as I pinned a couple of small jingle bells on her blouse.

She hopped down and took off. And as I expected, my ears followed the jingle telling me where she was.

With each week, each month, she learned to handle her nana. When navigating through the house, I extended my hand, and immediately, her little hand slipped into mine. She didn't know it, but she led me around.

Delighted, I let her take me any place she chose. We stopped and often sat on the floor, legs crisscrossed. That's when all my senses devoted to her. The books I read to her weren't written on paper. They were written in my own imagination.

Each created story included a message, a lesson and a new revelation of what Jesus can do.

"Did you know Jesus healed the blind?" I said, "Your nana is blind too, and Jesus healed her also, in a different way. He showed her to see with her heart."

Would she understand that concept? It didn't matter. She would have to see for herself how Jesus guides, teaches and provides.

And He did.

The Joy of Being Nana

One morning she made her usual request. "A smoothie, Nana."

I scooped her up and placed her in her high chair. Snapping the tray in place was easy enough.

Then I headed to the fridge. Using my fingertips to find the items, I pulled them out—a container of pineapple chunks, blueberries, frozen bananas and the carton of almond milk.

I placed them on the counter, and one by one dropped all ingredients in the blender, careful to add just enough almond milk.

“You’ll love this, sweet girl,” I said as I found the button to start the blender.

Little legs bounced against the high chair with excitement.

Once I poured it in her cup, cautious not to make it overflow, I inserted a straw. Then with my fingers, found the center of her tray. “Here you go, my precious.”

Her delicate hands held the cup. “Thank you, Nana,” she said in her high-pitched voice.

“No, sweet baby,” my heart wanted to say. “Thank you for showing me the joy of being your nana.”

I sang songs to her when I changed her diaper. And while I got her dressed. Sometimes, I learned that the clothes I put on her didn’t match. She didn’t seem to care. I didn’t either. We concentrated on serious playing instead.

It Wasn’t All Play

When I accidentally bumped into an object, she stopped, and in an angelic voice she asked, “You OK, Nana?”

At 20 months old, did she already know the importance of compassion?

I groped for my shoes, unable to find them.

“Nana’s shoes,” she said as she quickly found them and attempted to put them on my feet. Had she already learned to help those in need?

When she handed me something, she first called my name, then placed the item in my hand. Without me teaching her, had she learned to overcome her nana's limitations?

One afternoon, thunder roared outside, and we listened with awe. I pointed toward the sky and told her about the clouds. When the storm subsided, I scooped her in my arms and walked outside into a drizzling rain. "Look up, baby girl," I said. "That's rain. Feel how it tickles your face?"

I inhaled an exaggerated deep breath. "Smell that? That's the scent of a wet earth. It's good and fresh. God gave us the sense of smell."

Sweet Imaginations

And God had also given me a way to take her for a ride. She climbed on my back and giggled when her Nana bucked like a horse.

But there were no horses when we went to a safari adventure. Seated on my lap, I pointed up, "Look up there, in that tree, a hairy monkey is swinging from the branch."

"I see it, too," she said.

And look what's coming on this side, a tall giraffe ..."

She gave squeals with each animal we pretended to see as we rode the vehicle of our imagination.

But what was truly real was the way God showed me that love requires no sight. Bonding needs no material things. And delightful moments need nothing but a profound belief that God gives us eyes to see beyond limitations, obstacles or barriers.

We overcame them. And for me, no more feelings of envy or self-pity. Instead, with joy overflowing, she and I still sit on the couch of mutual love. And through Jesus' eyes, we both

see the wonders of this world.

Let's Pray

Father, thank you for Your compassionate heart to see what we need, when we needed it and how You'll provide. Thank You for the delightful moments You give us when we choose to see our life through Your promises. In Jesus' name, amen.

What will you accomplish with the power of God at work within you? {eoa}

Janet Perez Eckles is an international speaker and the author of four books. She has helped thousands conquer fear and bring back joy.

This article originally appeared at .

Vital Ps. 23 Encouragement for Your Parenting Journey

I sat in the passenger's seat as my friend and I headed to the mall. "Freedom," she said, "kids in school, finally a little peace."

I knew what she meant. As a blind mom of three little active boys, my job changed during the fall. No more summer days sprinkled with, I'm-bored-Mom moments.

Have I Made a Difference?

Decades flew by and now, looking back, I wonder if there's

anything I had done in those days that made a difference, taught them something worthwhile or left memories in their hearts.

Looking at my sons, now with their own families, I asked, "Hey guys, do you remember the notes I used to tape to your pillows?"

"I think I might still have some of them, mom," my oldest son said.

"I remember the notes you'd put in our lunch boxes," my middle son said. "I almost ate one of them by accident."

I grinned. But secretly, I hoped they erased memories of moments when their mom wasn't so nice. Sometimes I threw my hands up in the air and, in utter frustration, I ordered. "OK the three of you, in your room, and don't come out until you know how to behave."

Nothing Extraordinary

But even in those days of discipline, God prompted me to spend a few seconds jotting simple words on a piece of paper. I stuffed them in their lunch boxes or taped them to their pillow.

Nothing extraordinary in that gesture. Only a simple way for them to know they were loved no matter where they were.

Although my love was genuine, my job as a mom seemed overwhelming at times. I questioned my abilities, doubted my decisions and feared my inadequacies to do enough for them.

But in that season of my insecurities, God was busy watching, listening and with the pen of His love, He was writing notes to me. The note in Psalm 23 was written to carry me through my days.

God Reminded Me

He was my shepherd, I lacked nothing to make me the mom He wanted me to be.

As I sent my three little guys to school, God made me lie down in the green pastures of reassurance that they would be safe from all harm.

He led me beside the quiet waters of peace knowing His hand covered them. Drained after a long day of chores—of cooking, cleaning the kitchen, folding laundry and picking up toys, He restored my soul.

And when I wandered on the path of worry, He guided me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

When tragedies, conflict and violence filled the news, the shadow of gloom came over me. But though I was tempted to walk in the shadow of worry, I declared I would fear no evil, for God would be with me and my children. His rod and His staff would comfort me.

And while I prepared meals for the family, God reminded me that He prepared a table before me in the presence of my enemies: worry, doubt, anxiety or guilt.

God anointed my sons' heads with the oil of purity and faith; their cups would overflow. Surely goodness and love would follow me and my children all the days of our lives, and we would dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

God's note left on the pillow of our hearts carries the truth of His Word, the strength of His promise and the guarantee they will come to be.

Let's Pray

Father, thank You for lifting from my heart feelings of guilt, insecurity and blame. I praise You for filling my days with

peace, reassurance and trust in Your promises. In Jesus' name, amen.

What are God's notes telling you today? {eoa}

Janet Perez Eckles *is an international speaker and the author of four books. She has helped thousands conquer fear and bring back joy.*

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