

God Can Turn Trials Into Blessings

Are you facing trials that make you question, why me, Lord? Those trials could be relationship difficulties, financial struggles and personal challenges. They can sometimes leave you questioning God's plan for your life. No one chooses to go through trials, and have a "threshing-floor experience," it comes upon you—as a surprise.

In Judges 6, Gideon is on a threshing floor, threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. The Midianites had been cruel to the Israelites, they burned their harvest, assaulted their women and killed their people. Because of this, Gideon was hidden away, grinding out the grain. The angel of the Lord came to him saying, "Gideon, the Lord is with you, you mighty warrior." Gideon responded, "But if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? . . . But now the Lord has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian."

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Gideon is saying, where is the Lord? Isn't that exactly what we say when we're going through difficulties? When you're having a threshing-floor experience you may experience a feeling of abandonment and you may be in a season of questioning God.

In response, God said to Gideon, "Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?" In effect, God was saying, am I not on the threshing

floor with you?"

When you're on the threshing floor, God is there with you. He doesn't desert you.

Gideon continued his dialogue with God saying, "But how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family." In today's language, Gideon was saying, don't you know who I am? I can't handle this. I'm not made to handle this, my emotions can't handle it, my background didn't prepare me. God, I can't take this.

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When you're on the threshing floor, you may also say, why is this happening to me? Where is the Lord? He has abandoned me. I can't take it.

The Lord answered Gideon, "I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive." Gideon responded, "If now I have found favor in your eyes, give me a sign that it is really you talking to me." Isn't that like something you'd say to God when going through a tough time? But God, in His mercy, will give you a sign because threshing floors are God's opportunities with us.

Back to Gideon—he offered a sacrifice and the angel touched it and fire flared and consumed the meat and bread. Then God told Gideon to tear down the altar to Baal.

While on the threshing floor, you may have to pull down some of your own altars. Maybe it's things you've said you'd never do, that you've been doing. There may be things you've said you'd never do that God wants you to do. There may be false altars in your life that God wants you to tear down. It may be false pride that God wants you to tear down. You may have a big idea, but trust that God has a bigger idea for you.

Gideon pulled down those altars to Baal, and then went through some time of questioning God. Eventually, God used Gideon to be a deliverer.

What was God doing with Gideon on the threshing floor? He was making Gideon a deliverer. And that's what God will do with you on your threshing floor—make you a deliverer. The threshing floor is where your ministry is made because that's where God changes you and gets rid of the chaff (false altars). It's where He checks out your motive to make sure you're really in it for the Lord. God wants to know if you're willing to follow Him and do what He tells you to do—or are you trying to be the big name? The threshing floor is important for ministry, and all of us have a ministry.

Don't despise threshing-floor experiences. Your struggles are not in vain, but are an essential process God uses to refine, strengthen and prepare you for His greater purpose and to step into the identity the He calls you into.

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Reset Yourself: Body, Mind and Spirit

Do you need a reset button? Certified nutrition counselor and wellness expert, Laura Harris Smith, says you can detox your mind, body and spirit in 30 days—and she wrote "The 30-Day Faith Detox: Renew Your Mind, Cleanse Your Body, Heal Your Spirit" to help you do that.

Years ago, Laura had been on the brink of adrenal failure—and didn't know it. Symptom after symptom began to manifest, she visited doctors and she had lots of tests. Her thyroid was shutting down and her cholesterol was shooting up. Most of her organ systems were showing signs of irregularity. When she was finally diagnosed, Laura was told to make changes or die. "I was in stage three adrenal burnout, and stage four is when your organs shut down entirely," she explains.

What got Laura into that position was a lack of sleep. "Sleep is so important. I have a king-size life with six kids (and eight grandkids), a vibrant marriage and we pastor a church. Life is busy!" She had sleep-deprived herself to the point of sickness. "Through this I learned if you do not go to sleep, your organs will go to sleep for you."

Through the care of a master nutritionist, Laura started using food as medicine. She needed this approach because if she were given prescriptions, her failing liver could not have acted as the filter it needed to be. The plan was to use food as medicine—foods good for each specific organ. Laura was told, if you live, it will take 18 to 24 months to turn everything around. For six to eight weeks, she was on total bedrest, and in six months, she was back up on her feet.

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Laura believed she received a miracle healing because she was able to turn her situation around using the things God created on the third day of creation. "During that time, I was convinced that God has given us the tools to be healthy. We can use wellness to combat illness."

When she was battling through her illness, Laura felt that God was going to require her to write about her experience. She went back to school, became a nutritionist and now teaches others how to become healthy: body, mind and spirit.

Through her studies, Laura learned that God has color-coded our food. "The pigments give us clues to which phytonutrients they contain. Everything that's red, strawberries, red grapes and peppers, contain lycopene, which is super good for your heart. If a food has blue/purple in it, it has anthocyanin in it. Each different phytonutrient in our food does different things for specific organs.

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In 1 Corinthians 3:16, the Bible tells us, Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit? "God is so concerned with how we feed and treat our body." Laura says. "Proof that food is linked to our faith is the practice of fasting. When you remove food, something happens in your spirit, and you go to whole new place because you've denied your flesh."

While "The 30-Day Faith Detox" doesn't prescribe a fast, it accomplishes the same thing. "You're telling your flesh who's boss," Laura says. When you fast, your appetite for God increases.

You need to say about yourself what God's Word says, without faith it's impossible to please Him. But with faith and a plan, you can do a powerful, successful detox to cleanse you, body, mind and spirit.

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□ Does a Prosperous Soul Lead to Financial, Physical Prosperity?

Is it possible our financial prosperity and physical health are directly linked to the prosperity of our soul? And what constitutes a prosperous soul?

In 1977, pastor and ministry school director Greg Mohr had a cancerous mass removed from his neck and received a dismal prognosis. Right away, Mohr and his family began to pray. The Lord told him that He had already provided healing, that the cancer would die, that the devil would leave and that Greg would be healed if he would seek God and have believers pray for him. He did that and prepared a battery of tests for the next cancer surgery, which might result in removing his thyroid and voice box.

The three men who had prayed helped him to identify things in his heart—unforgiveness, unhealed abandonment and

resentment—that hindered the healing he sought. He dealt with those issues, and when the medical tests were run, no cancer was found in his body. His doctor wanted to remove Mohr's thyroid, just to be sure. But he declined.

"The Lord healed me, and I'm so thankful," Mohr says. "And He helped me to deal with those issues in my heart. The Lord has healing for others as well. God loves you and, and wants us well."

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He wrote "A Prosperous Soul" because he wants folks to know how to prosper in their souls so they can prosper in their bodies. Third John 2 (BSB) says, "Beloved, I pray that in every way you may prosper and enjoy good health, as your soul also prospers." That verse was the genesis of his book.

"I've read that Scripture over 150 times, but when I was reading a new Bible (without my notes), God amplified the words 'even as your soul prospers,'" Mohr says. "It was like bells and whistle went off."

Mohr realized his financial prosperity and physical health were linked to the prosperity of his soul.

"I got upset because I had never heard anybody teach this," he explains. "Then the Lord said, 'I'm teaching you now.'"

This concept became a passion for Greg because as a pastor, he wanted to see people walk in health and prosper. And a lot of the people he pastored were sick and broke. He made a study and went through the Bible to determine what constitutes a prosperous soul.

There are several keys to attaining a prosperous soul—coming to Jesus for rest, magnifying the Lord, removing judgements and having a soul anchored in hope.

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These days, people have their hope tethered to the most unstable things, and they truly need to learn how to anchor their souls in hope. People who are sick and broken have poverty in their soul. If folks have drama and dysfunction in their relationships, have a victim mentality, whine constantly and complain about others, they have issues in their soul. They could even be born again and have a right spirit with God, but something is wrong in the soul that doesn't line up with their spirit.

On the other hand, people who are disciplined followers of Jesus experience prosperity and health—a natural byproduct of a prosperous soul. Understanding this truth will motivate you to shift your focus from seeking financial prosperity and physical healing to developing a prosperous soul as your first priority.

When we value what Jesus did for us more than what people have done to us, our soul becomes sweet. That's what God wants, and Jesus paid the price for that.

You can prosper and walk in health.

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Jenny Weaver: God Can Turn Messes Into Miracles

No problem you face is too big or too small for Jesus to solve. The Good News of the gospel has the power to set captives free and is available to you right now.

Do you have loved ones who need to break strongholds? Maybe they're on drugs, are homeless or have walked away from God. Jenny Weaver offers hope and wrote "The Sound of Freedom" to help others access a deeper, more satisfying relationship with

God—to experience personal freedom.

Weaver was raised in a strict Christian home. Going to church regularly was a part of her life, but there was also a lot of dysfunction that shaped the way Weaver viewed Christians. By the time she turned 13, she decided she didn't want to be a part of the church because she saw her parents do one thing on Sunday and be mean the rest of the week. She didn't feel loved.

The enemy used her feelings to deceive her. Weaver felt bullied at school and bullied at home. She became depressed and started to cut herself. The music she listened to further promoted dark feelings, and she ended up using drugs and practicing witchcraft. She became hateful and was a mean, bitter liar.

This sweet little girl who was brought up in the church and baptized in the Holy Spirit at the age of 6 was transformed by the enemy. She hated God, her parents and her siblings. At 17, she was living on the streets, homeless, on drugs, practicing witchcraft and far from the Lord. For 9 1/2 years, she was in and out of rehab and jail, living on the streets, until God took hold of her.

One day when she was pregnant, homeless, using methamphetamines and with a drug-dealer husband, Weaver felt her child kicking. She realized she needed help and recalled years earlier when her mother had said, "If you need help, call on the name of Jesus."

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She says she cried out, "God, help me!" God stepped in, and He

rescued her.

“Prodigals come home. I’m a prodigal, and I came home,” Weaver explains. “It doesn’t matter how long your loved one has been out there; it doesn’t matter what they’re involved in; they could have even sworn off God. But there’s never been a person who is too far gone for the love and restorative power of Jesus Christ. If He did it for me, He can do it for them.”

When she returned to the Lord, it looked ugly and messy. “I didn’t feel anything—no goosebumps or lightening, no angel appeared. But you don’t have to feel something to know that the Word of God is working.”

The Lord said that whosoever calls on His name shall be saved (see Rom. 10:13). And that’s what happened. “He ripped me out of that situation, and I was rescued,” Weaver says. “I was arrested days later, and that was the best thing for me.” Being arrested meant she was able to eat and get care for her unborn daughter who, months later, was born free of drugs. “Today my daughter is a powerful girl who loves and worships the Lord.”

For Weaver, the drugs, hatred, rage, alternative lifestyle and witchcraft all were symptoms of a much deeper issue: She suffered from rejection, and she had to go through the process of deliverance. It’s not an easy procedure. “You don’t just put on a Jesus-smile and go on your way,” she says. “You have to call on Jesus daily and surrender so He can start pulling bad stuff out and putting what you need into your life.”

When she was a teen, her father was sent to prison. She hadn’t see him, and didn’t want to see him, for 17 years. One day while she was homeschooling her daughter, she got a call from a hospital saying her father had been released from prison but was close to death. Weaver explains, “I said, ‘I’m sorry. I don’t know him; call another sibling.’ But the Holy Spirit said, ‘Go to him!’”

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She didn't want to face the difficult memories from her childhood, but she went. Standing outside the hospital room, she felt powerless and was flooded with emotions—remembering her father leaving, not providing, times when the family had no food for days. Her husband's encouragement helped her walk into the room. Her father was unconscious, and she ran to him and said, "Daddy, I'm here."

When Weaver crossed the threshold in that hospital room, God brought her instant restoration. "Every bit of bitterness and unforgiveness I'd been holding on to was removed by God," she says. For the next few days, she sat with him, singing Scriptures over him, and on the third day, he woke up. Until his death several months later, Jenny cared for her father. During that time, he told her, "You're beautiful, I love you and I'm proud of you." Those were words she'd never heard from him before. God did that.

Today her life is radically different from the days when she lived on the streets. God has taught her how to sing the Word, how to sing prophetically, and now she travels, preaching and teaching the Good News. She tells church people, "If God did it for me, He can do it for you."

Do you need freedom? Submit to God and do whatever He wants you to do, day by day, and have faith. As Weaver says, God can turn messes into miracles.

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You Can Overcome Anxiety's Grip

Do you have anxiety, stress or fears? Do you struggle with panic attacks or know anyone who does?

Dr. Michelle Bengtson is a board-certified clinical neuropsychologist, which is a neurologist, psychologist and psychiatrist all wrapped into one person. She is the person you would seek out with a question of any potential brain

inefficiency. Bengtson sees patients who struggle with ADHD, learning disabilities, head injuries, stroke and those trying to figure out if someone is struggling from depression or dementia.

She wrote "Breaking Anxiety's Grip," and what makes her an expert in the subject is that she not only seen it from the professional side, but she has also walked through the valley of anxiety and found freedom from it.

She grew up in a family that was filled with anxiety. Bengtson's anxiety looked like crying on her way to work every day, feeling as if she had a boulder in her stomach and being unsure if she were even capable of handling the day. One day, she got to the point where she turned to the Lord and said, "This is not from You. There has to be a better way. Show me."

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She says, "I think a lot of people don't realize that they struggle with anxiety, which can be anything from thinking, I'm just worried about ___ or I'm just thinking about ___."

For Bengtson, anxiety showed up the most when she started thinking, "What if?" It could be the mildest thing, from "What if I'm not on time?" to "What if I lose a loved one?" Anxiety runs the gamut. People don't think they deal with anxiety because they look at the catastrophic and think, "I don't deal with that." Anxiety, worry and fear happen anytime we're not putting our trust in God.

There are a lot of different contributors to anxiety, and it's not possible to fully identify the cause in any person's life. Things that happen to us can cause anxiety, and if there is a

history of anxiety, especially with parents or grandparents, statistically there is a greater likelihood that someone may experience anxiety. But there also are environmental factors, modeling and well-intentioned parents who overcaution children ("Don't touch that; you'll get hurt."), which can fuel anxiety when the child doesn't understand where their parents are coming from.

We also have the enemy of our soul trying to cause anxiety. We cannot underestimate the impact of the enemy. Scripture says, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind," (1 Tim. 1:7, NKJV). There is a spirit of fear, and the enemy would love to get us entangled in worry, fear and anxiety so we focus more on our circumstances than on God.

Bengtson doesn't think we give enough emphasis to the importance of spiritual warfare. When you encounter spiritual warfare, you do not need to give in to worry, fear and anxiety; you can rest in God's peace. Even though you might be taken by surprise, realize that your circumstance did not take God by surprise. You can put your trust in Him.

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When you feel fear or anxiety creeping in, Bengtson says, "Pay attention to the voice you are listening to. Are you listening to the voice of the enemy, are you rehashing prior experiences that brought about fear and anxiety or are you listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit, who has come to remind us of all truth? God is faithful. If you have gotten through every difficult circumstance in your life, that is God's faithfulness."

The what-if questions can overwhelm you. Look at Adam and Eve in the garden. After they had eaten the fruit, they probably

said, "What if God sees us in our nakedness?"—as if God already hadn't created them naked and unashamed. "That's how the enemy works," Bengtson says. "The enemy tempts us to get into worry, fear and anxiety, and then he shames us for it. He doesn't play fair."

God wants to break the worry, fear and anxiety trap that plagues us. God gives us power, His perfect love and a sound mind, which are our three crucial weapons. When you receive Christ, His power comes upon you, and He tells you that you can do even greater things than He—it's not in our own strength or power. It's the power of the Holy Spirit. There is power just calling on the name of Jesus, just saying, "Jesus, help me." There is power in praying with the expectation that He will answer. We are perfectly loved, not because of what we do, but because of whose we are.

You can learn tools to cope with the crushing emotional burden of anxiety and reclaim God's peace as a way of life so you can break anxiety's grip. Worry, fear and anxiety are not our portion; God's peace is.

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You Don't Have to Be Trapped by Trauma

Have you struggled with trauma, or do you have a loved one who did? Healing from trauma can be deep and complex. Treatment can include medication and counseling. However, understanding the role of faith in the healing process can be lifechanging.

Almost everybody can relate to trauma issues. Seventy percent of the population has a documented traumatic event in their life: Either their own life has been threatened, or they witnessed a tragedy. There is also trauma that is not necessarily tied to one event—such as growing up in an abusive household, having an abusive marriage or growing up in poverty or wartime. Or it could be the tragedy of losing a loved one and experiencing the deep pangs of grieving. These things affect us physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually, and that's why Dr. Tim Murphy wrote "The Christ Cure," which

guides people out of darkness and onto a path of restoration. Inspired by the apostle Paul, "The Christ Cure" helps those affected by PTSD, trauma and tragedy.

Traumatic brain injuries can change the architecture of the brain—how well cells function. Those changes can contribute to depression and anxiety. Living a life of depression and anxiety can also change the brain. The chemicals in your brain can cause a loop where you keep reliving trauma.

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The amygdala is the fight/flight center of the brain. You can compare the amygdala to a smoke detector, which is loud and alarming. A smoke detector doesn't know the difference between a house on fire or Grandma blowing out 80 birthday candles. The amygdala can trigger a fight or run mode, which can result in a downward spiral of awful thoughts of guilt and shame.

Experiencing trauma can affect family, friends and employment. People may either reinforce your trauma or run away from you.

People who have prolonged traumatic effects and do better are those who regularly practice religion, are involved in a community and are aware of their own vulnerabilities. The symptoms of PTSD can be panic attacks, anxiety, depression, broken relationships and flashback memories. Many times, people with trauma will push others away and isolate.

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Unfortunately, people can get stuck in trauma, but there is hope. God heals, He sent Jesus to set us free to redeem us and give us hope. "The Christ Cure" is a handbook for the broken and those who love them. Hope is always on the horizon.

You can be victorious over trauma. The trauma can become a source of becoming bigger, faster, smarter. If you look at the apostle Paul, who had multiple traumas, you'll see that he was able to turn his trauma into a source of hope. He would see trauma as a means to understand more about himself, his relationship with Jesus and why Jesus did what He did, why the Holy Spirit is there and how all that feeds together to give him hope. With all Paul experienced, he was not overcome by PTSD. He should have gotten an eating disorder, been overcome with anxiety or depression, aged beyond his years, suffered chronic and acute illnesses, friendless, become involved in vice—but he wasn't. Paul was victorious because he felt tremendous hope. He'd witnessed the risen Christ and fully believed.

We can do that too! You can experience resilience, resistance, recovery and renewal. Every day you should build resilience, choose self-discipline and have a goal. Resistance will help you to press on, endure, persist and have courage. Recovery begins with hope and also includes dealing with guilt versus shame and forgiveness versus condemnation. The final component is renewal—being transformed by the renewing of your mind.

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Christmas Celebrates Immanuel

What's not to love about Christmas? Christmas is the special time when we celebrate that Jesus came to be Immanuel, God with us—our healer, the Prince of Peace and our everlasting hope.

Christmas can be an awfully busy season, too. Sarah Bowling and her daughter Isabell discuss how you can remain grounded during what can be a hectic time of year.

Isabell's advice is to "Get into the Word and read all the Christmas Scriptures. Especially Isaiah 9:6, one of the

prophesies about Jesus. “For a Child will be born to us, a Son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.”

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The Creator of the entire universe came as a newborn into human existence. “This is an indication of the impossible, being made possible,” says Sarah. “What seems impossible for humans, is possible for God.”

The first description of Jesus in Isaiah 9:6 is “Wonderful Counselor.” Everyone knows there can be loaded memories associated with Christmas—an accident, an illness, a betrayal, a death. When we think about God as the Wonderful Counselor, we understand that He can help us navigate a difficult season because He is the ultimate Counselor. He bore all our trauma, our mental health challenges, our pain and our sorrow on the cross. He’s the one who can speak to that spirit of despair and hopelessness that can show up at Christmas. You can invite God into your place of despair and depression and find healing. Jesus can relate to your earthly struggles and give you wisdom and comfort.

Isabell recalls, “One of my favorite Christmas traditions is looking at Christmas lights as a family. I love to see how all the homes are beautifully decorated. And I always look forward to going out as a family on Christmas day for an Italian dinner.”

“But Jesus is the reason for the season,” Sarah says. “After ‘Wonderful Counselor,’ the next description for Jesus is ‘Mighty God.’”

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Isabell explains, "The Hebrew words for 'Mighty God' tell us that God is physically strong with fortitude and lasting strength, and He is capable to supply our needs. The opposite of strength is weakness. The Bible has a lot to say about weakness—mostly, where we are weak, He is strong." God can be the mighty God in your Christmas and for every day.

Isaiah 9 also talks about God as our Eternal Father. Relationships can be complicated with our earthly family, but thinking of "Eternal Father" grounds you in the reality that you are God's child. "God, who is love, is infinite and everlasting. You'll never run out of the infinite love of God." Sarah says. "You simply can't outrun God's compassion and love."

Scripture also tells us that Jesus is your Prince of Peace. Christmas often can be a less than peaceful time with families. There could be conflict or strife. "But Jesus came to bring peace," Isabell points out. "Peace in your home, in your family, in your workplace and even in the malls. The Prince of Peace can bring you *shalom* peace, which is wholeness. Sometimes you might feel like you are lacking, that there's a missing peace. You can ask Jesus, the Prince of Peace, to come and bring you the wholeness and peace you need in your heart and your mind.

But the most important gift at Christmastime that you can give yourself is a personal relationship with Jesus, your Immanuel.

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Transform Curses Into Blessings

Marilyn Hickey got together with her daughter and granddaughter, Sarah Bowling and Isabell Bowling, to discuss healing wounds of the past, transforming curses into blessings and turning defeat into victory.

Marilyn's book, "Breaking Generational Curses," explains that a key component to breaking generational curses is the truth that you don't have to be under a curse. With Jesus, we have the power of being under that blessing. In Hebrews 6:14 (NKJV), the Bible tells us, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you."

"There are promises that go with the blessing, and we need to speak them," Marilyn says. She encourages everyone to start their day with a blessing and watch what God does all day.

Isabell elaborated, "That's important because if you receive that blessing for yourself, you are breaking that curse for your children and your grandchildren. But you have to receive it for yourself first."



Get your copy of Alexander Paganis' "The Secret to Generational Curses" on today!

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In the Bible, we see David's big weakness is women. He didn't deal with his sin. He wasn't up front about it until a prophet confronted him to bring him into repentance. "Because he didn't deal with that issue, it was an issue for his sons." Isabell says. "But on the other side, we see blessings as well. We can inherit curse or we can inherit blessings." For instance, Timothy, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all received generational blessings/covenants.

In the Bible, a generational blessing is seen with David. "If you study Bible characters, you'll see how the blessings go as well as how the curses go," Marilyn says. You don't have to be under a curse because you are living under a blessing, she explains. "I speak blessings over my day, and it's wonderful."

Isabell has been the recipient of generational blessing.

“Speaking your confessions over yourself is something that Mimi started and you [Sarah] continued, and that’s something that I do.” As a child, driving to school every day, Isabell recalls that Sarah would recite confessions and blessings over Isabell and her brothers. “That’s powerful—getting into the habit of holiness and inviting the Holy Spirit into your everyday life. That is a blessing you can give to all generations.” Isabell says.

When she was a young Christian, Marilyn’s father had felt inferior. She used to start her day saying, “I can’t be under a curse, I am under a blessing.” When Marilyn’s son was in his early teens, he told her, “You think I can’t do anything. And because you think it, I think it.”

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“That was very frightening to me,” Marilyn recounts. “I thought, what am I putting into my children and grandchildren? I’m putting a curse on my own children. So I began to speak promises on a daily basis, and I made my son speak them as well. We’d say verses like, ‘I can do all things through Jesus Christ.’ If you were to ask him today, I think he could recite those promises.”

Isabell sees the connection between her great-grandfather’s inferiority and her uncle’s attitude. “Mimi, you were very quick to cut that curse off once you saw it,” she says. “You cut off the root of that curse and replaced it with Bible truths.”

You need to consider what God says. At one time, there was a point when Marilyn felt she had a weak heart because her grandfather had heart issues. Her father had mental illness, and Marilyn was struggling. But you can overcome those curses. “God helped me by having me speak what He said about me.”

Marilyn says. "I began speaking Scripture, 'I can do all things' and 'I'm more than a conqueror. I began speaking things that were not as though they were, and that changed my life."

Sometimes we believe because previous generations had issues and problems, we will have them as well. But God is your heavenly Father, and you're made in the image of your heavenly Father. God, as your heavenly Father, replaces the deception and distortion that might have been passed on to you from previous generations. You too can turn a curse into a blessing.

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Marilyn Hickey, and her mom, Sarah Bowling. After graduating from Oral Roberts University in 2023, Isabell joined the Marilyn & Sarah Ministries team, where she stepped into a powerful teaching ministry with her family.

Discover Joy in Generosity

Brian Kluth is all about having joy, being a generous person and sharing that joy with others. He wasn't always like that, having grown up very materialistic and selfish. "I was a taker, not a giver," he says. He would also take things from his family and from his employer. In Brian's words, "I had sticky fingers."

When he was 21, Kluth came to know Christ, and his life changed forever. He found that by being open-handed in a tight-fisted world, you'll have joy in your life. Ephesians 4:28 (NKJV) says, "Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need."

"Christ transformed my life, and He gave me greater joy in my giving than I ever got in my taking and my getting," he explains. "The joy came in not what I could get, but what I could give."

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As Kluth began to study the Bible, he discovered there are many verses on finances. As he continued to study, God changed his heart and his practices. "I studied what the Bible said about finances and began to apply it," he says. Ezra 7:10 talks about setting your heart to learn, practice and teach

the law of the Lord, and he wanted to be someone who learned, practiced and taught. "I began to teach seminars, preach and write biblically based materials to get that message out," he says. Today, his materials are available in 40 different languages worldwide, and thousands of churches have distributed them to help families understand the biblical principles of finances and generosity.



Order your copy of "The Generosity Journey" by Greg Locke on today!

He discusses the time he had some financial challenges. His income was down, and his expenses were up. He decided he would give funds to a ministry in Africa. "I was facing a pile of [financial] needs, and those needs existed, but I told God that I'm going to give in faith and honor Him with what I have," he says. "I knew that ultimately, He would take care of my needs." It was an act of faith to give in light of those challenges. Even though he gave with a shaking hand, he trusted God with his future and his finances.

In all his giving, he has discovered that God is his provider. "He's bigger than a paycheck, which is great," Kluth says. "But He can provide a discount for an item you're looking for, or someone can give you the thing you're needing, or someone can come alongside you and help you or, out of the blue, bless you." There are many ways God can move into the picture, and it's not always with cash or a paycheck.

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Once his teenage son needed new tires for his truck, and he advised him, "You need to pray for any need you have, and God will lead and guide you." They prayed, went online and found the exact tires that were needed. The tires were a year old,

so instead of paying \$800, they were only \$125. His son saw God meet his need.

When Kluth has taught in churches about generous living, donations have increased, "But the goal is not the giving in the church," he says. "The goal is the person's heart. When someone gets the understanding that God wants them to be generous, their life changes, and thus their giving changes: to the church, to missions and to the needy. When someone gets hold of generosity in their spirit, it changes their life, their world and the world of the people they give to.

He explains, "If you don't learn to be generous in your finances, you'll never understand what generosity is all about. But once you learn to be generous with finances, then your whole world opens up. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you."

As believers, we're called to be generous—in our time, finances, abilities and businesses. We are to be generous and bless others. As Christians, we're to live in a world of receiving and sharing, not buying and keeping.

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Names of God Minister to Your Needs

Did you know God has 19 names? Each of these names reveals something new and exciting about God's character that can minister specifically to your needs.

Marilyn Hickey, along with her daughter Sarah Bowling and granddaughter Isabell Bowling, discuss the glory of knowing Jehovah Jireh, our provider, and knowing our right standing with God, Jehovah Tsidkenu.

The name of God that deals with provision is Jehovah Jireh, our provider—which brings us peace, joy, favor—whatever our need is. In your life, you may have a lack of finances, wisdom, favor, direction, resources or energy, but Jehovah Jireh will provide.

Isabell says she relies on Jehovah Jireh every day. “There was a time when I was fundraising for a mission trip, and I was \$3,000 short,” she explains. “I was 16 at the time and didn’t have \$3,000 on hand. I prayed and sent out ministry letters, and it was getting to the point where if I didn’t have the money, I was going to be off the team. The night before the deadline, I received a check in the mail for \$3,000. That was the first time the Lord had provided financially for me.”

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That provision represented a destiny-changing moment. “That trip ended up changing my life, setting me on a trajectory to where I am today,” she says.

Seeing God work in your life is amazing. “Jehovah Jireh is growing your faith for more and more provision,” Isabelle says. “He will supply all your needs—today, tomorrow and in the future.”

When she thinks of the Lord our provider, Sarah Bowling recalls the time when Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac. “He’s got Isaac tied up on the altar, he’s got the knife and he’s about ready to sacrifice Isaac—and he still has confidence that God will be his provision,” she says. “This is the first time we see Jehovah Jireh in the Bible.”

Marilyn adds, “Sometimes God brings us to the end of ourselves so we can trust Him. And He gives us bigger miracles. In the story of Abraham and Isaac, the big miracle was the deliverance, the ram in the thicket. Abraham and Isaac had to trust God, or sink.”

In the story, Abraham tells his servants, “I and the lad will go and worship, and we will come back to you’” (see Gen. 22:4). Sarah says, “I find that so encouraging that Abraham believed God, even though he was supposed to sacrifice Isaac.”

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“What faith Abraham had, and what relief he must have felt,” says Isabell. “God had Abraham down to the wire. Isaac must have been freaked out. But at the last second, the Lord provided.”

Jehovah Tsidkenu, another name of God, means “the Lord is our righteousness.” “There are times when we don’t feel holy or right with God.” Marilyn says. “But He is our righteousness. We are righteous in Him. We might not feel righteous, but He is our righteousness.”

Isabell explains, “In Hebrew, *Tsidk* is ‘righteous’ and *enu* is ‘for us.’ So, it means the Lord is our righteousness. Righteousness is right living. It’s what happens after you give your life to Christ. When you repent, you turn righteous. It’s an identity thing. Righteousness is not having to work hard to be deserving; it’s a byproduct of salvation.

“When we say the Lord is our righteousness, it means you don’t have to be in right living on your own volition, and you don’t have to work to earn your salvation,” she adds. “You live a righteous life by allowing Him to live through you. Many people have struggles with addiction—pornography, alcohol, drugs—the Lord wants to heal you of that because that is not who you are. It shouldn’t feel like a burden to live righteously, but a joy because you get to partner with the Lord daily, making decisions.”

The enemy is a liar, but God is present with you. God is infinite, and there is no need you can have that God cannot occupy and transform.

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