

Your Spirit-Filled Salve for Rejection's Sharp Sting

Warnings are vital. They prepare you for what's to come and can reroute you toward safety to help you avoid danger or even make better plans.

Jesus issued many warnings to His followers.

In His compassion, He never shied away from truth. He spoke plainly many times, wanting to prepare His disciples for what lay ahead.

"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. But because you are not of the world, since I chose you out of the world, the world therefore hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My words, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have had sin. But now they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates Me hates My Father also. If I had not performed among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin. But now have they seen and hated both My Father and Me. But that the word which is written in their law might be fulfilled, "They hated Me without a cause" (John 15:18-25).

Our great High Priest, the one who is well acquainted with us and our weakness, is familiar with our experiences of rejection. We can take comfort in this truth. Jesus has experienced what it's like to be rejected by men, to be

counted out, to be unwanted, to see a quick demise to the midst of popularity surrounding His earthly ministry.

There had been a time when others had flocked to Him, seeking miracles, food, notoriety or even entertainment. But at the end of His life, amid two thieves, the Lamb slain before the foundations of this world kept His focus on His future as He entered that familiar terrain that He was accustomed to inhabiting—rejection.

Hunted by King Herod as a newborn, attacked and demeaned by His elders during His ministry, He was slandered and plotted against, and in the moment of His death, He was mocked by those with military control and separated from His Father. It may seem shocking, but the one who endured rejection throughout His life on earth identifies with His followers when we're rejected, not because of what occurred during His time on earth, but because this is what He still experiences on a daily basis.

Even though Jesus is King of kings, Lord of all lords and the greatest of the great, He is still the one Isaiah referred to in chapter 53 as "despised and rejected of men" (Isa. 53:3a). We respect our King; we follow Him. But at times, we overlook the truth that He is a King appointed by God, not a leader elected by popular opinion. This truth further underscores the stability of our future and is a clear indicator of the impending arrival of His kingdom. Jesus has all power and all authority. And yet, He is constantly rejected, slandered, maligned, mocked and abhorred every day.

When we are rejected because of our faith, we are following in Christ's footsteps. Whether the hurt comes from a family member, friend, loved one or acquaintance, the Lord is present and is prepared to carry us through the difficulty.

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:10).

The rejection still hurts, but the Lord makes it clear that it is not to be a surprise to us.

“The world does not know us, because it did not know Him” (1 John 3:1).

Amidst the hurt and rejection of those closest to us, we have a Father who accepts us, a friend who’s lived through and identifies with our pain and a Comforter who desires to bring us into healing.

Our God has continually proven His desire and ability to choose the small and weak things of this world to confound the wise. The One who chose David when his resume was sparse, who called to Peter when his best efforts were lacking, and reached out for Paul when his reputation was the antithesis of holy, also chose you. Time and time again, Jesus reaches out to every heart, knowing there is a chance He may be rejected, but that doesn’t keep Him from asking. Our God asks and keeps asking.

He is so unlike us.

When we’ve been wounded, there is always temptation to draw back, to view the offender as an opponent, an enemy. We reinforce the doors that keep others out as we reassess who needs to have access to our hearts. Self-preservation sets in as we seek a place of safety. We nurse the pain and justify the distance.

Although boundaries are healthy, bringing our emotions and wounded hearts before the Lord in order to receive healing must be the main focus. He alone is our place of safety. While keeping others out may prevent that person from causing further wounding, it’s not going to guarantee healing or that someone else won’t injure that same area.

In areas of hurt, even experiences that have happened long

ago, there is discomfort and pain, but there is also opportunity for a cure to be applied to the problem. As followers of Jesus, we are in covenant with a Redeemer who is able to transform every situation as He cleanses us, heals us and makes us whole.

As followers of Christ, we are in relationship with the Trinity, are able to enjoy unhindered access to Almighty God—and this changes everything.

We Have a Father

God is clearly a Creator. It's obvious. We see it all around us season after season, all around the world—in the sky, the sea, the vegetation. But before God ever created any of those things, He existed outside of time as a Father. This powerful God calls Himself our Father. When others reject us and rebuff us, we can remain confident in the one who chose us before the foundations of the world to be holy and blameless before Him. When others desert us, our Father remains unshakeable, lifting our heads to see His character has not changed. Even in the aftermath of rejection, He is for you, and no one can be against you.

The future He has secured for you is to still available, even in the midst of wounded emotions. His desire for His children to overcome and walk in wholeness and healing is what He offers to anyone who has called upon His Son. The God who can do anything, and make anything, desires you and desires to love you through the good, the bad, the painful and disparaging moments of life.

We Have a Friend

Our God has promised to never leave or forsake us. In those moments when the very real sting of rejection arises, we can remember our Savior's words. He gives beauty for the ashes of lost relationships, dead dreams, trampled aspirations and hope that seems to have been deferred and strangled by

circumstances. Jesus binds up broken hearts. This is His area of expertise. His healing hands are always extended and available to His followers, inviting us to come to Him when we are weak and weary and receive His rest. Jesus' compassion and desire remain to set all things right, and that includes our emotions, perspective and relationships.

We Have a Comforter

The third member of the Trinity is not only powerful, but remains our fearless, ever-present help during the most trying times. He makes Himself readily available to teach the followers of God, reminding us of all that Jesus taught. He also calls Himself our counselor and helper. In times of very real pain and turmoil, He stands ready to remind us of truth and shine light on the pathway of healing. He reassures us. Even when others condemn us and back away, He remains steady, committed to guiding us into all truth. He is with us. When others hurt us, reject us and leave us, He continues to joyfully reside within, bringing the healing balm of truth to our souls and enabling us to love like Jesus despite trauma and setbacks.

Although rejection is a common occurrence in this life, we have a cure for its painful sting in the one who has drawn us into covenant. He sees all, knows all. He was present when harsh words were spoken and when relationships were broken beyond human repair.

In those moments, when we were unwanted by others, we've always been wanted by God. He created us because He wanted us. When we've been rejected by those we've loved most, Jesus reminds us that we are fully accepted by Him. When we cease to be enough for others, our Father speaks words of truth over our hurting hearts. His Spirit reassures us of truth, "even before time, you were all I ever wanted." {eoa}

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Your Supernatural Secret to Walking in Faith

I have a confession to make. Even though I've lost 250 pounds, weight loss is not the most important thing in my life. And I don't think it should be yours either, no matter how much weight you have to lose.

Following God

Following what God is telling us, showing us and where He is leading us should be our No. 1 objective. God will use anything in our lives to bring us to the place that we understand that truth.

As I look back at my journey, I realize God used the biggest obstacle in my life to lead me to what I should have been doing all along—following Him without question. He even rewarded me for following Him by showing me how to lose over 250 pounds.

He rewards those who diligently and earnestly seek Him (see Heb. 11:6), but I didn't realize that was what I was doing. I just thought I was losing weight to save my life, which was part of God's purpose for sure.

God's main objective, though, is what I needed to understand. More than that, I needed to understand why God had to reinforce it to me in the first place.

I Am Weak, But He Is Strong

Somewhere I had gotten off the track. I had begun to rely on my own self-effort to get me through life. I had stopped understanding that "when I am weak [in human strength], then I am strong [truly able, truly powerful, truly drawing from God's strength]" (2 Cor. 12:10, AMP).

I had to come to the end of myself to understand that God's strength is the only thing that could help me. All along, He wanted me to rely on Him, but I thought I was self-sufficient. Of course, I reasoned this was because He made me that way.

I didn't understand that I am only self-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency. On our own we can do a lot, but when we rely on the power of the Holy Spirit, anything is possible!

Trusting God

Getting to that point of totally relying on God has been the best part of this journey. Understanding I can trust Him to lead me is the crucial issue.

To walk in faith is difficult. It means we aren't relying on what we can see, feel, taste, touch or hear. We are relying on the power of an invisible force to lead us.

The problem is we operate in a very physical realm. The spiritual is difficult for us to understand. Many times, things in our childhood have made us feel we can't really totally trust God to lead us. So we figure out ways to get what we want.

Over-Compensating

We over-compensate for our felt inadequacies. We become

workaholics, perfectionists or control freaks. We feel the stress and the emotional weight of trying hard to get everything done and done right. We self-medicate with food, alcohol, drugs, sex, gambling and any number of other things.

We are one of the most overworked societies ever to live on this planet, and yet we are also one of the most unhealthy physically.

It's the cry that Paul defined so well, when he said, "For the good I desire to do, I do not do, but the evil I do not want is what I do" (Rom. 7:19, MEV).

We are caught in a rut. We want out but it feels impossible for that to ever happen. Who will rescue us from this body of death? Thanks be to God, who delivers us through Jesus Christ.

Our Deliverer

He delivers us when we want to be delivered. When we will do anything and everything it takes to get free. When we will seek and knock until we find the answer. I knocked on every door until I found someone who could lead me by the hand and help me see where I had gone off track and then, ask me the right questions to reconnect with God and get back on that faith walk.

Because someone helped lead me there, I now am able to do the same for others. I love coaching others. It feels a lot like paying it forward to be able to work one on one with someone who is ready, really ready, to cast off the baggage and go all the way with God. {eoa}

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The Life-changing Truth About the Baptism of the Holy Spirit

You believe Jesus is Lord, you attend weekly services at your local Christian fellowship, you read the Bible and even memorize Scriptures. Yet, something is missing. You begin to question your walk with the Lord. And with quite a bit of delusion, you have come to the conclusion that something is missing and there has got to be more to Christianity than what you have.

A young man in Austin, Texas came to this point of delusion with his daily walk with the Lord. He was raised in a denominational church that taught him this was it. And even though he realized that his salvation in Jesus Christ is a great gift and his entrance into eternal life in heaven, something was missing to walk out his faith on this earth. And he reached the point where he knew there had to be more to Christianity. He cried out to God and said, *"Enough is enough!"* He accepted an invitation to come to a healing conference being held with another fellowship that weekend. And this is where I met this young man.

This young man had heard the Word preached before, but never

with the demonstration of power that he read about in the Bible. And when he came into the presence of the Holy Spirit it made him cry out all the harder for more—more of God. He wanted it all, not just part.

I offered to minister the baptism of the Holy Spirit to those who had never received this precious gift before. He came forward, and even though this was all new to him, he was ready to receive from God what had been missing all these years. I placed my hand upon him and baptized him in the Holy Spirit. And this young man not only started to pray in tongues, but he fell to the floor, and his spirit cried out with great sorrow and joy. Sorrow for what he had lost during all these years because he was taught that the workings of the Holy Spirit had been done away with. And he also sobbed for joy because at this moment, he stepped into a fullness with God he had never known before.

Another man had been in the same denomination for many years and was furious when he first learned the truth about the Holy Spirit. He felt he had been robbed, and he had. But since then, he has begun to walk in the fullness of the Spirit and even ministers healing to the sick with success.

These are both common responses when God's people first receive the truth about the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

The false doctrine that teaches the Holy Spirit, His gifts and power are done away with causes great harm and suffering to the body of Christ. And that's exactly what the enemy wants. He desires God's people to walk in defeat and discouragement. He is so bent upon our destruction that he authored this slanderous lie against the Spirit of God.

Here is the evidence that the baptism of the Holy Spirit, His gifts and His power are for today.

1. The Holy Bible says that the Scriptures are God-breathed, and they will endure forever. Do you believe

the Holy Bible is God's Word? I do. And because I believe the Word of God I walk successfully in the baptism of the Holy Spirit, His gifts, and in His power. And you can too if you will believe His word.

- "All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17).
- "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God shall stand forever" (Isa. 40:8).
- "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away." Mt. 24:35.

2. God is truthful. Do you believe God lies to you? Or do you believe He is truthful in every way? I believe God speaks only the truth, and because of this, His truth sets me free. I am not bound to religious lies conjured up by Satan. I believe Him when He speaks of the benefits of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

- "Your word is true from the beginning, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever" (Ps. 119:160).
- "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free" (John 8:32).
- "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth" (John 17:17).

3. God tells us that He does not change, this includes the Holy Spirit, the baptism of the Holy Spirit and all of His gifts. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. Do you believe this? I do. And because I believe this I have the assurance that no matter what happens in today's world, God is stationary and remains to be my foundation in this life.

- "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8).

- “For I am the Lord, I do not change” (Mal. 3:6a).
 - “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no change or shadow of turning” (James 1:17).
4. Concerning the baptism of the Holy Spirit, here are a few verses found in the Bible.
- ““He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.’” By this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believe in Him would receive. For the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:38-39).
 - ““Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God” (Rom. 8:26-27).
 - “Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all who are far away, as many as the Lord our God will call’” (Acts 2:38-39).
5. He said that when the Holy Spirit comes upon us, we would have His power. Is your life filled with the power of the Holy Spirit? Or is your walk with the Lord lame? If it’s the latter, what are you going to do about it?
- “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. And you shall be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).
 - ““If a son asks for bread from any of you who is a

father, will you give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will you give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will you offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?" (Luke 11:11-13).

- "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to speak" (Acts 2:4).

Remember, Jesus is God's gift to the sinner, and the Holy Spirit and His baptism are for the believer only. If you have already received Jesus as your Savior and would now like to be baptized in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of praying in tongues, then place your hand upon your heart and let's pray this aloud together. Keeping in mind, this is not your earthly language, but a supernatural language given to you by the Spirit of God.

Dear heavenly Father, I am a believer in Jesus Christ, and I ask You in His name for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, with the evidence of speaking in tongues. I believe and receive from you. In Jesus' name, amen.

Now, it's time to put your faith into action. Open up your mouth, move your tongue and give voice to what the Holy Spirit will pray through you. He will not force you, but as you activate faith He will flow through you with this utterance gift.

Both Jesus and His salvation and the Holy Spirit and the baptism of the Holy Spirit are great gifts to be received and opened and put to use in our daily lives, in heaven and on earth. {eoa}

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The Only Citizenship That Can Truly Transform Your Perspective

In the past six months, areas of California, Oregon, Montana and western Canada were consumed by flames. Houston was underwater, Idaho and Mexico experienced strong earthquakes, and North Korea tested nuclear bombs. Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria devastated anything in their path.

Then there are personal crises we're all dealing with. Prodigal children. Health issues. Financial pressures. Broken relationships.

I. Can't. Keep. Up.

And I don't want to try.

It's emotionally draining to read or listen to the news. To know what the people I care about are struggling with. And my heart aches to see the multiplied needs arriving with increasing speed and intensity.

How can we make sense of all these tragedies and struggles? Can *anyone* make sense of it all? If there was ever a reasonable time to feel anxious, this is it...at least that's how a growing number of Americans seem to be responding. According to a recent [study](#), an estimated 8.3 million American

adults—about 3.4 percent of the U.S. population—suffer from serious psychological distress.

But there's a better way to respond, and it has to do with citizenship.

No, not the immigration debates creating turmoil in Washington. A different kind of citizenship. A dual one that shapes our perspective on all the events swirling around us, both personal, local, international *and* eternal.

Someone once said this world is really just a glorious bus station. Have you ever waited for a long-distance bus? People mill about or sit on benches, with their luggage close by. You won't see them unpack their suitcases, hang up their clothes and arrange their toiletries inside the station.

Instead, they're prepared to board as soon as the bus arrives. They're not focused on where they've been, but rather on where they're going, who will meet them and what they'll do when they get there.

The Bible tells us Christians have an eternal perspective. Our citizenship is in heaven. To paraphrase an old hymn, we're just passin' through this world.

I'm an American and proud of it. But I also have a dual citizenship. Here *and* there. Now *and* then. Temporary *and* eternal.

Sadly, while I *know* this is true, I don't always *live* as if it's true.

I can become so attached to the things of this world that I forget that this world and all that's in it is temporary. The one Abraham looked forward to, as the writer of the book of Hebrews described it:

“Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God” (Heb.

11:10, NLT).

Do I care about the events occurring in the world around me? The things happening to the people I love? Of course I do. I want to help. To encourage. To love others both emotionally and in practical ways.

At the same time, I know I've been restored to my heavenly Father through the gift of salvation found in His Son, Jesus. So, while the events of this life and this world are disturbing, I have an eternal perspective. I know this world is just a glorified bus station—a temporary stop on the way to the destination of my eternal citizenship.

How about you? Do you have dual citizenship? {eoa}

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This article originally appeared at avawrites.com.

The Power-Packed Prayer Your Child Needs You to Take Before God

Have you noticed how artificial life has become in the past years? It seems that more people than ever are searching for self-worth in their looks, validation in what they accomplish

and joy in what they possess. I find myself having to fight against this. Sometimes I get so weary of having to constantly battle the world's definition of who I am and what's important.

This struggle has given me a new place to pray for my children. I know if I'm fighting this influence, so are they. So I've taken this battle to the Lord, asking Him to intervene and make sure my children are protected from all the false definitions the world is trying to apply to them.

Dear Lord,

I want my child to be happy and learn to be satisfied. Actually, I want even more than that. I'm asking you to give my child a foundation of true joy and contentment. As I watch, I'm afraid he has begun to look to the things of this world to make Him happy.

Please teach him (or her) that how we look, what we accomplish and what we own are fleeting. Show him the things from You are the only things that can provide true contentment. And don't let me get drawn into this way of thinking and set a bad example. Instead let me see his struggle as a reminder for me to keep my focus on You.

You are the only one who can provide real and lasting contentment. Use this challenge to grow his faith in You. Teach him the basics of looking to You for his self-worth so that when he's older, he will live in victory instead of constant frustration.

Most of all, let us learn this lesson together—as a family. Don't ever let me make the mistake of not letting my son (or daughter) see my own struggle to grow in faith. Amen. {eoa}

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The ‘One Thing’ Every Christian Must Do to Live Without Fear

We are human, and we are afraid. We are grown men and women, and we are afraid. We are Christians, saved by grace and guaranteed a place in heaven, and we are afraid. We live in the mystery of God, and we are afraid.

We are afraid of dying, and we are afraid of living. We are afraid of failure, and we are afraid of success that leaves us empty. We are afraid of not pleasing everyone we love, but we are not afraid of letting down the one person we should be love the most. That person is ourself.

We live our lives trying to live up to a nebulous ideal that we assume will appear before our eyes one day, and then every day and every moment in our lives will make sense.

The difficulty is that enigmatic, illusive moment never quite appears. We want something or someone to sit us down and say, “Child, this is why you are here. This is who you are.” We long for it. We know it would put everything in alignment if that moment would just happen now.

We try to manipulate things to make that happen, but we still wander through life trying hard to get ahead, trying hard to

please everyone, trying hard to do enough to feel like we have earned a spot in forever.

Our trying is a pointless, endless jumble of threads, a web where we are trapped. Our spinning has made it impossible to find a way out. To do the one thing we know we need to do.

We know that one thing will make all the difference. That one thing will set us free to soar on wings of eagles. That one thing will open our lives to the mysteries of the universe.

It is the one thing we fear. It is the one thing we can't seem to do no matter how hard we try.

That one thing involves giving up self-effort. That one thing requires us to stop trying to control every outcome in our lives. That one thing moves us towards starting to live our lives for someone else.

That one thing is to simply lay down trying to manipulate, plead and cajole the God of the universe to let our will be done. And when things don't happen to our liking, we blame Him.

We get angry with Him. We scream at Him. We rebel against what He gently tries to lead us to do.

All along, He has been implementing, orchestrating and directing good plans for us to give us that mysterious future and hope we long for. He longs to show us, but if He did we could not contain it.

The dream, the purpose, the destiny God has for us so far exceeds anything we could ask, hope, dream or imagine. It goes beyond the universe.

That mystery we feel is our connection to a Spirit we cannot fathom. It's the same Spirit who raised Christ from the dead. It's the same Spirit who makes our earthly bodies His temple.

It's the same Spirit who spoke and all of the heavens, stars, land, seas, animals, birds, fish, you and me came into existence.

That same Spirit lives inside you and me if we have accepted Christ's sacrifice for our lives. We are connected to Him and yet, we live a very limited, mortal existence. We dare not try to see beyond our bodies, our things and our money. To do so would be too hard, too mysterious, too complex.

Yet we know there is more. We know it and we long to be connected fully to that mystery we know as God. Standing between us and Him are all the hurts, wounds, scars of our past.

We have shoved them down into the cellar of our lives and tightly shut the door thinking we have them contained.

At obnoxious times they choose to come out like unwelcome belches and foul words. We try to shove them back down, but they won't be quiet without lots of unhealthy, cardiac-failure-producing food or alcohol or drugs or anything that gives us a temporary comfort fix.

Spirit beckons us to open the cellar doors and let the wounds, the hurts, the misperceptions, the lack of love, the abuse of role models, the jeers of siblings and friends begin to heal. He beckons us to lay them all at His feet.

These are the things that govern our emotions. We have tried so long to bury them, to not admit they are there. We have tried to make them go away, but it only serves to make them scream louder.

And why doesn't God help us as we writhe in our emotional slime pit?

He is there and has been there all the time. Our difficulties and our attitudes have caused disconnect. Not His.

He's been patiently waiting for us to come to Him in our own time and in our own way. He's been waiting for us to notice the lines are dead. He's been waiting for us to want to reconnect to Him.

He watches as one by one we lay down our self-effort, our striving, our plans, our control, our wills, our desires to achieve and be seen achieving, It's then that He says, "Now, My child, you are ready."

That's the day we learn to surrender every desire we've ever had to Him. That's the day we abdicate our own throne and reinstate the true King.

That's the day we learn how to be free. {eoa}

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This blog originally appeared at teresashielsparker.com.

5 Vital Instructions Every Spirit-Filled Believer Must Embrace

When we think of commands or instructions in Scripture, we automatically think of the Ten Commandments.

There are commands all throughout Scripture. The Bible is God's way of communicating Himself to us. Through the Bible we get to know God, His character, His plan for our lives, and what He wants from us as His disciples.

This is why throughout the Bible we see these life lessons and instructions mingled between the stories of great heroes of the faith and the life of Jesus.

If we want to be true disciples of Jesus Christ we must read Scripture. We must study Scripture.

I fear that many people who have become Christians view this decision the same way they view becoming a Sam's Club member: They signed their name, they got a membership card and they got some cool benefits out of it.

Becoming a Christian is way more than just signing our name on a church membership form and getting an "I'm a Christian" badge that comes with some really cool benefits—like escaping hell.

The prayer of salvation was just the first step.

Christianity isn't club membership; it's a lifestyle of discipleship and dedication to God's will and God's Word, and the only way we understand what true discipleship is and means is if we study His Word.

Among the many commands and instructions in Scripture, we see five very important ones in the book of Romans.

5 Instructions for Every Believer

As get to the end of Romans, let us remember that Paul opened this vitally important letter by reminding us that [Christians are not better than anyone else.](#)

We are all equally lost without a Savior.

We are all equally in need of the same grace.

And often we, through our passive participation, still approve of the same sin that nailed Jesus to the cross.

He then moved on to remind us why salvation is important and the depth of its meaning. He reminded us that the Law—while important to lead us to the Savior—cannot save us. But that the work of Christ [purchased for us a whole new identity](#).

Now he is wrapping up this letter by letting us know how we, as disciples of Christ with a whole new identity, should live.

Because if we call ourselves after Christ's name and have been given a new identity, we should also begin developing new behavior patterns.

1. Be Renewed in Your Mind

“I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service of worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Rom. 12:1-2).

The only way we will move from being a convert to being a disciple of Jesus Christ with a new identity and new behavior patterns is if we begin actively renewing our mind.

We renew our mind by reading, studying, memorizing and meditating on Scripture.

As God's Word is truly “hidden in our heart”; when it becomes the hub of our life—the central part of our life that holds everything together and causes all the parts of our life to move with precision—we will begin to see our life conform to its principles and precepts.

Our old worldview will submit to God's worldview. Our actions

will submit to God's instructions.

2. Be Christlike

"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21).

Actually, the whole passage of Romans 12:9-21 is a set of instructions in Christ-like behavior:

- Love without hypocrisy
- Hate evil
- Cling to good
- Love and honor one another,
- Fervently serve the Lord
- Rejoice in hope
- Be patient in trials
- Pray steadfastly
- Be generous with one another
- Bless those who persecute you
- Be joyful with those who are joyful, bear the sorrows of those who grieve
- Be unified as a body—don't elevate your opinions or allow your knowledge to make you arrogant
- Don't retaliate
- Live at peace with all men
- **3. Be Submitted to Governmental Authority**

"Let every person be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those that exist are appointed by God" (Rom. 13:1).

I am often shocked and dismayed by what I see Christians post on Facebook regarding our president. And not just President Trump. I was equally shocked and dismayed by some Christians' behavior toward President Obama.

It doesn't matter what party you support or what candidate you voted for, the man or woman who currently

occupies the seat of the president is the one we should submit to.

Notice here that Paul gives no qualifiers for their personal moral code, for their political opinions, for their behavior. As we read on, we see: "So it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for the sake of conscience" (Rom. 13:5).

I fear that at times in our fight for justice and morality, we become a bad testimony because we fail to do so while honoring Scriptural command at the same time.

Being subject to authority and maintaining our moral and biblical convictions are on mutually exclusive. And we don't prove the level of our convictions by how much we speak out against our president's and politicians' behavior or political platform.

Remember those who were the political leaders in Paul's day.

4. Be Loving With One Another

"Owe no one anything, except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law" (Rom. 13:8).

When you look at the Ten Commandments, you can divide them into two categories:

- Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength
- Love your neighbor as yourself

In fact, every command in Scripture falls into one of these two categories, "... for he who loves another has fulfilled the law."

It's quite simple.

And from this verse, Paul goes on for two more chapters to talk about love:

- Don't allow yourself to get embroiled in needless debates (diet, personal convictions, which day we observe as the Lord's day)—it destroys the love and unity of the body.
- Don't judge another Christian because of their personal convictions. They are living to the Lord, and you are being a stumbling block.
- Don't judge another because you have a personal conviction. You are judging and will be judged.
- Don't allow your opinions to get in the way of unity. This destroys the work of God.
- Be patient and support those who are weak in the faith. We are one body, and if the strong don't support the weak, then the whole body is weak.

Paul is calling the church to a life of mutual respect and honor.

Those who have a personal conviction about a behavior or food shouldn't feel demeaned because of that conviction. Those who don't have that particular conviction need to honor those who do and encourage them to remain obedient to the Lord.

However, those who have a personal conviction about a behavior or food shouldn't judge those who don't as being weak or carnal. Their conviction is personal between them and God, and those who don't possess such a conviction shouldn't be given a burden God didn't mean for them to carry. They should be respected and honored, and those with their personal conviction should encourage and edify them to walk in freedom.

5. Be clothed in Christ

“But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision

for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts” (Rom. 13:14).

- Paul is emphasizing here that what we wear says a lot about who we are.

“The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us take off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave properly, as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in immorality and wickedness, not in strife and envy” (Rom. 13:12-13).

People can tell a lot about us from how we dress: whether we are indulgent or thrifty, whether we have a lot of money or not, whether we care about ourselves or not.

Our clothing also tells a lot about our tastes: when we wear T-shirts with our favorite singers on them, a funny quote, a provoking statement or a cartoon character.

Paul is instructing us to put on clothing that depicts who we are.

Our behavior is our clothing—and he is reminding us that those things we do or don’t do clearly reveal who we are and with whom we identify ourselves.

- If we entertain ourselves the way the world entertains itself
- If we participate in the same activities the world participates in
- If we use the same language the world uses
- If we respond in the same way the world responds
- If we hold the same philosophies the world holds

What do these things say about who we are and our identity?

It is time to cast off our old identity and our old clothing and start depicting who we really are! We need

to put the armor of light because we are children of light!

Don't let your old clothing dim your light. {eoa}

Rosilind Jukic, a Pacific Northwest native, is a missionary living in Croatia and married to her Bosnian hero. Together they live with their two active boys, and she enjoys fruity candles, good coffee and a hot cup of herbal tea on a blustery fall evening. Her passion for writing led her to author her best-selling book *The Missional Handbook*. At [A Little R & R](#) she encourages women to find contentment in what God created them to be. You can also find her at [Missional Call](#) where she shares her passion for local and global missions. You can follow her on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Pinterest](#) and [Google +](#).

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Holy Spirit's Supernatural Strength to Eliminate Polio's Enduring Effects

People are often waiting upon God for the manifestation of their healing, but in actuality He is waiting upon us to activate our faith for our healing that He already provided for us. What do I mean by this statement? According to Isaiah 53:4-5 (AMP), we are already healed by the whips Jesus endured to purchase our healing.

But [in fact] He has borne our griefs, and He has carried our sorrows and pains; yet we [ignorantly] assumed that He was stricken, struck down by God and degraded and humiliated [by

Him]. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was crushed for our wickedness [our sin, our injustice, our wrongdoing] the punishment [required] for our well-being fell on Him, and by His stripes (wounds) we are healed.

You say to yourself, “If I am already healed, then why do I still feel sick? Or why do I still have these symptoms?” These are great questions with even greater answers from the Scriptures.

Like any other promise found in God’s Word, your supernatural healing is activated by your faith. And the two ways to activate your faith are by the power of your spoken words and by putting action behind your faith-filled words.

In other words, you are responsible for your healing, Jesus made good on His healing promise as stated above in Isaiah 53:4-5. Your part is to strengthen your faith to the point that you actually believe. And how do you do this? According to Romans 10:17 (MEV), “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” And to build up or strengthen your faith for healing you need to direct your efforts towards the healing Scriptures. Now is not the time to study finances, it is time to focus in on healing. And this is good news, you have control over your health and healing or any situation for that matter.

Here is a wonderful testimony about a woman who came to the healing conference in Austin, Texas with multiple issues that caused her great pain. She had contracted polio as a child, and it crippled her, then when she was a little older, she had an accident where she went through a window and the glass cut her down to her bone. And the other health issue was she had a torn rotator cuff.

She had heard how she was responsible for her own healing, and that it is her faith that heals her. She received the teaching necessary to know what faith is and how to activate her faith

for her healing.

We started with the torn rotator cuff first. She was instantly healed and had full range of movement. And that made her very happy. I then released the healing power down her spine and into her hips. I told her to put her faith into action and do what she was not able to do before. She started to sway her hips back and forth and within about a minute, she was beaming with joy as she was loosed from a lifetime of ill effects from childhood polio. Then I released the power of the Holy Spirit into her left knee and leg that had been cut through from the accident with the glass door. She was eager to exercise her faith, and the pain and tightness was easing up. I then asked her if she came to the service with someone. And she did so. I asked her friend to walk her around the sanctuary, and amazingly, she just started to walk with ease.

Glory to God, all things are possible to those who believe in the miracle-working power of the Spirit of God. And this woman is a shining example of what happens when people learn what it means to believe, and how to work faith to activate the benefits of God. {eoa}

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This article originally appeared at [authorbeckydvorak.org.](#)

Beware of These Dangerous

Lies Too Many Christian Parents Swallow

Beware of the great lies, “boys will be boys” and “girls will be girls.” Or “They’re teenagers (or adults) and so I no longer have influence in their lives.”

Eli’s refusal to restrain his sons had a devastating impact on his family and the nation of Israel (1 Sam. 3).

It helps to define parenting goals. Some parents live to launch their children from the family nest. Others want their children to be successful by the world’s standards in education and profession. But shouldn’t our ultimate goal be to strive for God’s approval for a job well done in raising His children to love, honor and serve Him and others? How do we achieve this? The Holy Spirit must govern our lives and theirs. So let’s pray about it,

Father, Please help us to pray life-defining prayers over the children You have assigned to us. May we take life-defining action to ensure they become all You desire and designed them to be. We want them to be world-changers who honor You and who lead vast multitudes to Christ.

Church attendance has never been an option at our house. If you live under our roof, you’re going – but that’s not helpful without passion. And so we prayed,

Father, Please grant our children a passion for church services and activities. Connect them with energetic, God-honoring individuals of all ages who will reinforce the values You’ve asked us to instill in their hearts, truth from Your Word.

He did.

Whenever we ask God for more of Himself, He will never give us less—but it may be necessary to leave our comfort zone. In 2002 I journaled prayers asking God to center my family in the midst of a global awakening. He soon led us to a young church over an hour from our home, but the presence of God was so dynamic, we made the drive every Sunday and Wednesday and were involved in as much as our circumstances would allow.

We couldn't possibly have known that today it would be the second-largest church in America. My children and grandchildren are thriving because of an obedient response to a dangerous prayer. When we kept the grand-angels one weekend, they came downstairs ready for church before their alarms were scheduled to go off. But our older children are just as passionate.

I frequently place my hands on their Bibles, asking God to give them a passion for His Word.

He does.

But we have to set the example. Our experience with God has to be as fire in our hearts. My family is aware of the darkness and consequences I once chose to walk in, and so they better understand why those things are no longer a part of my life—or a part of their lives. When looking at the lives of others, they appreciate this. And so I strive to turn up the flames in their hearts when they appear to be growing comfortable or cold spiritually.

Next month, I'll share prayer inspirations that can help us effectively guide and guard their hearts and minds and lives.
{eoa}

Connie Norris' *passion is to mobilize women and children to pray. Please visit her website, "My Home, a House of Prayer for All Nations" myhomeahouseofprayerforallnations.com or connect with her on Facebook at www.facebook.com/conniepn.*

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Why You Need the Holy Spirit to Deal With the Weight of Your Words

When Hurricane Irma blew through south Florida last September, we were fortunate not to sustain damage to our home. But the natural environment did not fare as well. Trees toppled all around us. Hurricane-force winds snapped off branches and uprooted trees. Root balls sometimes six feet across lay upended on top of the ground instead of underneath it.

Many trees died. Some are still hanging on, shadows of their former, vibrant selves. Still others, with human assistance, have been replanted, pruned and nurtured, and are now thriving.

But all that pruning cost us something. It cost us in time and labor. And in our efforts to save some of the landscaping surrounding us, other landscaping died.

We piled tree trunks and branches on the curb for collection. The final mound of dead foliage was 6 feet high and wide, and 15 feet long. By the time it was all picked up, we had an equally large patch of dead grass in our lawn. Five months later, it's smaller, but still distinctly visible.

The grass that died under the weight of the branches has me thinking about my relationships. How many relationships have I killed with the weight of my words? How many people stuck with me for just so long before they needed to move on, allowing

the relationship to die?

It goes the other way, too. How many friendships have I walked away from over the years, because the weight of the other person's words brought death to my spirit instead of life?

Someone once said, "Be careful of your words. Once spoken, they can be forgiven, but not forgotten."

So true. I confess to having rehearsed hurtful words long after I claimed to forgive the person who spoke them. Their words pierced my heart, arrows that found their mark, long after the sender may have regretted speaking them. I said I forgave, but I said it from a distance.

Or perhaps we are the ones consumed with regret for words spoken in the heat of the moment. We attempt reconciliation with the other person, but even years later, their hurt is still raw, and they choose remoteness rather than reconciliation.

Of course, healthy boundaries are important. If the other person won't acknowledge their responsibility for the damage they've caused, then it's not wise to continue the relationship at the same level of intimacy. God calls us to forgive unconditionally, but restoration and reconciliation are processes that may or may not occur.

Still, what if you and I were more careful of the words we speak? What if we stopped those words *before* we spoke them, instead of asking forgiveness after they leave our mouth?

Winston Churchill once said, "We are masters of the unsaid words, but slaves of those we let slip out."

The writer of Proverbs observed, "There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise is health" (Prov. 12:18) and "Death and life are in the power of the tongue" (Prov. 18:21a).

It's easier to maintain a good relationship than to have to repair it. To that end, I want my words to be gracious, even when I'm hurt or angry. It's worth it because people are worth it. People created in the image of God and people for whom Jesus Christ died.

I know I can't do this in my own effort. I need the Holy Spirit's work in my life to strengthen me in this area. So today, my prayer is, "Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips" (Ps. 141:3).

Will you join me in that request? {eoa}

Ava Pennington is a writer, speaker and Bible teacher. She writes for nationally circulated magazines and is published in 32 anthologies, including 25 *Chicken Soup for the Soul* books. She also authored *Daily Reflections on the Names of God: A Devotional*, endorsed by Kay Arthur. Learn more at AvaWrites.com.

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