

Your Secret to Reaping the Harvest of a Spirit-Filled Life

I recently retired, sold most of our belongings and trekked across the country for a fresh start. This is not unlike many who do the same in our mobile society every day. However, this was our 25th move. You would think we'd have it down to a science by now. And we did, 25 years ago. But this was a hard move. I'm an old lady now. No, really. I am old. I am tired and dealing with the many challenges old age brings for my husband of over 50 years, my family and me. I feel spiritually invigorated and mentally astute, though my body seems to have a mind of its own, so like it or not, it gets a vote in what we do and don't do.

I felt a little like Moses who at 80, after spending 40 years in Egypt and another 40 in a desert wilderness received a new call and could do no other than obey. But the God who is over all things and does what seems impossible was with him. He enabled Moses to go beyond anything he could have imagined. He had no choice but to follow the Lord one day at a time, and in the process, God used him to save a nation. One of his greatest strengths was the understanding that he could not do this alone and was totally dependent on the Lord. The God who called Him enabled him—one day at a time.

Some years ago, when I thought I wouldn't be able to keep an appointment for a job interview, I became distressed. I desperately needed a job because we had just moved to another city (again), and the needs were great.

As I sensed the anxiety, the word of the Lord rose up in my spirit, "This is the day the Lord has made. I *will* rejoice and be glad in it—even if I don't make that important interview!"

When I began to meditate on the Scripture that was the foundation of this word, the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart: “*This is the day. Today. Live today. Don’t waste today fantasizing about tomorrow or reminiscing about the past. Make the most of today. You cannot change the past. Yesterday is gone forever. You cannot live yesterday over again. You can only live in one time frame at a time. Do not look back! He who sets his hand to the plow and looks back is not fit for the kingdom of God.*”

He continued: “What you do today affects tomorrow. Whatever you sow today you will reap tomorrow. If you waste today, your tomorrow will be empty. If you don’t plant, water and weed today, you will have no fruit tomorrow.”

Wow! Fears began to rise up within me—concerns about past failures and about the unknown future. I got a bad case of the “what-ifs”—*What if this happens? What if that happens?*

In the midst of all that, the Holy Spirit taught me a profound yet simple lesson. It was the secret to living successfully each day of a Spirit-filled life.

I realized then that it is dangerous to fantasize about the future but not plant today for it—because when the future becomes today, and there’s no fruit, the day will be empty. So how did I plant?

I began to focus on the day—not the past and not the future. I set my heart on the will of God for that day. I determined to be glad in that day. I confessed, “I will live for God *this* day. I will overcome by the blood of the Lamb *this* day. I will do my best in everything my hand finds to do *this* day. I will cast down vain imaginations *this* day. I will bring every thought into obedience and captive to the lordship of Jesus Christ *this* day.”

Why *this* day? Because if I am thinking about tomorrow’s good or evil, I’m not dealing with today’s requirements. Jesus

focused on doing the will of the Father every day.

I've walked with the Lord for over 70 years now, and every act of obedience has brought its own challenges, reward and fruit. I am now living in my tomorrow, but the truth I learned many years ago remains. I still need to plant seeds of obedience for a continual harvest—one day at a time.

You may ask, "Is it true that as you age you become more childlike?" Well, I don't know about that, but I do know that each day is full of promise because you know the truth of what's been sown in your own heart. Sometimes reminders come in the form of old songs that are simple but hold profound truths, like this favorite: "I don't know about tomorrow/ but I know who holds my hand." Do you know who holds your hand through all your tomorrows?

In all the changes, one thing remains constant, and that is the peace that comes from following Him one day at a time. If you are going through difficult times and are uncertain about the future, don't let fear paralyze you. Instead, take hold of God's Word, and it will enable you to get through these unpredictable and turbulent times—one day at a time.

Prayer Power for the Week of August 11, 2019

This week, pray daily that you would achieve all that the Lord has purposed for you in that day. Pray for those in your own sphere of influence at home, work, extended family, neighborhood, church and community. Continue to lift up our nation, its leaders and allies. Watch what the Lord does as you faithfully bring them before His throne. Read: Matthew 6:34, James 4:13-15.

In Times of Crisis, Use This Prophet's Secret to Hearing From God

You feel as if life is spiraling out of control. Sickness has a strong grip on you. It's dominating the direction of your life. You wonder when you will be able to stop scraping the bottom of the barrel just to make ends meet. Let's not forget your children are rebelling against their godly upbringing. You don't know where to turn, and you don't know what you should do.

The right thing to do is to get down on your knees and send Him a dispatch for help. His Word tells us that He will hear when we call out to Him (see Ps. 4:3). You read these words and think to yourself, "I am doing this, and still He doesn't respond." Second Corinthians 10:5 teaches us to take every thought into captivity. And then we need to be still, quiet ourselves and learn to listen.

The prophet Elijah has to learn this lesson as well. Evil is happening all around, he's now in trouble with Jezebel and has to flee for his life. Let's read from 1 Kings 19:11-13 what the Spirit of God reveals to him.

He said, "Go and stand on the mountain before the Lord."

And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind split the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind, an earthquake came, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake, a fire came, but the Lord was not in the fire, and after the fire, a still, small voice. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood in the entrance to the cave.

And a voice came to him and said, "Why are you here, Elijah?"

The lesson I see in this portion of Scripture is that most of us don't know how to still ourselves during times of crisis. Many busy themselves so they have no time to think about the situation. But in doing so, they also are so occupied with meaningless things that they cannot hear God's voice either. Or they try to run from their troubles and go from one meeting to the next, hoping they will hear from the Lord, but it still doesn't happen. Why not?

Because we must learn what Elijah learns: He needs to stop the running, be still, stop crying and talking and just be quiet and listen. If you will purpose in your heart to do this, you too will hear the Lord speak to you. You will hear Him speak to you with His still, small voice, but only after you send out an SOS, take control of your wild and negative thoughts, stop running, quit busying yourself with distractions, be quiet and allow Him to speak to you.

My greatest victories happen when I do as Elijah does and cover myself with my mantle, shut out the noise and the confusion of this world, come out from the spiritual darkness of the cave, stand in the entrance where His manifested presence can shine down upon me. Then I can clearly hear His voice call out to me. And I encourage you to do the same.
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This article originally appeared at beckydvorak.com.

For more lessons from the life of Elijah, listen to the podcast included with this article!

The Prophetic Word That Helped This Woman Lose Over 250 Pounds

The speaker asked, "Where do you want to be in five years?" This was not a new question for me. I've asked this question, or a version of it, to myself and those I coach many times. The question wasn't new, but the timing was different. When I heard him ask that question, it was shortly before my birthday.

All of a sudden, it hit me. In five years, I will be close to celebrating my 71st birthday. That made an answer to that question even more crucial.

Who Am I?

The real question we have to answer first is who am I. and how can I continually work on that part of me? Years ago. I claimed a prophetic statement over my life. I said, "I am a whole, healthy, happy woman." It was prophetic because to look at me, my human container was far from that.

I was even more aware of that this last weekend, when my only living biological aunt was visiting and brought a box of pictures. Back when I weighed 430 pounds, I didn't allow pictures of myself to be taken, but she had several that I had never seen. One was with my husband and me at a family reunion probably around 1998. Put it side by side with the two of us today, and the change is dramatic.

Back then it wasn't just how I looked, although that was a big part of it. I had congestive heart failure, diabetes, sleep

apnea, high blood pressure, arthritis and many other aches and pains. A doctor had given me five years to live. So my five-year plan had to be to lose weight. I wanted to be around for my children and husband. I wanted to write books that mattered. Change had to happen for that to be a reality.

I had to come to a point of total desperation before I would step into the fullness of who He said I was. If I had been able to lose weight on my own and keep it off, applying my own self-effort, I would have taken credit for it. Now, though, I give all the credit for losing more than 250 pounds to Him, even though it did take more than five years.

Beyond a shadow of a doubt, I know that it is God and God alone who gave me the strength to overcome sugar's addictive pull. By His strength I continue to say no to sugar every moment of every day. I give it up as unto Him.

Doing that flows out of who God says I am. I am a whole, healthy, happy woman. I am His beloved daughter. I am a child of the King.

What Do You Want to Accomplish?

Once we figure out who we are, we are then ready to answer the next part of the question. What you want to do with your life? I have accomplished many of my life goals and some I didn't even know God had for me, but looking forward to when I am over 70 and beyond seems different, more weighty.

The older I get the more I am aware that I cannot purchase more time here on earth. I've come to terms with that by acknowledging that even though my days are numbered, I will be here as long as God has something to teach me that I can only learn in this earthbound suit of clay.

We all have only a certain amount of time on this earth. "Help me to know how fleeting my time on earth is. Help me to know how limited is my life and that I'm only here but for a moment

more. What a brief time you've given me to live! Compared to You my lifetime is nothing at all! Nothing more than a puff of air, I'm gone so swiftly. So too are the grandest of men; they are nothing but a fleeting shadow, at best, each of us is but a breath" (Ps. 39:4-5, TPT).

God has a purpose for each of us and has instilled that purpose as a deep desire within us. We have to strip away all the things covering up that purpose to get to what more there is that He has for us. For me, 250 of those things looked like extra pounds of fat.

Risky Step

I don't know all of what my next season will hold except that I know I have a deep, urgent motivation to write the kind of transformation stories I've always dreamed of writing.

From the time I was a child, I have wanted to write stories that help people cope with life. I saw what an armload of library books could do to help my emotionally ill mother get through her days. Whatever was bothering her would fade away when she got lost in a book. For hours, she would be normal. It was coming back into everyday life that caused her angst.

It was as if God whispered in my ear, "One day you will write stories that help people." Now He's making it clear that no matter what else I do with the next five years, it must involve writing stories that center around transformation.

For any transformation to happen, there must be a change from dark to light. Without the shadows, there is no depth to a painting. We can't know what happiness is until we have experienced the depths of despair. Since 2014, I have had characters and a story living in my heart and mind. It's time for that story to be poured out on the pages of a book.

Anything new we attempt feels scary and hard. Once we've allowed God to help us accomplish that, though, it becomes

easy almost graceful. That's because when we step out in faith that we are doing what God is calling us to do, His grace-strength kicks in. His power carries us. It happened when I lost weight. It happened when I started writing nonfiction. It happened when I started coaching, doing videos and speaking.

"When I am weak [in human strength], then I am strong [truly able, truly powerful, truly drawing from God's strength]," (2 Cor. 12:10b, AMP). I am counting on His strength and anointing to be the force that propels me and guides as I launch out into the deep to write as many transformational fiction books as I can in the next five years and beyond.

What Is Your Five-Year Plan?

What about you? What is the desire that is burning in your heart? Who are you, and what is your five-year plan? {eoa}

Teresa Shields Parker is the author of five books and two study guides, including her latest, [Sweet Journey to Transformation: Practical Steps to Lose Weight and Live Healthy](#), and her No. 1 best-seller, [Sweet Grace: How I Lost 250 Pounds](#). She is also a blogger, spiritual weight loss coach (check out her coaching group, [Overcomers Academy](#)) and speaker at [TeresaShieldsParker.com](#).

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How This Mom Turned a Rude Question Into a Vital

Teaching Moment

Many times, my daughter, Grace Anna, has been referred to as a “cute little baby.” She is a 9-year-old girl, not a baby. This kind of statement never goes over well. Grace Anna is becoming increasingly aware of how people look at her and assume things about her because she doesn’t fit the “normal” mold.

One such instance in which Grace Anna was treated differently was when a family stared at us from across a room, and I wasn’t the only one who noticed their staring. “Mom, why do they keep looking at us?” Grace Anna questioned me. I felt awful. She was immediately overcome with concern about her looks being criticized.

At first, I thought they might recognize her from social media videos and posts, but that wasn’t the case. “What’s wrong with her?” one family member finally asked, loudly enough for both Grace Anna and me to hear.

I paused for a few moments, letting it sink in that they didn’t say hello or introduce themselves. Instead, they verbalized a negatively phrased question about my child. Some people don’t realize that questions like “What’s wrong with her?” leave a child feeling inadequate and ostracized. It hurt my heart to see the nervousness on Grace Anna’s face about what I might say.

“Hi! My name is Angela. This is Grace Anna. My beautiful girl has Conradi Hunermann Syndrome. She is beautiful, smart and super talented. Yes, she uses a wheelchair, but nothing is ever going to hold her back from what she wants to accomplish. She’s the toughest girl I know,” I kindly explained.

Maybe it was what I said or my facial expressions, but something must have impacted them because they stood there speechless. Grace Anna smiled. I took what could have been a discouraging remark and used it as an opportunity to boost her

confidence. I also hope the interaction educated the family on how to be considerate toward someone with a physical abnormality or disability.

How do we stop the culture of pointing out differences and start incorporating the idea that we are all far more alike than we are different? How do we combat the generalization that people are defined by the way they look? We educate and encourage our children to do and be better.

Children are remarkable beings; their minds absorb all kinds of information at incredible speeds. They are often brutally honest and do not hold back from asking about anything and everything that pops into their heads, especially when they see someone who looks different. This may seem like a negative impulse, but it is the perfect opportunity to educate them.

We can teach children to develop an awareness of how their words affect the feelings and lives of others, particularly those with disabilities. Some of the primary lessons to stress to a child are:

- It is OK to ask questions as long as they are asked respectfully.
- It takes all kinds of people to make this world a wonderful place.
- Everyone has something to offer the world, no matter what he or she looks like.
- A person with a physical disability has hopes and dreams.
- God designed each of us in his image, which makes all of us beautiful.

As parents and citizens, we have a responsibility to make this world a better place for everyone. It is vital that we learn to appreciate people with disabilities as valuable members of society in order to cultivate a harmonious environment. This movement can start with children. When we prepare our future

generations to be empathetic and educated about people with disabilities, we have hope for positive change. And maybe one day in the future, when a child like Grace Anna rolls by in her little wheelchair, a person's first thought will not be *What is wrong with her?* but *What gifts and talents make her unique?* {eoa}

Angela Ray Rodgers is the author of two books: *Grace Anna Sings* and *Who Do You See When You Look at Me*. [Who Do You See When You Look at Me](#) is available for preorder now.

If you'd like to learn more about Grace Anna, [check out this recent video](#).

Here's What You're Really Seeking in Your Weight-Loss Journey

Belonging is a big deal to us. We will do almost anything to belong. We will fix our noses, lift and tuck our faces and other body parts, enhance some parts and try to reduce others. It's all because we want to find a place to belong where we are at peace with ourselves.

I totally get it. I felt this way when I weighed 430 pounds. I felt like everyone was looking at me, pointing fingers and talking behind my back about my size. I didn't want to be slim and trim. I just wanted to look halfway normal, whatever that is.

After I lost weight, I realized that others don't really care about how we look; they are focused on themselves. It is this

self-focus that tends to make us want to fix ourselves in some way.

What we are really looking for, though, is not just to fit in but to be at peace with who we are. There is only one place to find and discover peace and that is in following Jesus completely.

Shortly before Jesus began His final journey to the cross, He spent some time sharing parting words with His disciples. He said many things but two things really jumped out to me and I realized how seamlessly they go together. One is obedience; the other is peace.

Obey Me

Jesus spoke clearly about what He expected of His disciples. He didn't mince words. "All who love Me will do what I say ... Anyone who doesn't love Me will not obey Me," (John 14:23a, 24a NLT).

It doesn't get any clearer than that. Jesus had one expectation: "If you love me, obey my commandments" (John 14:15).

When we hear this, most of us think of the Ten Commandments, and we figure we haven't killed anyone or stolen anyone's husband or wife, so we're good. There's a lot we could say about every commandment, and we can logically argue that obedience is to how Christ is leading us and not to the Old Testament law. Still, the Ten Commandments are a good place to begin to understand what Jesus expects of us.

All we have to do, though, is focus on the first commandment. This is where most of us fall short. "You must not have any other god but Me," (Ex. 20:3). For years, I had another god I was worshipping. I didn't think of it that way, but it was true. I was worshipping the god of my stomach, my belly, my appetite.

Living to Eat

Paul also didn't mince words when he talked about this. "Many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things" (Phil. 3:18b-19, NIV).

I lived to eat. I did not eat to live. Food was all I felt I had to look forward to. It marked my days and the passing of time. Some folks have said that boredom is a big problem for those who have weight to lose. For me, it wasn't boredom. It was that I had come to rely on food as the one thing that I always had access to in order to calm me and give me a moment of peace.

Being stressed and overworked was one of the main reasons I ate almost continually. It was a reward for working hard. It wasn't that I was bored. It was that I was too busy.

Then, if I slowed down, I also rewarded myself with foods I loved, which were never salads, but always something baked like Grandma would have made. I followed the dictates of my appetite. My mind was set on earthly, self-centered things that I wanted.

Peace

The second thing that struck me about what Jesus told His disciples was that He was leaving them with the gift of peace of mind and heart (see John 14:27), "Not the kind of fragile peace given by the world, but My perfect peace" (John 14:28b, TPT).

The Amplified version adds, "Let My perfect peace calm you in every circumstance and give you courage and strength for every challenge." We know that in verse 26, Jesus promised the disciples that He would send the Holy Spirit, who is the helper, comforter, advocate, intercessor, Counselor and

strengtheners.

The Holy Spirit is actually the Spirit of Christ. He is sent in Jesus' name in His place to represent Him and act on His behalf (see John 14:26, AMP). What Jesus is trying to get across to His disciples and to us is that the only way we can have peace is by following Him.

It's plain and simple, but to make it even easier, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to live within us and help us remember everything Jesus has told us to do (see John 14:26, AMP). He gave us commandments, but He didn't leave us alone to figure it out. He sent the Holy Spirit.

It's Not That Hard

It's not a hard thing that He's asking us to do, and He's not punishing us. He's setting us free to live in peace. That only happened for me when I finally surrendered my food addiction to God.

What I mean by that is I accepted that I needed to change. I owned my specific issue of sugar addiction. I then laid sugar down at His feet and asked Him to show me how to walk out my journey.

That doesn't mean that I gave it up cold turkey. I'd tried that before and it only worked for a limited period of time. No, I allowed God to teach me how to walk out my journey by relying on His strength instead of my own.

Dancing in Grace

The key to all of this is to dance in the light of His grace to the point where we are joyfully engaging with Him in His element. His element is grace. He told Paul, "'My grace is always more than enough for you, and My power finds its full expression through your weakness.' So I will celebrate my weaknesses, for when I'm weak I sense more deeply the mighty

power of Christ living in me" (2 Cor. 12:9, TPT).

I was always weak around food and trying to muster up my own strength to beat it. This never worked. When I finally admitted I had a problem and I needed God's help to get through it. I no longer saw myself as unable to fix things. I saw how great and how good my God is to give me strength where there was none.

Now, I can agree with Paul and say that when I am weak in human strength is the time I realize that I am strong only when I am truly drawing from God's (see 2 Cor. 12:10, AMP).

Living in Peace

Many of us live in discouragement, discontentment and despair rather than the peace that Jesus promised us. If you are like me, part of it may be that there is something you know God has told you to do that you have not yet done.

It might be following Him in a healthy lifestyle. It might be forgiving someone or asking someone to forgive you. It might be pursuing a specific calling. Whatever it is, you will never be at peace until you are following Jesus in all that He has shown you to do.

What is He asking you to do? What step will you take toward that? When will you start? {eoa}

Teresa Shields Parker is the author of five books and two study guides, including her latest, [Sweet Journey to Transformation: Practical Steps to Lose Weight and Live Healthy](#), and her No. 1 best-seller, [Sweet Grace: How I Lost 250 Pounds](#). She is also a blogger, spiritual weight loss coach (check out her coaching group, [Overcomers Academy](#)) and speaker at [TeresaShieldsParker.com](#).

This article originally appeared at [teresashieldsparker.com](#).

How You Can Put a Stop to These Common Spiritual Attacks

Chronic anxiety and depression are running rampant among people today, even throughout the church.

One of my readers wrote me with the following request, “Becky, I need help for healing from chronic anxiety and depression.”

I ask you now, you who hold this book in your hand, “Is this request too difficult for God?”

You answer in your heart, “No.”

Then let me ask you another question, “Are chronic anxiety and depression too difficult for the Christian to overcome?”

Many struggle with this type of inner healing, but I remind you again, “*With God...*” not in your own strength. With Him, it is possible to triumph over even this situation.

And just how do you win over this type of attack of destruction? You win with *God* and with the *power of the spoken word*.

In Jesus’ name, that’s correct, with our God, Jesus Christ, with the power of His name, you use the authority of your words and verbally renounce the spirit of fear and depression. Again, with your vocal chords, you command these evil spirits out and off of you. You decree with your voice a radical turnaround in the way you see and hear things, the way you respond to others and even to the past. Use this Scripture, “For I will restore health to you and heal you of your

wounds,' says the Lord" (Jer. 30:17, NKJV). {eoa}

Becky Dvorak is a prophetic healing evangelist and the author of [DARE to Believe, Greater Than Magic, The Healing Creed, and The Prophetic and Healing Power of Your Words](#). Visit her at authorbeckydvorak.com.

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How Patricia Heaton's Newest Role Reflects Her Own Biblical Values

You may recognize her as Debra Barone or Frankie Heck, but Patricia Heaton's latest role as Carol Kenney may be the one closest to her own life.

Speaking at a Television Critic Association panel for *Carol's Second Act*, Heaton addressed how biblical values drive her.

"At the end of the day, you have to be able to look yourself in the mirror and say, 'I stood up for the voiceless and for the poor and the hungry,'" Heaton said, paraphrasing Matthew 25.

Heaton says the same values can also be attributed to her character Carol.

"You have to be able to say that to yourself, because—and I found—and this is a great thing for Carol too—the older you get, the more you—at least for me, I've let a lot of stuff go

that I don't feel I need to weigh in on. It's just not important, and I'm not going to spend these precious, precious moments that we have here in anger or hatred or—you just have to kind of like open yourself up and humble yourself and just let life happen. Life is hard ... and you just have to try to make it easier for other people around you. We're so blessed and privileged here, and nothing to complain about. So, I think it's just more of that. It's more of, like, 'What can we do to make the world a better place? What energy can we put into it?'" Heaton said.

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Why You Already Have the Spiritual Strength to Carry On

These past two weeks have been a whirlwind of activity—all good, but physically demanding. Let me explain and share.

Two weekends ago, I was ministering in Langley, British Columbia, Canada. I poured my heart out with the healing word and witnessed wonderful healings and miracles. I arrived home on Monday afternoon a little bit tired physically.

Thursday morning I find myself back on the plane, but this time to Guatemala to go and pick up our 20-year-old son, Jorge, and bring him back to the States to live with us here. That evening, our arrival was delayed due to weather. We were unable to land in Guatemala because of an electrical storm. The pilot flew around the city, waiting for approval to land,

but we were not able to because of the lighting. Needing to fuel the plane, they announced we would be flying next door to Belize, but the airport there was also closed down due to the same weather issues. They wanted to land in El Salvador, but because of the surrounding weather, they already had nine planes waiting for the OK to take off to these other countries. And so we were not able to land there either. So we ended up in Honduras.

The airport there had already closed for the evening, but we were able to land to fuel the jet. The process probably took about two hours because it was after hours. Afterwards, we were able to fly into Guatemala City at about midnight. And despite the delays, I had a wonderful time visiting our other two adopted sons and their families who are managing out children's home in Guatemala and spent a little time with the children in the home, along with ministering to a group of students in a discipleship program and a healing service at a local church. Then Monday morning, Jorge and I made the journey back to the U.S., again landing about midnight and arriving home at 1:00 in the morning.

I was thinking I had that day to sleep in and rest, but to my surprise, the house we were moving into was ready for us that day. And so for the past few days, I have been unpacking our belongings and trying to put our new home in order. I am physically, tired, and with good reason, but even in the midst of this whirlwind of activity, I find that there is great stamina in having faith in God.

And this is what I want to focus on now with you. Be encouraged that when life is moving faster than you expect and is physically demanding, and it takes everything within you to finish the task put before you, know that when you feel physically weak, He is not. And you can rely on His strength to carry you through.

Perhaps you are fighting a battle with sickness and disease,

and you feel like you can't continue. I am here to tell you that you can. You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you (see Phil. 4:13).

And maybe you are struggling to find the physical strength to carry on, I can't encourage you enough to call out to God and thank Him by faith that when you feel weak, He is strong (see 2 Cor. 12:10).

And when the unexpected events of life happen, hold your peace and rest in Him because He truly is the same yesterday, today and forever (see Heb. 13:8.) He is faithful (see 1 Cor. 1:9.) He is the way, the truth and the life (see John 14:6.) When He promises to uphold you with His righteous right hand—He will (see Isa. 41:10.)

Regardless of all the demands placed upon your faith-walk, you will find there is great stamina and relentless staying power in your faith in Christ. {eoa}

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This article originally appeared at authorbeckydvorak.com.

Anne Graham Lotz: Stop Trying to Earn the Holy Spirit's Love

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever. He is the Spirit of truth” (John 14:16-17, CSB).

What do you know about the one whom Jesus promised He would ask the Father to give us, in His absence? How much do you know about the Holy Spirit? Growing up, I can never remember being taught about the Holy Spirit. I knew His name because the pastor of the little mountain church I belonged to always ended the Sunday morning service with a benediction in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. He was also mentioned at weddings when the bride and groom were pronounced joined together in the same three names, or when someone was baptized. But it wasn't until I began studying the Bible in order to teach it that I increasingly got to know this one we refer to as the third person of the Trinity. I discovered He is not spooky; He is not an "add-on" or an optional extra in the Christian life. He is a divine necessity. Yet one misconception of who He is lingered in my thoughts.

When I received Jesus as my Savior, my assumption had been that the Holy Spirit was "assigned" to me. I thought He had come into my life because He had no option. I was now His "job"—His responsibility. My view of Him was that He was strictly professional, a perfectionistic stickler for details and someone who would keep me in line until one day He would present me to the Father and say something like "Here she is. I've done My best to work with what I had." This harmful misconception could have led me to living a lie, as I would have tried hard to impress Him. I could have burned myself out trying hard to earn His love.

Then one day, while reading my Bible, I was gripped by the following: "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30, NIV). While I understand that Scripture is warning us not to intentionally, willfully sin, the word "grieve" caught and held my attention. I reflected on grief in my own life and knew I had experienced that emotion only when I deeply cared about someone or something. I grieved when my mother went to heaven. I grieved when my husband followed her there about

eight years later. I grieved when my father joined them both. And I realized that "grief" is a love word. I grieve because I love my mother and my husband and my father.

This realization turned the light on in my thinking as I realized that if I can grieve the Holy Spirit, it's because He loves me. The Holy Spirit loves me! That was a profound, revolutionary thought. He's not just a professional partner. He's not just assigned to me. He doesn't live within me because He has to—He lives within me because He wants to live within me. He deeply cares about what I do and who I become. When I do the right thing, He rejoices. When I do the wrong thing, He grieves. Not only is He spiritually and practically involved in my life, He is also emotionally caught up in who I am and who I am to become. What a difference that simple truth has made in my perspective. I can be myself with the Holy Spirit. I don't have to be "on." I can relax and be transparent with Him. I can trust Him completely because He truly loves me!

And the Holy Spirit loves you too! He cares deeply about what you care about because He cares about you (see 1 Pet. 5:7). It doesn't matter how small or how large your concern is. He cares. He understands. He wants what's best for you. He desires for you to fulfill your God-given potential. He wants to ease your burden, solve your problem, comfort your broken heart, bind up your wounds, bring you through the valley of the shadow, shower you with blessing upon blessing. And yes, He wants to make you holy—because He loves you! He will work all things—*all things*—for your good (see Rom. 8:28). So relax. Stop trying to impress Him. Stop working so hard to earn His love. Be open and honest and transparent. Live with the confidence that you are deeply, unconditionally, permanently loved by Him.

I cannot begin to express in words what He has meant to me during this past year. I have experienced His constant companionship. There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that He

has carried me through not just somehow, but triumphantly. So if you, too, are faced with a deadly disease ... divorce ... death ... disaster, open your heart and life to the one who is Jesus in you. {eoa}

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This article originally appeared at annegrahamlotz.org.

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How You Can Say Goodbye to the Fears That Have You Trapped

Our secret fears motivate us to hide or try to hide from ourselves, others and even God. Hiding, though, never works because these kinds of fears will stay with us forever until we willingly let them go. God always see us, and what He sees is the person we will be on the other side of our fears.

I want to be clear that I'm not talking about the fears that

are recognizable to us and others, like fear of mice, spiders, snakes, thunder, injections, shots, falls, heights, enclosed spaces, darkness, loud noises, flying, driving, clowns. Yes, fear is a real thing.

The Fear Deep Inside

The kinds of fear I'm talking about are those buried deep inside us and we are allowing to govern our lives in ways we either refuse to acknowledge or don't even recognize.

As a Christian weight-loss coach, I meet many people with these kinds of fears. It is really fear that drives many to think things like, *I'm not good enough. No one truly cares about me. I'm not worth loving. I am not strong enough. I am a loser. I'll never be a success. Nothing good will ever happen to me. I can't stand myself.*

Most people won't come right out and tell me what they believe until we get into a heart-to-heart conversation. Then they tell me they think their problem is they can't lose weight.

"Why do you think that?" I'll ask.

"Because every time I've tried to lose weight, I've failed. It's just not in the cards for me to lose weight. I guess I'll just stay fat and happy." They laugh, but the problem is, they are far from happy. I know it; they know it; and they desperately want an answer.

Created Without Fear

We think these types of fears have always been with us and are part of how we were created. This is a major fallacy. We were actually created without fear. We know that "God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and love, and a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7).

Since it is God who created us, then there is no possible way we entered this world with these kinds of fears attached. God

didn't give us a spirit of fear, but He did build into us the instinctive response to run when confronted with something that could be harmful to us. We run from danger.

These are built-in instincts for survival. We are cautious in areas of town with high crime rates. If a dog is growling, we go the other way. We run and hide if we hear gunshots.

What's Even More Scary

As scary as some of those things would be to me, they are not as debilitating as the fear I had when I weighed 430 pounds. That fear kept whispering to me that I was just made to be fat and die and that I would never see my children grow up.

I was afraid that I was not good enough to be used by God for anything of consequence. I was afraid I would never succeed at losing weight or becoming healthy. I had the constant nagging fear that I would never amount to anything.

These fears drove me to try to hide from them by indulging in food more rather than doing anything about my problem. I felt like I was a hopeless case. It was a never-ending cycle, one the enemy loves to perpetuate over and over again.

The knowledge that I was a failure and the fear that I would always be branded that way kept me stuck in what felt like the quicksand of life. There seemed to be no way out.

False Evidence Appearing Real

Fear is just False Evidence Appearing Real. The enemy is really good at feeding us his version of truth, but it's always only half of it. He was the one telling me I was a failure, so I felt and acted like there was no way out of my predicament.

This a partial truth because even though I had failed in a gigantic way, I was never doomed because I had given my life to Christ. Even when I was close to death and ready to give

up, God had not given up on me.

He reached out to me through His servants and began showing me a new way to live. He brought people alongside me who didn't judge me but simply helped direct me in how to walk through my fears to discover the light on the other side.

Walking Out of Fear

It began with realizing that nothing happens until I love myself and see myself as a daughter of the King of kings. No matter what is happening to me, I am always His child.

"For the Holy Spirit makes God's fatherhood real to us as He whispers into our innermost being, 'You are God's beloved child!' And since we are His true children, we qualify to share all His treasures, for indeed, we are heirs of God Himself. And since we are joined to Christ, we also inherit all that He is and all that He has" (Rom.8:16-17, TPT).

As a child of God, I do not have to be afraid of the darkness of my failures. It is exactly because I have dwelt in the depths of my own difficulties that I appreciate even more the beauty of the light of grace when I am finally able to dance in it.

God of the Impossible

By God's grace, mercy and strength, I have been able to walk out of that very fearful time in my life to lose more than 250 pounds. It's because of what I've been through that I know that anyone who taps into this same power of the Spirit of God can see the impossible happen in their lives as well.

"Jesus looked at them intently and said, 'Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But not with God. Everything is possible with God'" (Mark 10:27, NLT).

Most of the time, the devil is able to make us think the molehill is really a mountain. It's only a mountain if that's

the way we see it. God's ready for us to let go of how we see our issue and begin to see it through His eyes.

Through God's Eyes

We walk around blind to who we really are, but our eyes are wide open to who the devil says we are. If we can begin to see ourselves through God's eyes, everything will change.

God sees us as His beloved children. In us He sees potential, possibility and promise. He sees us as His works of art, His masterpieces, His poetry (See Eph. 2:10).

First though, you must let go of your fears. They never were yours in the first place. Simply acknowledge them and then hand them to God.

Now it's time to grab hold of the entirely new way of looking at yourself. See who you are through God's eyes.

You, my friend, are beautiful. {eoa}

Teresa Shields Parker is the author of five books and two study guides, including her latest, [Sweet Journey to Transformation: Practical Steps to Lose Weight and Live Healthy](#), and her No. 1 best-seller, [Sweet Grace: How I Lost 250 Pounds](#). She is also a blogger, spiritual weight loss coach (check out her coaching group, [Overcomers Academy](#)) and speaker at [TeresaShieldsParker.com](#).

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