

Our Source of Pure Delight

Several years ago I was introduced to the poignant Irish hymn “Be Thou My Vision” for the first time. It quickly became a favorite, especially the stanza that reads: *“Riches I heed not, nor man’s empty praise / Thou mine inheritance, now and always / Thou and Thou only, first in my heart / High King of heaven, my Treasure Thou art.”*

Whenever I hear this verse—and I sing it often—I imagine the glorious, eternal riches of our inheritance in Christ. It is true that on earth and in heaven, God has by His grace provided for us “one blessing after another” (John 1:16). Yet without eyes to see Christ as our inheritance and our chief aim, we don’t recognize His blessings for what they are.

King David wrote: “Lord, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance” (Ps. 16:5).

In His sovereign, loving, infinite wisdom, God apportions to each of us what is to be ours. And He chooses better for us than we would choose for ourselves.

God selected an inheritance for Abraham that was beyond anything he knew to ask for. But He also told him, “‘I am your shield, your very great reward’” (Gen. 15:1). Seeing God Himself as his true reward moved Abraham to forfeit the earthly, temporal riches of Haran in order to claim the eternal wealth of Canaan and a heritage through which all the peoples of the earth would be blessed (see Gen. 12:2).

In *The Pursuit of God*, renowned preacher and author A.W. Tozer wrote about the significance of making God our treasure: “The man who has God for His treasure has all things in One. Many ordinary treasures may be denied him, or if he is allowed to have them, the enjoyment of them will be so tempered that they

will never be necessary to his happiness. Or if he must see them go, one after one, he will scarcely feel a sense of loss, for having the Source of all things he has in One all satisfaction, all pleasure, all delight. Whatever he may lose he has actually lost nothing, for he now has it all in One, and he has it purely, legitimately and forever.”

Although God deals with each of us in unique ways, His intentions toward us are the same as they were toward Abraham—to bless us and, through us, to bless others. The key to receiving His blessing is to see ourselves and our inheritance from heaven’s perspective.

It will take this kind of spiritually enhanced vision to take our land, because in every case, there will most certainly be giants to conquer—enemies within and without. But we must believe that possessing our territory for ourselves and our descendants is worth the fight of faith we’ll have to engage in.

Shake off any weariness or discouragement and take one faithful step at a time, boldly staking your claim: “My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion [inheritance] forever” (Ps. 73:26).

Prayer Power for the Week of March 27, 2016

This week delight yourself in the Lord’s presence and ask Him to give you His perspective on things. Thank Him for His desire to bless you and, through you, to bless others. Ask Him to make you sensitive to the opportunities He gives you to be the blessing He desires. Continue to pray for revival in our nation, and remember those struggling financially through cutbacks and loss of income. Pray for the protection of Israel and our troops, those persecuted for their faith in Christ, and those who have suffered the loss of homes, jobs and loved ones. Pray for the upcoming elections and that our government leaders would have godly wisdom when making decisions

affecting our nation and the world (John 1:16; Ps. 16:5; Ps. 73:26).

2 Days Before Easter: Via Dolorosa

On this Good Friday, we present a video devotional from Christian author and Pastor Jamie Buckingham, in which he, while in Jerusalem, follows the traditional path in which Jesus was tried and carried His cross to His death on Calvary.

If This Doesn't Motivate You for Christ, Nothing Will

When Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* released on February 25, 2004, I was one of the millions who flocked to the theater to see it on opening night. The film was an instant success as it grossed nearly \$84 million its first weekend.

The pre-release hype was incredible, and many critics panned the film for various reasons, including its brutality, as my friend Lee Grady described in his *Fire in My Bones* column this week. My question to the naysayers is, and was at the time, "what do you think a Roman crucifixion was like for Jesus, an amusement park ride?"

Because of its nature, it's difficult not to remember almost every detail of that film, including the fact that it was done in the Hebrew language with English subtitles. I remember the Jewish community's objection to the film.

I felt it was a bit creepy that a demon would follow Jesus throughout the movie, but I wonder if that's what life was like for Him. And certainly to Gibson the details of Jesus' flogging and crucifixion were as realistic as it was portrayed. I do remember that, throughout most of the movie, my hands were gripped tightly to the theater chair.

For those of you that have yet to see it, believe me, it is that intense. Much more so than some of my other classic favorites like *The Greatest Story Ever Told*, *Jesus of Nazareth* or even *The Jesus Film*. I just finished watching *Jesus of Nazareth*, a six-plus hour mini-series that I saw originally on television when I was 11. That film had a huge impact on me then and still does.

Even the most recent films of the life of Christ, like *Son of God*, can't match the graphic depiction of Jesus' ordeal in *The Passion*. In 2004, Gibson told that it was his intention to make the film as realistic and human as possible.

"I don't think other films have tapped into the real force of this story," he said. "This film will show the passion of Jesus Christ just the way it happened. ... There is no gratuitous violence in this film. ... I think we have gotten too used to seeing pretty crucifixes on the wall and we forget what really happened. We know that Jesus was scourged, that He carried His cross, that He had nails put through His hands and feet, but we rarely think about what this means."

What it means is that Jesus suffered, and he suffered horribly. I truly believe in my heart that the flogging scene is exactly what took place, if not worse. They didn't just whip Him, they used the cat-o'-nine-tails, a multi-tailed whip

designed to lacerate the skin and cause intense pain.

During the flogging scene, the Romans stopped and apparently believed Jesus, played by Jim Caviezel, had suffered enough. But then Jesus stood up as if to say, "more." That's when it became really brutal. Jesus wanted to show that he had to suffer more than that to take the sins of the whole world upon Himself.

I remember my first thought was, "are you kidding me? More?" If that doesn't motivate you for Christ, then nothing will."

Jesus was willing to take all of that on, including the horrible crucifixion itself, just to save me?

Think about that on this Good Friday. And think about it long and hard. Jesus suffered that terrible pain—which, undoubtedly, no other human being could have—so that we didn't have to.

Think about that the next time your flesh prompts you to do something of which you know Jesus wouldn't approve. Think about that when the Holy Spirit prompts you to serve, but you have other plans. Think about that when you are sad and discouraged, that someone would love you that much.

And as I always like to say, "there is that." {eoa}

3 Days Before Easter: 'Not My

Will, but Yours Be Done'

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus knew what was coming, but He prayed to His Father anyway. Would God protect Him from an agonizing death on the cross?

Luke 22:42 says that Jesus prayed, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me. Nevertheless not My will, but Yours be done." Jesus already knew the answer. To fulfill His mission, He had to be sent to the cross.

Most of us will not be faced with this type of decision in our lifetime. Nonetheless, Christian author and Pastor Jamie Buckingham says, we should always pray that God's will be done and not ours in everything."

5 Ways to Help Your Teen Fall in Love With Scripture

Ask a teenager what his or her favorite verse is, and you might get a cute answer, like Psalm 127:2, or at least select parts of that verse:

"It is in vain for you to rise up early, to stay up late, and to eat the bread of hard toil, for He gives sleep to His beloved" (MEV).

At least that's the answer my 16-year-old niece gave when choosing a verse to be printed on her varsity letter jacket.

If you're a dad asking the favorite verse question early in the morning, you might get this sarcastic answer from your

teenager:

"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger" (Eph. 6:4a, MEV).

Or maybe your teenager's most loved Scripture verse is found in 1 Kings 18:27, when Elijah is making fun of the prophets of Baal, telling them their god is not answering their prayers because he's probably busy using the toilet.

Something happens between the ages of 9 and 12 that seems to flip a switch, at least for a time. Our sweet children who once sang with conviction, "The B-I-B-L-E, yes, that's the book for me," become teenagers and typically treasure God's Word only when it's funny, or for about one week out of the year at youth camp.

Oh well, at least they're searching the Scriptures. Right?

We All Have Excuses

Truth be told, teenagers are really no different than adults when it comes to their attitudes regarding God's Word. They have the same reasons we do for not reading their Bibles:

- "I don't have time." (Parents: Learn how to maximize the "fringe hours.")
- "I don't know where to start."
- "I don't get anything out of it."
- "I don't like to read."
- "I don't see how it applies to my life."
- "It's boring."
- "It's too confusing."

These excuses are common, and some of them might even be true. But it's also true that none of our excuses can ever outweigh or overcome the value and necessity of God's Word in our daily lives.

5 Ways to Help Your Kid Fall in Love With Scripture

Here are five ways to help your teenager learn to treasure God's Word (and these will blow up their excuses for not reading it too):

1. The Bible is hands-down, the best book ever. We don't read the Bible because it's an item on our checklist. We read it because it's the best book ever. Reading the Bible isn't a chore you have to do, like homework, washing the dishes or mowing the lawn. We get this messed up all the time, and sometimes mistakenly present Bible reading as though it is an item to mark off a daily list. It's not. Maybe instead of pushing a "daily quiet time," you could start by grabbing a Bible to search Scripture together when your teenager has questions, heartaches or struggles. (TIP: If you need advice for buying your next Bible, check out our official Bible buying guide.)

2. Reading the Bible is rebellious. "If you really want to be a rebel, read your Bible, because no one's doing that. That's rebellion. That's the only rebellion left." That's a quote from Lecrae's song "Rebel." That's right, it's not just parents and preachers who think reading the Bible is important; Lecrae thinks so too.

3. Reading Scripture is NOT the Pythagorean Theorem. When learning high school math, teenagers want to know, "When am I going to ever use this?" The Bible isn't like that. It is full of stories and truths that you need every single day of your life.

4. Reading the Bible will help them get a girl (or guy). Before you start silently arguing about this, hear me out. Your teenager needs to know God's Word will help him or her become the type of person another godly person will one day want to marry. This is not to say that God has plans for every teenager to get married, but the subject does cross each of their minds. Even if they're not dating, most of them are thinking about it. Their instruction about relationships

shouldn't come from listening to Drake or watching *The Bachelor*.

5. Explain the benefits of Scripture. It's like a mirror. And a hammer. And an LED lamp. This is where it gets a bit uncomfortable. We want the Bible to be like a selfie, using filters and crop tools to ignore the imperfections and feel good about ourselves. But the Word of God doesn't work like that. The Bible shows us who we are and where we need to make changes (James 1:23-25), breaks apart the hard places of our hearts (Jer. 23:29) and illuminates the way we should go (Ps. 119:105).{eoa}

For the original article, visit .

Holy Spirit Outpouring: Bonnie Brae House

The Bonnie Brae House in Los Angeles is the place where the catalytic fire for the Azusa Street Revival was first ignited. In those early meetings at the Asberry house on Bonnie Brae Street, there were only about 15 people including children, many of them coming from Julia Hutchins' mission.

Even though William J. Seymour had yet to receive the "evidence" of speaking in tongues, he continued to teach about it. On April 9, 1906, just before leaving for the prayer meeting, Seymour's friend Edward Lee began to speak in tongues after he laid hands on and prayed for him. After this, Lee, Seymour, and the others walked the couple blocks up the street to the Asberry home on Bonnie Brae Street for the 7:30 p.m. prayer meeting.

There, a handful of African-American saints gathered together because they wanted to encounter God in a greater measure. They had a song, a few prayers, and several testimonies released. Seymour shared the testimony of how Lee spoke in tongues less than two hours before. He then began to preach from Acts 2:4:

“When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like a mighty rushing wind came from heaven, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. There appeared to them tongues as of fire, being distributed and resting on each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to speak” (Acts 2:1-4, MEV)

Then something happened that they had all been waiting and longing for. God crashed into that meeting like never before and someone started to speak in tongues. Several others got baptized in the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues as well. Ruth Asberry’s cousin Jennie Evans Moore, who lived across the street, was resting on a stool, when she suddenly fell to the ground and began to speak in tongues. She is known as one of the first women in Los Angeles to speak in tongues during this time.

She recalled that it felt like a vessel broke inside of her and water “surged” through her entire being. When this rush came to her lips, she spoke in six different languages that she had seen earlier in a vision. These tongues were each interpreted in English.

Following this release, Jennie, who had never played the piano before, walked over to the piano and played it under the anointing while singing in tongues. She recounted the story in an article called “Music from Heaven” in the Azusa Mission’s newspaper called *The Apostolic Faith*:

“For years before this wonderful experience came to us, we as a family, were seeking to know the fullness of God, and He was filling us with His presence until we could hardly contain the power. On April 9, 1906, I was praising the Lord from the depths of my heart at home, and when the evening came and we attended the meeting the power of God fell and I was baptized in the Holy Ghost and fire, with the evidence of speaking in tongues. “As I thought thereon and looked to God, it seemed as if a vessel broke within me and water surged up through my being, which when it reached my mouth came out in a torrent of speech in the languages which God had given me. I sang under the power of the Spirit in many languages, the interpretation both words and music which I had never before heard, and in the home where the meeting was being held, the Spirit led me to the piano, where I played and sang under inspiration, although I had not learned to play” [Jennie Moore, *The Apostolic Faith* 1:8 (312 Azusa Street, Los Angeles, CA: May, 1907), 3.]

A few days later on April 12, 1906, Seymour spoke in tongues for the first time after tarrying with a white brother and not giving up until he “came through” at nearly 4 o’clock in the morning.

Crowds of both black and white people from Smale’s First New Testament Church, Hutchins’ mission, and other Holiness groups in the area came to the house on Bonnie Brae Street to see and partake in what God was doing.

At one point, the house swelled with people so much that the front porch caved in. No one was injured, but they realized that they had outgrown the house and it was time to get a larger place. Within a week, they moved to a vacant building at 312 Azusa Street, which used to be a Methodist Episcopal church before it had been damaged by a fire. {eoa}

* The above is an excerpt from new book titled ***Ignite Azusa: Positioning for a New Jesus Revolution*** with the following

authors, **Jennifer A. Miskov**, Ph.D. (Destiny House), **Heidi Baker**, Ph.D. (Iris Global), **Lou Engle** (TheCall), and **Bill Johnson** (Bethel Church in Redding, California) who partner together in **Ignite Azusa** to inspire courage to step into the momentum set before us today. They will also be in Los Angeles April 9, 2016 for the 110 anniversary of the Azusa Street Revival at the AzusaNow gathering. We are believing for a new Jesus Revolution in our day.

*In addition to authoring Silver to Gold, Spirit Flood, Water to Wine and Life on Wings, **Jennifer A. Miskov** has supported Bill Johnson and Heidi Baker on several writing projects. She was ordained with Iris Global on New Year's Eve 2011 by Heidi Baker. Shortly after, she walked through one of the most stretching times of her life to establish Destiny House in February 2012. She also launched the first of the Annual Healing and Revival Retreats at Carrie Judd Montgomery's Home of Peace that year. Jen currently teaches a few classes at Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry and SUM Theological Seminary as well as hosts Writing in the Glory: How to Write and Publish Your 1st Book workshops.*

For the original article, visit .

'Batman v Superman' Packs A Punch, But It's No Marvel

Putting the two most iconic comic book characters mano-a-mano on the big screen for the first time should be a guaranteed knockout for fan boys and action-movie fans.

But like a heavyweight fight filled with hype and hoopla, *Batman v. Superman: Dawn of Justice* features more

flash and dash rather than substance and something special. Despite extensive spiritual overtones about a god-like superhero and Messiah figure, the movie is also not very family friendly with its dark and brooding elements, as well as jarring violence (see Content Watch below for details).

For the most part a glorified sequel to 2013's *Man of Steel*, the movie launches a series of "DC Comics Extended Universe" movies from Warner Bros., including later this year with *Suicide Squad* and next year with *Wonder Woman* and *Justice League Part I*.

Directed by Zack Snyder, who was also behind *Man of Steel*, *Batman v. Superman* stars Ben Affleck as Bruce Wayne/Batman and Henry Cavill as Clark Kent/Superman, as well as Gal Gadot as Wonder Woman, Amy Adams as Lois Lane and Jessie Eisenberg as Lex Luthor.

Batman v. Superman takes place after the events of *Man of Steel*, when Superman becomes the most controversial figure in the world following his battle against fellow Krypton, General Zod, which caused the city of Metropolis to be razed to the ground.

While many still see Superman as an emblem of hope, a growing number of people consider him a threat to humanity—seeking justice for the chaos he has brought to Earth.

In fact, to Gotham City's Bruce Wayne, Superman is clearly a danger to society. He fears for the future of the world with such a reckless power left ungoverned, and so he dons his mask and cape to right Superman's wrongs.

The rivalry between them is furious, fueled by bitterness and vengeance, and nothing can prevent them from a collision course. Added to the tension is a dark new threat in the form of a third man, who has a power greater than either of them to endanger the world and cause total destruction.

Far from a faith-based film, *Batman v. Superman* repeatedly broaches the subject of God. Quirky and borderline overbearing, Eisenberg's Lex Luthor offers some curious speeches about how Superman plays into myths about religion and godly powers.

"We know better now, don't we?" Luthor asks. "Devils don't come from hell beneath us. They come from the sky."

Later, the film's main villain tells Superman: "And now, you will fly to him, and you will battle him ... to the death. Black and blue, fight night! The greatest gladiator match in the history of the world. God versus man. Day versus night! Son of Crypton versus Bat of Gotham!"

Luthor also says: "If man won't kill God, the devil will do it!"

Rated PG-13, *Batman v. Superman* clocks in at 153 minutes, featuring lots of destructive and action-packed scenes, as well as special effects that are big and spectacular.

Overall, the film has well grim, dark and serious tone. Affleck told the media that he would not take his young son to the film because it could give him nightmares, which means that *Batman v Superman* might be off limits to families with younger children.

"I'll have to con one of the editors into giving me a truncated version of the movie without some of the scarier stuff," Affleck said.

On the down side, the movie is practically devoid of humor or levity, except for Lex Luthor's unfunny quips and some brief one-liners during the film's climax. Speaking of which, Wonder Woman practically steals the show from Batman and Superman with her glorified cameo during the battle sequence.

With *Batman v. Superman*, Warner Bros. hopes to go toe to toe

with rival Marvel Studio's unparalleled cinematic gold mine of comic book characters turned film franchises. With a staggering \$250 million budget, the film is expected to generate as much as \$150 million when it hits 4,200 screens domestically this weekend, and more than \$300 million globally when it rolls out across more than 60 major territories, including China, the world's second biggest market for film.

"This is basically their Avengers," Jeff Bock, a box office analyst with Exhibitor Relations, told *The Hollywood Reporter*. "There's a ton of buzz about it. They need to open bigger than any DC Comics film ever has."

But as *The Hollywood Reporter* succinctly pointed out in its review, *Batman v. Superman* "may be imposing, but it's not fun." Translation: *Batman v. Superman* packs a wallop, but it's no marvel.

Content Watch: *Batman v Superman* is rated PG-13 for sequences of violence and action throughout, and some sensuality. The violence isn't gory, but it's graphic and jarring at times for a superhero flick. The picture opens with Bruce Wayne's parents being murdered and then cuts to *Man of Steel's* climax with an even greater emphasis on civilians dying and children watching their parents get blown up. There are also a flurry of brutally violent action sequences (point-blank executions, sex trafficking victims in cages, etc.) and grim testimonials about the collateral damage that Superman allegedly causes. Additionally, there are scary scenes with demon-like creatures, which will definitely scare young kids. The sensuality involves an unmarried couple getting in a tub together, and one of the main characters is shown getting out of bed with someone who is not his wife. The movie features several expletives, while God's and Jesus' names are used in vain a handful of times. When it comes out on DVD later this year, *Batman v Superman* will feature a R-rated version for its increased violence but no nudity, which will be a half-hour longer than the theatrical release.{eoa}

4 Days Before Easter: The Towel and the Basin

After the Passover meal on the night before His crucifixion, Jesus took a basin and a towel and washed the feet of His disciples. He did it to show them His desire that they serve one another.

In this video devotional, Christian Pastor and author Jamie Buckingham tells us that, other than the cross, nothing gives us a more dramatic picture of what God wants us to be than the towel and the basin.

‘... That Saved a Wretch Like Me’

As we approach Resurrection Sunday, each of us should take a moment (or maybe more) to reflect on what the grace given us by the cross means in our lives.

We should take a moment to reflect on the person we used to be, the person we are now and the person God is molding us to be.

In 1779, English poet and clergyman John Newton penned these words, “Amazing Grace!/How sweet the sound/That saved a wretch like me/I once was lost, but now am found/Was blind, but now I see.”

“That saved a wretch like me.” Like me. Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary defines wretch as: A miserable person. One who is profoundly unhappy or in great misfortune. A base, despicable or vile person.”

Undoubtedly, before I truly received Christ into my life, I was all of those things. I don’t believe I was a bad person by any stretch of the imagination. I grew up in a loving home with a Spirit-filled mother who prayed for me always. Yet without Christ, I was unquestionably lost and blind.

When we come into a relationship with Christ—and I don’t mean simply praying the sinner’s prayer and saying you are saved because of that act—we are no longer considered a wretch. “In Him we have redemption through His blood and the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace” (Eph. 1:7, MEV).

Our behavior may still be wretched at times, but we are not, according to 2 Corinthians 5:17: “Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things have passed away. Look, all things have become new.”

Certainly, we must repent of our wretched behavior anytime it rears its ugly head. But remember this: You don’t have to apologize for the person you are and call yourself a wretch, or garbage (sadly, I’ve heard even some Christ followers refer themselves as this), or even unworthy. You don’t have to condemn your own character because of the lies the enemy feeds you.

Of course, he wants to keep you under condemnation for as long as he can. But remember Romans 8:1, which says, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit” (MEV).

When you come into a true relationship with Christ, your personality begins to change because you want to be more like Christ. You no longer want to be the wretch you used to be.

You don't care about what the world says about you, and you don't desire to do what the world does because of the Holy Spirit, who dwells within you. Jesus' death and resurrection has given you that opportunity to change.

"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, MEV).

In other words, people should be able to see a difference between the way Christians and non-Christians live. As Christ followers, we shouldn't expect instant maturity, but if we have been confessing Christ for years and there isn't a difference in us—that is to say, if your life isn't producing any fruit—then something is amiss. You need to go back to the cross and figure out why the fruit isn't evident.

"If you were raised with Christ, seek those things that are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God" (Col. 3:1, MEV). We need to regard our earthly nature—our wretchedness—as dead. We need to change our moral and ethical behavior by letting Christ live within us so that he can shape us into the person we should be.

It took me years to figure this out. And why? Simply because of my own arrogance and failure to stop listening to what my flesh wanted instead of what my Lord and Savior wanted for me. Believe me, I have learned the latter is much more fulfilling.

If we keep listening to God, we will be changing all the time. Over the past couple years, I have slowly learned to kill many of my fleshly desires. People have told me they have noticed remarkable changes in me, and I'm grateful to God for opening my eyes and my heart.

What about you? As you look over the past year, what changes for the better have you seen in your thoughts and attitudes? Change may be slow, but your life will change significantly if you trust God to make the adjustments.

Remember, the wretch is gone. Keep him or her buried.

And as I always like to say, “there is that.” {eoa}

5 Days Before Easter: ‘Have You Received Him as the Lord of Your Life?’

During the final week of Jesus’ life, Jesus continually told His disciples of the events that were soon to take place. Although the mood was solemn, the disciples still didn’t fully understand what they would soon witness because they did not fully understand what type of Messiah Jesus really was.

In this video devotional, Christian author and Pastor Jamie Buckingham asks us, as believers, if we truly understand what it is to be known as a child of God.

“Today, make certain you not only recognize Him as your Savior, but receive Him as the Lord of your life,” Buckingham says.{eoa}