

# Virtual Christian Magazine

Hope And Encouragement  
For The Real World



## Christ the Cornerstone

By Katherine Rowland



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# Christ the Cornerstone



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## Who or What is your Cornerstone?

By Katherine Rowland

We are often acquainted with the cornerstone of a building as being a fairly ceremonial block in fancy structures. It often has the date that the building was erected carved on it, and may have other information there as well. However, the original idea of the cornerstone is less ceremonial and more practical: in masonry, the cornerstone or foundation stone is the first stone laid; all the rest of the construction is built in relation to that first stone.

In Isaiah 28:16, the Lord says, "... Behold, I lay in

Zion a stone for a foundation, A tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation..." Commentaries agree that this is a reference to the coming of Jesus Christ. In Psalm 118:22, we read that, "The stone [which] the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone." In Acts 4:11, Peter makes clear that this stone is Jesus Christ, who was rejected by the Jewish leaders of His day and crucified. If the stone is true enough and sound enough to be laid as a cornerstone, why would it be rejected by the builders? Why did the Jewish leaders

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not accept Him and what can we learn from this? During His ministry on earth, Jesus Christ voiced His harshest criticism towards the Jewish leaders of the day: the scribes and Pharisees. In Matthew 23, Christ proclaims woe to the scribes and Pharisees and criticizes their hypocrisy: seeming so holy on the outside, but not really practicing what they said they believed. In addition, He said that they made heavy burdens for men, but would not lift a finger to help them. The Jewish practice of the time had become a burden--not because of God's law, but because of the traditions that had been added to the law--ironically, in an attempt to help Jews keep God's law. In Matthew 15, the scribes and Pharisees ask Christ why His disciples do not keep the traditions of the elders; Christ responds by asking why the scribes and Pharisees transgress God's law in order to uphold the traditions of the elders (Matthew 15:1-9). He quotes Isaiah 29:13 saying, "...in vain they worship me, teaching [as] doctrines the commandments of men." Perhaps now we can begin to see why the scribes and Pharisees could not accept Christ: He taught against

their traditions, not God's law. He preached that the law was about more than physical regulations and that it was instead a matter of heart and mind. The Jewish leaders, though, had a structure in which they put their trust: the traditions of the elders. The chief cornerstone, Christ, did not fit into this structure. What He said did not fit with what they had already built; so they did indeed reject Him. We must be careful not to make the same mistake. In Ephesians 2:19-22, Paul writes, "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner [stone], in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit." Paul says that we are to have Christ as our cornerstone, the fundamental element on which all else is laid. In this way, we will be built into a holy temple if we start with the right foundation. Paul uses this analogy in

many places, always pointing back to Christ as the cornerstone, the first thing that is established. He has good reason to do so. In Luke 6:46-49 Christ says, "But why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say? Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And he ruin of that house was great." God does not want a temple that is built on shaky ground, one that will fall under any kind of stress. Instead, He wants us to build carefully, laying everything upon the right foundation. We must build with care, as Paul points out: "According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he

builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation [*with*] gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is" (1 Corinthians 3:10-13). Simply having that cornerstone available will not help us if we do not

then build carefully and always in reference back to that cornerstone. The cornerstone will not automatically make what we build perfect: we must always be looking back to it, referencing it, holding up our deeds against it so that we will build a sturdy structure that will not be shaken.

A cornerstone cannot be picked up and jammed into a structure that is already partially built: it is designed to be the first piece of the structure, used

to set all the other walls in alignment. We must be careful to heed the lesson of the mistake of the scribes and the Pharisees in rejecting this cornerstone. As we build on the foundation that has been laid for us, we must constantly keep our eyes on Christ the cornerstone of our faith.

For more information on Jesus Christ the Cornerstone, read the Bible study aid booklet *Jesus Christ The Real Stor*

## Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

by Robert Berendt

**God uses simple and memorable analogies to help us understand His plan.**



When I was a young boy, I would often hear the Lord's Prayer recited, and I noted the request humans are to have of God: "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:9-13).

Food was important to me as a growing teenage boy. It is important to us all because it nourishes us and is necessary for life.

The word "bread" in the prayer struck a strong chord in my young mind because sometimes my mother would stay up late at night baking bread for our family. On those special nights, she would wait until we were all in bed.

Dough requires a little time to rise before it is baked. One night, just about midnight, the fresh bread had just been baked and I came out of the bedroom. My mother cut me a slice of the best bread I have ever eaten with a pat of butter that melted right into it. Along with that hot slice came a cup of coffee. That was her reward to herself for a job well done. I do not think I ever missed

getting up another night when she was going to bake bread. I could pretty well time the moment it came out of the oven since we had an old wood and coal burning stove and opening the doors or adding fuel made some noise. The bread needed just a little time to cool and then it was perfect. With fresh homemade bread, butter and a cup of coffee, life just did not have anything better to offer me at that time.

### **God uses memorable symbols**

There are some themes in the Bible that God seems to have placed more emphasis on than others. He knows how our minds and our memories work. The theme of bread representing deeper concepts is used in a number of different ways in the Bible and the word has a number of meanings in scripture. When Jesus explained how to pray, He used the word to mean good physical and spiritual food and He was also conveying a deeper spiritual message about our daily bread. He used the word bread in reference to Himself when He said He was the “bread of life” (John 6:48).

Bread in the Bible can also refer to a meal. It is used to

describe something special as in the “bread of affliction” as well (1 Kings 22:27). There is often much symbolism when bread is discussed in scripture.

When Israel left Egypt in haste, there was no time for the dough to rise for the daily bread they would usually bake. They ate unleavened bread at the beginning of their journey (Exodus 12:34). During the 40 years Israel wandered in the wilderness, God supplied them with daily bread (Exodus 16:4, 33). It was called “manna.” They were to eat it for a period of seven days during a season called the Days of Unleavened Bread by a statute that God gave them (Leviticus 23:6).

God did not originally intend to feed them manna every day for 40 years; He did not intend for Israel to wander in the dry and arid region of Sinai for 40 years. But because Israel continually defied God and disregarded His commandments, He was forced to punish them. His punishment was that nobody over the age of 20 would see the Promised Land and they would wander for 40 years until all those over that age would have died. During the trek, He would

supply them with manna for each day even if they were not obedient to Him (Numbers 14:1-4, 27-34).

The command to eat unleavened bread this first annual Holy Day, was designed by God to be an everlasting command that is still in force today, long after those 40 years in the wilderness. Each year the observation reinforced the understanding God wanted to relay: that they were to be a pure, clean, undefiled people among all the nations of the earth. *They* were to be “unleavened.” In this case leavened bread was likened to having sin present or being like all others in the world.

### **Continued symbolism in the New Testament and for us today**

When the Father sent His Son Jesus to be our sacrifice and Savior, the meaning of the manna and the days God gave were symbolic of what God was doing. Jesus died on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan on the Passover Day the day before the start of the Days of Unleavened Bread. He was the pure undefiled Passover Lamb. Israel had gathered a pot of manna and kept it inside the Ark in the Temple. There was great significance placed on that.

Since the Ark was a replica of the Ark that is before God's throne in heaven, we can easily see that Christ was the symbolic manna of that heavenly Ark (Hebrews 8:5, 9:4).

All sacrifices of grains that were brought before God during the period of time that the Levites were to be the acting priests, were to be unleavened (Leviticus 2:1-7, 11). When we come before God in prayer, we are also "unleavened" through Jesus' sacrifice (1 Corinthians 5:6-8). Not all the members Paul wrote to in Corinth were acceptable to God – some were "puffed up" (1 Corinthians 4:18). Paul likens the "old leaven" to malice and wickedness and being "unleavened" to sincerity and truth (1 Corinthians 5:8). The decisions and actions in our lives show whether we are living in a manner that pleases God or in a manner that embarrasses Him.

Jesus referred to Himself as the "living bread" for a reason (John 6:51). All who wish to be saved must come to God through Jesus Christ. We are to symbolically eat His flesh and drink His blood whenever we take the Passover (Matthew 26:26-28). He said we are to symbolically eat

His body that was broken for us (1 Corinthians 11:24). Each year at the Passover, unleavened bread is taken as the symbol of His sacrifice for us along with a little wine that represents His blood that was shed for our sins and payment of the penalty of sin for us. We are to be as closely bound to Christ as if we were one (John 17:21-23). The bread represents His body, and a converted person understands that Christ dwells within him. We are to walk according to His example every day.

#### **Ask God for your daily bread**

When Jesus said to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," there is both the physical and the spiritual intent of that prayer. We cannot live without physical food for nourishment and we also cannot live spiritually if we do not have Christ in our lives every day. To be the pure and undefiled people of God we have become "unleavened" through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (John 15:3-7). Just as bread is the staple of our everyday lives, so too, Christ is intended to be the daily staple of our spiritual lives. The dual lesson of needing bread to live physically

and needing Christ to live spiritually is reinforced by the lesson of the Passover.

Israel did not learn the lessons God had planned for them and were left to wander until God decided it was time to work with them again. For converted people, the precious and high cost of the spiritual bread does not give anyone the option of leaving salvation until later. We dare not turn away from the gift of Jesus Christ once we have accepted it. Christ will not die a second time for anyone (Hebrews 10:26-29). Paul noted the words of Jesus on the night of His betrayal. Jesus said: "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me" (1 Corinthians 11:24).

I loved my mother's bread. It tasted good, it was healthy and good for me and I have always been thankful for the good feeling of family that it gave. Jesus told a group of Jewish followers that they should never hunger or thirst if they took the bread that represented Him (John 6:32-35). We are spiritually nourished with Christ in us just as we are physically nourished with good bread in us. His offering leads us to becoming part of the family of God (Galatians

3:26-28). God's gift satisfies and makes our life better (Matthew 11:28-30). Jesus said His yoke was light and easy and we would find rest for our souls.

To be part of the family of God is something that our dreams and imagination cannot grasp completely. Jesus used the lesson about bread to drive home the way of God so we can understand it. We are to hun-

ger and thirst after righteousness. Jesus said those who did yearn to be close to God would be blessed because they shall be filled (Matthew 5:6). Remember to take Christ into your life every day. We need Him dwelling in us continually in order to live eternally. If we do so, we will never be hungry or thirsty again.

If you want to learn more about how the "bread of life" really lived, request

our free booklet *Jesus Christ: The Real Story*.

For more information on the symbolism of bread in God's holy days, request our free booklet *God's Holy Day Plan*.

## No Heat, No Water, No Electricity... No Plan?

by Amy Stephens

### Are you prepared?



It could happen in the winter, or the spring, or even the summer. It may happen when you least expect it. It may happen with little or no warning. It may affect your family, your neighborhood or your entire community. 'It' is an

emergency. We know that we are to watch and pray so that we are spiritually prepared for the events that will come in the end times. "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh"

Matthew 25:13  
(King James Version throughout).

The admonition here to watch means more than just staying alert to current events. We are to be watching our own spiritual

lives in light of the world and circumstances we live in. Turning on the evening news every night does not meet the requirement of this scripture; there is action required in the term watch, and it implies using caution, paying attention and being sure of our calling. “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall” (2 Peter 1:10).

Emergencies cause more than just physical damage, bodily harm or interruptions to our daily lives. They are stressful and, if extreme in nature, can draw us away from God. An emergency can leave us questioning God’s power, love or mercy. Times of emergency—when we watch a loved one die, see our homes destroyed or wonder how we will feed our hungry child—can fill us with doubt.

The admonition to “watch” is to be prepared, to have a close loving relationship with God, to know God and trust Him in all things, to know and understand God’s plan for mankind and put our trust in Him.

## Spiritual preparedness

We should take seriously our calling and be sure that we have a relationship with God our Father. Becoming like our Savior and Elder Brother should be our highest priority. “But grow in grace, and [in] the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him [be] glory both now and for ever. Amen” (2 Peter 3:18).

God is our protector and guide, and He will see us through the trials of our lives, including emergencies and natural disasters, according to His will. Our trust should be in the loving mercy our Father provides. “The LORD [is] my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, [and] my high tower” (Psalm 18:2).

In everything we do, it is important to understand who our true source of blessing, wisdom and protection is. We should never rely on our own defenses and preparations for survival either spiritually or physically. The knowledge, wisdom and means to prepare are all blessings from God.

“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy” (1 Timothy 6:17).

## Examples of preparedness

There is a beautiful story of ten virgins waiting for the bridegroom that entreats us to prepare ourselves spiritually to be the bride of Christ. But did you ever consider the physical aspect of the story? The wise virgins had enough oil so they were prepared and ready to go.

Every day floods, ice storms, tornadoes, and earthquakes occur somewhere. Are we physically prepared, but much more, are we spiritually prepared? What would we do in the event of an emergency? Do we have extra oil? Should we prepare? Can we prepare?

The description in Proverbs 31 is that of a godly, wise woman. Notice that verse 21 shows how she has prepared: “She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household [are] clothed with scarlet.”

In Proverbs 6:6

we are told to consider the ant and be wise: “Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise.” An ant gathers her food and stores it; she works diligently all day preparing. The wisdom we are striving for comes in growing and preparing spiritually, but isn’t it also wise to prepare as much as we can physically?

## Physical emergency preparedness

How prepared are you and your family for an emergency? What should you be prepared for?

The first step for physical emergency preparedness is to consider the emergencies that are possible in the area you live. Do you live on or near the ocean, a fault line, river, airport, railroad yard, or interstate? Consider the possible scenarios:

- Earthquake.
- Flood.
- Tornado.
- Hurricane or typhoon.
- Tsunami.
- Ice storm.

- Snowstorm.
- Chemical spill.
- Medical emergency.
- Terrorist attack.

Next, consider the effects of any of these events on your daily life. What if you could not get to the grocery store for several days? What if the electricity was out for several days? What if you had to evacuate your neighborhood or shelter in place? What would you need in each of these situations?

The next step is to design a plan for your family. Consider contingency plans in the event your normal daily tasks are interrupted or cannot be completed in the same way. If you have to leave the area, will you meet your spouse or children somewhere? If you are unable to leave the house, what items would your family need? Don’t forget in this stage of planning to also consider those who do not live with you but who you care for, such as an elderly parent or neighbor. It is also good to consider what affect the emergency and the plan for dealing with it will have on your pets so you can prepare to take care of them as well.

The website for the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) in the United States lists the items that you need to create a basic emergency kit. These items include:

- Water – one gallon per person per day, for at least three days (for drinking and sanitation).
- Battery powered or hand crank radio and a NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert.
- Extra batteries.
- Flashlights.
- A whistle to signal for help.
- Dust masks to filter contaminated air.
- Plastic sheeting and duct tape in the event you need to shelter in place.
- Moist towelettes.
- Garbage bags with ties (personal sanitation).
- Wrench/Pliers to turn off utilities.
- Manual can opener.
- Local maps.
- Cell phone with chargers, inverter or solar charger.

- Non-perishable food: a three-day supply for each person.

- Eating utensils.

- (I would add a Bible, as nothing will be of more comfort than God's word in the event of an emergency.)

It is also advised to have on hand a supply of any additional items that individuals in your household may need, such as prescription medication, glasses, infant formula, diapers, and pet food and water. It is also advisable to have some additional cash on hand in the event you are unable to retrieve funds from your accounts.

Other items to consider when building your emergency kit or outlining the plan for your family include:

- Important family documents such as copies of insurance policies, identification and bank account records in a waterproof, portable container.

- Emergency reference material such as a first aid book or free information printed from the FEMA Web site.

- Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person. Consider additional bedding if you live in a cold-weather climate.

- Complete change of clothing including a long sleeved shirt, long pants and sturdy shoes. Consider additional clothing if you live in a cold-weather climate.

- Household chlorine bleach and medicine dropper – when diluted, nine parts water to one part bleach, bleach can be used as a disinfectant. Or in an emergency, you can use it to treat water by using 16 drops of regular household liquid bleach per gallon of water. Do not use scented, color safe or bleaches with added cleaners.

- Fire extinguisher.

- Matches in a waterproof container.

- Feminine supplies and personal hygiene items.

- Mess kits, paper cups, plates, paper towels and plastic utensils.

- Paper and pencil.

- Books, games, puzzles or other activities for children.

Your family home emergency kit should be stored in a designated place and should be ready in the event you must leave your home quickly. It should be updated yearly and food items refreshed to avoid expiring.

When preparing your kit, consider preparing a kit for your workplace as well. You should be prepared to shelter at work for at least twenty-four hours. A workplace kit should be in one case and easily accessible. It would include food, water, medication and possibly toiletries. Consider the possibility of an evacuation that requires long-distance walking from your workplace as well.

Another area to consider is an emergency that leaves you stranded in your car. Each car in your household should be equipped with an emergency kit that includes:

- Jumper cables.

- Flashlights and extra batteries.

- First aid kit and any necessary medication.

- High-protein food items (nuts, energy bars).

- Water.

- AM/FM radio.

In areas of cold weather, your car kit should also include:

Salt or cat litter for traction.

Shovel.

Ice scraper.

Warm clothes.

Blankets.

The FEMA website <http://www.ready.gov/make-plan-kids> offers many suggestions on emergency planning and includes activities to teach and prepare your children.

## Balance

The physical preparations can seem like an overwhelming task. How overwhelming it must seem to the ant hauling back that morsel of food, relentlessly going back and forth storing up his provisions in the heat of the day. “The ants [are] a people

not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer” (Proverbs 30:25).

We should take some responsibility for our families, and we are admonished that a wise person will make preparations.

There are many sources of information on emergency planning and preparedness, and some can be very helpful, while others can be somewhat extreme. Each family should assess their needs and situation and plan accordingly, being careful not to lose our perspective or become greedy or covetous of our possessions or supplies. “And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15).

## Our assured emergency plan

In an emergency and in our daily lives, our peace comes from knowing, not that we have stockpiled food and water, but that God is in control. He is our protector and He gave us His Word as an instruction manual. In it we see examples and directions to be spiritually alert and watchful, and spiritually and physically prepared and wise.

We put our ultimate trust in the creator and sustainer of our universe, our merciful Father and loving High Priest, and no matter what emergency we find ourselves in we can be assured God will be with us. “Thou wilt keep [him] in perfect peace, [whose] mind [is] stayed[ on thee]: because he trusteth in thee” (Isaiah 26:3).

For information about disasters and God’s intervention please request our free booklet: *Why Does God Allow Suffering?*

# Putting Things into Perspective

by Janet Treadway

**Where is your focus in life? Is it aimed at the things that will make you truly happy?**



It seems to be a habit of many of us to stop and reflect on what we are thankful for as we near Thanksgiving. In doing this, many of us made a daily post on Facebook last November, listing something for which we were thankful. While I was reading these posts, the one my son, David Treadway, wrote grabbed my attention and really said it all. Let me share it with you.

David wrote, "With Thanksgiving fast approaching I had to take a moment and reflect on things I could be appreciative of. It is true that I am no Albert Einstein with

amazing intellect. I am no Warren Buffet with fabulous wealth. I am no Barak Obama with great power. I am no Brad Pitt with a perfect face. Nor am I a George Clooney with ridiculous fame. What I do have, however, is a great loving and supportive family. I do have the most beautiful and healthy children. I do have an amazing and supportive girlfriend. I do have great health (generally). I have a roof over my head, a job (a precious commodity these days) and a full pantry. My life, while peppered with troubles at times, is a good life and for that I am grateful. Take a moment friends and reflect too on those things which you do have that

make your life feel pretty awesome."

David's point was that many times our thoughts are on what we do not have instead of what we do have. Reflecting on what we do not have only makes us depressed and unhappy. We all want happiness, but many times we focus on things that make us unhappy. Do material things make us happy? How about fame and wealth—do they make us happy?

## Studies

Studies conducted in 1970 followed people who won the lottery for a year. A year after they won, these

people were no happier than those who had not won the lottery at all! Why? Because they dropped back to their baseline of happiness (called "hedonic adaptation"), or back to the mood they were in before they won the lottery.

Psychology studies tell us that we each have a baseline level of happiness. Certain events take us above this baseline, and others take us below, but no matter how glorious or traumatic the event, we return to our baseline within months. Thus, each person is said to have a happiness set point, which is thought to remain constant throughout life.

This suggests that no matter what happens, good or bad, the effect on our happiness is only temporary; we tend to rebound back to our baseline level. Some people have a higher baseline of happiness than others. This can be attributed to genetics, but also to how we think. Can we all achieve a higher baseline of happiness?

Martin Seligman, one of the leading researchers in positive psychology and author of "*Authentic Happiness*", describes happiness as having three parts:

pleasure, engagement, and meaning. Pleasure is the "feel good" part of happiness. Engagement refers to living a "good life" of work, family, friends, and hobbies. Meaning refers to using our strengths to contribute to a larger purpose. Seligman says that all three are important, but that of the three, engagement and meaning make the most difference to living a happy life.

So, being happy does not come from the things that all of us strive to find and keep? Nobody is happy all of the time, but some people are definitely more fulfilled than others. Studies on what make people happy reveal that it doesn't have much to do with material goods or high achievement; it seems to whittle down to our outlook on life and the quality of our relationships with the people around us. Only improving our outlook on life will improve our happiness.

## Training

My son David's comment reflected on what can make a person happy: being thankful for what you have, being content, having supportive family and relationships, and contributing to your job.

With that said, can we raise our set point of happiness and keep it there? And if so, how? Yes, we can, with mental training and God's Spirit. Here are a few suggestions.

### 1. Be Content

The Bible clearly teaches us to "be content" no matter our circumstances. In Philippians 4:11 Paul said, "...I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content." Philippians 4:6-7 states, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." No matter what is happening. Pray about it and tell God your need.

### 2. Be Thankful

Have you ever noticed that when you are thanking God for what you have, your whole mind changes! It turns the depressed, negative feelings in your mind from despair to hope and peace. Psalms 92:1-5 says, "It is good to praise the LORD and make music to your name, O Most High, to proclaim your love in the morning and

your faithfulness at night, to the music of the ten-stringed lyre and the melody of the harp. For you make me glad by your deeds, O LORD; I sing for joy at the works of your hands. How great are your works, O LORD, how profound your thoughts!” (New International Version)

King David started by saying that it is good to praise the Lord. The difference between a person who is happy and the one who is not is the one who is full of thanksgiving. He sees the glass half full and not half empty. Colossians 3:15 says, “And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.” Thankfulness gives you peace of heart.

Romans 1:21 (NIV): “For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.” This verse clearly points out that by not glorifying God and not being thankful, you hope for worthless things. It causes your heart to be de-

pressed and darken because you do not have those things. Above all, be a very thankful and grateful person.

### **3. Guard Your Thoughts!**

We certainly cannot start with positive thinking without thinking about Philippians 4:8: “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” (NIV)

We all struggle with ungodly thoughts, but controlling them and reminding yourself to think positive thoughts is extremely important and very necessary for a healthy, spiritually stable mind!

It is so hard to think positively in the negative, difficult world we live in.

One can only listen to the news and you could easily find yourself plunged into an angry, depressed mood. I can tell you I struggle with it, so when I point the

finger I have three pointing at me. Guarding your thoughts means focusing on positive things; prayers of thanksgiving and reading and watching positive things. Listening to uplifting music helps me. We should be looking for the best in others. And, as my son David mentioned, be thankful for what you have. Spiritual stability requires that we guard our minds, filtering out the negative and replacing it with the positive.

Those who are spiritually stable are thankful, content, and seek to guard their minds daily. They reach for the higher things in life, which may not include riches, fame, and power, but do include relationships with God, family, and friends. They are content and thankful for all that God has given them. They know and trust God to make it all work out. They have the right perspective. Thanks to my son David for the reminder to have the right perspective.

For more information on right perspectives in everyday challenges, request a copy of the free booklet *Making Life Work*

# Should You Wish Upon a Star?

By Diane Stewart



## Is helpless wishing all we can do?

The song *When You Wish Upon a Star*, written for the Walt Disney movie *Pinocchio*, was released in 1940. It was sung by a character called Jiminy Cricket and won the Academy Award for the best original song. This song has since become the theme song of the Walt Disney Company.

I found myself pondering the thought of dreams coming true today. I found myself thinking, “I wish things were different in certain aspects of my life.” If things were different, then I could rest easier and my life wouldn’t be so hard to deal with. I have a hard time relaxing until certain matters are taken care of. Sometimes things trouble me, and I lie awake at night fretting. No amount of wishing can make our problems go

away. God wants to help. God wants us to find contentment. Matthew 6:25 reads, “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?” We as Christians do not look to the stars for answers, we look to God.

God calls us out of this wishful thinking. We have the heart that says “Thy will be done.”

The sample prayer below gives us an example of how we should handle life’s troubling situations:

*“In this manner therefore pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be thy name (Matthew 6:9),” and verse 10, “Your*

*kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as [it is] in heaven.”*

God’s heart is toward His children. He is our Master Potter and Master Builder and He is creating us in His image. Trials, we are told, build faith and many other virtues. See the first chapter of James to read about all the wonderful virtues that are developed in us by going through difficult situations.

“... knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience, ” (*James 1:3*), and verse 4, “ But let patience have [its] perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. ” Patience is a beautiful thing. It helps our minds focus on what God wants us to think (not “I” wish, but “Thy” will be done).

If Jesus had not had the mindset, in His last prayer to the Father before His crucifixion, of "...nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done (Luke 22:42)," we would not have the promise of eternal life from the Father. He yielded to His Father's will. Christ learned "obedience by the things which He suffered (Hebrews 5:8)." We also learn as we follow in His footsteps.

Therefore, when we start yielding to wishful think-

ing, let's ponder the words of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who did not fight against His Father's will. He simply prayed, "Thy will be done." Jesus also said, in John 16.23, that whatsoever we ask of the Father in His (Jesus Christ's) name, will be given. That is not wishing on a star, but it is going to the Father for all our needs and desires.

Let's continue in Christ's footsteps. When our hopes and prayers are in line with God's will and our dreams

are subject to Christ's example of: "Thy will be done," then we can remain peaceful, and rest assured that we are doing God's will. When you hope upon the Savior, your dreams come true.

For more information request the free booklet, [You Can Have Living Faith](#) .

# God's Investment

By Katherine Rowland

## Can we earn our way into God's Kingdom

Several years ago, I applied for a job at a public library. I had been volunteering there for some time, and I had been asked to apply for a minimum wage position with basically the same responsibilities as I had already been carrying out. Accordingly, I filled in the application, completed the interview, and had a mandatory drug screening. The man who would be my supervisor offered me the job and sent



my information downtown. All I lacked was official approval. Unfortunately,

the day my paperwork arrived downtown was the same day the administration announced a hiring freeze due to budget concerns. When I arrived for my volunteer duties that evening, the supervisor explained that he had been on the phone all

day with Human Resources, trying to get my hiring approved. In his eyes, he had already hired me and the freeze shouldn't affect my hiring;

from their standpoint, the hiring wasn't official until they made it official, which they couldn't do because of the hiring freeze.

After many phone calls, my supervisor won out, and I had a job. I hadn't done anything to "earn" that job. I hadn't asked him to work so hard on my behalf. Whether I got the job or not didn't matter a great deal to me as I was already doing the work that I wanted to do. However, having seen how hard he fought to secure my position made me determined to be the best employee I could possibly be so that when he looked at my work he would think, "I am glad I was able to add her to the library."

I remembered that story when I read 1 Corinthians 15:9-10. "For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

Paul is saying a lot here in these two sentences. At first, he may sound like he's bragging a little, "I labored more abundantly than they all." But what

Paul is saying is that he had no right to be doing what he was doing—unlike the other apostles, he hadn't been a part of Christ's earthly ministry. In fact, he had originally been on the complete opposite side—a zealous Pharisee (Philippians 3:5). Paul (as Saul) had persecuted the church and killed Christ's followers until Christ Himself stepped into Paul's life.

Paul here recognizes and states that it is by God's grace alone that he is doing what he is doing—he isn't a super-apostle. He wasn't a disciple of Christ during His ministry. Despite being "blameless" in keeping the Pharisaic law (Philippians 3:4-6), Paul knew that God would have had every reason to write him off—he had persecuted and worked against the truth. The blood of believers had been on his hands, so to speak. And so here, Paul points to the gift of God's grace—a reprieve he could never have earned, a gift he would not even have known to ask for.

What is his response to that gift? Paul writes, "His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all..." Paul's recognition of the awesome gift of grace that God had given him was determination to make a

good return on God's gift to him. He saw God's grace as an investment, one on which God may rightly expect a return (think of the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30). He had labored more abundantly than the other apostles because he saw the enormity of the gift that God had given him. This is reminiscent of Christ's teaching in Luke 7:40-43. "And Jesus answered and said to him, 'Simon, I have something to say to you.' So he said, 'Teacher, say it.' 'There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?' Simon answered and said, 'I suppose the one whom he forgave more.' And He said to him, 'You have rightly judged.'"

Paul worked incredibly hard not because he thought he was better than everyone else, but because he knew the enormity of his past sin and what had been forgiven. And he didn't labor under his own steam alone. As he points out in 1 Corinthians 15:10, "I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of

God which was with me.” He hadn’t earned his position by his works; and the works he did through determination to respond to God’s gift weren’t done by him alone, but through that same grace. It was God’s

grace that saved him, and Paul’s response to that was to turn and throw himself into following God’s will.

In Micah 6:6, the prophet asks, “With what shall I come before the LORD, And bow myself before the High God?” In verse 8, he answers himself, “He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?”

King David also echoed this idea when he wrote in Psalm 40:6-10, “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; My ears You have opened. Burnt offering and sin offering

You did not require. Then I said, ‘Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me. I delight to do Your will, O my God, And Your law is within my heart.’”

David knew that what God desires is our wholehearted love of Him and His ways. John wrote in 1 John 5:3,

“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.” And just like Paul, when we recognize God’s gift of grace to us and determine to work so that the gift will not have been made in vain, it is His grace that allows us to understand and to follow His commandments—to demonstrate our love and appreciation for the gift He has given us. Well did the author of Ecclesiastes (in 12:13) write, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man’s all.”

For more information on God’s plan, request the free study aid booklet: *What is Your Destiny*

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