

THE
EVERYDAY LIFE
BIBLE

COMMENTARY BY

JOYCE MEYER

The Everyday Life Bible

Containing the
Amplified Old Testament
and the
Amplified New Testament

FEATURING NOTES *and* COMMENTARY
BY

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New York • Nashville

A Personal Word from Joyce Meyer

For more than forty years, I have enjoyed and greatly benefitted from the *Amplified Bible*. It gives insights I have not found in other translations I have used. Because God has used the *Amplified Bible* in my life to open up many truths from His Word to me, I wanted to share the insight He has given me to help others. I prayed for many years to get permission from the publisher to produce a specialty Bible using this version and was thrilled when permission was finally granted.

God's Word is very precious to me. I can truly say that I love God's Word. It has changed me, and it has changed my life. I have also witnessed transformation in the lives of multitudes of people over the years through studying and believing God's Word. God's words are not ordinary words, as the words of people are. His words are filled with power. The power of God is actually inherent in His Word and it heals, delivers, comforts, saves, corrects, and encourages us.

When people are very discouraged, they can actually take God's Word as medicine for their souls. It encourages the discouraged, lifts up the lowly and downtrodden, heals the sick, saves the lost, fills the empty, and counsels those who need to make a decision.

Jesus is the Word of God Who took on human flesh and dwelt for a while among people (see John 1:14). When we read, study, meditate on, or confess the Word of God, we are fellowshiping with Jesus. We are actually taking Him as our nourishment and we find that only He can satisfy our souls. God's Word is our spiritual food and we need it regularly, just as we need natural food. The prophet Jeremiah said, "Your words were found and I ate them, and Your words became a joy to me and the delight of my heart" (Jeremiah 15:16).

God's Word is very important to Him. The Bible says in Psalm 138:2 that He has magnified together His name and His word. We should always respect and honor God's Word and give it a place of priority in our everyday lives. I truly believe that God's Word contains an answer to every problem and situation we encounter in life. It is certainly spiritual, but it is also very practical and has been given for our everyday lives. This is why, when we first produced this Bible, using the *Amplified Classic Bible*, we called it *The Everyday Life Bible*. This new edition uses the most current *Amplified Bible* translation (2015). I believe that many people have connected the Bible only with church or some other spiritual activity when it really is a life-giving Book we can apply to our lives daily.

I also believe the Bible is largely a book about relationships. It offers in-depth information about our relationships with God, ourselves, and our fellow human beings. Much of the difficulty we face in life is the result of poor relationships. I have learned through God's Word how to receive His love, love myself in a balanced way, and let His love flow through me to others. I pray that this would be your goal because Jesus said that the thing we should concentrate on is loving God and loving others as we love ourselves (see Matthew 27:37-39).

Let me encourage you to be a "lifetime learner." Apply God's Word to situations in your life as you would apply medicine to an injury. If you are having

a particular struggle such as anger, depression, or fear, go to God's Word and select passages that deal with these subjects (I have provided in the back of this Bible a topical index called "The Word for Your Everyday Life," which makes finding these passages easy for you). As you read these verses, slowly take them in, and roll them over and over in your mind. You will find a change taking place in your heart and life. I encourage you to love God's Word, for in it you will find resurrection power and contentment far greater than anything the world has to offer.

Now, I want to make sure you are aware of the special features *The Everyday Life Bible* has to offer because I believe they will help tremendously as you live your life by the Word of God.

Book Introductions: At the beginning of every book of the Bible, you will find basic historical background information on that particular book, along with my thoughts on why each book is important and how it relates to practical living. You will also find "Everyday Life Principles," which summarize the key points and general themes of each book.

Everyday Life Articles: These articles are the longest, most thorough entries in the Bible. They correspond to specific verses or passages, and provide great insight and advice on a variety of topics. I wrote many of them especially for *The Everyday Life Bible*, and I believe they will help you tremendously in your everyday life.

Life Points: If you have followed my teaching ministry for long, you may realize that I often use short, catchy, to-the-point phrases or "one-liners" to emphasize certain principles or truths. Life Points include many of these well-known phrases, as well as other nuggets of encouragement and exhortation.

Speak the Word: I believe that confessing God's Word is vital to a successful Christian life. Anywhere you see an entry entitled, "Speak the Word," you will find a Scripture verse or passage adapted as a first-person confession or prayer. I encourage you to speak and pray these words as you come across them in this Bible and use them to teach you how to pray and confess other verses throughout God's Word.

Putting the Word to Work: We all need to apply the truths of God's Word to our lives. The "Putting the Word to Work" feature takes biblical principles and gives you opportunities to meditate on them, answer questions about them, and think about how you can specifically apply them to the situations in your life.

The Word for Your Everyday Life: Located in the back of this Bible, "The Word for Your Everyday Life" is a list of topics you are likely to face over the course of your life—perhaps many times. Under each topic heading, you will find Scripture references pertaining to that topic. Read those verses and passages, and you will discover biblical answers and guidance to help you overcome every challenge and live your life victoriously.

How To Receive Jesus as Your Personal Lord and Savior: The most important relationship of your life is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. If you would like to receive Him as your Lord and Savior, and enter into the greatest relationship you have ever known, please pray the prayer at the back of the Bible on the page entitled, "How To Receive Jesus as Your Personal Lord and Savior."

Old Testament

Genesis

Author:
Moses

Date:
About 1440 BC

Everyday Life Principles:
Beginnings are important and, thankfully, God continually gives us opportunities for a fresh start.

Be watching for the opportunities God brings your way. They will present themselves in the situations of your everyday life, such as your relationships, your workplace, the way you choose to spend your time, and issues of personal integrity.

Only as you take advantage of these opportunities can you move forward in God's plans for your life.

We often hear the book of Genesis described as a “book of beginnings,” but I also like to think of it as a book of opportunities. From its start to its finish, we read stories of people who were presented with opportunities.

First, we see Eve with the opportunity to choose between good and evil—between God’s instruction and the serpent’s deception. We read about Noah and his opportunity to demonstrate his faith when everyone around him thought he was crazy. We see Abraham with an opportunity to believe God’s promise when it was naturally impossible and then to obey God when obedience required a willingness to sacrifice the promised son for whom he waited so long. We learn about Jacob’s opportunity to deceive, which resulted in all kinds of trouble—and later with an opportunity to surrender completely to God, which resulted in great blessing. We see Joseph with opportunities to forgive and to trust God.

Throughout Genesis, people were blessed when they took advantage of opportunities to choose well—to choose truth over deception, faith over fear, peace over strife, forgiveness over bitterness, patience and waiting on God over trying to force something to happen. I hope the stories and principles in this book will help you recognize the opportunities God gives you and help you make wise choices that will lead to greater blessings than you have ever known.

1 IN THE beginning God (*Elohim*) created [by forming from nothing] the heavens and the earth. [Heb 11:3]

²The earth was formless and void or a waste and emptiness, and darkness was upon the face of the deep [primeval ocean that covered the unformed earth]. The Spirit of God was moving (hovering, brooding) over the face of the waters.

³And God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

⁴God saw that the light was good (pleasing, useful) *and* He affirmed and sustained it; and God separated the light [distinguishing it] from the darkness. [2 Cor 4:6]

⁵And God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

⁶And God said, "Let there be an expanse [of the sky] in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters [below the expanse] from the waters [above the expanse]."

⁷And God made the expanse [of sky] and separated the waters which were under the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so [just as He commanded].

⁸God called the expanse [of sky] heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

⁹Then God said, "Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place [of standing, pooling together], and let the dry land appear"; and it was so.

¹⁰God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called

seas; and God saw that this was good (pleasing, useful) *and* He affirmed and sustained it.

¹¹So God said, "Let the earth sprout [tender] vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit according to (limited to, consistent with) their kind, whose seed is in them upon the earth"; and it was so.

¹²The earth sprouted *and* abundantly produced vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, according to their kind; and God saw that it was good *and* He affirmed and sustained it.

¹³And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.

¹⁴Then God said, "Let there be light-bearers (sun, moon, stars) in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be *useful* for signs (tokens) [of God's provident care], and for *marking* seasons, days, and years; [Gen 8:22]

¹⁵and let them be *useful* as lights in the expanse of the heavens to provide light on the earth"; and it was so, [just as He commanded].

¹⁶God made the two great lights—the greater light (the sun) to rule the day, and the lesser light (the moon) to rule the night; *He made* the [galaxies of] stars also [that is, all the amazing wonders in the heavens].

¹⁷God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to provide light upon the earth,

¹⁸to rule over the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good *and* He affirmed and sustained it.

Speak the Word

Lord, I thank You that You have blessed me and called me to be fruitful in my life. I pray that I will use the resources You have created to serve You and to serve others.

—ADAPTED FROM GENESIS 1:28

¹⁹And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.

²⁰Then God said, "Let the waters swarm *and* abundantly produce living creatures, and let birds soar above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens."

²¹God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind; and God saw that it was good *and* He affirmed and sustained it.

²²And God blessed them, saying, "Be

fruitful, multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth."

²³And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

²⁴Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to (limited to, consistent with) their kind: livestock, crawling things, and wild animals of the earth according to their kinds"; and it was so [because He had spoken them into creation].

²⁵So God made the wild animals of the earth according to their kind, and the cattle according to their kind, and

enjoy your life

When God had completed His six days of creation, He took time to look over everything and He saw that "it was very good and He validated it completely" (Genesis 1:31). God took time to enjoy the work of His hands, and we should do the same. In our passion to possess more and more, we often fall into the trap of working, working, working—and we never enjoy the fruit of our labor. Sometimes we should simply take time to relax and enjoy what we have accomplished.

The writer of Ecclesiastes said there is nothing better for a person than to see "good in his labor" (Ecclesiastes 2:24). I have always been a hard worker. A few years ago, I realized I was working hard but not taking time to enjoy what I was doing. I made a decision to include enjoyment in my life. I no longer just "do" conferences; I enjoy them. When my house is clean and pretty, I take time to look at it and enjoy it. At the end of a year I go over my calendar and remember the various things I have done, and I enjoy the sense of accomplishment it brings. I look at what God has enabled me to do, and I say, "It is good."

Many people feel worthless, insecure, and unacceptable, but God looked at *everything* He had created, including man, and said, "It is very good." He validated it completely. God knows everything about each of us, and He loves us unconditionally. God approves of us; He may not approve of everything we do, but He does approve of us as His beloved children. I encourage you to make a decision to not only enjoy the labor of your hands, but to approve of and enjoy yourself as well.

Choosing to enjoy and accept myself is one of the best decisions I have ever made. God does not create anything worthless. He is good, and everything He does is good. We cannot believe that God created us and also believe we are worthless. Begin to accept and enjoy yourself where you are, and God will help you get to where you need to be.

everything that creeps *and* crawls on the earth according to its kind; and God saw that it was good (pleasing, useful) *and* He affirmed and sustained it.

²⁶Then God said, “Let Us (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) make man in Our image, according to Our likeness [not physical, but a spiritual personality and moral likeness]; and let them have complete authority over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the cattle, and over the entire earth, and over everything that creeps *and* crawls on the earth.” [Ps 104:30; Heb 1:2; 11:3]

²⁷So God created man in His own image, in the image *and* likeness of God He created him; male and female He created them. [Col 3:9, 10; James 3:8, 9]

²⁸And God blessed them [granting them certain authority] and said to them, “Be fruitful, multiply, and fill

the earth, and subjugate it [putting it under your power]; and rule over (dominate) the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and every living thing that moves upon the earth.”

²⁹So God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of the entire earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you;

³⁰and to all the animals on the earth and to every bird of the air and to everything that moves on the ground—to everything in which there is the breath of life—I *have given* every green plant for food”; and it was so [because He commanded it].

³¹God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good *and* He validated it completely. And there was evening and there was morning, a sixth day.

life point

Here in the very first chapter of the Bible, God clearly communicates His desire for our lives to be fruitful. Two of the things necessary to live fruitful lives are balance and pruning. To stay balanced we need to make sure we get the right amounts of healthy nourishment, rest, work, play, time alone with God, and time to enjoy godly relationships.

Pruning is not always pleasant, but it does ensure that the situations, activities, or relationships that are depleting us will not continue to do so. It means something must be cut off or removed from our lives, but God promises great reward as a result—more fruitfulness than ever!

Stay balanced by letting God, the wise Master Gardener, prune your life as He sees fit, and you will enjoy years of fruitfulness and fulfillment.

2 SO THE heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts (inhabitants).

²And by the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested (ceased) on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. [Heb 4:9, 10]

³So God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it [as His own, that is, set it apart as holy from other days], because in it He rested from all His work which He had created and done. [Ex 20:11]

⁴This is the history of [the origin of] the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day [that is, days of creation] that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens—

⁵no shrub *or* plant of the field was yet in the earth, and no herb of the field had yet sprouted, for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground,

⁶but a mist (fog, dew, vapor) used to

rise from the land and water the entire surface of the ground—

⁷then the LORD God formed [that is, created the body of] man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being [an individual

complete in body and spirit]. [1 Cor 15:45–49]

⁸And the LORD God planted a garden (oasis) in the east, in Eden (delight, land of happiness); and He put the man whom He had formed (created) there.

⁹And [in that garden] the LORD God

a very creative God

I cannot imagine what a job it must have been for Adam to name all the birds and animals. He certainly had to be creative to do that!

I could go on and on about how diverse and imaginative God was in creation, but I am sure, if you think about it, you will agree that our God is awesome not only in His power and His love, but also in His creativity.

Simply take a walk and look around. Watch something about nature on a video or on television. Find out what is in the ocean, or learn about how bees and flowers work together. Then realize that the same Holy Spirit present at Creation is living inside you if you have truly accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

So much creativity lies within each one of us, and we need to learn to tap into it and express it without fear. Often, instead of exercising creativity, we keep repeating the same things, even when we are bored with them, simply because we are afraid to step out and do something different. Even if we like the familiar, we all need variety in our lives.

Some people keep the same job or live in the same geographic area all of their lives because they feel those activities or environments are safe. Even if they feel unfulfilled and unhappy at work, at least they know how to do their jobs (they're familiar) and are comfortable with them—and the thought of getting other jobs is frightening to them! In other cases, people do want to make changes in their lives, but they do not want to fail at something new, so they refuse to try and they stick with the familiar.

I do not encourage people to pursue every whim that crosses their minds or to latch onto every fad that comes their way. But there is a definite time to step out of the ordinary—out of the comfort zone—and into new things.

God has created us to need diversity and variety. We are designed to require freshness and newness in our lives, and there is nothing wrong with feeling that you “just need a change.” On the other hand, never being satisfied and always trying the next new thing is another type of problem. Stay within reason, but do not be afraid of something new. Embrace the fresh and different opportunities, experiences, and environments God brings your way. He is a creative God; His creativity did not stop in the Garden of Eden, but is still active today as He continues to shape and refine the wonderful creation He is making in you!

caused to grow from the ground every tree that is desirable *and* pleasing to the sight and good (suitable, pleasant) for food; the tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the [experiential] knowledge (recognition) of [the difference between] good and evil. [Rev 2:7; 22:14, 19]

¹⁰Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four [branching] rivers.

¹¹The first [river] is named Pishon; it flows around the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold.

¹²The gold of that land is good; bdellium (a fragrant, valuable resin) and the onyx stone are found there.

¹³The name of the second river is Gihon; it flows around the entire land of Cush [in Mesopotamia].

¹⁴The third river is named Hiddekel (Tigris); it flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

¹⁵So the LORD God took the man [He had made] and settled him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and keep it.

¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may freely (unconditionally) eat [the fruit] from every tree of the garden;

¹⁷but [only] from the tree of the knowledge (recognition) of good and evil you shall not eat, otherwise on

life point

Adam did what God told him not to do (see Genesis 3:1–6). As a result, Adam became a captive of Satan, who had lured him into going against what God had said. By listening to Satan instead of to God, Adam surrendered to Satan the authority to rule the earth that God had originally given to man. Always listen to God and obey His Word.

life point

God created Adam as a living being, in His image (see Genesis 1:26–27), and gave him authority over everything else He had created (see Genesis 1:28). Man was created to rule under God and to be the physical carrier of God's Spirit in the earth. Part of human nature is that we, as living beings like Adam, have a free will. Why? Because God is too loving to force submission from anyone. He wants us to freely choose to love and serve Him. I hope that today you will make a fresh and willful commitment to love and serve Him with all your heart.

the day that you eat from it, you shall most certainly die [because of your disobedience]."

¹⁸Now the LORD God said, "It is not good (beneficial) for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper [one who balances him—a counterpart who is] suitable *and* complementary for him."

¹⁹So the LORD God formed out of the ground every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name.

²⁰And the man gave names to all the livestock, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for Adam there was not found a helper [that was] suitable (a companion) for him.

²¹So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam; and while he slept, He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place.

²²And the rib which the LORD God had taken from the man He made (fashioned, formed) into a woman, and He brought her *and* presented her to the man.

²³Then Adam said,
 “This is now bone of my bones,
 And flesh of my flesh;
 She shall be called Woman,
 Because she was taken out of Man.”

²⁴For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. [Matt 19:5; 1 Cor 6:16; Eph 5:31–33]

²⁵And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed *or* embarrassed.

3 NOW THE serpent was more crafty (subtle, skilled in deceit) than any living creature of the field which the LORD God had made. And the serpent (Satan) said to the woman, “Can it really be that God has said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden’?” [Rev 12:9–11]

²And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees of the garden,

³except the fruit from the tree which is in the middle of the garden. God

becoming one

The minute two people marry, they are legally joined together. Experientially, though, they do not immediately “become one” when they say, “I do”; they simply begin the *process* of becoming one (see Genesis 2:24). As the process works itself out, each partner should hold marriage in honor and esteem the relationship as worthy and precious. They should treat each other as being very valuable.

Note in this passage a three-step progression that demonstrates how to become one: (1) *Leave*. Sometimes a wife clings excessively to her mother and her mother’s opinions about what she ought to do, or a husband runs to his father for advice, when the couple should be trusting and leaning on each other. If two people are married but have not left home (both physically and mentally), they need to do so. (2) *Be joined*. In practical terms, this means to stick to each other like glue. (3) *Become one*. Becoming one means the complete union of body, soul, and spirit—and again, this takes time.

If both people in a marriage relationship are born again, then the spiritual union is in place. The most difficult part of the “becoming one” process is usually the uniting of two souls—the joining of two minds, wills, and sets of emotions. Most marital problems in the arena of the soul result from strife over lack of communication, sexual misunderstanding, money, goals, and the disciplining of children. All of these things need to be worked out in the soulish realm of the marriage union, and in order to become one in that area, a husband and a wife need to give their issues to God and say, “Father, change my mind, my will, or my feelings if I’m wrong.” God is the One Who will bring them into agreement with His will and purpose. If each marriage partner is willing to be brought into agreement with the other, they no longer try to force each other to be someone they are not, but realize they need each other to be exactly who God created them to be. They no longer pick on each other’s weaknesses. Instead, they partake of their strengths, they enjoy one another, and they enjoy the process of becoming one.

said, ‘You shall not eat from it nor touch it, otherwise you will die.’”

⁴But the serpent said to the woman, “You certainly will not die! [2 Cor 11:3]

⁵“For God knows that on the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened [that is, you will have greater awareness], and you will be like God, knowing [the difference between] good and evil.”

⁶And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was delightful to look at, and a tree to be desired in order to make one wise *and* insightful, she took some of its fruit and ate it; and she also gave some to her husband with her, and he ate.

⁷Then the eyes of the two of them were opened [that is, their awareness increased], and they knew that they

were naked; and they fastened fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

⁸And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool [afternoon breeze] of the day, so the man and his wife hid *and* kept themselves hidden from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

⁹But the LORD God called to Adam, and said to him, “Where are you?”

¹⁰He said, “I heard the sound of You [walking] in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.”

¹¹God said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten [fruit] from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?”

¹²And the man said, “The woman

the devil’s doom

I believe that Adam was clothed with God’s glory before he sinned. As soon as Adam and Eve sinned, they realized they were naked. We might say that they lost their “covering.” As long as they obeyed God, they were protected from everything the devil wanted to do to them—and, ultimately, through them. Upon seeing what the devil had done, God immediately announced his doom and told him how it would take place.

Satan did not really understand what God was saying; nevertheless, God said it, and it had to come to pass: “And I will put enmity (open hostility) between you and the woman, and between your seed (offspring) and her Seed; He shall [fatally] bruise your head, and you shall [only] bruise His heel” (Genesis 3:15).

To “bruise the head” symbolizes a weakening of authority. God has said that the woman’s offspring (Jesus) will take away Satan’s authority. Satan will bruise Jesus’ heel (afflict His body—both on the cross and by afflicting mankind).

Through Jesus’ death on the cross, God took Satan’s authority (which Adam had given him) and gave it first to Jesus and then to every person who will believe—not only that Jesus died for them, but also that Satan has lost authority over them. We need to understand not only that Jesus died for us, but also that He has *redeemed* us!

No matter what the devil tries to do to you, he is doomed to defeat, and you are redeemed and victorious over him through Jesus Christ.

whom You gave to be with me—she gave me [fruit] from the tree, and I ate it.”

¹³Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” And the woman said, “The serpent beguiled *and* deceived me, and I ate [from the forbidden tree].” [2 Cor 11:3; 1 Tim 2:14]

¹⁴The LORD God said to the serpent,

“Because you have done this,
You are cursed more than all
the cattle,
And more than any animal of
the field;
On your belly you shall go,
And dust you shall eat
All the days of your life.

¹⁵“And I will put enmity (open hostility)
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed (offspring)
and her Seed;
He shall [fatally] bruise your head,
And you shall [only] bruise His
heel.” [Gal 4:4]

¹⁶To the woman He said,

“I will greatly multiply
Your pain in childbirth;
In pain you will give birth to
children;
Yet your desire *and* longing will
be for your husband,
And he will rule [with authority]
over you *and* be responsible
for you.”

¹⁷Then to Adam the LORD God said, “Because you have listened [attentively] to the voice of your wife, and have eaten [fruit] from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’;

The ground is [now] under a curse
because of you;
In sorrow *and* toil you shall eat
[the fruit] of it
All the days of your life.

¹⁸“Both thorns and thistles it shall
grow for you;
And you shall eat the plants of
the field.

¹⁹“By the sweat of your face
You will eat bread
Until you return to the ground,
For from it you were taken;
For you are dust,
And to dust you shall return.”

²⁰The man named his wife Eve (life spring, life giver), because she was the mother of all the living.

²¹The LORD God made tunics of [animal] skins for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

²²And the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us (Father, Son, Holy Spirit), knowing [how to distinguish between] good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take from the tree of life as well, and eat [its fruit], and live [in this fallen, sinful condition] forever”—

²³therefore the LORD God sent Adam away from the Garden of Eden, to till *and* cultivate the ground from which he was taken.

²⁴So God drove the man out; and at the east of the Garden of Eden He [permanently] stationed the cherubim and the sword with the flashing blade which turned round and round [in every direction] to protect *and* guard the way (entrance, access) to the tree of life. [Rev 2:7; 22:2, 14, 19]

4 NOW THE man Adam knew Eve as his wife, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, “I have obtained a man (baby boy, son) with *the help of* the LORD.”

²And [later] she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept the flocks [of sheep and goats], but Cain cultivated the ground.

³And in the course of time Cain

brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground.

⁴But Abel brought [an offering of] the [finest] firstborn of his flock and the fat portions. And the LORD had respect (regard) for Abel and for his offering; [Heb 11:4]

⁵but for Cain and his offering He had no respect. So Cain became extremely angry (indignant), and he looked annoyed *and* hostile.

⁶And the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you so angry? And why do you look annoyed?"

⁷"If you do well [believing Me and doing what is acceptable and pleasing to Me], will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well [but ignore My instruction], sin crouches at your door; its desire is for you [to overpower you], but you must master it."

⁸Cain talked with Abel his brother [about what God had said]. And when they were [alone, working] in the field, Cain attacked Abel his brother and killed him. [1 John 3:12]

⁹Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" And he [lied and] said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"

¹⁰The LORD said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's [innocent] blood is crying out to Me from the ground [for justice]. [Num 35:33; Deut 21:1-9]

¹¹"And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's [shed] blood from your hand. [Deut 28:15-20]

¹²"When you cultivate the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength [it will resist producing good crops] for you; you shall be a fugitive and a vagabond [roaming aimlessly] on the earth [in perpetual exile without a home, a degraded outcast]."

¹³Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear.

¹⁴"Behold, You have driven me out

this day from the face of the land; and from Your face (presence) I will be hidden, and I will be a fugitive and an [aimless] vagabond on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me."

¹⁵And the LORD said to him, "Therefore, whoever kills Cain, a sevenfold vengeance [that is, punishment seven times worse] shall be taken on him [by Me]." And the LORD set a [protective] mark (sign) on Cain, so that no one who found (met) him would kill him. [Gen 4:24]

¹⁶So Cain went away from the [manifested] presence of the LORD, and lived in the land of Nod [wandering in exile], east of Eden.

¹⁷Cain knew his wife [one of Adam's descendants] and she conceived and gave birth to Enoch; and Cain built a city and named it Enoch, after the name of his son.

¹⁸Now to Enoch was born Irad, and Irad became the father of Mehujael, and Mehujael became the father of Methushael, and Methushael became the father of Lamech.

¹⁹And Lamech took for himself two wives; the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other, Zillah.

²⁰Adah gave birth to Jabal; he became the father of those [nomadic

putting the Word to work

Cain did not relate well to his brother, Abel. We know that their interests and pursuits were different, because Abel was a shepherd and Cain tilled the ground. We do not know what their other differences were, but Cain's resentment of Abel eventually led to murder (see Genesis 4:8).

How do you respond to those who are close to you, yet have different personalities, gifts, or pursuits? Ask God to help you when you are tempted to resent them.

New Testament

Matthew

Author:

Attributed to Matthew

Date:

Probably shortly before AD 70

Everyday Life Principles:

Jesus' teachings in the book of Matthew and in the other Gospels are as relevant and as important to your life today as they were while He lived on earth.

Jesus taught with words, with stories, and by personal example. I strongly encourage you to study His teachings and to imitate His attitudes and actions.

One way to be blessed is to cultivate the heart attitudes and character qualities Jesus taught in The Beatitudes and throughout the book of Matthew.

The book of Matthew begins the New Testament and is the first of the four Gospels—accounts of Jesus' life and ministry, which include stories He told (called parables), lessons He taught, and miracles He worked. The Gospels also include the teachings, insights, and instructions Jesus gave to the people who followed Him so many centuries ago—and to those who follow Him today.

Matthew focuses on Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Testament law, on Jesus as the Messiah who was prophesied so long ago, and on the kingdom of heaven. There are so many treasures in Matthew; it is especially rich with Jesus' practical instructions for our lives. This book emphasizes Jesus' teaching ministry, and as we read it we see Jesus teaching people both through the spoken word and by example how to live, how to think, how to treat people, how to pray, and how to be wise and godly in everyday life.

In Matthew chapters 5—7, we find a collection of teachings called The Sermon on the Mount. In this great sermon are “The Beatitudes” (a list of heart attitudes and character qualities that bring blessing to our lives, found in 5:1–12) and “The Lord's Prayer” (6:9–13).

I hope you will take time to read, meditate on, and apply to your life the teachings and truths in Matthew. As you do, you will be blessed.

1 THE RECORD of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son (descendant) of David, the son (descendant) of Abraham: [Ps 132:11; Is 11:1]

²Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers [who became the twelve tribes of Israel].

³Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez was the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram.

⁴Ram was the father of Aminadab, Aminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon.

⁵Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab, Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse.

⁶Jesse was the father of David the king.

David was the father of Solomon by *Bathsheba who had been the wife of Uriah. [Ruth 4:18–22; 1 Chr 2:13–15]

⁷Solomon was the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa.

⁸Asa was the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah.

⁹Uzziah was the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah.

¹⁰Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, and Amon the father of Josiah.

¹¹Josiah became the father of Jeconiah [also called Coniah and Jehoiachin] and his brothers, at the time of the deportation (exile) to Babylon. [2 Kin 24:14; 1 Chr 3:15, 16]

¹²After the deportation to Babylon: Jeconiah became the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel.

¹³Zerubbabel was the father of Abihud, Abihud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor.

1:6 Lit *her of Uriah*. 1:20 Lit *begotten*.

¹⁴Azor was the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud.

¹⁵Eliud was the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob.

¹⁶Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah (Christ).

¹⁷So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen; from David to the Babylonian deportation (exile), fourteen generations; and from the Babylonian deportation to the Messiah, fourteen generations.

¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by [the power of] the Holy Spirit.

¹⁹And Joseph her [promised] husband, being a just *and* righteous man and not wanting to expose her publicly to shame, planned to send her away *and* divorce her quietly.

²⁰But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, descendant of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the Child who has been *conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

²¹"She will give birth to a Son, and you shall name Him Jesus (The LORD is salvation), for He will save His people from their sins."

²²All this happened in order to fulfill what the Lord had spoken through the prophet [Isaiah]:

²³"BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND GIVE BIRTH TO A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL"—which, when translated, means, "GOD WITH US." [Is 7:14]

²⁴Then Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him, and he took *Mary* [to his home] as his wife,

²⁵but he kept her a virgin until she had given birth to a Son [her firstborn child]; and he named Him Jesus (The LORD is salvation).

2 NOW WHEN Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king (Herod the Great), magi (wise men) from the east came to Jerusalem, asking,

²⁴“Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east and have come to worship Him.” [Num 24:17; Jer 23:5; Zech 9:9]

³When Herod the king heard this, he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.

⁴So he called together all the chief priests and scribes of the people and [anxiously] asked them where the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed) was to be born.

⁵They replied to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for this is what has been written by the prophet [Micah]:

⁶‘AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, IN THE LAND OF JUDAH, ARE NOT IN ANY WAY LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH; FOR FROM YOU SHALL COME A RULER WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.’” [Mic 5:2]

⁷Then Herod secretly sent for the magi and learned from them the [exact] time the star [had first] appeared.

⁸Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search carefully for the Child; and when you have found Him, report to me, so that I too may come and worship Him.”

⁹After hearing the king, they went their way; and behold, the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them [continually leading the way] until it came and stood over *the place* where the young Child was.

¹⁰When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.

¹¹And after entering the house, they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell down and worshiped Him. Then, after opening their treasure chests, they presented to Him gifts [fit for a king, gifts] of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

¹²And having been warned [by God] in a dream not to go back to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way.

¹³Now when they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod intends to search for the Child in order to destroy Him.”

¹⁴So Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt.

life point

Satan is always out to kill things in their infancy, which is why he planted in Herod’s mind the idea of ordering every male child in Bethlehem, two years old and under, put to death. Because Herod was frightened of the newborn Christ Child—the “King of the Jews” Whom the wise men sought—he wanted to kill Him (see Matthew 2:1–16).

I find it interesting that Satan was afraid of a child, and that a child was the King of the Jews. Kings rule, and perhaps one lesson here is that if we desire to rule and reign as kings in life (see Romans 5:17), we must also become like little children. When we become childlike (humble, trusting, and forgiving), we frighten the devil just as the Christ Child frightened Herod. If you want to be a threat to the enemy, one way to do it is to be childlike in your faith.

¹⁵He remained there until the death of Herod. *This was* to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet [Hosea]: “OUT OF EGYPT I CALLED MY SON.” [Hos 11:1]

¹⁶Then Herod, when he realized that he had been tricked by the magi, was extremely angry, and he sent [soldiers] and put to death all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that area who were two years old and under, according to the date which he had learned from the magi.

¹⁷Then what had been spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled:

¹⁸“A VOICE WAS HEARD IN RAMAH,
WEEPING AND GREAT MOURNING,
RACHEL WEEPING FOR HER
CHILDREN;
SHE REFUSED TO BE COMFORTED,
BECAUSE THEY WERE NO MORE.”
[Jer 31:15]

¹⁹But when Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, and said,

²⁰“Get up! Take the Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child’s life are dead.”

²¹Then Joseph got up, and took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel.

²²But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod [the Great], he was afraid to go there. Then being warned *by God* in a dream, he left for the region of Galilee,

²³and went and settled in a city called Nazareth. *This was* to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets: “He shall be called a Nazarene.”

3 IN THOSE days John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the Wilderness of Judea [along the western side of the Dead Sea] and saying,

²“Repent [change your inner self—your old way of thinking, regret past sins, live your life in a way that proves repentance; seek God’s purpose for your life], for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

³This is the one who was mentioned by the prophet Isaiah when he said,

“THE VOICE OF ONE SHOUTING IN THE
WILDERNESS,
‘PREPARE THE ROAD FOR THE LORD,
MAKE HIS HIGHWAYS STRAIGHT
(level, direct)!’” [Is 40:3]

⁴Now this same John had clothing made of camel’s hair and a [wide] leather band around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. [Lev 11:22; 2 Kin 1:8; Zech 13:4]

⁵At that time Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea and all the district around the Jordan;

⁶and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.

⁷But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the [divine] wrath *and* judgment to come?”

⁸“So produce fruit that is consistent with repentance [demonstrating new behavior that proves a change of heart, and a conscious decision to turn away from sin];

⁹and do not presume to say to yourselves [as a defense], ‘We have Abraham for our father [so our inheritance assures us of salvation]’; for I say to you that from these stones God is able

speak the Word

*God, I pray that my life will bring forth fruit consistent with the change of heart
You have worked in me.*

—ADAPTED FROM MATTHEW 3:8

to raise up children (descendants) for Abraham. [Luke 3:8]

¹⁰“And already the axe [of God’s judgment] is swinging toward the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹“As for me, I baptize you with water because of [your] repentance [that is, because you are willing to change your inner self—your old way of thinking, regret your sin and live a changed life], but He (the Messiah) who is coming after me is mightier [more powerful, more noble] than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to remove [even as His slave]; He will baptize you [who truly repent] with the Holy Spirit and [you who remain unrepentant] with fire (judgment). [Luke 3:16]

¹²“His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear out His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat (believers) into His barn (kingdom), but He will burn up the chaff (the unrepentant) with unquenchable fire.”

¹³Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan [River], to be baptized by him. [Mark 1:9–11; Luke 3:21, 22; John 1:32]

¹⁴But John tried to prevent Him [vigorously protesting], saying, “It is I who need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?”

¹⁵But Jesus replied to him, “Permit it just now; for this is the fitting way for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John permitted [it and baptized] Him.

¹⁶After Jesus was baptized, He came up immediately out of the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he (John) saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him (Jesus), [John 1:32]

¹⁷and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased *and* delighted!” [Ps 2:7; Is 42:1]

putting the Word to work

Do you ever struggle with wondering if you do enough to please God?

When Jesus was baptized, He had not yet taught publicly, performed miracles, or done any sort of ministry. Yet God called Him “My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased and delighted!” (Matthew 3:17). Likewise, God is delighted with you because you are His child. That pleases Him far more than anything you can do. Ask Him to show you more and more how delighted He is in you.

4 THEN JESUS was led by the [Holy] Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. [Luke 4:1–13]

²After He had gone without food for forty days and forty nights, He became hungry. [Ex 34:28; 1 Kin 19:8]

³And the tempter came and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.”

⁴But Jesus replied, “It is written *and* forever remains written, ‘MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE, BUT BY EVERY WORD THAT COMES OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.’” [Deut 8:3]

⁵Then the devil took Him into the holy city [Jerusalem] and placed Him on the pinnacle (highest point) of the temple. [Neh 11:1; Dan 9:24]

⁶And he said [mockingly] to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written,

‘HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU [to serve, care for, protect and watch over You]’;

and

‘THEY WILL LIFT YOU UP ON *their* HANDS,

SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.’” [Ps 91:11, 12]

⁷Jesus said to him, “On the other hand, it is written *and* forever remains written, ‘YOU SHALL NOT TEST THE LORD YOUR GOD.’” [Deut 6:16]

⁸Again, the devil took Him up on a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory [splendor, magnificence, and excellence] of them;

⁹and he said to Him, “All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.”

¹⁰Then Jesus said to him, “Go away, Satan! For it is written *and* forever remains written, ‘YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.’” [Deut 6:13]

¹¹Then the devil left Him; and angels came and ministered to Him [bringing Him food and serving Him].

¹²Now when Jesus heard that John [the Baptist] had been arrested *and* put in prison, He left for Galilee.

¹³And leaving Nazareth, He went and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the country of Zebulun and Naphtali. [Mark 2:1]

¹⁴*This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah:*

¹⁵“THE LAND OF ZEBULUN AND THE LAND OF NAPHTALI, BY THE WAY OF THE SEA, BEYOND THE JORDAN, GALILEE [in the district] OF THE GENTILES—

¹⁶“THE PEOPLE WHO WERE SITTING (living) IN [spiritual] DARKNESS HAVE SEEN A GREAT LIGHT, AND FOR THOSE WHO WERE SITTING (living) IN THE LAND AND SHADOW OF [spiritual and moral] DEATH, UPON THEM A LIGHT HAS DAWNED.” [Is 9:1, 2]

¹⁷From that time Jesus began to preach and say, “Repent [change your inner self—your old way of thinking, regret past sins, live your life in a way that proves repentance; seek God’s purpose for your life], for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

¹⁸As Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He noticed two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen.

¹⁹And He said to them, “Follow Me [as My disciples, accepting Me as your Master and Teacher and walking the same path of life that I walk], and I will make you fishers of men.”

²⁰Immediately they left their nets and followed Him [becoming His disciples, believing and trusting in Him and following His example].

²¹And going on [further] from there He noticed two other brothers, James the *son* of Zebedee, and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets; and He called them [to follow Him as His disciples].

²²Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him [becoming His disciples, believing and trusting in Him and following His example].

²³And He went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the good news (gospel) of the kingdom, and healing every kind

putting the Word to work

We should not be surprised when temptation comes. Satan deliberately tried to tempt Jesus, and he tries to tempt us. How do you respond to temptation? Every time Jesus was tempted, He responded with the Word of God (see Matthew 4:1–11). Be diligent to study God’s Word, so that when temptation comes, you too will know what action to take in order to resist and overcome it.

of disease and every kind of sickness among the people [demonstrating and revealing that He was indeed the promised Messiah].

²⁴So the news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were sick, those suffering with various diseases and pains, those under the power of demons, and epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them.

²⁵Large crowds followed Him from Galilee and the Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and the other side of the Jordan.

5 WHEN JESUS saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and when He was seated, His disciples came to Him.

²Then He *began* to teach them, saying,

³Blessed [spiritually prosperous, happy, to be admired] are the poor in spirit [those devoid of spiritual arrogance, those who regard themselves as insignificant], for theirs is the kingdom of heaven [both now and forever]. [Luke 6:20–23]

⁴Blessed [forgiven, refreshed by God's grace] are those who mourn [over their sins and repent], for they will be comforted [when the burden of sin is lifted]. [Is 61:2]

⁵Blessed [inwardly peaceful, spiritually secure, worthy of respect] are the *gentle [the kind-hearted, the sweet-spirited, the self-controlled], for they will inherit the earth. [Ps 37:11]

⁶Blessed [joyful, nourished by God's goodness] are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness [those who actively seek right standing with God], for they will be [completely] satisfied. [Is 55:1, 2]

⁷Blessed [content, sheltered by God's promises] are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

⁸Blessed [anticipating God's presence, spiritually mature] are the pure in heart [those with integrity, moral courage, and godly character], for they will see God. [Ps 24:3, 4]

⁹Blessed [spiritually calm with life-joy in God's favor] are the makers *and* maintainers of peace, for they will [express His character and] be called the sons of God. [Heb 12:14]

¹⁰Blessed [comforted by inner peace and God's love] are those who are persecuted for *doing that which is morally right, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven [both now and forever].

¹¹Blessed [morally courageous and spiritually alive with life-joy in God's goodness] are you when *people* insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil things against you because of [your association with] Me.

¹²Be glad and exceedingly joyful, for your reward in heaven is great [absolutely inexhaustible]; for in this same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. [2 Chr 36:16]

¹³You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has lost its taste (purpose), how can it be made salty? It is no longer good for anything, but to be thrown

life point

In Matthew 5:4, Jesus said that those who mourn are blessed and that they will be comforted. The comfort of God, which is administered by His Holy Spirit, is so awesome that it is almost worth having a problem just to be able to experience it. As with most of the things of God, it goes far beyond any kind of ordinary comfort.

Let God be your source of comfort. When you are hurting, just ask Him to comfort you. Then wait in His presence while He works in your heart and emotions. He will not fail you.

5:5 Or *humble, meek*. 5:10 Lit *the sake of righteousness*.

out and walked on by people [when the walkways are wet and slippery].

¹⁴“You are the light of [Christ to] the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;

¹⁵nor does *any*one light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lamp-stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. [Mark 4:21; Luke 8:16; 11:33]

¹⁶“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good deeds *and* moral excellence, and [recognize and honor and] glorify your Father who is in heaven.

¹⁷“Do not think that I came to do away with *or* undo the Law [of Moses] or the [writings of the] Prophets; I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.

¹⁸“For I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter

or stroke [of the pen] will pass from the Law until all things [which it foreshadows] are accomplished.

¹⁹“So whoever breaks one of the least [important] of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least [important] in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever practices and teaches them, he will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

²⁰“For I say to you that unless your righteousness (uprightness, moral essence) is more than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

²¹“You have heard that it was said to the men of old, ‘YOU SHALL NOT MURDER,’ and ‘Whoever murders shall be *guilty before the court.’ [Ex 20:13; Deut 5:17; 16:18]

²²“But I say to you that everyone who continues to be angry with his brother

pure-hearted and powerful

God is seeking people who are “pure in heart” (Matthew 5:8). A person who has a pure heart, who is wholeheartedly serving God, is truly powerful. In Psalm 51:6, David tells us that having a pure heart means having truth in our “innermost being,” which is who we really are deep in our hearts. Having a pure heart starts with paying attention to our thoughts, because from our thoughts come our words, our emotions, our attitudes, and our motives.

It took me a long time to realize that God will not bless actions based in wrong motives or an impure heart.

Purity of heart is not a natural trait; it is something most of us must work on. This is a challenge that every believer should be excited about accepting, but we do not have to face it alone.

God has created us to be dependent upon Him, to bring Him our challenges and to allow Him to help us with them. Only He knows what is in our hearts, and He is an expert at removing the worthless things from us while retaining the valuable.

There is a price to pay to have a pure heart, but there is also a reward for it. We do not have to be afraid to make the commitment to allow God to do a deep purifying work in us. We may not always feel comfortable about the truth He brings us, but if we do our part—facing it, accepting it, and allowing it to change us—He will make sure we are blessed.

5:21 Or *liable to*.

or harbors malice against him shall be guilty before the court; and whoever speaks [contemptuously and insultingly] to his brother, 'Raca (You empty-headed idiot)!' shall be guilty before the supreme court (Sanhedrin); and whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of the *fiery hell.

²³"So if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and *while* there you remember that your brother has something [such as a grievance or legitimate complaint] against you,

²⁴leave your offering there at the altar and go. First make peace with your brother, and then come and present your offering.

life point

In Matthew 5:13, Jesus tells us we are the salt of the earth, but if salt loses its flavor it is not good for anything.

I say that all of life is tasteless without love. Even acts of generosity that are done out of obligation, but without sincere love, leave us empty. Love represents the salt; it is the energy and the flavor of our lives.

Every day can be exciting if we see ourselves as God's secret agents, waiting in the shadows to sprinkle some salt on the bland lives of the people we encounter. For example, behind a counter in a fast food restaurant we might see a woman who looks unhappy, tired, and angry. A simple comment such as, "Your hair is really pretty," can add flavor to her day.

Love is an effort, and sometimes we allow ourselves to become lazy in dispersing this gift. I hope you will actively express God's love everywhere you go, sprinkling "salt" on everyone you meet because God has placed you where you are for that very purpose.

5:22 Lit *Gehenna of fire*.

²⁵"Come to terms quickly [at the earliest opportunity] with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way [to court], so that your opponent does not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you are thrown into prison. [Luke 12:58, 59]

²⁶"I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, you will not come out of there until you have paid the last cent.

²⁷"You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY'; [Ex 20:14; Deut 5:18]

²⁸but I say to you that everyone who [so much as] looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

²⁹"If your right eye makes you stumble *and* leads you to sin, tear it out and throw it away [that is, remove yourself from the source of temptation]; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

³⁰"If your right hand makes you stumble *and* leads you to sin, cut it off and throw it away [that is, remove yourself from the source of temptation]; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

³¹"It has also been said, 'WHOEVER DIVORCES HIS WIFE IS TO GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE';

³²but I say to you that whoever divorces his wife, except on grounds of sexual immorality, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who has been divorced commits adultery. [Deut 24:1-4; Luke 16:18]

³³"Again, you have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FALSE VOWS, BUT YOU SHALL FULFILL YOUR VOWS TO THE LORD [as a religious duty].'

³⁴"But I say to you, do not make an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God;

³⁵or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet; or by Jerusalem, for it is THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING. [Ps 48:2; Is 66:1]

³⁶Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you are not able to make a single hair white or black.

³⁷But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no' [a firm yes or no]; anything more than that comes from the evil one. [Lev 19:12; Num 30:2; Deut 23:21]

³⁸You have heard that it was said, 'AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH [punishment that fits the offense].' [Ex 21:24; Lev 24:20; Deut 19:21]

³⁹But I say to you, do not resist an evil person [who insults you or violates your rights]; but whoever slaps you on the right cheek, turn the other toward him also [simply ignore insignificant insults or trivial losses and do not bother to retaliate—maintain your

secret goodness

In Matthew 6:1, Jesus warns us against trying to impress people with our good deeds and encourages us to wait for our reward from God. God really brought this point home for me once through something that happened in my life.

I was having my nails done in a shop where I went regularly, and I happened to be wearing a rhinestone "Jesus" pin. God prompted me to give it to a nurse, who was sitting nearby talking about ministering to cancer patients in the hospital where she worked. She said that she was not allowed to preach to them openly, but wanted to be able to minister to them somehow.

I felt the Lord was leading me to give her my pin so that when she wore it on her lapel as she bent over her patients, the name of Jesus would minister to them. I hesitated because I felt the Lord wanted me to do that privately, but saw no way to do so because of the girl who was doing my nails.

Suddenly the manicurist stopped and said, "Oh, I ran out of something. I have to run next door to get some more. I will be right back."

I knew God was making a way for me to give the nurse my pin discreetly and without any fanfare, but my flesh wanted some credit. So instead of doing what God wanted me to do the way He wanted me to do it, I kept putting it off, reasoning to myself, *I think it would really bless this manicurist to see my generosity.*

I waited until the girl came back. Then I took off the pin and made a big deal about giving it to the nurse. Just as I envisioned, the ladies expounded on my generosity, going on and on about how kind it was of me to give away my pin. As I left the shop thinking about how generous I had been, the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart and said, "Well, I hope you enjoyed that because it is all the reward you are going to get. Whatever reward you would have had from Me, you just traded for those compliments."

I often wonder what God would have done for me had I obeyed what He told me to do, letting Him have all the glory and credit. Let me urge you not to make the same mistake I did. Obey God and do what He wants you to do, when He wants you to do it, the way He wants you to do it.