Do you not know? Have you not heard? The L ORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the whole earth. He never becomes faint or weary; there is no limit to his understanding. He gives strength to the faint and strengthens the powerless. Youths may become faint and weary, and young men stumble and fall, but those who trust in the L ORD will renew their strength; they will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not become weary, they will walk and not faint.  
(Isaiah 40:28-31, CSB)

“I am the L ORD your God. I am holding your hand, so don’t be afraid. I am here to help you.”  
(Isaiah 41:13, CEV)

Distractions

Do you ever get distracted? I think I’m a bit OCD. And, I know I am easily distracted.

Last week while I was fixing breakfast my hot drink became a bit cool – I like my hot drinks really hot, so I stuck it into the microwave to heat it up.

As I was putting the drink in the microwave I noticed a piece of food that had escaped Bandol’s breakfast there so I picked it up and brought it over to his dish. On the way noticed an other piece he had dropped on the floor, so I picked it up and put it into his bowl as well.

There was a dirty dish there, so I grabbed it and put it into the dishwasher. There were a couple of other dirty dishes there at the sink, so I put them into the dishwasher.
Then I reached for my drink, and I couldn’t find it. I had to retrace my steps to find it back in the microwave where it was still cool. So I nuked it for 20 seconds or so and finally, it was hot enough.

There are moments when I scare myself. If I’m like this at 67, what’s going to happen if I reach 80?

Distractions are sometimes very distracting!

And, I find this especially true when I sit down with my Bible in the morning to spend time with Jesus.

I’m not sure where all the random thoughts come from – although I have a feeling the enemy is behind many of them.

The Bible tells us to:

Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8, NLT)

There is nothing that scares the enemy more than when you come into God’s presence to get to know Him better and allow His power to direct your life.

Therefore, the devil will try to keep you from taking time with God on a regular basis and when you do get there, will do everything in his power to distract you.

It has been a while since we have talked about this; so, before we get into any new material we’ll take a few minutes to review the main Bible passages we’ve spent time with so far.

**Matthew 11:28-30**

We spent the first couple of sermons looking at Matthew 11:28-30, which is a well-known passage. (There are links to all the previous sermons in the Notes Section) Jesus said:

“Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.”

(Matthew 11:28-30, NLT)

There were two things we especially noted.

- **First, Jesus offers you rest and support.** In fact, everything you need for living life as His follower begins by saying yes to this invitation!

- **Second, Jesus is asking you to make one significant lifestyle change.** He tells you that to experience the rest (or peace) He offers, you must develop a pattern of living with Him. Everything Jesus offers you, comes only as a result of living your life focused on Him – learning from Him, working with Him, continuing to say “yes” to Him. There is no shortcut.
In connection with this invitation, I asked you to memorize two passages from the Book of Isaiah. The first is found in Isaiah 40:

_Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the whole earth. He never becomes faint or weary; there is no limit to his understanding. He gives strength to the faint and strengthens the powerless.

Youths may become faint and weary, and young men stumble and fall, but those who trust in the LORD will renew their strength; they will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not become weary, they will walk and not faint._ (Isaiah 40:28-31, CSB)

This passage reminds you how strong, wise, and powerful God is and again promises you strength if you will trust Him. The second is in Isaiah 41 where God said:

_“I am the LORD your God. I am holding your hand, so don’t be afraid. I am here to help you.”_ (Isaiah 41:13, CEV)

This reminds you that while God is the most powerful Being in the Universe, He is also loving and tender – He takes personal interest in your life. You can trust Him with your life!

2 Peter 1:3-4

We then looked at 2 Peter 1:3-5 where it says:

_By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence._

God gives you everything you need for living the way He wants us to live. And, the way you receive what you need for living the way He wants you to live is by coming to know Him! The direction of your life is entirely based on whether or not you know God. Reading on:

_And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world’s corruption caused by human desires._

_In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God’s promises._ (2 Peter 1:3-5, NLT)

The way you come to know God is by knowing and responding to His promises.

- _They tell you what He wants to do for you_ so you can come to know His heart. They reveal God’s intentions. They help you know how much He loves you!
- _They give you the conditions you need to meet_ in order for God to make His promise work in your life. These conditions are not difficult to meet. They mainly involve staying with God and saying “yes” when He asks you to do something.
We then looked at a promise from Ezekiel 36 that tells us what God will do in you when you come to Him and stay with Him:

“Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. Your filth will be washed away, and you will no longer worship idols.

First of all, He cleans you up. He takes care of whatever filth and idols He finds in your life.

For those of you who have raised children, this is kind of like giving an infant a bath. They don’t do much to contribute to it, they either enjoy it or kick and scream about it, but they get clean either way – because you have cleaned them.

Reading on:

“And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart.

Not only does He clean up the mess you’ve made, He goes to the root of the problem. He takes out your stony stubborn heart – the one that has made such a mess of things – and replaces it with a tender, responsive heart.

He helps you see things from His perspective. He gives you a heart that breaks for the same things that break His heart and finds joy in the things that bring Him joy!

“And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations.” (Ezekiel 36:25-27, NLT)

He not only cleans up your mess, and gives you a renewed heart; He also gives you His Spirit to keep you from messing up your heart again – to keep you moving the right direction.

This is an incredible promise! God promises to do everything needed to point you in the right direction and keep you moving that way as long as you will stay with Him and keep saying “yes”!

Everything depends on coming to know God and staying with Him day by day.

So, how do you do this?

**P.R.A.Y.**

This past December I came across a model for spending time with God that has helped create more meaning and a deeper connection with God in the time I spend with Him each day. (See the Notes Section below or click here to download and print a copy.)

It follows the acronym P.R.A.Y. where:

- **P** = Pause
• **R** = Rejoice & Reflect
• **A** = Ask
• **Y** = Yield

This is not a magic formula. It’s just a simple outline that can help keep you on track during the time you spend with Jesus.

Over the next several weeks, we will look closer at this model to help you understand how to use it to get to know God better. If you already have a pattern that working well for you, I’m not telling you to change it. But, perhaps you can pick up some ideas as we work through this together.

The method is not sacred – spending time with God is.

There is no power in any model. *All the power comes from God!* It gets poured into your life as you spend time with Him each day.

This model is only something to help you structure your time with God in a way that helps you deepen your connection with Him.

**Pause**

Pause simply means to stop what you’re doing and focus on something else.

At this point Satan will try to convince you that you are too busy to do this – there are too many important things you must get done. Others; your family, your friends, your associates at work; are depending on you to get these things done, and if you don’t do them they may not get done.

He tells you that taking time with God right now is really a distraction from your important agenda. You will have time later so don’t worry about it now.

The truth is, if you want to thrive as a follower of Jesus, there is nothing more important than spending time with God every day getting to know Him and learning to trust and follow Him.

In a passage speaking about money, treasures, and our earthly needs; Jesus said:

“*Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you.*" (Matthew 6:33, CSB)

If you are serious about following Jesus, your time with Him is not optional.

The first step in *Pause* is to select a time and place where you will meet Jesus every day. For me, it has to happen first thing in the morning because once I get started on my day, I am too distracted.
The second step in Pause is to show up. This will be the hardest part for the first few weeks. Your goal is to make this a habit that becomes an integral part of your everyday routine. They say it takes about three weeks to begin to establish a habit.

When you show up, the next step of Pause is to redirect your thinking from yourself to God.

This is the place where lots of distractions show up. I am often already planning my day, thinking about issues needing to be solved, worried about our son or daughter, etc.

I have also found that I cannot just shut my mind off and choose to stop thinking about something. I don’t have enough will power for that.

I have found several things to be helpful.

- First, I ask God to come and take charge of this time.
- Then, the things that come to mind I need to deal with later, I make note of those so I don’t stay distracted by them by worrying about forgetting them.
- Other distractions I will pray about – especially distractions that involve thinking of other people.

But, for me the most effective way to deal with distractions is to focus on God by memorizing or saying from memory a meaningful Bible promise or two – often times out loud.

The passages I’ve found most helpful are the ones I first asked you to memorize; Isaiah 40:28-31:

Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the whole earth. He never becomes faint or weary; there is no limit to his understanding. He gives strength to the faint and strengthens the powerless. Youths may become faint and weary, and young men stumble and fall, but those who trust in the LORD will renew their strength; they will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not become weary, they will walk and not faint. (Isaiah 40:28-31, CSB)

And Isaiah 41:13:

“I am the LORD your God. I am holding your hand, so don’t be afraid. I am here to help you.” (Isaiah 41:13, CEV)

These passages remind me that I am coming into the presence of the most powerful Being in the universe. And, this powerful God loves and cares for me so much that He walks beside me holding my hand!

They tell me that God cares about every detail of my life and has the power to deal with every situation I may find myself in.

They prepare me to let go of my agenda and focus on God and His agenda for me.
Action Needed

Having this knowledge without acting on it will do you no good. There is no other way to grow spiritually than by coming to Jesus and spending time with Him. Those of you who have established this habit know how important it is.

If you have not established this habit, now is the time to begin. There will never be a better or more convenient time – the enemy will make sure of that.

Your assignment is to get started (and if you have started, keep on doing it).

• Start with 10 minutes – get up just 10-15 minutes earlier than you usually do.
• Then, before you do anything else of substance, pause in God’s presence to focus on Him.
• Begin with Prayer
• Pick a Bible Verse to spend your time on – memorize it, pray about it, write down any thoughts God gives you.

If you miss a day or two, don’t beat yourself up. Just start again. Ask God to keep you coming back.

This is the best habit you can develop.

This habit connects you to the Creator of the Universe, the One who is holding your hand! And, the One who has prepared an eternity for you to enjoy with Him in a place without pain, sorrow, or death.

Don’t miss out by putting this off!

______________
Pause (Take the Plunge, Part 6)

Notes

Text you find in this color is a link to more information. It may take you to the Bible verse in context and/or in several different translations utilizing BibleGateway.com. In some cases, it may take you to a website where there is additional information. And, it may take you to a PDF copy of previous sermons in this series.

Previous Sermons in this Series

- Dec. 28, 2019 – A Yoke?
- Jan. 11, 2020 – L, O, or LOL?
- Jan. 25, 2020 – Dig In!
- Feb. 15, 2020 – Loving the Law?
- Feb. 22, 2020 – Abide/P.R.A.Y.

P.R.A.Y. (Click here to download and print a copy to keep in your Bible)

Pause: Pause to be still in God’s Presence. Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him … (Psalm 37:7, NIV)

1. Find a place where you can stop and be quiet with God.
2. Invite the Holy Spirit to be present with you.
3. Read or say from memory a passage of Scripture that reminds you who God and His interest in you (Isaiah 40:28-31 and Isaiah 41:13 are great for this – click here to download a printable copy of these verse to keep with you).

Rejoice & Reflect: Rejoice with a Psalm and Reflect on Scripture. Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! (Philippians 4:4, NIV)

1. Read a Bible passage or listen to a song that helps you to connect with God – there are many Psalms that do this well.
2. Invite the Holy Spirit to show you something to rejoice over.
3. Prayerfully work your way through a passage or book of the Bible, taking the time to notice and learn God’s promises – don’t rush, it’s more important that you understand and internalize a short passage than to read several chapters a day.
4. Keep notes of what you are learning so you can go back and see your journey with God.

Ask: Ask for God’s help – for yourself and others. “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you …” (Matthew 7:7, NIV)

1. Share what’s on your heart, asking God to provide, protect and encourage you. Be specific.
2. Think of people in your life who need God to move in their situations. Ask for God to be at work and to show you how to share God’s love with them.

Yield: Yield to God’s will in your life. “... But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well ...” (Matthew 6:33, NIV)

1. Think of a situation which feels challenging, stressful or uncertain. Invite God’s kingdom to reign
2. What are you holding onto, today? Invite the Holy Spirit to challenge you to let go and trust God
3. Many of God’s promises have conditions you need to meet in order to experience what He promises. Most of the time this will involve yielding in some way that will bring your life more into harmony with Him.
4. When you make the choice to yield to Him, God will empower you to act on your choice.

Scripture References

Exodus 14:13-14 (NIV): Moses answered the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. 14 The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.” (Exodus 14:13-14, NIV)

Nehemiah 8:1-12 (CSB): When the seventh month came and the Israelites had settled in their towns, all the people gathered together at the square in front of the Water Gate. They asked the scribe Ezra to bring the book of the law of Moses that the LORD had given Israel. 2 On the first day of the seventh month, the priest Ezra brought the law before the assembly of men, women, and all who could listen with understanding. 3 While he was facing the square in front of the Water Gate, he read out of it from daybreak until noon before the men, the women, and those who could understand. All the people listened attentively to the book of the law. 4 The scribe Ezra stood on a high wooden platform made for this purpose ...

5 Ezra opened the book in full view of all the people, since he was elevated above everyone. As he opened it, all the people stood up. 6 Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and with their hands uplifted all the people said, “Amen, Amen!” Then they knelt low and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

... Levites explained the law to the people as they stood in their places. 8 They read out of the book of the law of God, translating and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was read.

9 Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to all of them, “This day is holy to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep.” For all the people were weeping as they heard the words of the law. 10 Then he said to them, “Go and eat what is rich, drink what is sweet, and send portions to those who have nothing prepared,
since today is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, because the joy of the LORD is your strength.” 11 And the Levites quieted all the people, saying, “Be still, since today is holy. Don’t grieve.”

12 Then all the people began to eat and drink, send portions, and have a great celebration, because they had understood the words that were explained to them. (Nehemiah 8:1-12, CSB)

Psalm 4 (CSB): Answer me when I call, God, who vindicates me. You freed me from affliction; be gracious to me and hear my prayer.

2 How long, exalted ones, will my honor be insulted? How long will you love what is worthless and pursue a lie? 3 Know that the LORD has set apart the faithful for himself; the LORD will hear when I call to him. 4 Be angry and do not sin; on your bed, reflect in your heart and be still.

5 Offer sacrifices in righteousness and trust in the LORD.

6 Many are asking, “Who can show us anything good?” Let the light of your face shine on us, LORD.

7 You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and new wine abound. 8 I will both lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, LORD, make me live in safety. (Psalm 4, CSB)

Psalm 19:6-14 (NKJV): The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; 8 the statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; 9 the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

10 More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. 11 Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward.

12 Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. 13 Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression.

14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer. (Psalm 19:6-14, NKJV)

Psalm 37:3-9 (NLT): Trust in the LORD and do good. Then you will live safely in the land and prosper. 4 Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you your heart’s desires.

5 Commit everything you do to the LORD. Trust him, and he will help you. 6 He will make your innocence radiate like the dawn, and the justice of your cause will shine like the noonday sun.

7 Be still in the presence of the LORD, and wait patiently for him to act. Don’t worry about evil people who prosper or fret about their wicked schemes.
Stop being angry! Turn from your rage! Do not lose your temper – it only leads to harm. For the wicked will be destroyed, but those who trust in the LORD will possess the land.
(Psalm 37:3-9, NLT)

Psalm 46 (NLT): God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. So we will not fear when earthquakes come and the mountains crumble into the sea. Let the oceans roar and foam. Let the mountains tremble as the waters surge! Interlude

A river brings joy to the city of our God, the sacred home of the Most High. God dwells in that city; it cannot be destroyed. From the very break of day, God will protect it. The nations are in chaos, and their kingdoms crumble! God’s voice thunders, and the earth melts! The LORD of Heaven’s Armies is here among us; the God of Israel is our fortress. Interlude

Come, see the glorious works of the LORD: See how he brings destruction upon the world. He causes wars to end throughout the earth. He breaks the bow and snaps the spear; he burns the shields with fire.

“Be still, and know that I am God! I will be honored by every nation. I will be honored throughout the world.”

The LORD of Heaven’s Armies is here among us; the God of Israel is our fortress. (Psalm 46, NLT)

Psalm 119:105 (NLT): Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.
(Psalm 119:105, NLT)

Isaiah 40:28-31 (CSB): Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the whole earth. He never becomes faint or weary; there is no limit to his understanding. He gives strength to the faint and strengthens the powerless. Youths may become faint and weary, and young men stumble and fall, but those who trust in the LORD will renew their strength; they will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not become weary, they will walk and not faint. (Isaiah 40:28-31, CSB)

Isaiah 41:10 & 13 (CEV): “Don’t be afraid. I am with you. Don’t tremble with fear. I am your God. I will make you strong, as I protect you with my arm and give you victories.

“I am the LORD your God. I am holding your hand, so don’t be afraid. I am here to help you.”
(Isaiah 41:10 & 13, CEV)

Jeremiah 31:33-34 (NIV): “This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”
(Jeremiah 31:33-34, NIV)
Ezekiel 36:25-27 (NLT): “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. Your filth will be washed away, and you will no longer worship idols. And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations.” (Ezekiel 36:25-27, NLT)

Matthew 6:19-34 (CSB): “Don’t store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves don’t break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

22 “The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. So if the light within you is darkness, how deep is that darkness!

24 “No one can serve two masters, since either he will hate one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

25 “Therefore I tell you: Don’t worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Isn’t life more than food and the body more than clothing?

26 Consider the birds of the sky: They don’t sow or reap or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren’t you worth more than they? Can any of you add one moment to his life span by worrying? And why do you worry about clothes? Observe how the wildflowers of the field grow: They don’t labor or spin thread. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was adorned like one of these. If that’s how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, won’t he do much more for you – you of little faith?

31 “So don’t worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’

32 For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you. Therefore don’t worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” (Matthew 6:19-34, CSB)

Matthew 11:28-30 (NLT): Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30, NLT)

John 6:28-29 (NLT): They replied, “We want to perform God’s works, too. What should we do?” Jesus told them, “This is the only work God wants from you: Believe in the one he has sent.” (John 6:28-29, NLT)
John 15:1-17 (NLT): “I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn’t produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. 3 You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. 4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.

5 “Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. 6 Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. 7 But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! 8 When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.

9 “I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. 10 When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. 11 I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! 12 This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. 13 There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn’t confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. 16 You didn’t choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. 17 This is my command: Love each other.” (John 15:1-17, NLT)

Romans 13:8-10 (NLT): Owe nothing to anyone – except for your obligation to love one another. If you love your neighbor, you will fulfill the requirements of God’s law. 9 For the commandments say, “You must not commit adultery. You must not murder. You must not steal. You must not covet.” These – and other such commandments – are summed up in this one commandment: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” 10 Love does no wrong to others, so love fulfills the requirements of God’s law. (Romans 13:8-10, NLT)

2 Timothy 3:14-17 (NLT): But you must remain faithful to the things you have been taught. You know they are true, for you know you can trust those who taught you. 15 You have been taught the holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. 17 God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work. (2 Timothy 3:14-17, NLT)

1 Peter 5:6-11 (NLT): So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor. 7 Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.
8 Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. **9 Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith. Remember that your family of believers all over the world is going through the same kind of suffering you are.**

10 In his kindness God called you to share in his eternal glory by means of Christ Jesus. So after you have suffered a little while, he will restore, support, and strengthen you, and he will place you on a firm foundation. **11 All power to him forever! Amen. (1 Peter 5:6-11, NLT)**

**2 Peter 1:1-11 (NLT):** This letter is from Simon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ.

I am writing to you who share the same precious faith we have. This faith was given to you because of the justice and fairness of Jesus Christ, our God and Savior.

2 **May God give you more and more grace and peace as you grow in your knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord.**

3 **By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence.** 4 And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world’s corruption caused by human desires.

5 **In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God’s promises.** Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge; 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness; 7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone.

8 **The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.** 9 But those who fail to develop in this way are shortsighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins.

10 **So, dear brothers and sisters, work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Do these things, and you will never fall away.** 11 Then God will give you a grand entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **(2 Peter 1:1-11, NLT)**

**1 John 4:7-21 (NLT):** Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. 8 But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

9 **God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him.** 10 This is real love — not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.
11 Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. 12 No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us.

13 And God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us. 14 Furthermore, we have seen with our own eyes and now testify that the Father sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. 15 All who declare that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God. 16 We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love.

God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. 17 And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world.

18 Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love. 19 We love each other because he loved us first.

20 If someone says, “I love God,” but hates a fellow believer, that person is a liar; for if we don’t love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see? 21 And he has given us this command: Those who love God must also love their fellow believers. (1 John 4:7-21, NLT)

E.G. White Resources

Desire of Ages, page 478: In all ages, philosophers and teachers have been presenting to the world theories by which to satisfy the soul’s need. Every heathen nation has had its great teachers and religious systems offering some other means of redemption than Christ, turning the eyes of men away from the Father’s face, and filling their hearts with fear of Him who has given them only blessing. The trend of their work is to rob God of that which is His own, both by creation and by redemption. And these false teachers rob man as well. Millions of human beings are bound down under false religions, in the bondage of slavish fear, of stolid indifference, toiling like beasts of burden, bereft of hope or joy or aspiration here, and with only a dull fear of the hereafter. It is the gospel of the grace of God alone that can uplift the soul. The contemplation of the love of God manifested in His Son will stir the heart and arouse the powers of the soul as nothing else can. Christ came that He might re-create the image of God in man; and whoever turns men away from Christ is turning them away from the source of true development; he is defrauding them of the hope and purpose and glory of life. He is a thief and a robber. (Desire of Ages, page 478)

Desire of Ages, page 480: Every soul is as fully known to Jesus as if he were the only one for whom the Saviour died. The distress of every one touches His heart. The cry for aid reaches His ear. He came to draw all men unto Himself. He bids them, “Follow Me,” and His Spirit moves upon their hearts to draw them to come to Him. Many refuse to be drawn. Jesus knows who they are. He also knows who gladly hear His call, and are ready to come under His pastoral care. He
says, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” He cares for each one as if there were not another on the face of the earth.

“He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out .... And the sheep follow Him: for they know His voice.” The Eastern shepherd does not drive his sheep. He depends not upon force or fear; but going before, he calls them. They know his voice, and obey the call. So does the Saviour-Shepherd with His sheep. The Scripture says, “Thou ledest Thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.” Through the prophet, Jesus declares, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.” He compels none to follow Him. “I drew them,” He says, “with cords of a man, with bands of love.” Psalm 77:20; Jeremiah 31:3; Hosea 11:4.

It is not the fear of punishment, or the hope of everlasting reward, that leads the disciples of Christ to follow Him. They behold the Saviour’s matchless love, revealed throughout His pilgrimage on earth, from the manger of Bethlehem to Calvary’s cross, and the sight of Him attracts, it softens and subdues the soul. Love awakens in the heart of the beholders. They hear His voice, and they follow Him. (Desire of Ages, page 480)

Desire of Ages, pages 667–668: The Lord is disappointed when His people place a low estimate upon themselves. He desires His chosen heritage to value themselves according to the price He has placed upon them. God wanted them, else He would not have sent His Son on such an expensive errand to redeem them. He has a use for them, and He is well pleased when they make the very highest demands upon Him, that they may glorify His name. They may expect large things if they have faith in His promises.

But to pray in Christ’s name means much. It means that we are to accept His character, manifest His spirit, and work His works. The Saviour’s promise is given on condition. “If ye love Me,” He says, “keep My commandments.” He saves men, not in sin, but from sin; and those who love Him will show their love by obedience.

All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us.

As Christ lived the law in humanity, so we may do if we will take hold of the Strong for strength. But we are not to place the responsibility of our duty upon others, and wait for them to tell us what to do. We cannot depend for counsel upon humanity. The Lord will teach us our duty just as willingly as He will teach somebody else. If we come to Him in faith, He will speak His mysteries to us personally. Our hearts will often burn within us as One draws nigh to commune with us as He did with Enoch. Those who decide to do nothing in any line that will displease God, will know,
after presenting their case before Him, just what course to pursue. And they will receive not only wisdom, but strength. Power for obedience, for service, will be imparted to them, as Christ has promised. Whatever was given to Christ— the “all things” to supply the need of fallen men— was given to Him as the head and representative of humanity. And “whatever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.” 1 John 3:22. (Desire of Ages, pages 667-668)

**Steps to Christ, page 35:** Study God’s word prayerfully. That word presents before you, in the law of God and the life of Christ, the great principles of holiness, without which “no man shall see the Lord.” Hebrews 12:14. It convinces of sin; it plainly reveals the way of salvation. Give heed to it as the voice of God speaking to your soul.

As you see the enormity of sin, as you see yourself as you really are, do not give up to despair. It was sinners that Christ came to save. We have not to reconcile God to us, but—O wondrous love!—God in Christ is “reconciling the world unto Himself.” 2 Corinthians 5:19. He is wooing by His tender love the hearts of His erring children. No earthly parent could be as patient with the faults and mistakes of his children, as is God with those He seeks to save. No one could plead more tenderly with the transgressor. No human lips ever poured out more tender entreaties to the wanderer than does He. All His promises, His warnings, are but the breathing of unutterable love.

When Satan comes to tell you that you are a great sinner, look up to your Redeemer and talk of His merits. That which will help you is to look to His light. Acknowledge your sin, but tell the enemy that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” and that you may be saved by His matchless love. 1 Timothy 1:15. Jesus asked Simon a question in regard to two debtors. One owed his Lord a small sum, and the other owed him a very large sum; but he forgave them both, and Christ asked Simon which debtor would love his Lord most. Simon answered, “He to whom he forgave most.” Luke 7:43. We have been great sinners, but Christ died that we might be forgiven. The merits of His sacrifice are sufficient to present to the Father in our behalf. Those to whom He has forgiven most will love Him most, and will stand nearest to His throne to praise Him for His great love and infinite sacrifice. It is when we most fully comprehend the love of God that we best realize the sinfulness of sin. When we see the length of the chain that was let down for us, when we understand something of the infinite sacrifice that Christ has made in our behalf, the heart is melted with tenderness and contrition. (Steps to Christ, page 35)

**Steps to Christ, pages 52-55:** Now that you have given yourself to Jesus, do not draw back, do not take yourself away from Him, but day by day say, “I am Christ’s; I have given myself to Him;” and ask Him to give you His Spirit and keep you by His grace. As it is by giving yourself to God, and believing Him, that you become His child, so you are to live in Him. The apostle says, “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him.” Colossians 2:6.

Some seem to feel that they must be on probation, and must prove to the Lord that they are reformed, before they can claim His blessing. But they may claim the blessing of God even now.
They must have His grace, the Spirit of Christ, to help their infirmities, or they cannot resist evil. Jesus loves to have us come to Him just as we are, sinful, helpless, dependent. We may come with all our weakness, our folly, our sinfulness, and fall at His feet in penitence. It is His glory to encircle us in the arms of His love and to bind up our wounds, to cleanse us from all impurity.

Here is where thousands fail; they do not believe that Jesus pardons them personally, individually. They do not take God at His word. It is the privilege of all who comply with the conditions to know for themselves that pardon is freely extended for every sin. Put away the suspicion that God’s promises are not meant for you. They are for every repentant transgressor. Strength and grace have been provided through Christ to be brought by ministering angels to every believing soul. None are so sinful that they cannot find strength, purity, and righteousness in Jesus, who died for them. He is waiting to strip them of their garments stained and polluted with sin, and to put upon them the white robes of righteousness; He bids them live and not die.

God does not deal with us as finite men deal with one another. His thoughts are thoughts of mercy, love, and tenderest compassion. He says, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins.” Isaiah 55:7; 44:22.

“I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.” Ezekiel 18:32. Satan is ready to steal away the blessed assurances of God. He desires to take every glimmer of hope and every ray of light from the soul; but you must not permit him to do this. Do not give ear to the tempter, but say, “Jesus has died that I might live. He loves me, and wills not that I should perish. I have a compassionate heavenly Father; and although I have abused His love, though the blessings He has given me have been squandered, I will arise, and go to my Father, and say, ‘I have sinned against heaven, and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son: make me as one of Thy hired servants.’” The parable tells you how the wanderer will be received: “When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.” Luke 15:18-20.

But even this parable, tender and touching as it is, comes short of expressing the infinite compassion of the heavenly Father. The Lord declares by His prophet, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.” Jeremiah 31:3. While the sinner is yet far from the Father’s house, wasting his substance in a strange country, the Father’s heart is yearning over him; and every longing awakened in the soul to return to God is but the tender pleading of His Spirit, wooing, entreating, drawing the wanderer to his Father’s heart of love.

With the rich promises of the Bible before you, can you give place to doubt? Can you believe that when the poor sinner longs to return, longs to forsake his sins, the Lord sternly withholds him from coming to His feet in repentance? Away with such thoughts! Nothing can hurt your own soul more than to entertain such a conception of our heavenly Father. He hates sin, but He loves
the sinner, and He gave Himself in the person of Christ, that all who would might be saved and have eternal blessedness in the kingdom of glory. What stronger or more tender language could have been employed than He has chosen in which to express His love toward us? He declares, “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.” Isaiah 49:15.

Look up, you that are doubting and trembling; for Jesus lives to make intercession for us. Thank God for the gift of His dear Son and pray that He may not have died for you in vain. The Spirit invites you today. Come with your whole heart to Jesus, and you may claim His blessing.

As you read the promises, remember they are the expression of unutterable love and pity. The great heart of Infinite Love is drawn toward the sinner with boundless compassion. “We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” Ephesians 1:7. Yes, only believe that God is your helper. He wants to restore His moral image in man. As you draw near to Him with confession and repentance, He will draw near to you with mercy and forgiveness.

(Steps to Christ, pages 52-55)

Steps to Christ, pages 62-63: The condition of eternal life is now just what it always has been – just what it was in Paradise before the fall of our first parents – perfect obedience to the law of God, perfect righteousness. If eternal life were granted on any condition short of this, then the happiness of the whole universe would be imperiled. The way would be open for sin, with all its train of woe and misery, to be immortalized.

It was possible for Adam, before the fall, to form a righteous character by obedience to God’s law. But he failed to do this, and because of his sin our natures are fallen and we cannot make ourselves righteous. Since we are sinful, unholy, we cannot perfectly obey the holy law. We have no righteousness of our own with which to meet the claims of the law of God. But Christ has made a way of escape for us. He lived on earth amid trials and temptations such as we have to meet. He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ’s character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned.

More than this, Christ changes the heart. He abides in your heart by faith. You are to maintain this connection with Christ by faith and the continual surrender of your will to Him; and so long as you do this, He will work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. So you may say, “The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” Galatians 2:20. So Jesus said to His disciples, “It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.” Matthew 10:20. Then with Christ working in you, you will manifest the same spirit and do the same good works – works of righteousness, obedience.
So we have nothing in ourselves of which to boast. We have no ground for self-exaltation. Our only ground of hope is in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and in that wrought by His Spirit working in and through us. (Steps to Christ, pages 62-63)