

# Rejoice & Reflect



Take the Plunge

*Celebrate God all day, every day. I mean, revel in him! Make it as clear as you can to all you meet that you're on their side, working with them and not against them. Help them see that the Master is about to arrive. He could show up any minute!*

*Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life. ([Philippians 4:4-7](#), the Message)*

**NOTE:** The presentation of this sermon on-line included times of feedback and discussion. To get the full impact, you may want to watch it on [YouTube](#) or on our [Facebook page](#) (there is music playing for the first six and half minutes).

## *Trouble Everywhere*

Here in the middle of everything going on, one would think my life had been simplified by not going out much.

I was thinking I would have some extra time to read and work in my shop in between connecting with people online and by phone.

So far, this is not what has happened. I have been busier than ever trying to figure out how to keep ministry moving ahead.

I am extremely thankful for many of you who have stepped up at this time to help.

- Calvin learning how to use Zoom and organizing our online business meetings.
- Our Elders for making phone calls.
- Judy and Lori for getting out the letter you should have gotten by now.
- Nathan for figuring out how to maximize our live stream.
- And numerous others of you who have reached out with thoughtful comments and encouraging messages.

I can still honestly say there is not place I would rather be right now than right here with you.

That being said, Satan is brutal and crafty in his attacks. I'm not sure how he is attacking you right now, but he is attacking me in several ways:

He reminds me of everything that could be and probably should be done – and the big picture can be crushing. It makes me feel hopeless because I think there is no way I'm going to get it all done.

He suggests that I am not up to the task because – and gives lots of reasons why it's true. The kicker is that most of it is mostly true – which is depressing.

He points out that I'm not feeling very well so I should be not doing as much, but should be resting more. He hints that it is unfair that I'm having to do all this under these circumstances – this fosters resentment.

And then I hear the still small voice of God saying:

*"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)

And then God reminds me that He has the big picture under control, I just need to follow him today.

And while it's true that I'm not up for the task ahead, He is; and as long as I stay with Him, He'll keep me moving in the right direction.

He tells me everyone is feeling troubled, confused and overburdened right now and doing all they can – I just need to hold on to Him and He will renew my strength.

And then I hear Jesus say:

*"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)

He reminds me that this is the place where I find all the solutions. This is the place where I find leadership and wisdom.

This is where my frustrations, my hopelessness, and resentment fade into peace.

I'm not telling you this to make you feel sorry for me – please don't. I share it so you know that I'm not some sort of super Christian. Being a Pastor may make me look like I have it all together, but I'm just as human as you are.

Just like you, I have to make a conscious choice to stay connected to Jesus in the midst of everything Satan throws our way to keep us off balance.

I'm not sure what the devil is throwing at you right now, but there is only way to effectively deal with it – coming to Jesus and staying with Him.

This is not only the main thing – in reality, it is the only thing..

This is what we have been talking about the past several weeks. This is the basis for living how He wants us to live now and living with Him for eternity. There is nothing more important in our day, than staying connected to Him.

## P.R.A.Y.

A few weeks ago I introduced the P.R.A.Y. model for spending time with God. (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.

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.

The last time we met together here at church we spent some time looking at the first step of this process, which is to *Pause*. ([Click here](#) to download a copy of that sermon or [click here](#) to watch it.)

## Pause

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 get distracted.

The second step in *Pause* is to show up. Your goal is to make this a habit that becomes an integral part of your everyday routine.

When you show up, the next step is to redirect your thinking from yourself to God. To do this, 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.

## Rejoice – Psalm 103:1-5

The second part of the P.R.A.Y. model is *Rejoice & Reflect*.

Today, we're going to look at two different passages using one to help us *Rejoice* and the other to help us *Reflect*. This doesn't have to be two different passages, you will often find things in a passage to rejoice about and stuff to reflect on.

Rejoicing and thankfulness are closely related. If you think of them in similar terms, it may make it easier to understand what rejoicing is – choosing to be thankful for His involvement in your life!

Paul talked a bit about rejoicing, as do a number of the Psalms. Here are three selections from the writings of Paul:

*Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!* ([Philippians 4:4](#), CSB)

*Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in everything; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.* ([1 Thessalonians 5:16-18](#), CSB)

*Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer.* ([Romans 12:12](#), CSB)

We are told to always rejoice (or be thankful). The last verse we read, from Romans, gives us a hint as to why we can do this. It says to "Rejoice in hope ..." Let's see what else we can learn by looking at [Psalm 103:1-5](#).

*My soul, bless the LORD, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. My soul, bless the LORD, and do not forget all his benefits.*

*He forgives all your iniquity; he heals all your diseases. He redeems your life from the Pit; he crowns you with faithful love and compassion. He satisfies you with good things; your youth is renewed like the eagle. (Psalm 103:1-5, CSB)*

Here are some things I see in this passage that are a cause for rejoicing:

1. God is deeply involved in your life – He sees and meets your needs!
2. He is concerned both about the quality of your life here, and what happens for eternity!
3. He has done things for you that you aren't able to do for yourself – forgiveness, salvation, strength and healing!

*What else do you see in this passage that is cause for rejoicing?*

You can rejoice, or be thankful, that God is so involved in your life that He knows your greatest needs and has a plan to meet them.

The second part of this is to *Reflect*.

## *Reflect – Philippians 4:6-7*

What I mean by *Reflect* is to think about what God is saying and especially note how it impacts your life. Let's reflect on [Philippians 4:4-7](#):

*Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your graciousness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. (Philippians 4:4-5, CSB)*

Is this verse just a command to rejoice, or does it give you something to rejoice about?

The last sentence is certainly something I rejoice in – *the Lord is near!* This means that He is close enough to know about your life. He knows what is messing it up, He knows what is causing you pain, He knows the secrets you don't hardly even admit to yourself – and He loves you and wants to help you deal with these things!

Reading on:

*Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7, CSB)*

When we look at this passage and see that rejoicing in the Lord has something to do with prayer. In fact, if we look at the other passages we looked at a few minutes ago about rejoicing, we see they are all connected to prayer:

*Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in everything; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, CSB)*

*Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer. (Romans 12:12, CSB)*

Prayer, which is simply connecting with God, is an essential part of *Rejoicing*. The two go together!

This passage in Philippians helps us understand the connection. It tells us:

1. We can pray about anything.
2. Giving our concerns to God in prayer will lead to peace.
3. This peace will be beyond anything we have ever experienced.

Experiencing this kind of peace is certainly a huge reason to rejoice!

One more thing to notice about this promise - did you notice it does not say anything about giving us the things we ask for – it simply promises you peace if you make it your practice to talk to Him about everything that is going on in your life.

This tells me that prayer is more about learning to trust God with your life than getting everything you ask for. When you talk to Him about your burdens and your joys, and give Him permission to be in charge you can let go of worry, because someone stronger and smarter than you is in charge.

I love the way [the Message](#) phrases the last part of this text.

*It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life.*  
([Philippians 4:7](#), the Message)

## Action Needed

So, now it's time to put what we have learned into practice.

First of all you have to be doing this on a regular basis. If you have not yet set aside a time to meet with God each day, now is the time to begin. There will never be a better or more convenient time.

Your goal is not time spent, but making a connection with God. There is nothing magical or special about the time, everything depends on getting connected with Him.

Don't get too hung up on the method – it's not sacred; it is only a way to help you connect with God.

And keep coming back to God day after day – at the time you have set aside – asking God to connect with you. Like anything else, you learn how to do it best by simply doing it and not giving up.

Remember, God wants to be connected to you probably way more than you want to be connected with Him. He's got a lot of skin in this – in fact His skin got pretty torn up ensuring this would be possible for you. He's committed to making it happen!

I like the way [Matthew 11:28-30](#) reads in a Bible translation I had not known of before last Friday. It is called [Worldwide English](#). It was prepared by a Canadian Bible Teacher working in West Africa. She was

teaching in a school that taught in English, but found that in Bible class she was spending more time explaining the English found in the Bible than teaching the Bible. So she wrote this version in simple English that was easier to understand for people who did not speak English well.

*“All you who work hard! All you who carry heavy loads! Come to me! I will give you rest. Do what I tell you. Learn what I teach you. I am gentle. I am not proud. Then your hearts will rest. What I tell you to do is easy. What I give you to carry is not heavy.”* (Matthew 11:28-30, WE)

When you meet God at the time and place you have set aside; when you pause in His presence; when you rejoice in His love and contemplate His promises, you are doing what this promise says you should be doing – these are the things that lead to rest He promise in Matthew 11 or the peace He promised in Philippians 4.

He’s not asking you to do hard stuff or carry heavy loads. Just come into His presence regularly to spend time getting Him and learn learning to trust Him. He’ll take you from here to wherever you should be!

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## 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.](#)
- Mar. 14, 2020 – [Pause](#)

**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

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

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

<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> Stop being angry! Turn from your rage! Do not lose your temper – it only leads to harm. <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>2</sup> So we will not fear when earthquakes come and the mountains crumble into the sea. <sup>3</sup> Let the oceans roar and foam. Let the mountains tremble as the waters surge! Interlude

<sup>4</sup> A river brings joy to the city of our God, the sacred home of the Most High. <sup>5</sup> God dwells in that city; it cannot be destroyed. From the very break of day, God will protect it. <sup>6</sup> The nations are in chaos, and their kingdoms crumble! God's voice thunders, and the earth melts! <sup>7</sup> The LORD of Heaven's Armies is here among us; the God of Israel is our fortress. Interlude

<sup>8</sup> Come, see the glorious works of the LORD: See how he brings destruction upon the world. <sup>9</sup> He causes wars to end throughout the earth. He breaks the bow and snaps the spear; he burns the shields with fire.

<sup>10</sup> “Be still, and know that I am God! I will be honored by every nation. I will be honored throughout the world.”

<sup>11</sup> The LORD of Heaven’s Armies is here among us; the God of Israel is our fortress. (Psalm 46, NLT)

**Psalm 103:1-5 (CSB):** My soul, bless the LORD, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. <sup>2</sup> My soul, bless the LORD, and do not forget all his benefits.

<sup>3</sup> He forgives all your iniquity; he heals all your diseases. <sup>4</sup> He redeems your life from the Pit; he crowns you with faithful love and compassion. <sup>5</sup> He satisfies you with good things; your youth is renewed like the eagle. (Psalm 103:1-5, CSB)

**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. <sup>29</sup> He gives strength to the faint and strengthens the powerless. <sup>30</sup> Youths may become faint and weary, and young men stumble and fall, <sup>31</sup> 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. <sup>34</sup> 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. <sup>26</sup> 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. <sup>27</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven,

where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves don't break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

<sup>22</sup> "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light.

<sup>23</sup> 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!

<sup>24</sup> "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.

<sup>25</sup> "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?

<sup>26</sup> 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? <sup>27</sup> Can any of you add one moment to his life span by worrying? <sup>28</sup> And why do you worry about clothes? Observe how the wildflowers of the field grow: They don't labor or spin thread. <sup>29</sup> Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was adorned like one of these. <sup>30</sup> 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?

<sup>31</sup> "So don't worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?'

<sup>32</sup> For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. <sup>33</sup> But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you. <sup>34</sup> 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. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. <sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> *But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted!*<sup>8</sup> *When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.*

<sup>9</sup> *"I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love.* <sup>10</sup> *When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love.* <sup>11</sup> *I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!* <sup>12</sup> *This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you.* <sup>13</sup> *There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends.* <sup>14</sup> *You are my friends if you do what I command.* <sup>15</sup> *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.* <sup>16</sup> *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.* <sup>17</sup> *This is my command: Love each other."*

(John 15:1-17, NLT)

**Romans 12:10-21 (CSB):** *Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters. Outdo one another in showing honor.* <sup>11</sup> *Do not lack diligence in zeal; be fervent in the Spirit; serve the Lord.* <sup>12</sup> *Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer.* <sup>13</sup> *Share with the saints in their needs; pursue hospitality.* <sup>14</sup> *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.* <sup>15</sup> *Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep.* <sup>16</sup> *Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud; instead, associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own estimation.* <sup>17</sup> *Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Give careful thought to do what is honorable in everyone's eyes.* <sup>18</sup> *If possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*

<sup>19</sup> *Friends, do not avenge yourselves; instead, leave room for God's wrath, because it is written, "Vengeance belongs to me; I will repay," says the Lord.* <sup>20</sup> *But*

*If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. For in so doing you will be heaping fiery coals on his head.*

<sup>21</sup> *Do not be conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good.* (Romans 12:10-21, CSB)

**Philippians 4:4-7 (CSB):** *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!* <sup>5</sup> *Let your graciousness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.* <sup>6</sup> *Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.* <sup>7</sup> *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.* (Philippians 4:4-7, CSB)

**Philippians 4:4-7 (the Message):** *Celebrate God all day, every day. I mean, revel in him! Make it as clear as you can to all you meet that you're on their side, working with them and not against them. Help them see that the Master is about to arrive. He could show up any minute!*

*Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness,*

everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life. ([Philippians 4:4-7](#), the Message)

1 [Thessalonians 5:16-18 \(CSB\)](#): Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup> pray constantly, <sup>18</sup> give thanks in everything; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. ([1 Thessalonians 5:16-18](#), CSB)

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. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.

<sup>8</sup> Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. <sup>9</sup> 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.

<sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> May God give you more and more grace and peace as you grow in your knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord.

<sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> 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, <sup>6</sup> and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, <sup>7</sup> and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone.

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

<sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

<sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>11</sup> Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. <sup>12</sup> 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.

<sup>13</sup> And God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us. <sup>14</sup> Furthermore, we have seen with our own eyes and now testify that the Father sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup> All who declare that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God. <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> 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.

<sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> We love each other because he loved us first.

<sup>20</sup> 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? <sup>21</sup> 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 leddest 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 “whatsoever 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](#))*