

»mon

If we work on developing our skills and interests, our work will be very fruitful. Ask God to cultivate the talents He has given to you.

»tues

God wants us to believe that He is able to do *anything*. Praise God today for His omnipotence—His power to do whatever pleases Him.

»wed

God will give you the grace to make it through anything. Ask God for grace, even when it seems that nothing will help.

»thurs

God will be with you in everything, nothing excluded. Thank God that He is

intimately involved in your growth.

»fri

God promises to provide all that you need. Ask Him today for the things you will need today.

»sat

The final result of God's grace, preparation, and power is that you are going to abound in the things you do that honor God. Praise God for the promise of success in these things.

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

—Ephesians 2:10

Songs in the Night

Have you ever had feelings you didn't know how to put into words?

Oh, it's easy enough to find adjectives to describe how you feel when things are going well, but what about those times when you feel all alone or when a special relationship ends?

You are not alone in wrestling with the issues of life. Often, they are much too personal to share with just anyone.

So what do you do?

The ordinary person of the Bible was just like you. Sometimes he or she was afraid of an enemy and hid in fear. At other times he or she may have sinned and tried to cover it up. Then, there were people who had faith in God, and God did amazing things through them. You will find that whatever the circumstance, whether the person experienced his or her greatest challenge, biggest disappointment or sweetest victory, the Lord gave him or her a song to sing.

In the Bible there are many accounts of how God blessed His faithful followers. Many people He blessed sang to Him. The following are a few examples of those occasions. The children of Israel sang a song of deliverance when the Lord brought them out of Egypt. David sang a song when God blessed him in triumph over his enemy. Zechariah sang a song of praise when God fulfilled His promise to give him a son, who would be greatly favored of the Lord. Elizabeth's song came when the Lord blessed her to give birth to a son in her old age. Mary magnified the Lord in praise because He regarded her and allowed her to be the mother of the Savior. Simeon's song was the fulfillment of a promise "that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah." Luke 2:26.

As you seek the Lord in prayer,
He will give you a song for your
heart and a new song when
you see the fulfillment of
His promise.



»mon

In the computer age “miracles” happen every day. What is left for God to do? In your life, what seems difficult—choosing a college? Making a team? Getting a date? Keep these situations in mind as you meditate on Luke 1:37.

»tues

Talk to grandparents about what they once thought was impossible but is taken for granted today. Thank God for the good progress that has occurred in civilization.

»wed

Jesus performed miracles for people just like you. Are you facing a situation that seems difficult? Ask God for help.

»thurs

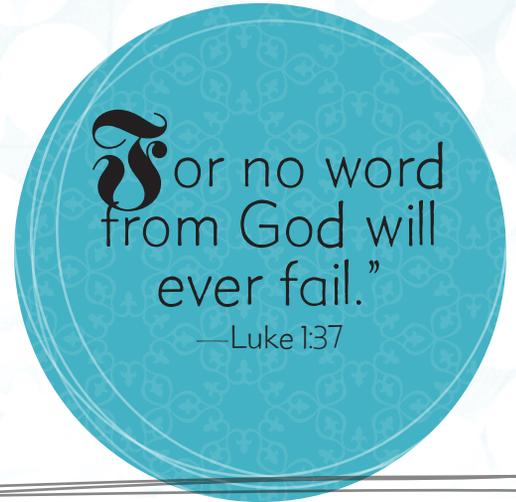
Thomas didn’t believe Jesus was risen from the dead until he saw and touched the Lord. Overcoming fear in order to believe is hard. Thank God for the belief that you have; ask Him to help you overcome your unbelief.

»fri

“Go, and sin no more.” Jesus said this to those He healed. Perhaps the greatest miracles weren’t the merely physical ones but the way people’s lives changed. Ask God to open the doors of change for you.

»sat

Remember when you thought you could never learn to ride a two-wheel bike? Every few years, look and see what God has accomplished.



TIME SLICE
John the Baptist

Being **beheaded** was how John the Baptist died. When Jesus learned of John’s death, He went to a solitary place. It must have been **very sad for Jesus** that John had been treated so poorly.

The desert was **John the Baptist’s home**. He probably was pretty used to having sand in his picnic lunch.

If you thought your generation was the first to use a tablet, think again. **Moses, of course, used two tablets**—but did you know **Zechariah used a tablet** to write his newborn son’s name?

References come in handy when applying for a job or applying to college. John the Baptist received a **GREAT** one from Jesus: **“Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist.”**
Matthew 11:11

Cousins—most teens have one; some have dozens! Jesus and John the Baptist met before they were born. John leaped with joy and John’s mother Elizabeth was filled with the **Holy Spirit**. John and Jesus may have played as little kids or ran barefoot desert races as teens. We don’t know. What we do know is that **John prepared the way for Jesus—His Lord.**

John the Baptist wasn’t the first person to **eat grasshoppers**. In some cultures eating bugs is a way to add protein to your diet. Chocolate covered insects, cricket and larva licket lollipops, dried crickets flavored with bacon and cheese or sour cream and onion, and scorpion pops are just a few bugs marketed online.
Hungry anyone?



» **mon**

God's timing is perfect. Sometimes God says no to our requests because the time for them has not fully come. Thank God today for His orchestration of everything that happens.

» **tues**

Even though Jesus is fully God, He is also fully human. That means He can understand all of our human feelings. Ask the Lord to show you how completely He can identify with *all* of your emotions.

» **wed**

Jesus was born of a woman—He had a mom that He loved. Thank God for every good thing that your mom has provided for you.

» **thurs**

When we receive Jesus, His righteousness is transferred to us. Because Jesus lived under the law perfectly, we can stand before God blameless. If you are a Christian, thank the Lord for attributing His goodness to you.

» **fri**

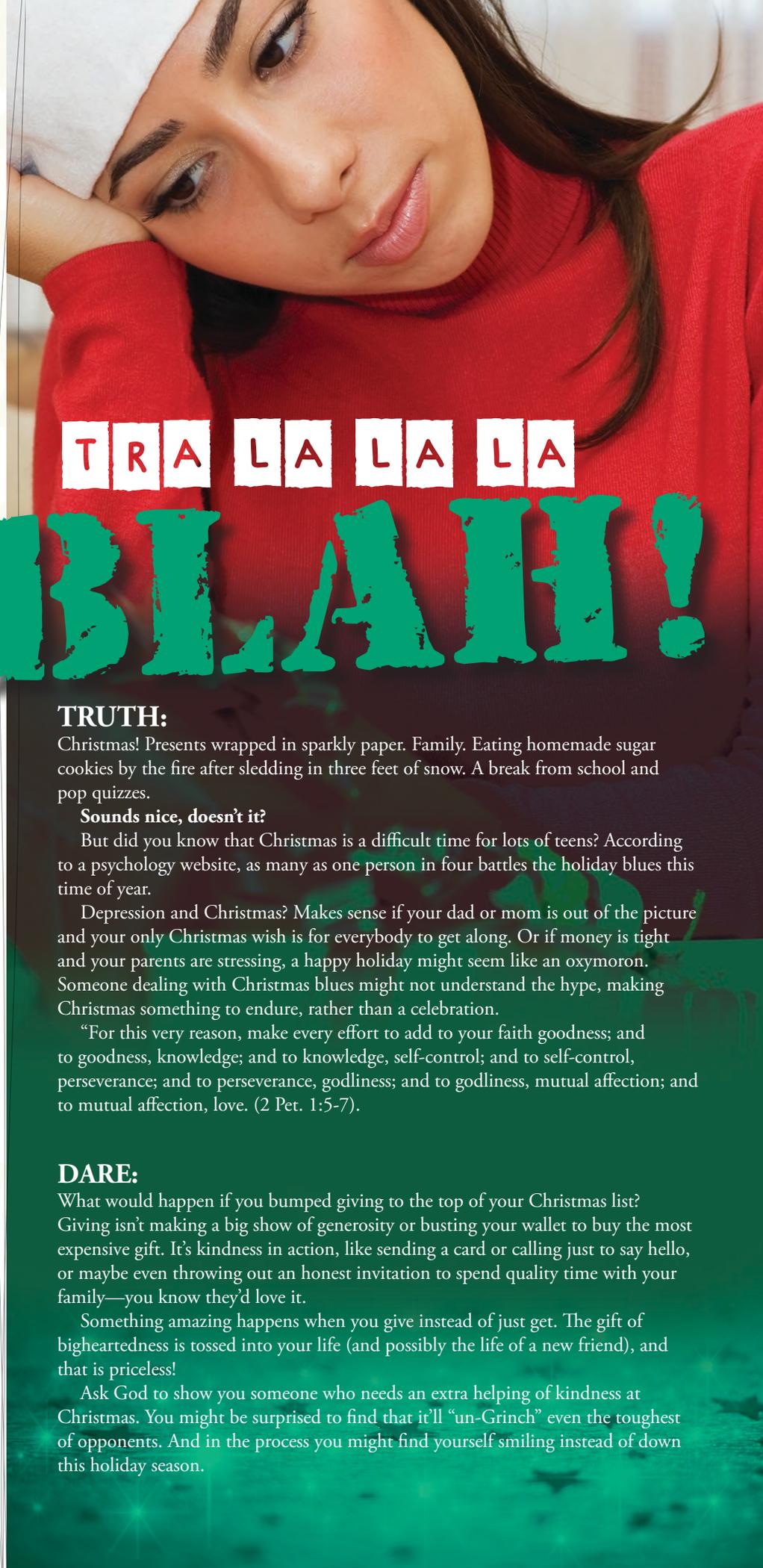
You are a family member based on your last name. You don't have to do anything to be a Jones or a Smith. To receive "full rights" as a child in God's family, simply accept your last name—Christian. Spend some time thanking God for your family membership.

» **sat**

God sent Jesus to lift us out of a deadly situation. But He didn't just come to *help* us—He came to *save* us. What does it mean to you that Jesus was born as the Savior? Talk with God about it.

But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.

—Galatians 4:4-5



T R A L A L A L A

BLAH!

TRUTH:

Christmas! Presents wrapped in sparkly paper. Family. Eating homemade sugar cookies by the fire after sledding in three feet of snow. A break from school and pop quizzes.

Sounds nice, doesn't it?

But did you know that Christmas is a difficult time for lots of teens? According to a psychology website, as many as one person in four battles the holiday blues this time of year.

Depression and Christmas? Makes sense if your dad or mom is out of the picture and your only Christmas wish is for everybody to get along. Or if money is tight and your parents are stressing, a happy holiday might seem like an oxymoron. Someone dealing with Christmas blues might not understand the hype, making Christmas something to endure, rather than a celebration.

"For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. (2 Pet. 1:5-7).

DARE:

What would happen if you bumped giving to the top of your Christmas list? Giving isn't making a big show of generosity or busting your wallet to buy the most expensive gift. It's kindness in action, like sending a card or calling just to say hello, or maybe even throwing out an honest invitation to spend quality time with your family—you know they'd love it.

Something amazing happens when you give instead of just get. The gift of bigheartedness is tossed into your life (and possibly the life of a new friend), and that is priceless!

Ask God to show you someone who needs an extra helping of kindness at Christmas. You might be surprised to find that it'll "un-Grinch" even the toughest of opponents. And in the process you might find yourself smiling instead of down this holiday season.

»mon

When a building is condemned it is marked for destruction. But God never intended people to be destroyed—He wants to save them. Think about God’s love for the people you know who aren’t Christians.

»tues

God’s purpose is to save “the world.” Try making this more personal. As you read the memory verse through a few times, substitute your name for the last two uses of the phrase “the world.” Jesus came to save you.

»wed

Movies and books sometimes have “cliff-hangers”—the person in peril is saved just in the nick of time. In real life, though, it’s unwise to put off trusting in Christ to save you. Take a serious look at your relationship with God today.

»thurs

Just as there is a door to enter a room, or a bridge to cross a stream, so there is a Savior to bring us to God. Are you going “through Him,” or trying to find another way? Think—what am I depending on for my salvation?

»fri

Have you ever tried to find your way around in an unfamiliar city? Did you admit you were lost and ask for help? If you sense you are spiritually “lost,” spend a moment in prayer asking God to point you in the right direction.

»sat

God is offering you the gift of salvation—eternal life with Him. Have you received it by saying with your heart: “Yes, Lord, I have sinned against You, and I need You to save me”? If not, consider doing it now.

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.
—John 3:17

Be My Example

When Amy walked onto the bus, she noticed people staring. She tugged down her shirt to hide the small belly ring. She found a seat and slipped in her earbuds, humming along with the tunes on her iPod. Two teens turned and stared. She finally asked them if they needed anything.

“Just checking out your belly ring,” one guy said. “No one in youth group has one.”

“Oh, and I just wanted to warn you that your counselor is going to take your phone. They’re against camp rules,” said the girl sitting next to him.

Amy had just connected with God the Wednesday before. When the youth leader talked about camp, her mom scraped the money together. She was excited that Amy might make new friends. Two years before, when Amy’s father left, Amy changed schools. Her mom worked and that left a lot of alone time. New friends entered the picture, but so did trouble.

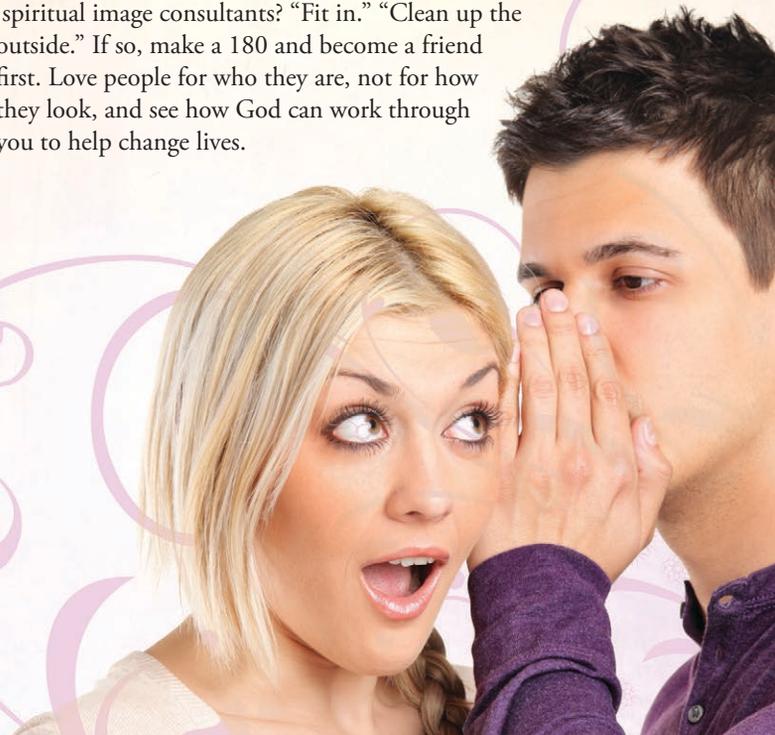
That’s why winter camp sounded like such a great idea.

Until now. These kids made Amy feel self-conscious and not “good” enough to even be on the same bus.

You hear a lot of sermons about how the media tries to make

people fit a certain image, but sometimes believers do the same thing. Amy was looking for new friends and a new way of life, but all she received was a fashion and music critique.

First Thessalonians 4:9 reminds us to care about people the same way that Christ did. He loved the disciples from the very beginning, even when they were raw and unsure of their new faith. Have you ever been one of these spiritual image consultants? “Fit in.” “Clean up the outside.” If so, make a 180 and become a friend first. Love people for who they are, not for how they look, and see how God can work through you to help change lives.



» mon

To fear the Lord means to respect and revere Him. This happens when we remember how great and powerful God is. Make a list of five “awesome” qualities of God.

» tues

If you want to be wise, respect the Lord first—that’s just the *beginning* of knowledge. Ask God to help you gain knowledge through building a strong relationship with Him.

» wed

“Nobody’s going to tell me what to do!” Have you ever heard that—or said it? The Bible says that is an attitude for fools. No one is completely independent. Try writing a short paragraph about the ways your parents—or other adults—have to depend on others.

» thurs

Foolish people despise wisdom. Because wisdom is gained only by experience, many people grow impatient with trying to get it. They rush off to do something before getting the experience to do it well. Ask God to help you slow down for wisdom.

» fri

Foolish people despise discipline. No one excels in sports without training, and no one plays beautiful music without practice. What areas of your life require more discipline? Jot down a plan for change and ask God to help you carry it out this week.

» sat

Why is it so tough sometimes to listen to parents? Try to remember the last thing your mother or father instructed you about. Ask the Lord to help you see the wisdom in their words.

↑ The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline. Listen, my son, to your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching.
— Proverbs 1:7-8

TIME SLICE

Family joke: “That’s a nice story, but now tell me where you’ve really been for the last three days.” — Jacob’s mother

The Bible is full of accounts of **families** — some functional, others dysfunctional. The very **first sibling rivalry** occurred between Cain and Abel, and **— it ended badly.**

It isn’t easy to “**get along**” but it’s important. You’ll be a part of your family your whole life. That’s a long time to fight, but if you get along, you have **friends for life!**

Jesus got His parents very worried one time. They had to walk all the way back to the temple in Jerusalem to find Him. Have your parents ever come looking for you?
How’d that end up?

Remember Jacob who had 12 sons? See Acts 7:14.
Imagine having 75 around your kitchen table!

Those who have **fewer than 3 dinners as a family per week** are almost 4 times more likely to use tobacco; more than 2 times as likely to use alcohol; 2-1/2 times more likely to use marijuana; and almost 4 times likelier to say they expect to try drugs in the future.

— National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University

»mon

Jesus taught His followers to be in the world, but not of the world. Just how far are you willing to go to promote His worldview when it stands in drastic opposition to what the world says is “right and good”? Ask God for courage to take a stand when necessary.

»tues

World history is full of people who nonviolently resisted laws that denied God’s gift of equality to all people. How could you nonviolently resist discrimination and other injustices in your school? Pray for courage again today.

»wed

During the U.S. civil rights movement, many Christian leaders took a public stand. Many were imprisoned; some were killed. Think about the cost of standing up for God’s higher laws. Once more, pray for courage today.

»thurs

Recently Christians have gone to jail for protesting things they believe are wrong. Pray for Christians whose consciences lead them to take this kind of action.

»fri

Obedying God is more than just keeping a set of rules. We obey Him because we love Him. Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching” (John 14:23). In your prayer time today, tell God how much you love Him.

»sat

All of the words in this verse have only one syllable, making it very simple to memorize. Whenever you find cases where human law conflicts with God’s law, stop and pray for your lawmakers.

Do what is
right and good
in the LORD’s
sight.

—Deuteronomy 6:18a

Do what is right and good
in the LORD’s sight.

- Deuteronomy 6:18a

» **mon**

Teachers usually have a subject in which they are experts. There is no subject that God doesn't know intimately and can't teach us. Ask God for His guidance as you consider the direction you should be taking in your life.

» **tues**

Have you ever been at a crossroads, wondering which way to turn? God's will can be like a road map for us. Ask God to help you make the right choices when faced with tough options.

» **wed**

Work can pile up. Sometimes our responsibilities seem overwhelming. Yet God has given us tasks to do, and He is in control of the outcomes. Ask God to give you strength to follow His guidance even when the work is hard.

» **thurs**

A counselor can help us make decisions. When God promises to counsel you, it means He will make you aware of His will as you seek it. Ask God for some advice today.

» **fri**

To receive God's counsel, we must spend time praying—just talking with Him. Try an experimental way of praying this week: Set up a chair for Jesus and talk with Him (aloud, if possible) as you would any other person. Don't forget to spend some time listening, too.

» **sat**

Say a prayer of thanks to God for His care, protection, and guidance.

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.

—Psalm 32:8

WHY PRAY?



Q: If God knows everything, then He already knows the stuff I'm praying about. So why should I bother? –Donald (17)

A: Awesome, good question to ask. WHY? Why do we pray? If God is all KNOWING, all POWERFUL, all EVERYTHING, the beginning and the end, then He would certainly know my prayers before I ask right? So why should I waste my time?

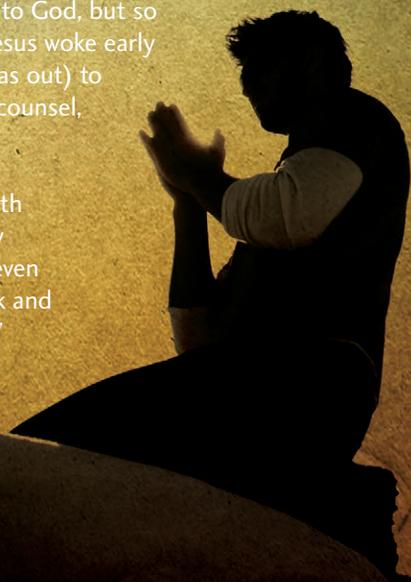
Have I hit dead on?

Well, to start off, you're totally right. God knows all and sees all. He knows your wants and needs before you ask for them. Let me take you down a road that I myself had to walk to finally get the answer to that exact question. As you know the Bible always has someone praying or seeking God. Whenever a man or woman of God won a battle, laid hands on the sick, overcame problems, or took over nations, everything from feeding people to winning impossible battles—if you look back at the origins of their victory, they went to the Father for prayer first. Jesus said,

“Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours” (Mark 11:24).

Prayer shouldn't be words that are thrown out to sound impressive; prayer is simply talking to Jesus. Prayer can go from straight-up seeking out guidance in your life, overcoming a problem, or praying for a friend or family member. Yes, He knows your life before you live it—what you'll do, what will happen, but get this: He still wants to hear from you. He desires to talk with you daily and to have a personal, one-on-one relationship with you. Now here's where it gets good. Not only did the people from the Bible pray to God, but so did the King of kings, Jesus. Multiple times Jesus woke early in the morning (sometimes before the sun was out) to spend some time with the Father, asking for counsel, wisdom, and guidance.

You see, God wants to have a relationship with you. He wants you to cry out to Him, to pray to Him, to ask Him the needs of your heart even though He already knows what they are. “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find” (Matt. 7:7). So I encourage you to pray. Pray to the Father who made all of everything, knows everything, and yet still wants a relationship with you. –Elisha (19)



»mon

The “truth” isn’t just a bunch of facts. Jesus personifies what is true. Ask for God’s help to make His truth real to you.

»tues

To *know* these truths means more than passing a quiz about them. It means to believe them in our hearts and trust them to make a difference in our lives. Pray for that kind of trust in your life.

»wed

After we *know* the *truth* about how to drive a car, we’re *free* to drive it. In the same way, learning spiritual skills gives us the freedom to grow.

Ask God to show you what spiritual skills you need to learn better.

»thurs

Look at the previous verse, John 8:31. Jesus first calls His disciples to obedience, *then* He tells them they’ll be freed by the truth. Ask God to increase your desire to obey Him unconditionally.

»fri

Some people can really turn you off. But if you look at the way God sees them, you’ll be free to care about them. Ask the Lord to help you see people the way He sees them, with eyes of compassion and encouragement.

»sat

Do you know someone who is enslaved to something or someone and needs to know this truth and find freedom? Ask God to use you in some way to help them.

When you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.”

—John 8:32

Don't rush decisions...

Should Eric skip a week of football practice to go to church camp? Should Tristan accept the offer to coordinate children’s church? Should Nick invite a good friend who has been down lately to go to a concert, or should he invite a new friend who is more fun?

These aren’t decisions that have obvious right or wrong answers. In each case, both choices look good. The longer it takes us to make these decisions, the more they feel unsolvable.

Here are some clues to follow next time a decision muddles your mind.

Gather more facts. Eric talked to the football coach and asked him how much of a problem it would be if he were gone for a week. Eric began to see that he had a responsibility not to miss practice. He and a few other players decided to drive out to the camp for a few sessions after each morning practice.

Figure out what each choice will cost. Tristan was flattered to be asked to coordinate children’s church, but she was already pushed for time.

It boiled down to band practice or children’s church. Would she feel worse if someone else did children’s church or took her place in the band? She decided she wanted to do children’s church more, so she took that position.

Talk it out. Pick people who listen well and who don’t prefer either choice. Tell them everything you can think of about the decision and then ask, “Which way seems best to you?” Get them to tell you what they heard you saying.

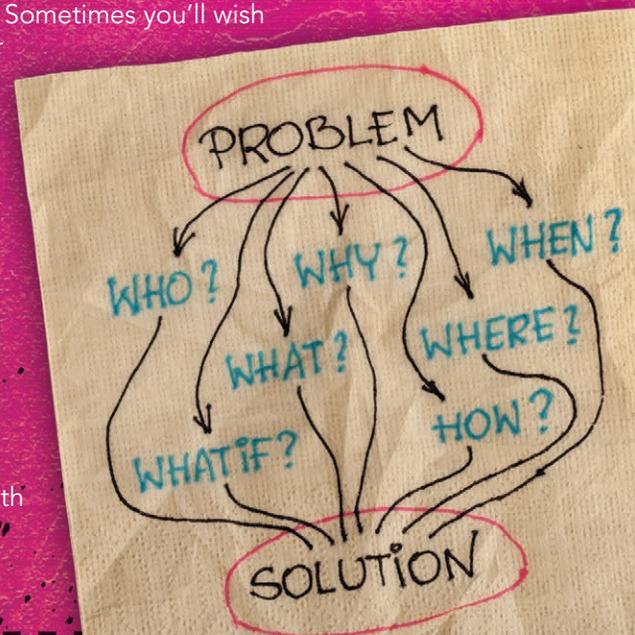
“Try on” the decision. See how a temporary decision feels. Nick considered what it would be like to invite the new friend, but he didn’t tell anyone. A few days later, it felt wrong. He could never go to the concert without his best friend.

Give yourself a deadline. You might want to say, “By January 30th, I will have talked to . . . and made my decision.” This helps you figure out when you’ll gather those facts and how soon you have to decide.

Don’t rush these kinds of decisions, because sometimes they work themselves out. Maybe you were struggling to decide which college to go to; eventually you find out that one of them is much better in the field you want to pursue than another.

Try not to panic about decisions. Realistically, you won’t make every decision perfectly anyway. Sometimes you’ll wish you’d done things another

way. In some cases, things will turn out fine. If you’re praying through decisions and asking godly people for advice, you’re on the right track. Worst case, if you make a bad decision, you’ll learn from it or will be able to steer a friend facing a similar decision in the right way. Think things through, pray, ask for help and then trust yourself. With God as your guide, you won’t stray far.



»mon

Being a Christlike servant involves our thoughts, speech, actions, motives, and attitude. Ask God to show you how you can develop in these areas.

»tues

Thoughts “Christ has set us free” (Gal. 5:1). Read Galatians 5:1-15. According to this passage, what is a wrong way of thinking about our salvation? What are we now free to live for in new ways?

»wed

Speech “If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other” (Gal. 5:15). What is something you have said to a family member that was “biting” instead of building up? Ask God to forgive you, then go ask that person for forgiveness.

»thurs

Actions “Keep in step with the Spirit” (Gal. 5:25). Galatians 5:16-26 describes two kinds of people—those controlled by their sinful nature and those controlled by the Holy Spirit. Think of someone you are not getting along with. How could you demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit to them?

»fri

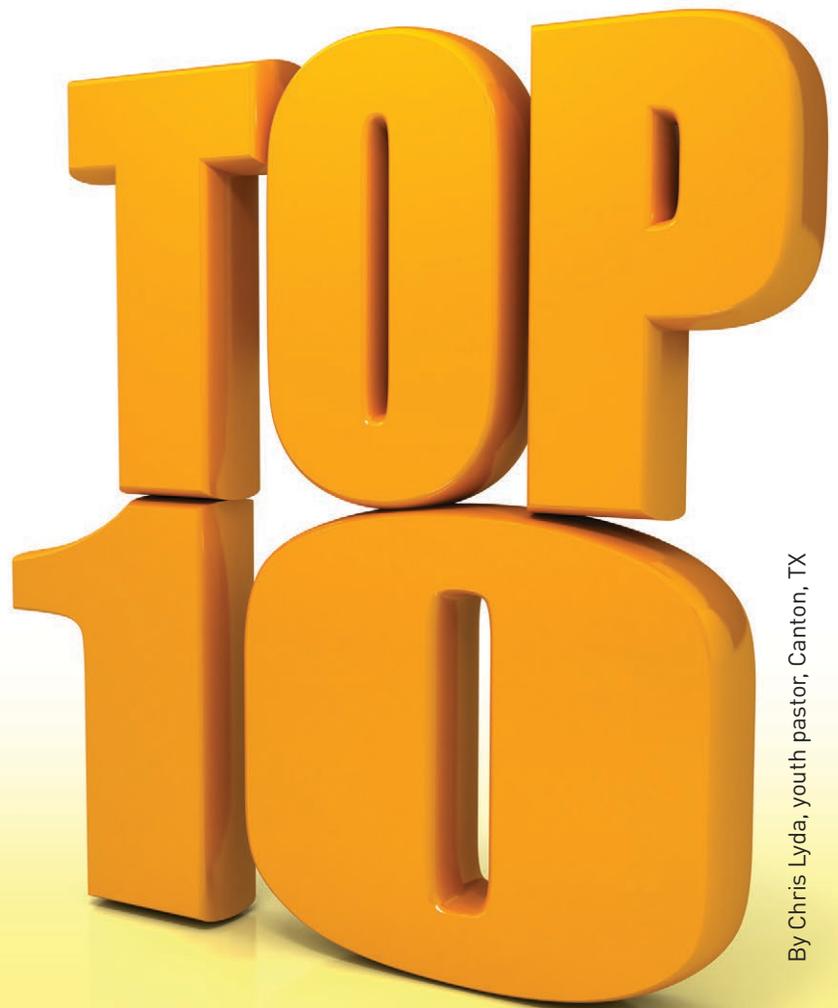
Motives “Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other” (Gal. 5:26). It is possible to do “religious” things and still not be a servant who pleases God. Why do you think our motives are so important to God?

»sat

Attitude “Serve one another humbly in love” (Gal. 5:13). Being a servant can be demeaning, boring, and tedious—unless we share Christ’s attitude of love. With His attitude, being a servant brings dignity, excitement, and fulfillment. Ask God for this love to serve others.

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.

—Galatians 5:13



By Chris Lyda, youth pastor, Canton, TX

Do's and Don'ts for New Missionaries

1. Do bring an open heart. Don't bring a bad attitude.
2. Do bring a good water bottle. Don't bring bottled soft drinks.
3. Do bring your Bible, notebook, and pen. Leave electronic devices at home!
4. Do bring a small digital camera. Don't bring your parents' expensive video camera.
5. Do bring extra socks and underclothes. Don't bring uncomfortable walking shoes, high-priced jeans, or your grandfather's antique watch.
6. Do bring a good quality sleeping bag and pillow. Don't bring a suitcase you can't carry.
7. Do bring deodorant (please!). Don't bring lots of hair care products.
8. Do bring sunscreen and insect repellent. Don't bring bottles of cologne.
9. Find out ahead of time how to best use your cell phone in the country you are visiting to avoid costly fees.
10. Exceed the need. Bring a great team spirit. Don't leave home without it.

»mon

What do you fix your eyes on? List some of the things you really desire, then list the long-term benefits of having those things.

»tues

Our eyes see marvelous things all around that can make life easier and more enjoyable. The benefits of those things, however, are always temporary. Ask God for the ability to enjoy those things that will last forever.

»wed

I am the one responsible for fixing my eyes on temporary things. I choose. What are my true desires? What is it that the deepest part of me wants?

»thurs

The Bible doesn't say we have to stop possessing things. But we cannot allow things to possess us. Ask God for a clearer perspective on the things He has given to you.

»fri

Years ago, people didn't believe in molecules because they couldn't be seen. Once the technology came, people saw that they did exist. It is the same with eternal things. Presently we don't have the "spiritual technology" to see them. One day we will. Ask God for the faith to believe in that which can't be seen.

»sat

A life based on God is renewed daily (2 Cor. 4:16). Pray for renewal and thank God for what He is doing in your life.

So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.
—2 Corinthians 4:18

SO WE FIX
OUR EYES NOT ON
WHAT IS SEEN, BUT
ON WHAT IS UNSEEN,
SINCE WHAT IS SEEN
IS TEMPORARY,
BUT WHAT IS
UNSEEN IS
ETERNAL.

- 2 CORINTHIANS 4:18

»mon

Are you at peace with the people in your home? How about friends at school? Find a way to make peace with someone this week.

»tues

How do you get peace with God? By doing good things? Being nice? In the Bible, “peace with God” means “salvation.” You can have peace with God by asking for salvation. Go to God and ask Him to renew your heart.

»wed

To experience peace with God, come to Him. Share your anxieties and concerns in prayer. Tell God your deepest fears.

»thurs

Take heart. Be brave. “In this world you will have trouble.” But Jesus has overcome the world. Meditate on how Jesus has overcome the fearful things in your world.

»fri

Jesus has told us what to expect from the world and how to react. This can eliminate many of our fears. Renew your desire to read God’s fear-fighting Word.

»sat

With God, fears don’t have to stress us out. God gives us rest. Put your faith to work and let your fears take a day off—rest in God’s forgiveness.

S have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

—John 16:33

Pop Culture

Pop culture is a really tricky subject to deal with because Christians have such strong feelings about it. Of course, we don’t all have the same strong feelings. Within the church you’ll find every opinion possible on how followers of Christ should handle pop culture.

Some believers think that we should strictly separate ourselves from the world—that we should dress differently, not go to movies, and listen to only Christian music. Others feel that it’s totally fine—and even gives us witnessing opportunities—when we share the same media interests as our non-believing friends.

So what’s the godly approach? That’s a tough question, because the Bible doesn’t give us black-and-white rules for handling pop culture and the media. That’s where faith comes in. Basically every Christian has to decide—in faith—where he or she will draw the line. When will you participate in the things of our culture and when will you say no?

Thankfully, in Romans 14, Paul gave us some great advice we can apply in this area.

First, this decision is between you and God—not between you and anyone else on earth (vs. 7, 8, 12). Where you draw your line should be a result of lots of Bible study and prayer.

Next, if your conscience says that something doesn’t line up with Scripture, you shouldn’t do it. In other words, “everything that does not come from faith is sin” (vs. 23).

Finally, in deciding what to wear, what to watch, and what to listen to, you should put others first (vs. 13). Even if you think a certain movie is fine, it’s wrong to watch it if you know that it will tempt your buddy to sin.

So how about it? Where are you gonna draw your line?

“For none of us lives for himself alone and none of us dies for himself alone. If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.” —Romans 14:7-8

» mon

"And my God"—can you say that with confidence? If you are a Christian, you belong to God. Take time to examine your relationship with God today.

» tues

Try not watching TV for a day. How badly would you miss it? Ask God to fulfill whatever needs watching TV once provided.

» wed

"The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing" (Ps. 23:1). Begin keeping a list of your prayer requests and watch how God answers.

» thurs

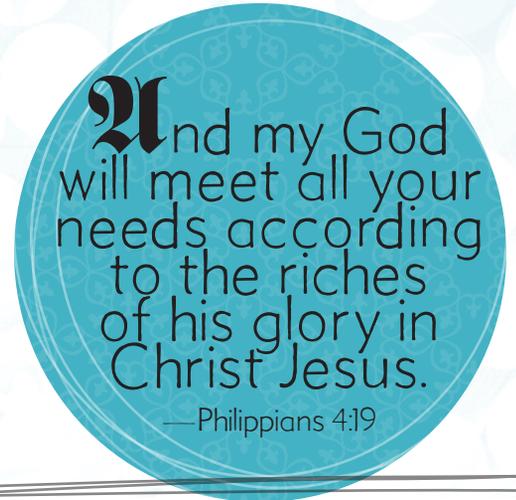
Ever been a little nervous and at a loss for words, especially when it came to talking about your faith? Ask God to help you calm down when you want to clam up.

» fri

Paul was in need, and the Philippian church helped him. Who has God sent into your life to meet some of your deepest needs? Thank God for this person today.

» sat

"... the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus." We may not have silver and gold, but God has given us wonderful gifts that no one can take from us: forgiveness and abundant life through Jesus. Thank God for this kind of wealth.



TIME SLICE

A company in Taiwan makes dinnerware out of wheat, so you can eat your plate!

The average kid will eat **1,500 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches** by the time he or she graduates from high school.

Americans eat nearly **100 acres of pizza** every day—that's approximately **350 slices per second!**

Jesus fed over **5,000 people** with a boy's lunch of 5 loaves and 2 fish. You do the math—**a miracle!**



Apples have more Vitamin C than oranges and apples are **more efficient than caffeine** in keeping people awake in the mornings! Why? The sugar in apples and the act of chewing, works better than a cup of coffee.

Did you know that there is a **giant mushroom** in Oregon that is over 2,400 years old, covers 3.4 square miles of land, and is **still growing!**

» mon

Lazarus's resurrection was an electrifying and mystifying event in Jesus' life. Put yourself in His followers' places—do you think their first reaction was one of hope or fear?

» tues

How can somebody live, even though he or she dies? Jesus used this strong contrast to make His point very clear: when you're dead, He'll bring you back to life. Thank God for the incredible power of the resurrection.

» wed

Do you know anyone who does not believe in life after death? How does this person see his or her life? How

would that outlook change if the person knew he or she would live forever?

» thurs

In this verse, life follows resurrection. If our glorified bodies are still recognizable (like Jesus'), how will life after the resurrection be different than before it?

» fri

Jesus uses the present and future tenses in this verse. In what ways does the resurrection affect you?

» sat

The central hope of the Christian faith is the resurrection of believers, a future assured us by Jesus' death and proven by His resurrection. What is your idea of heaven?



More to This Life

I don't think we've met, but I think you know me—or at least someone like me. I like listening to music, hanging out at the mall, and being with my friends. My brother and sister hassle me, and my parents fight sometimes. I have my good days and my bad days. Last week I did better on a test than I had hoped. But then when I got home, my parents were ticked off that I hadn't cleaned my room. That's how some days go. Such is life.

When I became a Christian, I thought that eternal life was something I would get after I died, and this life was just something to be endured. I was wrong! Eternal life is something that started when Jesus saved me. Knowing this really makes a difference at how I look at things.

The other day, I was having a bad day. Mom didn't like the clothes I was wearing; while I was changing, I missed my bus; I walked to school in the rain, forgetting my homework in the rush—you get the picture. At the time, as far as I was concerned, the day was ruined.

Then it dawned on me again—I'm going to live forever with God! What a difference it made! Don't get me wrong; my problems didn't just fly away, but I knew that Jesus was around to help me. After all, we're going to be spending a lot of time together—like forever! Remembering this changed my attitude about my clothes, because my mom is more important to me than what I'm wearing. Then some kids thought it was funny that I was soaked, and we all had a good laugh over it.

There's more to this life than seventy to eighty years (or whatever). Because I have eternal life I look at things differently now. It's great knowing that the good you do today is going to make a difference in eternity. It's like I have somebody else's eyes—Christ's. It's almost like it isn't me anymore, even though it is.

Sometimes when bad things happen, thoughts come into my mind telling me that there was no reason, no purpose, for it to happen. Then my brain goes crazy, wondering if anything has a purpose, or if it's all just senseless.

But since I have eternal life, I can keep reminding myself that there is a purpose to events (even if I don't know what those purposes are) and that God is in control.

Even though I still want the hurt to go away, my faith lifts me above what I can see. I know that beyond and within this life is another life, where the pain is easier to take and the questions eventually get answered.

I have eternal life NOW. And that makes all the difference.

I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die.

—John 11:25