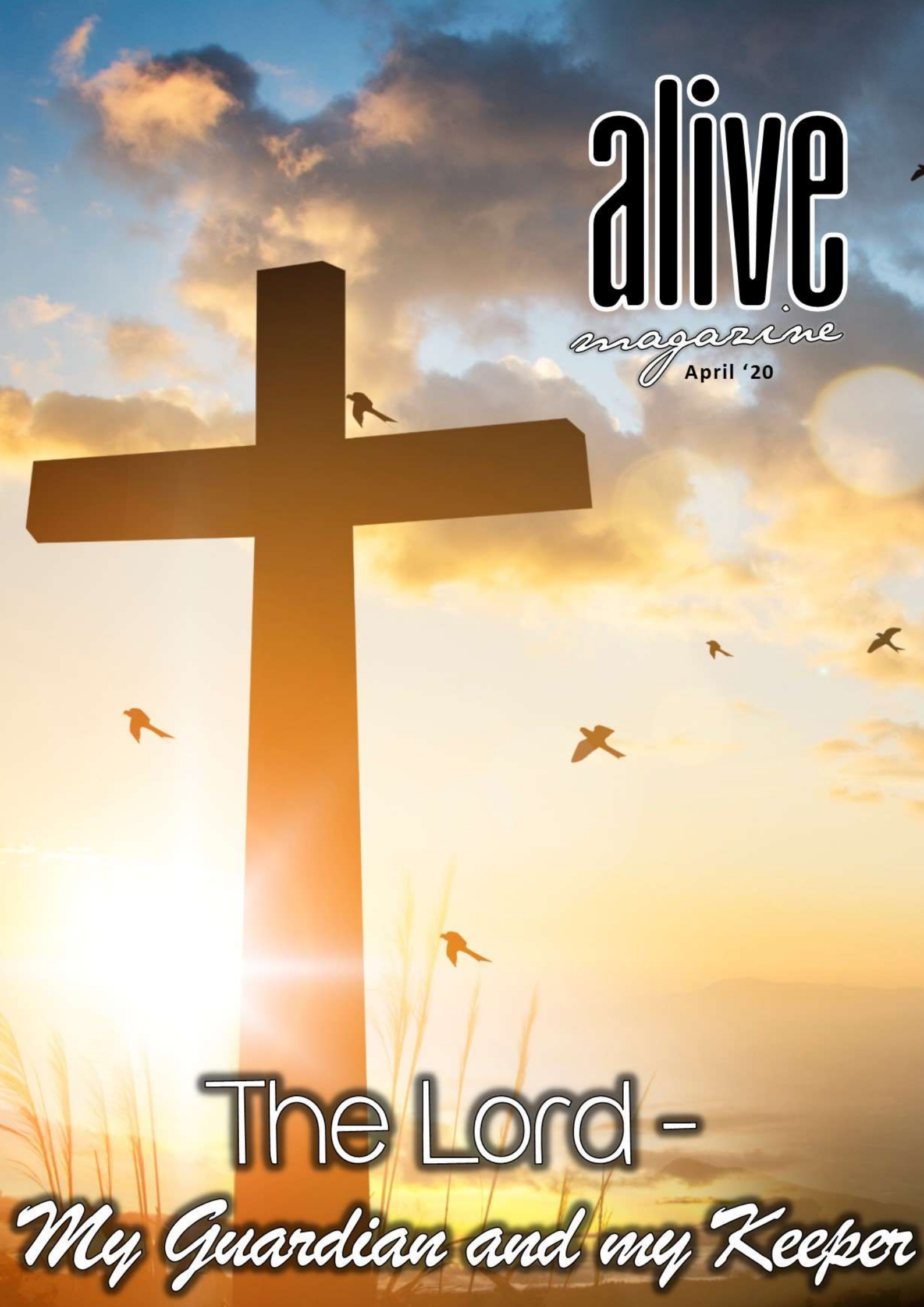

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April '20
The Lord -
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CONTENTS

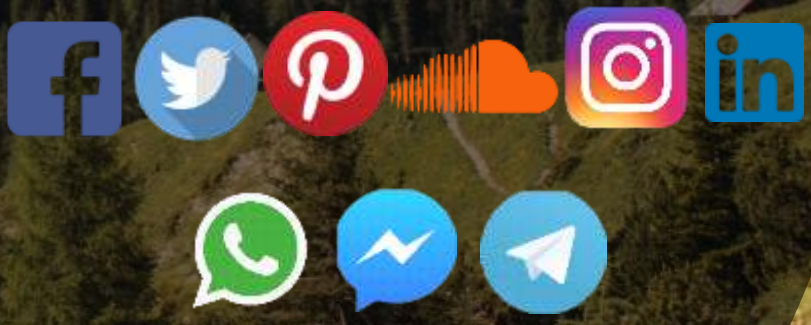
+ featured articles

4 **THE LORD – MY GUARDIAN AND MY KEEPER**
- Pastor John Roebert–

8 **NITPICKING IN MARRIAGE**
- MarriageMissions.com –

12 **BE KIND TO YOURSELF**
- Andrew Roebert –

16 **ATTITUDE – KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL LIFE**
- Andrew Roebert –



The Lord – My Guardian And My Keeper

By: Pastor John Roebert

I believe this message will bring you HOPE, HELP and ENCOURAGEMENT. There's nothing like the Word of God to bring hope and restore courage. God's Word is powerful. It can break shackles. It can break despair. Let's turn our attention to one of the Psalms. This psalm could quite possibly be considered as 'the most encouraging psalm' in God's Word. If not the most encouraging, then at least one of the most encouraging. It is Psalm 121.

Psalm 121:1-8 (NKJV) 'I will lift up my eyes to the hills - from whence comes my help? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is your keeper [other translations: protector or guardian]; the LORD is your shade at your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul. The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore.'

You have to agree this is a beautiful Psalm! Amen!

'LIFT UP MY EYES TO THE HILLS' ...LOOK TO YOUR DIVINE HELPER

A. Psalm 121:1-2a (NKJV) 'I will lift up my eyes to the hills - from whence comes my help? My help comes from the LORD.'

What is this business about the hills? Are we supposed to look up to the hills and somehow draw mystical power from the mountains or hills Not at all! Allow me to explain...

B. If you were living in those days, you would have understood this expression very well.

The city of Jerusalem is situated on a hill and is surrounded by other hills. And the Temple hill in Jerusalem was the dwelling place of God on earth - the place where the ark of God's presence rested. So, when someone needed divine help, he would look towards the hills. This was the same as looking to the Lord. In other words, he would look towards Jerusalem... towards the Temple hill... towards the place of God's presence. That's where he would direct his prayers. [It makes perfect sense]

C. Important Note: This wasn't about drawing some mystical power from the mountains, but it was about praying towards the location of God's presence in Jerusalem.

D. In 1 Kings we find an excellent example of praying towards the city and the temple: [These are the words of Solomon]

1 Kings 8:44-45 (NKJV) 'When Your people go out to battle against their enemy, wherever You send them, and when they pray to the LORD toward the city which You have chosen and toward the temple which I have built for Your name, then hear in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause.'

Praying towards the hills/the city/the temple... meant praying to the Lord!

E. Question: Where does your help come from?
The obvious answer is 'from the Lord'. We need to make sure that we really believe that!
Billy Graham - 'One really believes only that which one acts upon.' In other words, if you consistently go to the Lord as your Helper, then you demonstrate that you really believe He is your Helper. In this time of global crisis, make the Lord your Helper. Don't trust in your own power... trust your Divine Helper.

F. The psalmist was not at all confused about the source of his help. He knew that it came from the Almighty God - the Maker of heaven and earth.

G. We need to always go to the Lord for help! Sometimes we are tempted to look in the wrong places:
Example: Stuck without employment... look to alcohol for help Example: Struggling with loss & bereavement... look to a medium for help
- No... look to your Divine Helper.

H. *John 14:16-17a (NKJV) 'And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever - the Spirit of truth.'*
Praise the Lord for the Holy Spirit! He is our Helper.

THE MAGNITUDE OF OUR HELPER

A. *Psalm 121:2 (NKJV) 'My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.'*

B. The psalmist refers to our Helper as the One 'Who made heaven and earth'. That is a powerful statement!!
It means that if He made heaven and earth (The universe)... He made the whole. If He made the whole... then the parts of the whole are fully under His control. If everything is under His control... then it is easy for Him to help us! God can offer help because He has the authority to control. I can't offer help from our military, because I don't control it. God has the power and ability to help!

C. Our Helper is all-powerful. He is the Maker of heaven and the earth. He is the mighty God!
SPEAK IT OUT: 'He's is my mighty Helper!'

D. Psalm 46:1 (NIV) 'God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present HELP in trouble.'
He is no ordinary helper. He is our ever-present Helper! Our covenant-keeping Helper! Our faithful-to-His-promises Helper!

3. SOME OF THE WAYS IN WHICH HE WILL GUARD AND KEEP YOU

A. *Verse 3 (NKJV) 'He will not allow your foot to be moved.'*
The enemy would love to move your foot from the Rock of Ages, from the firm foundation of Christ. BUT God will keep you from slipping.

Psalm 40:2 (NKJV) 'He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps.'

B. *Verse 7 (NKJV) 'The LORD shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul.'*
I believe in God's protection! How about you?

C. *Verse 8 (NKJV) 'The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in.'*
One Theologian wrote the following: (uses Old Testament language) 'In the morning a man would go out of his chamber in which he slept. He would go about his daily tasks. Then in the evening he would return to his chamber. Throughout the entire day he would know God's preserving power.' The significance of 'going out' and 'coming in' is that God's protection will cover ALL your activities. Deuteronomy 28:6 (NKJV) 'Blessed shall you be when you come in and blessed shall you be when you go out.'

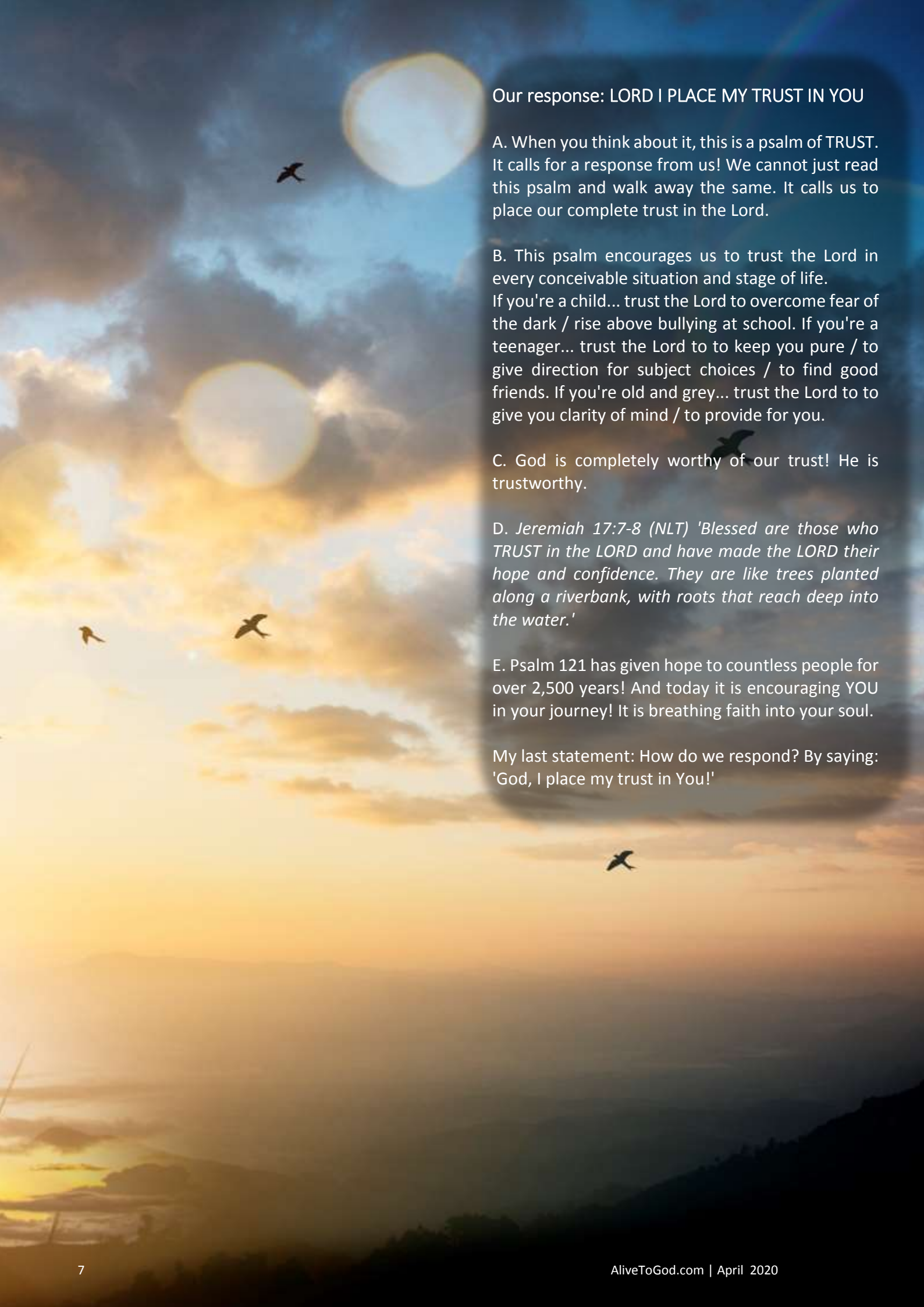
GOD'S KEEPING POWER IS BOTH FOR THE PRESENT AND FOR ETERNITY

A. *Psalm 121:8 (NKJV) 'The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore.'*

B. Isn't it wonderful to know that our future is secure? This is one of the most amazing promises of God! It reassures us.
God cares for you right now. In 20 years He will still be caring for you. If you graduate to heaven, He will still be caring for you there.

C. Psalm 125:2 (NIV) 'As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds His people both now and forevermore.'

D. DECLARE THIS: I am, secure! Both now, and forevermore. I am safe, in His arms!



Our response: LORD I PLACE MY TRUST IN YOU

A. When you think about it, this is a psalm of TRUST. It calls for a response from us! We cannot just read this psalm and walk away the same. It calls us to place our complete trust in the Lord.

B. This psalm encourages us to trust the Lord in every conceivable situation and stage of life.
If you're a child... trust the Lord to overcome fear of the dark / rise above bullying at school. If you're a teenager... trust the Lord to to keep you pure / to give direction for subject choices / to find good friends. If you're old and grey... trust the Lord to to give you clarity of mind / to provide for you.

C. God is completely worthy of our trust! He is trustworthy.

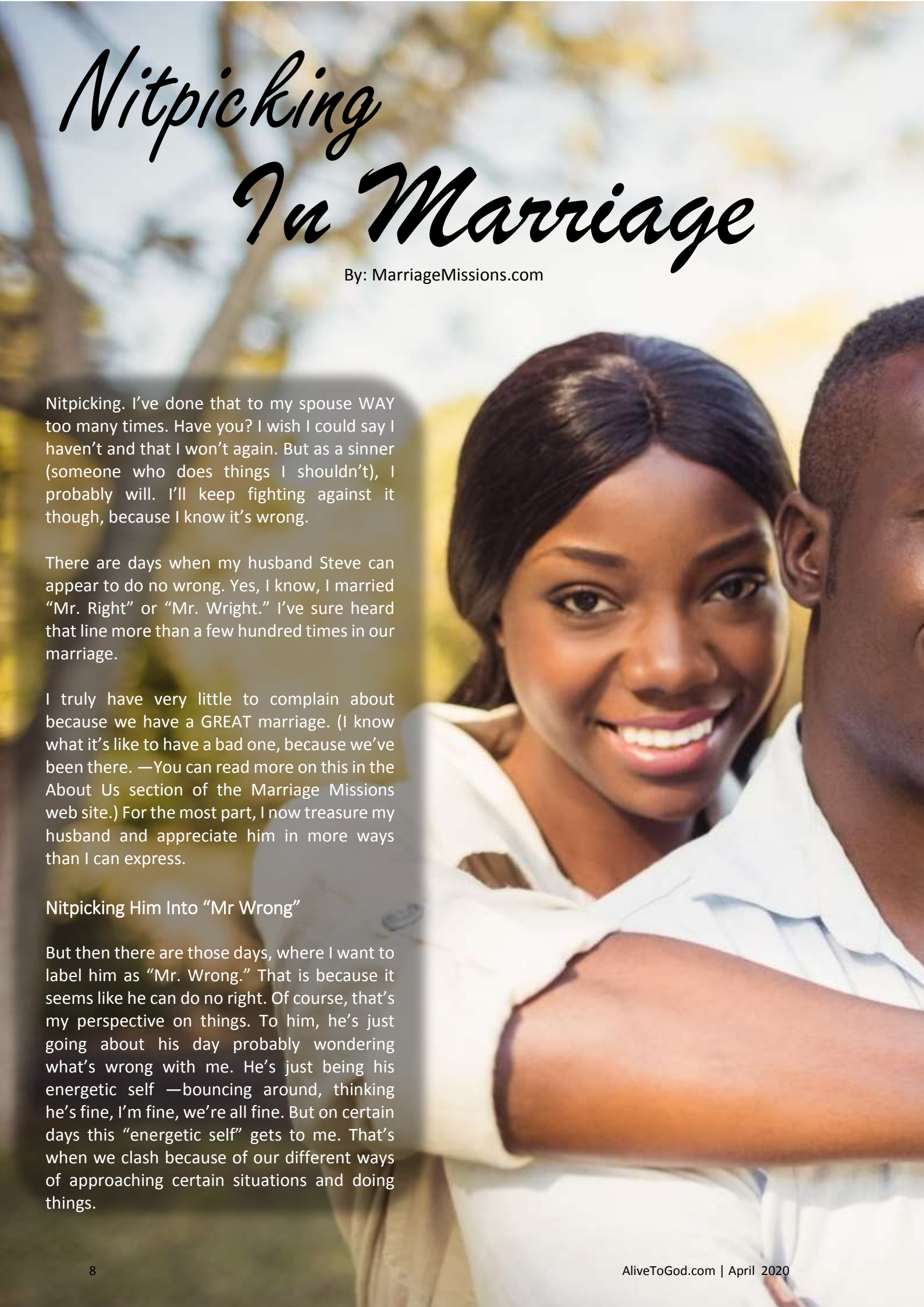
D. *Jeremiah 17:7-8 (NLT) 'Blessed are those who TRUST in the LORD and have made the LORD their hope and confidence. They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water.'*

E. Psalm 121 has given hope to countless people for over 2,500 years! And today it is encouraging YOU in your journey! It is breathing faith into your soul.

My last statement: How do we respond? By saying: 'God, I place my trust in You!'

Nitpicking In Marriage

By: MarriageMissions.com



Nitpicking. I've done that to my spouse WAY too many times. Have you? I wish I could say I haven't and that I won't again. But as a sinner (someone who does things I shouldn't), I probably will. I'll keep fighting against it though, because I know it's wrong.

There are days when my husband Steve can appear to do no wrong. Yes, I know, I married "Mr. Right" or "Mr. Wright." I've sure heard that line more than a few hundred times in our marriage.

I truly have very little to complain about because we have a GREAT marriage. (I know what it's like to have a bad one, because we've been there. —You can read more on this in the About Us section of the Marriage Missions web site.) For the most part, I now treasure my husband and appreciate him in more ways than I can express.

Nitpicking Him Into "Mr Wrong"

But then there are those days, where I want to label him as "Mr. Wrong." That is because it seems like he can do no right. Of course, that's my perspective on things. To him, he's just going about his day probably wondering what's wrong with me. He's just being his energetic self —bouncing around, thinking he's fine, I'm fine, we're all fine. But on certain days this "energetic self" gets to me. That's when we clash because of our different ways of approaching certain situations and doing things.



Whether he should do things differently or not, or whether I'm just being too picky in the way I view his actions, the nitpicking sure doesn't help. It's at those points where we have conflict problems.

I found a Peacemaker.net article, titled, "Getting to the Heart of Conflict," addressing this issue, which I highly recommend you read. I'd like to share a portion, which applies to what I just wrote about (which might help you too):

Dave Powlison writes:

"Conflicts arise from unmet desires in our hearts. When we feel we cannot be satisfied unless we have something we want or think we need, the desire turns into a demand. If someone fails to meet that desire, we condemn him in our heart. And we quarrel and fight to get our way. In short, conflict arises when desires grow into demands and we judge and punish those who get in our way."

He goes on to write,

"This is not to say that it is inherently wrong to evaluate or even judge others within certain limits. Scripture teaches that we should observe and evaluate others' behaviour. That is so that we can respond and minister to them in appropriate ways, which may even involve loving confrontation. (See: Matthew 7:1-5; Matthew 18:15; Galatians 6:1.)



"We cross the line, however, when we begin to sinfully judge others. This is characterised by a feeling of superiority, indignation, condemnation, bitterness, or resentment."

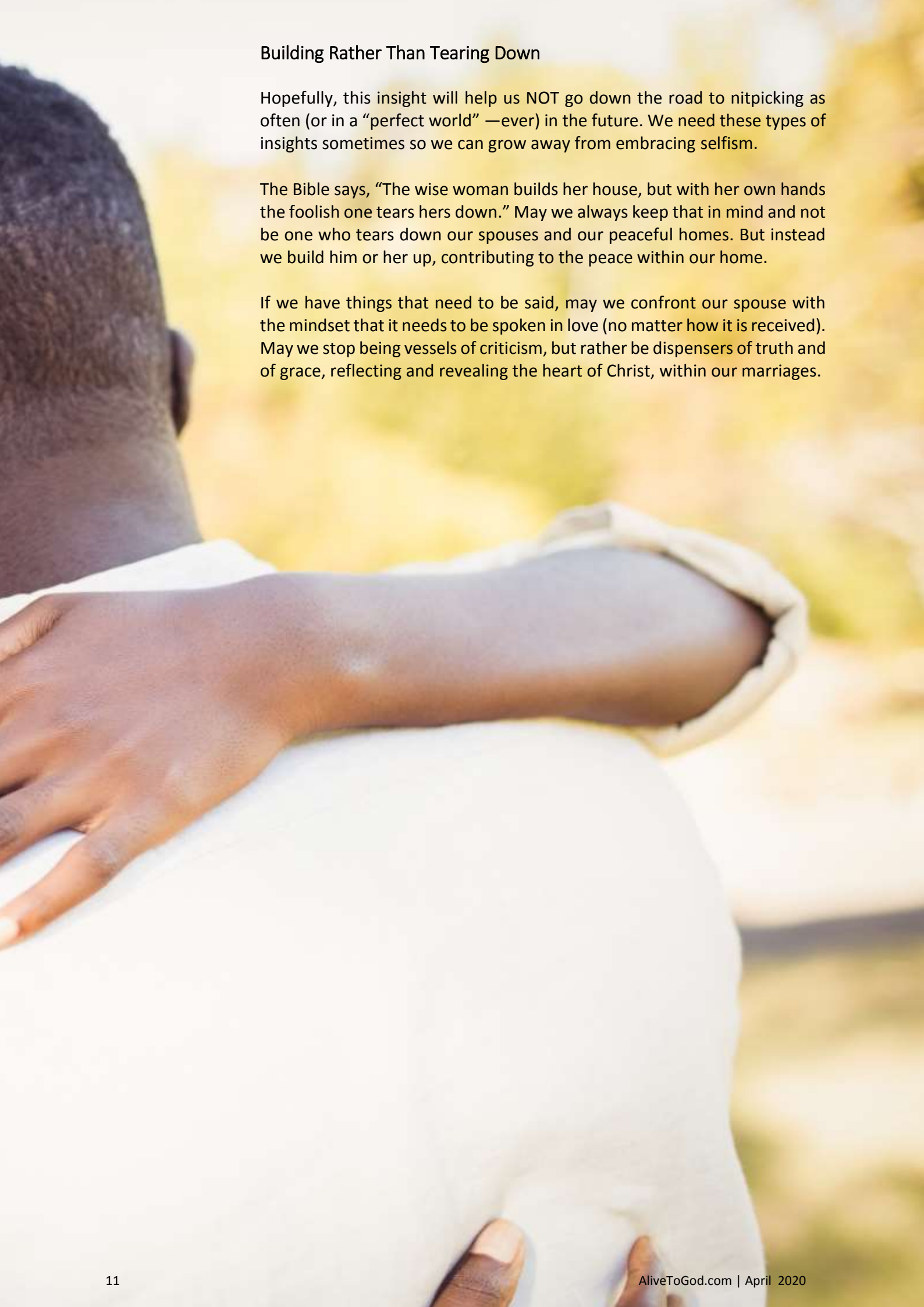
I never really looked at it that nitpicking can be an avenue of judging, as if I was somehow superior over my husband, on certain issues. But when I think about it, there's a lot of truth to this insight. That is because I do feel indignation when I'm irritated by how he does or doesn't do certain things. Sometimes the irritation is well-founded. But other times, it isn't. It's just plain judgmental and wrong.

Building Rather Than Tearing Down

Hopefully, this insight will help us NOT go down the road to nitpicking as often (or in a "perfect world" —ever) in the future. We need these types of insights sometimes so we can grow away from embracing selfism.

The Bible says, "The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down." May we always keep that in mind and not be one who tears down our spouses and our peaceful homes. But instead we build him or her up, contributing to the peace within our home.

If we have things that need to be said, may we confront our spouse with the mindset that it needs to be spoken in love (no matter how it is received). May we stop being vessels of criticism, but rather be dispensers of truth and of grace, reflecting and revealing the heart of Christ, within our marriages.



Be Kind To Yourself

By: Andrew Roebert

This is one of the most vital keys to success. It may sound like such a simple and almost stupid concept. Why would one need to be kind to oneself? But yet this is such an evident aspect of people's lives. I have dealt with many people and so often they are so hard on themselves. How easily we get disappointed in ourselves or think we should have or could have or simply failed or did not live up to some standard. Often we spend so much time being kind to others or to those close to us, like children etc, that we don't afford ourselves the time to be kind to ourselves.

BE KIND TO BE KIND!

How can we be kind to others if we cannot be kind to ourselves? How can we love others if we cannot love ourselves? Kindness to others often flows out of a sense of security that comes from within us! This happens as an outflow of the kindness we afford ourselves. I once read the following quote: "Stand up so you'll be seen. Speak up so you'll be heard. And then sit down so you'll be appreciated". John Davies. We seem to spend so much time standing up for ourselves, speaking up for ourselves that we often miss the opportunity to sit back and be appreciated. We say we must do this and we must do that and God says that He loves us anyway! The Bible speaks of the cares of this world and the fact that these cares can throttle us.

Matthew 12:22 The thorny ground represents those who hear and accept the Good News, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the cares of this life and the lure of wealth, so no crop is produced.

God wants us to be productive and this scripture indicates that this cannot happen while the cares of life crowd out the truly important! Life can consume us and before we know it we are consumed with pressures that we would never have placed ourselves under by choice.

Deuteronomy 4:9 Only take heed, and guard your life diligently, lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen and lest they depart from your [mind and] heart all the days of your life.



BE KIND TO YOURSELF BECAUSE GOD LOVES YOU

Do we realise that God loves us or how much He loves us? If God loves us and wants to be kind to us, surely we can be kind to ourselves. Don't speak negatively about yourself, don't down or criticise yourself. I once heard a story of a man who constantly told his family that he was a bad (sleg) person. Eventually he became what he spent time telling himself he was and it affected his wife and family and did immense damage. You are God's creation and God does not make junk. You are valuable and precious to God and He loves you! Perhaps people have told you that you are no good, useless or that you will never amount to anything. Over time you have entertained these ideas and been hard on yourself by believing such lies. It is time to stop believing the lies, give yourself the benefit of the doubt and believe what God says about you! God does not make junk!

Joshua 23:11 Be very watchful of yourselves, therefore, to love the Lord your God.

LOVE YOURSELF

The Bible indicates that we are expected to love ourselves.

James 2:8 Love your neighbor as you love yourself.

We can love ourselves because we are fearfully and wonderfully made by God Himself and He loves us.

Ephesians 5:28-29 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church.

Take time and invest in your life, wellbeing and health and make sure you guard and protect your heart.

Proverbs 4:23 Keep and guard your heart with all vigilance and above all that you guard, for out of it flow the springs of life.

2 John 8 Look to yourselves (take care) that you may not lose (throw away or destroy) all that we and you have labored for.

If we don't offer ourselves the kindness of caring for ourselves and those things that are important to us we may end up losing those very things that are precious to us.

YOUR OWN WORST CRITIC

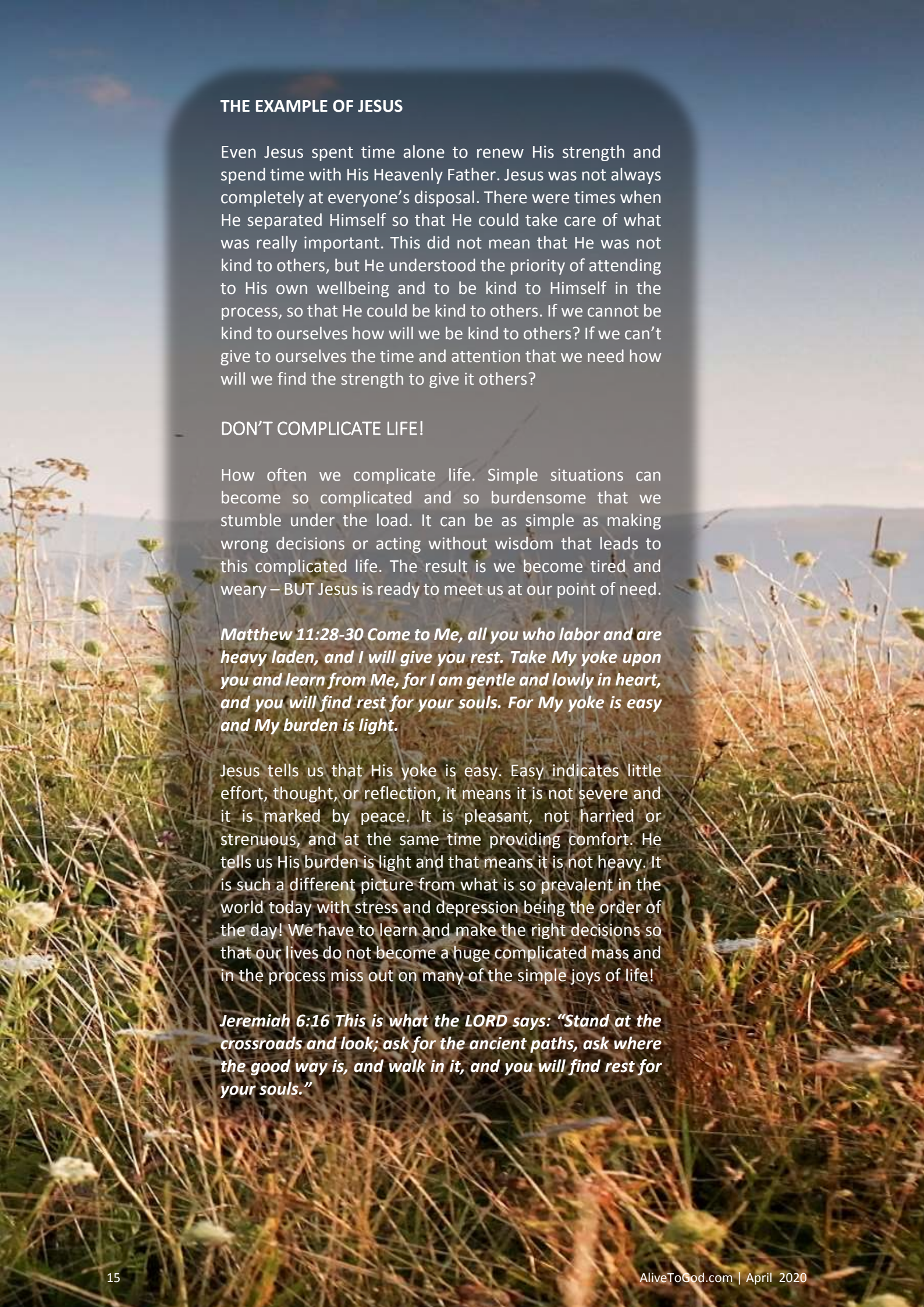
Often we can be so hard on ourselves. We blame ourselves for things that happened. We blame ourselves for success lost or opportunities missed. We often harp on our mistakes or things we should have done when God sees things so differently. God sees all the things you have been through and perhaps failed in and He wants to take all those things and work them together for good!

Romans 8:28 All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

You may say: 'I could have, I should have, I would have' but God says I will take your could haves', should haves' and would haves' and I will still give them value by using for something good! With God we can know what it means to not have regrets. We all have regrets, but God can even use them. Your misery could still become your ministry, your problems could still become a potential victory and your pain could become an area of power!

ROOM FOR ERROR

Give yourself the room to make mistakes. The right to make mistakes is part of life. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. Failing is part of discovering what God has. The Bible says we prophesy in part. We are never 100% correct, but that does not mean we do not try. What we regret the most is not the things we failed at, but we regret the things we never attempted. We must also give ourselves time! We have to face so many things in life and we often do not give ourselves time to adjust or make the necessary changes.



THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

Even Jesus spent time alone to renew His strength and spend time with His Heavenly Father. Jesus was not always completely at everyone's disposal. There were times when He separated Himself so that He could take care of what was really important. This did not mean that He was not kind to others, but He understood the priority of attending to His own wellbeing and to be kind to Himself in the process, so that He could be kind to others. If we cannot be kind to ourselves how will we be kind to others? If we can't give to ourselves the time and attention that we need how will we find the strength to give it others?

DON'T COMPLICATE LIFE!

How often we complicate life. Simple situations can become so complicated and so burdensome that we stumble under the load. It can be as simple as making wrong decisions or acting without wisdom that leads to this complicated life. The result is we become tired and weary – BUT Jesus is ready to meet us at our point of need.

Matthew 11:28-30 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

Jesus tells us that His yoke is easy. Easy indicates little effort, thought, or reflection, it means it is not severe and it is marked by peace. It is pleasant, not harried or strenuous, and at the same time providing comfort. He tells us His burden is light and that means it is not heavy. It is such a different picture from what is so prevalent in the world today with stress and depression being the order of the day! We have to learn and make the right decisions so that our lives do not become a huge complicated mass and in the process miss out on many of the simple joys of life!

Jeremiah 6:16 This is what the LORD says: "Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls."

Attitude – keys to a successful life

By: Andrew Roebert

We long to live successful lives. Our individual definition of success may differ, but the longing to be truly successful is fundamental to human desires. I have discovered that there are different keys, which if applied regularly in our daily lives, will open the door to success. For now we want to look at perhaps the most crucial and vital key. Without this element as an active positive element in our lives, success is sure to elude us. The key is attitude.

ATTITUDE AND ALTITUDE

My brother is a pilot and he has told me about a certain piece of equipment that they use as pilots. In aircraft there is an instrument called an ATTITUDE meter. This instrument measures the pitch of the plane. It shows if you are in a nose-up position or a nose-down position. You may ask why you would need such an instrument. Surely you can sense and tell that you are climbing or getting lower? However this is one of the aspects of flying that is very important and yet can easily bring confusion. After extended flying or especially in adverse conditions things can begin to feel different to the facts. At this point flying becomes dangerous. Are you going to trust your feelings or the gauges? The goal is this: if you are flying in a nose-up position you will hold and gain altitude. The danger is this: if you are not flying in a nose-up position, sooner or later you will crash. The attitude meter measures this aspect and constantly reports to the pilot. Our attitudes are like this meter. If our attitudes are in a nose-up position we will rise to new heights, no matter how much headwind. If however our attitudes are in a nose-down position, it will eventually bring us down – even in ideal circumstances.

This calls for constant evaluation and adjustment. It is this flexibility to adjust our attitudes constantly to the prevailing situations so that it will constantly bring us out on top that leads to success in life!

ATTITUDE – WHAT IS IT?

Our attitude is a very personal and internal aspect to our lives. Our attitude is how we really are feeling on the inside, as a result of the effect of things that are going on, on the outside. It can also include the position we take in a specific situation. It also includes our mental state, feeling or emotion towards a fact or a situation. Be Ready – your attitude will be tested. Our attitude is our state of readiness to respond in a characteristic way to a stimulus. This can be negative or positive.

BAD ATTITUDES CAN DAMAGE OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD!

Bad attitudes damage our relationship with God and eventually lead to separation from God. This is perhaps the most critical aspect of negative or bad attitudes. It is strange, but when we develop a bad attitude, we often become un-teachable. This un-teachable state affects our relationships with others and especially with God. Example: In this example a bad attitude leads to not obeying God.



Jeremiah 22:21 I spoke to you in your [times of] prosperity, but you said, I will not listen! This has been your attitude from your youth; you have not obeyed My voice.

This is what brings division and ultimately separation from God.

Isaiah 59:2 Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.

BAD DECISIONS FOLLOW BAD ATTITUDES

Attitude – the one thing you control 100%. You can't control circumstances, you can't control others, but you can control your attitude. Often bad attitudes lead to poor and bad decisions. This is because our attitudes affect every aspect of our lives. If we are battling with an attitude, it will influence and affect our choices.

Proverbs 14:6 A scoffer seeks Wisdom in vain [for his very attitude blinds and deafens him to it], but knowledge is easy to him who [being teachable] understands. (Amplified)

Our attitudes can blind and deafen us, so that when we get the right advice from others or from God, it fails to move us!

OUR ATTITUDES NEED TO BASED ON OUR TRUST IN GOD

If we trust God, then our attitudes can flow out of this relationship of trust. Negative or bad attitudes often emerge when we are threatened or feel injustice or a sense of insecurity. If we are going to trust in people and institutions, we will be let down and then bad attitudes can take hold. If, however we are trusting God, then we have a firm foundation on which to develop our attitudes.



Proverbs 29:25 The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever leans on, trusts in, and puts his confidence in the Lord is safe and set on high.

The attitude that will bring us success in life must be an attitude that stands on the foundation of our trust and confidence in God. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand!

ATTITUDE AND OUR CHOICE

As we mentioned earlier, attitude and choice go hand in hand. We can choose the attitude we would like. In life I have often found, that between an incident and the response or attitude, there is a moment in which a decision is made. This moment is so critical. I have actually developed a lifestyle in which I do not allow myself to respond or react immediately. I afford myself the opportunity of an extra moment in which I can make a calculated decision. So instead of reacting I can respond with an attitude that I know will not harm me in the long term. If we choose to fly off the handle, it is almost as if everything is lost. Give yourself a moment and make the right choice.

Romans 12:2 Do not be conformed to this world (this age), [fashioned after and adapted to its external, superficial customs], but be transformed (changed) by the [entire] renewal of your mind [by its new ideals and its new attitude], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, even the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His sight for you].

Our choices can bring about this transformation. Circumstances and situations will not always be ideal, but the choice of our attitudes can make all the difference.

Habakkuk 3:17–18 Though the fig tree does not blossom and there is no fruit on the vines, [though] the product of the olive fails and the fields yield no food, though the flock is cut off from the fold and there are no cattle in the stalls, Yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will exult in the [victorious] God of my salvation!



WHAT WOULD JESUS DO?

When it comes to our attitude we must constantly look to the One who is our example – JESUS. In those moments that we have to choose our attitude this is a question that we can ask ourselves. WHAT WOULD JESUS DO? Next time, before you respond or react to something ask yourself this question.

Philippians 2:5 Let this same attitude and purpose and [humble] mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus: [Let Him be your example in humility:]

Jesus is our example and if we will follow His example we are destined to win.

CHANGE YOUR ATTITUDE

Change your attitude and change your life. This is the bottom line. Our attitude will either destroy us or take us to new heights. Every problem has a solution, only if we adjust or change our attitude.

Revelation 3:19 So be enthusiastic and in earnest and burning with zeal and repent [changing your mind and attitude].

We can change our minds and attitude. It is a God-given ability and God wants to help us to make those critical choices and go on to enjoy more of the abundant life that He has in store for us.

1 Peter 4:1 Since Christ suffered in His body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude.

Even though Jesus suffered on the cross He had the right attitude. Perhaps the greatest example to me is when Jesus hung dying on the cross in agony and in that state He utters the follow words: 'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do!' We started with the story of the attitude meter in aircraft. It is when the weather is bad that you really rely on this piece of equipment. In the same way it is when things are going rough that we need our positive attitude more than ever. It is easy to have a positive attitude when things are ideal, but when we find ourselves in a valley it may be difficult but our attitude is still our lifeline! It's your attitude towards life (In all its facets – family, work, etc.) that makes your life great!


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