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February '20



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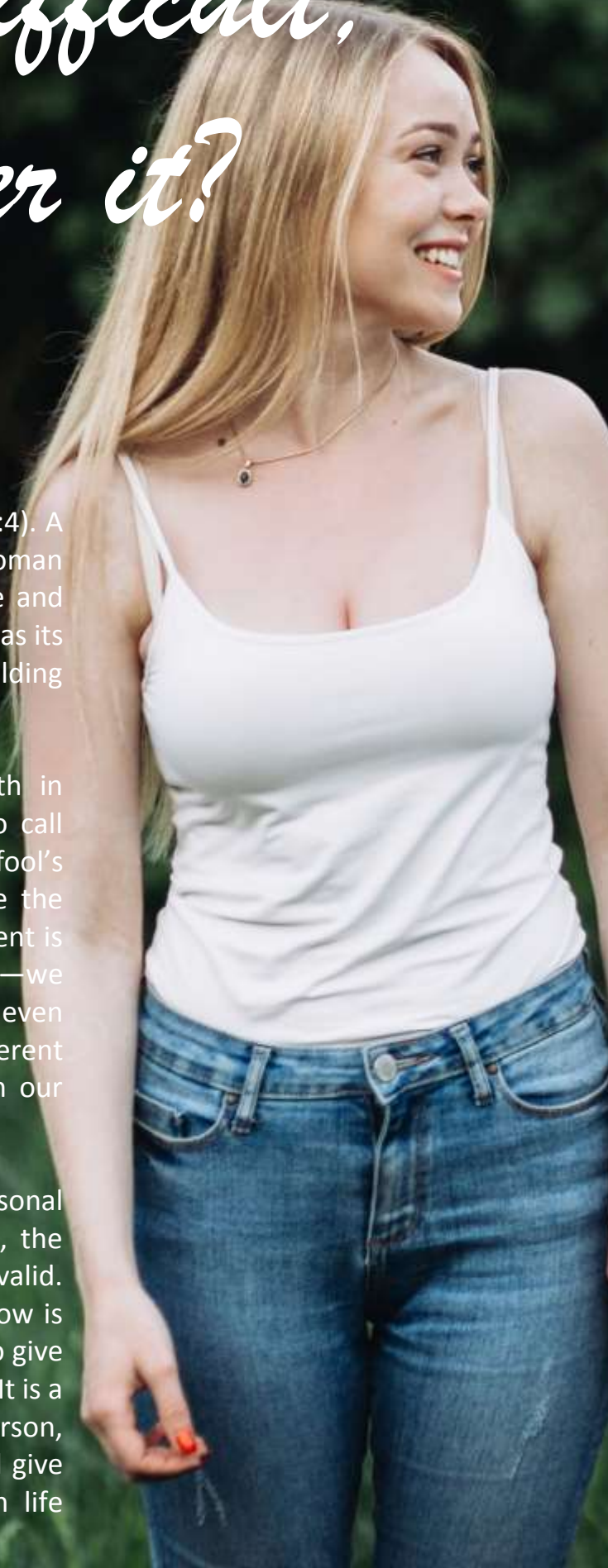
IF MARRIAGE IS *So difficult,* WHY SHOULD I *Even consider it?*

By: GotQuestions.org

“Marriage should be Honoured by all” (Hebrews 13:4). A biblical marriage, consisting of one man and one woman in a loving, lifelong commitment, is an honourable and godly institution. Fads come and go, and the world has its biases, but God’s plan for marriage is still the building block of society.

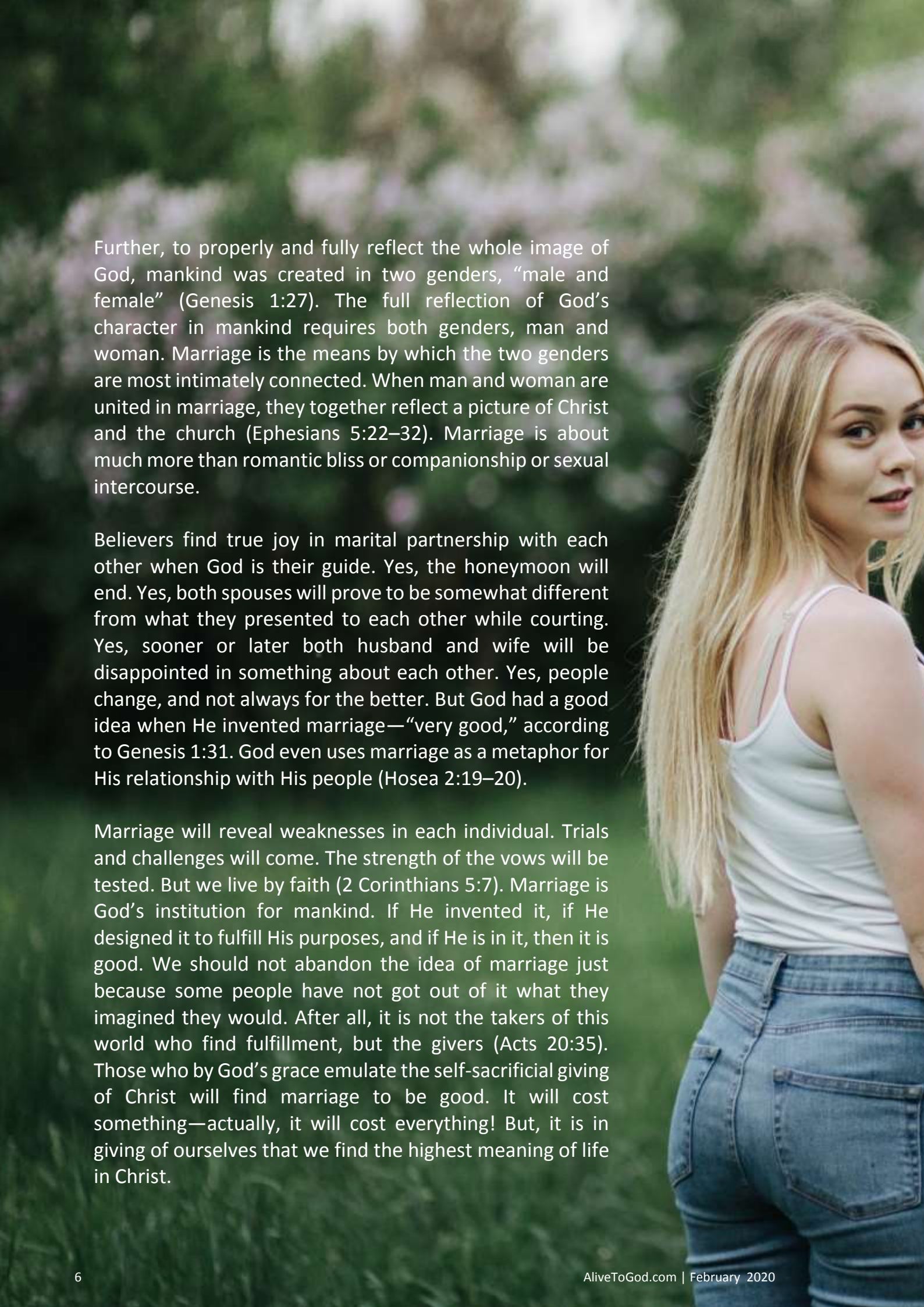
Unfortunately, some people are losing their faith in marriage as an institution. Some, even those who call themselves Christians, denigrate marriage as “a fool’s game” that is bound to end in regret. Some take the disillusioned view that to make a lifelong commitment is foolhardy, since the other person is going to change—we don’t know what our spouse will be like in twenty, or even five, years. He or she could be a completely different person—are we to be held to a vow we made in our youth?

If marriage were intended only to gratify the personal desires of a man or woman, then, and only then, the description of holy wedlock as “foolish” might be valid. But a godly marriage is not selfish. The marriage vow is not a lifetime commitment to be loved. It is a vow to give love. Marriage is a commitment to give love for life. It is a determination to live for the benefit of the other person, to stand by and behind the loved one. To give and give and give, even to the point of giving one’s own life (Ephesians 5:25).





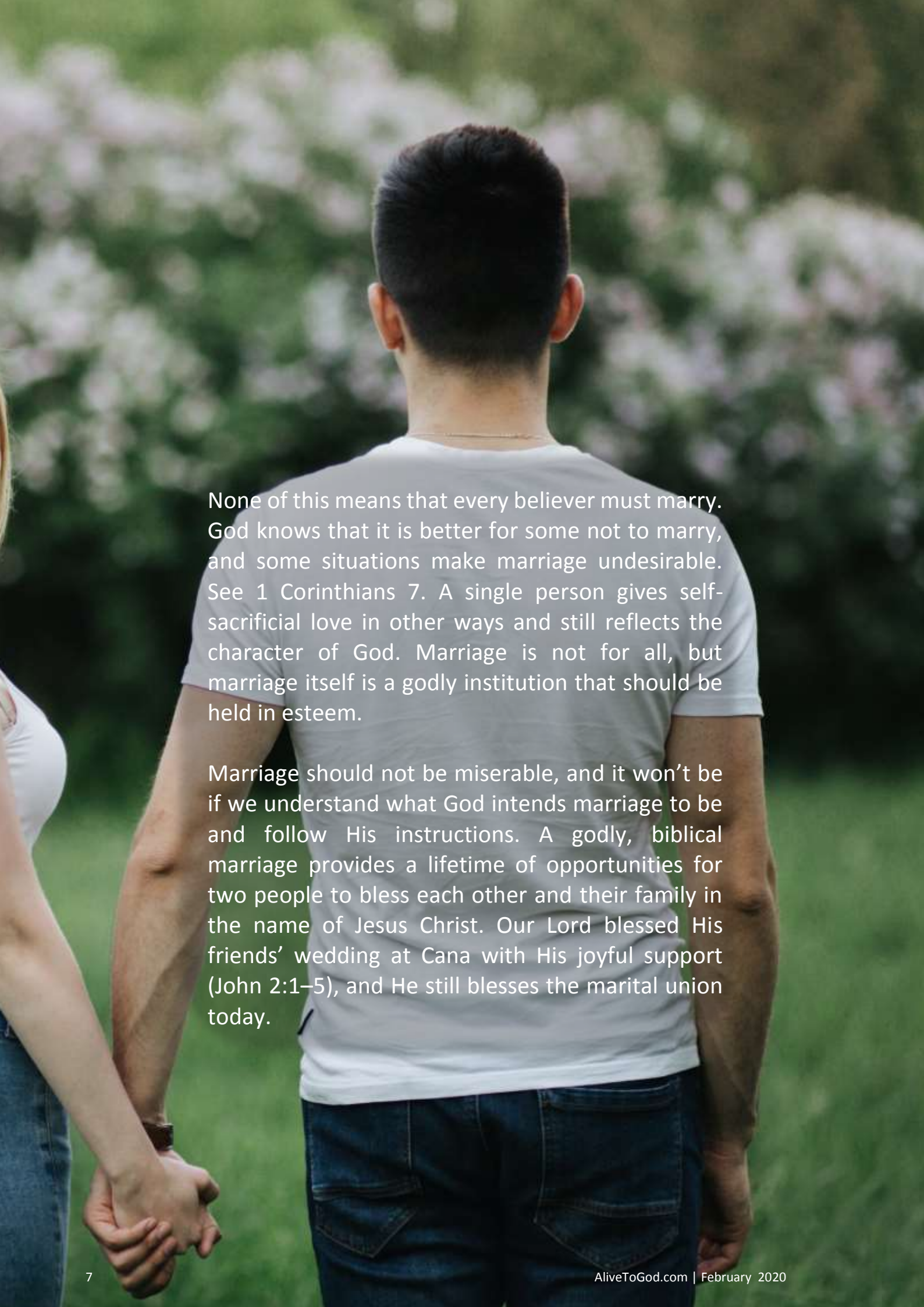
Even more fundamentally, man did not invent marriage. God did. When God made mankind male and female, placed them in Eden, and brought them together in marriage, He had a purpose in mind. The most basic purpose was that marriage would produce more people who bear God's name and reflect His image (Genesis 1:26–28; 2:22–24). Human reproduction was God's first stated mandate for the united Adam and Eve. Marriage, God's first and most fundamental institution, is designed to be the foundation for the family unit.



Further, to properly and fully reflect the whole image of God, mankind was created in two genders, “male and female” (Genesis 1:27). The full reflection of God’s character in mankind requires both genders, man and woman. Marriage is the means by which the two genders are most intimately connected. When man and woman are united in marriage, they together reflect a picture of Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:22–32). Marriage is about much more than romantic bliss or companionship or sexual intercourse.

Believers find true joy in marital partnership with each other when God is their guide. Yes, the honeymoon will end. Yes, both spouses will prove to be somewhat different from what they presented to each other while courting. Yes, sooner or later both husband and wife will be disappointed in something about each other. Yes, people change, and not always for the better. But God had a good idea when He invented marriage—“very good,” according to Genesis 1:31. God even uses marriage as a metaphor for His relationship with His people (Hosea 2:19–20).

Marriage will reveal weaknesses in each individual. Trials and challenges will come. The strength of the vows will be tested. But we live by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7). Marriage is God’s institution for mankind. If He invented it, if He designed it to fulfill His purposes, and if He is in it, then it is good. We should not abandon the idea of marriage just because some people have not got out of it what they imagined they would. After all, it is not the takers of this world who find fulfillment, but the givers (Acts 20:35). Those who by God’s grace emulate the self-sacrificial giving of Christ will find marriage to be good. It will cost something—actually, it will cost everything! But, it is in giving of ourselves that we find the highest meaning of life in Christ.



None of this means that every believer must marry. God knows that it is better for some not to marry, and some situations make marriage undesirable. See 1 Corinthians 7. A single person gives self-sacrificial love in other ways and still reflects the character of God. Marriage is not for all, but marriage itself is a godly institution that should be held in esteem.

Marriage should not be miserable, and it won't be if we understand what God intends marriage to be and follow His instructions. A godly, biblical marriage provides a lifetime of opportunities for two people to bless each other and their family in the name of Jesus Christ. Our Lord blessed His friends' wedding at Cana with His joyful support (John 2:1–5), and He still blesses the marital union today.

HOW CAN I *Stop questioning* MY SALVATION?

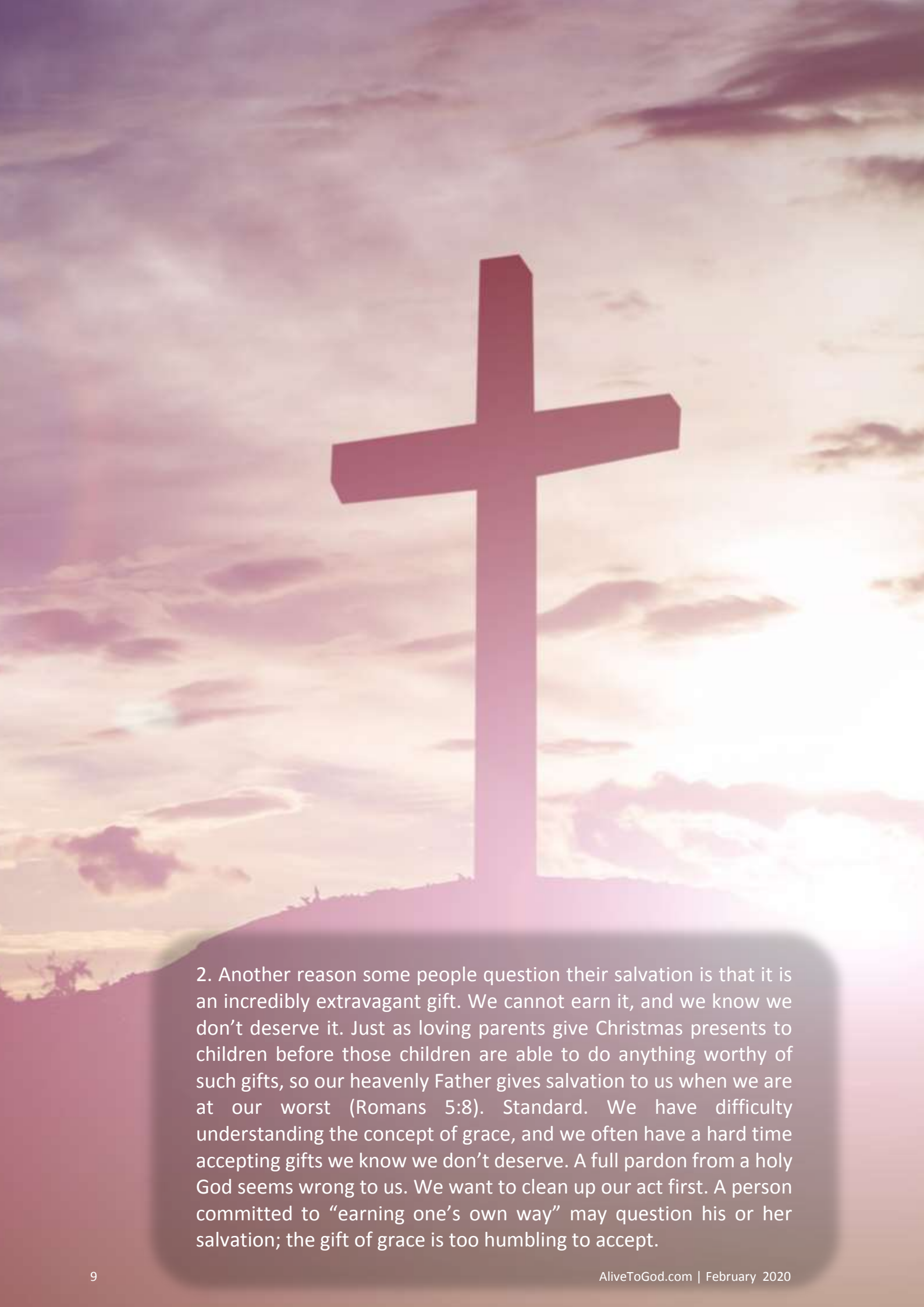
By: GotQuestions.org

Doubts about our relationship with God plague most of us at some point. The reasons for questioning our salvation are many. Some reasons are valid; some are not. This article will explore some common reasons people question their salvation and offer biblical solutions for ending those tormenting thoughts.

We must first define what salvation means as it pertains to eternity. Before we can know whether we have reason to question our salvation, we need to be certain we understand from the Bible what it means to be a Christian. A good definition of salvation is “the deliverance, by the grace of God, from eternal punishment for sin granted to those who accept by faith God’s conditions of repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus.”

1. The first and most obvious reason some people question their salvation is that they are not truly saved. False assurance of salvation is one of Satan’s best tricks to keep us from a true relationship with God. But even false assurance can desert us in crisis, in the middle of the night, or when we encounter a Spirit-filled Christian and are suddenly faced with the shallowness of our own assumptions. Second Corinthians 13:5 commands us to “examine yourselves. See if you are in the faith . . . unless, of course, you fail the test.” So self-examination is a good thing as long as we are honest with ourselves and use God’s Word as our standard.





2. Another reason some people question their salvation is that it is an incredibly extravagant gift. We cannot earn it, and we know we don't deserve it. Just as loving parents give Christmas presents to children before those children are able to do anything worthy of such gifts, so our heavenly Father gives salvation to us when we are at our worst (Romans 5:8). Standard. We have difficulty understanding the concept of grace, and we often have a hard time accepting gifts we know we don't deserve. A full pardon from a holy God seems wrong to us. We want to clean up our act first. A person committed to "earning one's own way" may question his or her salvation; the gift of grace is too humbling to accept.

With salvation, there are no markers to tell us when we have arrived. No price tags. No ledgers that tell us when we have achieved a goal. Those who struggle with the grace aspect of salvation must identify what they are basing their salvation on and whether, according to Scripture, they have accepted that gift. The book of Galatians was written to a church struggling with grace and can be an encouragement to those also caught in the grace vs. works debate.

3. Another reason some question their salvation is due to the inner voices they choose to listen to. People with introspective temperaments may be more prone to doubting their salvation because of their rich inner lives. God's voice, Satan's fiery missiles (Ephesians 6:16), and their own thoughts can get caught in a tangle, and they don't know how to sort them out.

We must learn the art of thought-stopping (2 Corinthians 10:5). If a voice in our head does not line up with the truth in God's Word, it did not come from God. We are to be the policemen of our minds, on the alert for trespassing thoughts or ideas (Proverbs 4:23). We see an intruder, and we take it captive, march it to Jesus the judge and ask, "Is this one of yours?" If we've placed our faith in the finished work of Christ and are following Him to the best of our understanding, then doubts of salvation are intruders and do not belong in a transformed mind (Romans 12:1–2). By developing a habit of thought-stopping when we recognise an enemy's lie, we can overcome the habit of questioning our salvation.

4. Misreading Scripture is another reason some people develop doubts about their salvation. Even those who have walked with God for long seasons can become disillusioned when they run across a verse that seems to contradict their understanding. Misinterpreting certain passages has allowed Satan to place a foot in the doorway of some believers' souls. Hebrews 6:4–6, Matthew 7:21–23, and other jarring passages, misunderstood, can cause weak believers to fear that what they thought was a secure salvation was actually at risk.

We stay balanced and assured of our relationship with God when we consider carefully "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). Interpret unclear verses in light of clear, easily understandable verses. If one verse causes undue fear, keep studying and see what God's Word as a whole says.

Consult godly teachers. Research sites like this one. But keep it always about Jesus: who He is, what He did on our behalf, and what our response to Him has been. Paul wrote, “I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). We must bring all our questions back to Jesus and remember that He wants to save us more than we want to be saved. Salvation was God’s idea, and He will never withhold it from someone who diligently seeks Him (Jeremiah 29:13; Luke 19:10; John 6:37).

5. Besetting sins can cause us to question our salvation. When particular sin habits reassert themselves or refuse to leave, we may doubt we were ever saved at all. Romans 7 can be a comfort to those battling fleshly temptations. It helps to know that even the apostle Paul wrestled with his flesh. Hebrews 12:1 encourages us to “lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.” We do this by considering ourselves “dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Romans 6:11). Our flesh no longer gets a vote on our decisions. It is to be treated like a toddler who wants to play in the street. A wise and loving parent will look out for the child’s best interest and do whatever is necessary to redirect the child to safety. Doubts recede as we gain the victory over sins that once enslaved us. The God Who lives in us is greater than the sin that tempts us, and His power makes us “more than conquerors” (Romans 8:37; cf. 1 John 4:4).

6. Dry seasons of the spirit may also cause us to question our salvation. Seasons of dryness are part of any believer’s journey. There are times when our ability to perceive the presence of God is far greater than at other times. We talk about feeling “close to God,” but feelings are not trustworthy barometers. James 4:8 says, “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” God draws near to us whether or not we feel Him.

The Holy Spirit does not leave us (Hebrews 13:5). We walk by faith, not by sight or feeling or mood (2 Corinthians 5:7). We tend to question our relationship with God when we are experiencing a spiritual dry season, but those seasons can actually help us dig deeper, obey anyway, and learn to endure (Revelation 14:12; 1 John 2:3).

We stop questioning our salvation when we choose to take God at His Word (John 3:16–18). We are saved by faith, nothing else. If we have faith that Jesus is Who He claimed to be (Matthew 16:16), and if our lives are an ongoing demonstration that He is our Lord, then we should have the assurance that we belong to Him and that nothing can pluck us out of His hands (John 10:29; 1 John 3:1–9). A. W. Tozer wrote, “Faith is the least self-regarding of the virtues. It is by its very nature scarcely conscious of its own existence. . . . The man who has struggled to purify himself and has had nothing but repeated failures will experience real relief when he stops tinkering with his soul and looks away to the perfect One. While he looks at Christ, the very things he has so long been trying to do will be getting done within him.”

WHAT DOES *The Bible say* ABOUT HOW YOU SHOULD *Treat others?*

By: GotQuestions.org



The Bible has much to say about human behaviour and the way we should treat each other. There are thousands of specific directions for doing so, but they can all be summarised in what we know as the Golden Rule. Jesus said, “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12).

When we treat others as we want to be treated, we will be honest, kind, trustworthy, and loving. We all need honesty, kindness, etc., from other people, so we should be equally concerned with giving those things to other people. When God first gave the law to Moses, He included hundreds of instructions about the way the Israelites were to treat each other (Leviticus 18:3; 20:23; Deuteronomy 18:9).



They were immersed in a world that was violent, godless, and wicked. When God chose them to be a holy people, set apart for Himself, He was very specific about what was allowed and what was forbidden (Isaiah 41:8–10; Deuteronomy 7:6; Exodus 19:6).

When asked about the greatest commandment, Jesus replied, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” In other words, all the laws God had given to Israel could be summarised in two commands: love God above all else, and love your neighbour as you love yourself. If we do those two things, we don’t need the other laws. We will automatically obey them as part of loving God and loving others.



Every culture has its own mores and social customs. Part of treating others as we wish to be treated is to honour those customs so as not to offend. When missionaries move to another part of the world, they are careful to study the customs of that culture and blend in as much as possible. They know that they cannot effectively share Christ with someone they are offending. For example, in cultures where women wear head coverings in public, a female missionary will wear a head covering so as not to offend the culture she wants to reach. In some cultures, people sit on the ground to eat. Even though the missionaries may prefer to sit on a chair, they will set aside preferences in order to love their neighbors as Christ loves them (John 13:34).

Jesus is our model. He is fully God, deserving of all honor and glory (Colossians 2:9; John 1:1). Yet, because He loved the human beings He had created, He set aside His rights as God to take on human flesh and come to earth to live among us (Philippians 2:5–11). He voluntarily accepted the limitations of a fleshly body in order to connect with us.



He lived as we live, hurt as we hurt, and fought temptation as we do (Luke 4:1–13). In doing so, He gave us an example of how He expects us to treat others.

Treating others as we would be treated means we must be willing to set aside our own preferences, rights, and desires in order to serve those in our lives. As a mother loses sleep, sacrifices financially, and cares for the children she loves, so we are to give up our own comforts for the good of others. Jesus did exactly that. When our focus is on treating others as Jesus would, we don't need a hundred specific laws telling us not to murder, steal, rape, abuse, or lie. A heart filled with the love of God would never treat others that way. When the heart is right, right actions will follow (Matthew 15:19; 1 Peter 1:22).

HE WILL *Strengthen you!*

By: Andrew Roebert

This Psalm was written by David. It was written at a difficult time in his life. Saul, his arch enemy, had sent men to kill him. The murderous intent of King Saul against David was openly revealed. These men were watching David day and night. They were monitoring his house, looking for an opportunity to step in and kill him. In all of this, David teaches us, by example, that we can know that the Lord will undertake, we can trust in Him, and we can know the Lord's strength in our lives and situations.

Things may appear challenging in your private world, but the Lord will come and strengthen you. Things may appear challenging in your country, but the Lord will come and strengthen you. Things may appear challenging in the world, but the Lord will come and strengthen you.

WE ALL NEED THE LORD'S STRENGTH

Each and every one of us need the strength that comes from God. We were not designed to do it (live) in our own strength. There are times when we are weak, there are times when we feel desperate, pressurized and discouraged. There is nothing unique about this condition, it is common to all of mankind. I remember speaking to someone years ago who was going through a lot of challenges. I asked her: 'How do you cope?' She retorted and said: 'Don't worry about me, I've got broad shoulders!' Having 'broad shoulders' can be helpful, but in the end of day it can wear us down and make us weak. How we need His help and His strength in our daily lives. Sometimes we simply need some 'Divine Intervention'. I know that I need the strength that God offers, and I am sure the same is true for you.

THE LORD'S STRENGTH STEMS OUT OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM

As we develop our relationship with the Lord, His strength in our lives will be an automatic outflow. In Psalm 59 we see how David had a relationship with the Lord. It was a relationship that was living and real. The Lord was a living reality to David and David looked to the Lord for intervention, help and strength. David cries out to God in the form of a prayer and asks the Lord for deliverance and defense in a situation where he was an enemy of the state and a hunted man. But in-between his prayers we discover a deep relationship with the Lord. In verse 1, David speaks of the Lord as 'MY GOD'! In the process, he declares his close and personal relationship with God. He speaks of MY God. Not THE Lord or OUR God, but MY God. In verse 9 and verse 17 he calls God his fortress: 'For You, O God, are MY fortress.' A fortress is a place of safety and security and David knew His God in this secure way. In verse 10 and verse 17 he speaks of the Lord as the One who loves him: 'My God of loving devotion!' It appears as if he could sense and feel the love of God towards him. He speaks out of a tenderness of heart, regarding God's love and commitment towards him. In verse 9 and verse 17 he speaks of the Lord as his strength: 'O my strength!' It almost sounds like a sigh of relief to know God as his strength. Just hear it: 'O my strength!' He knew the Lord as the One who was his strength and the One from whom all strength flows. Perhaps he had learnt to live in total and desperate dependence on the Lord? These things flowed out of his relationship with the Lord. We can know the same things out of our relationship with the Lord.

TELL THE LORD ABOUT YOUR AREA OF NEED

David was not hesitant to speak out his need to the Lord. In fact he was very graphic about what he was facing. He didn't try to water it down or minimise his challenges. He spoke of 'wicked traitors' and 'fierce men who conspired against him'. He spoke of 'snarling dogs' and 'scavengers', 'prowling' and 'growling' around him. He was aware of what he was up against and did not hesitate to bring it to the Lord's attention in graphic and descriptive detail. It reminds us of the fact that we too have an enemy who would like to see us destroyed.

1 Peter 5:8 'Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.'

In the same way we can bring our issues and challenges to the Lord and we can face the truth of things and tell God how we see and experience things. Don't hesitate to tell the Lord about your area of need. He is concerned about the drama you are facing. Step up, speak it out and get it off your chest – The Lord is there for you!

IN THE MIDST OF THE STORM, WAIT!

In the middle section of Psalm 59 we find a key to success, regardless of the odds we may be up against.

Psalm 59:9 'I will keep watch (wait) for You, O my strength!'

There is a correlation between waiting and receiving strength from the Lord.

Our natural human tendency is to rush out and deal with the issue or challenge. Often when the storms of life come our way, we react. I wonder how many opportunities have been lost, I wonder how many doors have closed, because of our reactions in situations and to situations. David was facing the imminent possibility of death and right there in that moment he chooses not to react or retaliate, but he chooses to watch and wait. David knows the problem; he has brought it to the attention of the Lord and now he waits. David is not sure of the outcome, but he waits and watches for God with expectation and anticipation. There are times when we don't know what will happen, but in those moments, we should watch and wait with faith, until we see what God is doing or is going to do. It is in the waiting, the pausing, the watching, that we can receive strength from Him. (and I dare say: wisdom) Stop the urge to react and vent.... watch and wait, His strength will be yours.

HE IS YOUR STRENGTH

Sometimes when we consider this aspect of God's strength, we see it like some by-product of His character that He gives us. But the truth of the matter is the HE is our strength. We receive Him, and in the process His strength. Don't just receive His strength but make HIM your strength. Appropriate Him as your strength. Take Him, the Lord, as your strength. Take hold of Him, take hold of the Lord, and strength will be yours. I have endeavored to make the Lord my strength. Recently I discovered how that the Lord has 'got my back' even when I didn't even know there was a problem. We recently went away on holiday. We have a little dog who is very special to us. Although the dog actually belongs to my daughter, she became endeared to us during my late wife's sickness and passing. During the time she was struggling with ill health, this little dog was her constant companion and often, we thought, this animal seemed to know that my wife was ill and would be a companion to her in her suffering. My wife left an instruction: 'Please take care of the dog!' The dog's name is Cupcake. When we went away, we gave the dog to some friends to look after. These friends live on a dangerous and busy street. During the holidays, on New Year's Eve, the dog became frightened due to all the fireworks and chewed its way out and escaped. No one even knew the dog was gone. At about 1am, someone phoned me. But my phone was already on silent for the night. She left a voice message. As I checked my phone in the dead of night, I heard the voice message: 'Hi, my name is Zanri. I have Cupcake. I was driving home and saw this dog running wildly around and she looked out of place. I picked her up. She is safe with me. You can collect her in the morning!' Who stops in the dead of night to pick up a dog that's running around? Who will take the responsibility to care for this animal and call its owners? Who offers to take care of the dog and then makes arrangements for us to collect it? God, my strength, had already provided for something I did not even know had happened. The dog could have been lost, stolen, run over, but no, everything was taken care of. Now I can just give God praise and thanks for what He has done, and I had nothing to do with it.

STRENGTH AND PRAISE

Our hearts need to wait upon God, our strength. Then God can be our strength. Then when we realize that He was our strength, we can rejoice. Then because of His strength we can break out into praise.

Psalm 59:17 'To You, O my strength, I sing praises!'

In the previous verse, Psalm 59:16 it says: 'But I will sing of Your strength, and proclaim Your loving devotion in the morning.' In the face of danger and trouble, David could sing. It takes Divine Strength to be able to sing in the face of danger, trouble and pending doom. When King Saul sent assassins to David's house, he was open about his desire to kill David. From then on, for the next many years (perhaps 10 to 15 years), David lived as a fugitive, constantly in danger of his life. It's interesting that David entered that period singing praises and was still able to pour out his heart to God in song at the end of that period (2 Samuel 1:17-27). You see, David was confident that with the Lord as His strength, he would survive the night and live to tell the tale of God's faithfulness and love in the morning. This he did, day by day, until, many years later, he was victorious, the battle was over, and he became king. So:

1. Make the Lord your strength.
2. Wait and watch for the Lord in your situation. Don't rush in where angels fear to tread.
3. Put God and His strength between you and those things that would like to destroy you.
4. Breakout in praise and shift the focus from your issues to Him and His strength.
5. Get ready to rejoice and to tell the story of how faithful God has been to you!

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