

A romantic couple is silhouetted against a vibrant sunset sky. The man is holding the woman, and they are standing on a sandy beach. The ocean waves are visible in the background, and the sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue. The overall mood is romantic and serene.

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March '19

*Lessons
From a Great
Love Story*

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WHY DOES GOD *Ask questions* IF HE IS *Omniscient?*

GotQuestions.org

God is omniscient—He knows everything. We also see in Scripture where God asks questions. In the Garden of Eden, God asks Adam where he is and what he had done (Genesis 3:9, 11). In heaven, He asks Satan where he has been (Job 1:7). In the wilderness, God asks Moses what he holds in his hand (Exodus 4:2). In the crowd on the way to Jarius's house, Jesus asks who touched Him (Mark 5:30). Being omniscient, God already knew the answers to these questions. "He knows the secrets of the heart" (Psalm 44:21). So why does He ask?

The questions God asks always serve a purpose. He does not ask to obtain information, since He already possesses all information; His questions serve a different purpose, and that purpose varies based on the context of the question and the needs of the one to whom the question is directed.

After Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit and hid themselves from God, God called out, "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:9). Of course, God knew Adam's physical location; that wasn't the point of the question. The question was designed to draw Adam out of hiding. God could have approached His sinful creation in anger, with harsh words of condemnation and instant judgment, but He did not. Instead, God approached Adam with a question and so showed His grace, gentleness, and desire for reconciliation.

God's repeated question to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry?" (Jonah 4:4, 9) was designed to stir self-examination on Jonah's part. God's question to Elijah, "What are you doing here?" (1 Kings 19:9) pointed out how Elijah was straying from God's purpose for him. God's question in Isaiah's presence, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" (Isaiah 6:8) had the effect of prompting the prophet to volunteer.

When teaching a young student basic arithmetic, a teacher might ask, "What is 2 + 2?" The teacher does not ask this because she doesn't know the answer but because she wants to focus the student's thinking on the problem at hand. When God asked Adam, "Where are you?" the question's purpose was, in part, to focus Adam on the problem he and his wife were tangled in.

Other questions of God in Scripture may have other purposes. In Job 38 — 41, God questions Job relentlessly about everything from Job's absence when the foundations of the earth were set (Job 38:4) to Job's inability to fish for sea monsters (Job 41:1). Here, it's obvious God is using questions as an instructional tool to emphasize His own power and sovereignty.



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During Jesus' ministry on earth, He often asked questions. A good teacher will use strategic questions to facilitate the learning process, and Jesus was the Master Teacher. Jesus at times asked questions in order to set up an opportunity for learning: "Who do people say I am?" (Mark 8:27). Or to focus His hearers' attention on something significant: "What is written in the Law? . . . How do you read it?" (Luke 10:26). Or to prompt introspection: "Do you want to get well?" (John 5:6). Or to prod deeper thinking: "What is the meaning of that which is written: 'The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone'?" (Luke 20:17). Or to bring faith to light: "Who touched me?" (Luke 8:45). Or to set up a big revelation: "Why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" (John 20:15).

God is a Father who uses language to teach within the context of relationship. He is a Teacher who uses questions to involve His students, force them to think, and point them to the truth. When He asks a question, it's not because He doesn't know the answer but because He wants us to know.



HOW CAN I STOP BEING *A grumpy Christian?*

GotQuestions.org

Grumpiness characterizes some personality types more than it does others. Some people are born with sunny dispositions and always see the glass half full. Others seem to be grumpy from birth, seeing every glass nearly empty—and who drank it anyway? Unfortunately, even after some grumpy people become Christians, they bring their grumpiness with them. Since they have always been this way, they often believe grumpiness is an integral part of who they are rather than a flaw that needs to be changed. Other Christians may have been happy earlier in life but find themselves being grumpier as they get older. Reasons for grumpiness vary, but life does take its toll. For those who recognize that perpetual grumpiness is at odds with the joy of the Lord (Acts 13:52; Galatians 5:22; Romans 14:17), there are some practical steps to change their attitude:

1. Recognize that continual grumpiness is sin. Consider negative personality traits to be like barnacles on the hull of a boat. Barnacles are the bane of boat owners because the little crustaceans cluster by the thousands, increasing drag and decreasing a boat's fuel efficiency. Barnacles are also notoriously difficult to remove. Sins of the personality, such as grumpiness, are like that. They attach themselves to our lives, weighing us down and keeping us from experiencing all that it means to "walk by the Spirit" (Galatians 5:16, 25). The grumpy Christian needs to resist shrugging off the problem by saying things like, "That's how I've always been" or "It's too difficult to change." Jesus paid too high a price to free us from our old ways for us to choose to remain enslaved (Romans 6:1–4).

2. Confess grumpiness as sin every time it manifests itself (1 John 1:9). Grumpiness becomes a habit that others see more readily than we do; many grumpy Christians don't even realize when they're being grumpy. In order to overcome a grumpy mood, we must agree with God about it. Jesus was never grumpy or cross, despite all that He faced and the cross that He bore (see Luke 10:21). Neither does grumpiness belong in the life of His followers (Romans 8:29). When we begin taking note of the way we respond to certain situations, we can become aware of how we come across to others. If we develop the habit of confessing grumpiness as sin every time we notice it, we become even more sensitive to it, and we can ask God for help in changing our old ways.

3. Thank the Lord for every good gift He has given (James 1:17). A grateful heart is a happy heart. Grumpiness and thanksgiving cannot co-exist. Choose to "give thanks in all circumstances" (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Perpetually grumpy people are so focused on what is not right that they overlook what is right. A grumpy Christian may be helped by starting a thankfulness journal. In the journal, record one thing each day that you can be grateful for. Then, when grumpiness sets in, change your focus by reading the journal and reminding yourself of God's unending goodness.

4. Take a breather. When you find yourself getting grumpy, take a break. Even if it's just for a few seconds, giving yourself time to step back and reevaluate things is helpful. If you have the time, spend your break praying, reading the Bible, or listening to worshipful music that uplifts Christ. Eat a healthy snack. Find a mirror and check your facial expression. Smile.

5. Identify the areas that contribute to grumpiness. Find the source of the grumpiness, and you can more directly deal with it. Often, grumpy people are attracted to information and people who encourage their grumpiness. They feast on negative news, seek the company of negative people, and listen to discouraging music. Overcoming an attitude of negativity requires that we stop feeding it. We have the responsibility to guard our hearts (Proverbs 4:23). It helps to filter all entertainment and outside information through this sentence: "Does this lift up my heart in praise to God or pull it down into anger and depression?"

A Christian prone to grumpiness can handle it in the same way we overcome any negative trait. We recognize it as sin, ask God's help in changing, and take action to create a new normal. The reward is a happier outlook, a closer relationship with God, and spiritual growth that will benefit everyone around us.

Scriptures

<https://christianpf.com/financial-scriptures/>

on Finances

(From Financial Experts)

Part 3

I asked some of the smartest Christian financial experts that I know two questions:

1. What Bible verse has impacted your finances the most?
2. And why?

I wanted to see what scriptures have had the biggest impact in their lives and give them an opportunity to share the reason as well. My prayer is that the assembling of these 29 financial scriptures is a blessing to you!

Tai and Tallatt McNeeley

***"Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law."
Romans 13:8***

This verse encouraged us greatly on our journey to debt freedom. For a while, we were comfortable with having no debt with the exception of our mortgage because we allowed the cultural norm of having a 30-year mortgage become our standard. However this verse encouraged us to let no debt remain outstanding, and no debt means NO debt. Therefore we made it our business to not just stay consumer debt free but to pay off our mortgage and be 100% debt free. With this scripture as our motivation, we indeed paid off our home. In total, we successfully paid off \$330,000 in just 5 years on one income and we give God all the glory for it.

Jay Peroni

***"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you."
James 1:5***

For me, James 1:5 has had the biggest impact on my financial life. As a Christ follower, wisdom from the heavens is far more important than anything man could ever come up with. In times of trial and difficulties, I seek wisdom from Him just like James did. No financial strategy or solution can trump what God and His word can reveal. Our Christian walk is about a relationship with Jesus, about putting a deeper trust in God as we face many trials, especially those that are financially related. When I don't have the answers, I cry out for His wisdom. My trust is in Him and He always provides the answer when I seek Him out. This for me has been the foundation of my finances and business life.

Joe Plemon

***"Two things I ask of you, Lord; do not refuse me before I die: Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God."
Proverbs 30:7-9***

Because the writer knows his own weaknesses and recognizes that either too much money or too little money can cause him to dishonor God. I love the humility and the fact that the focus is not on riches, but living to please God. I hope I can do that.

Art Rainer

***"Truly I tell you," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."
Luke 21:3-4***

This verse demonstrates how, in God's economy, the amount sacrificed always supersedes the amount given. It is all about the heart.

Jerry Robinson

***"All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty."
Proverbs 14:23***

One day while reading through the book of Proverbs, this scripture lept out at me. When you consider what "profit" from labor really is, it is quite profound. An individual's "profit" from his labor or work is equal to the amount of money saved. A paycheck is not profit. Profit is instead the difference between the amount earned from one's labor and the amount spent on daily necessities. In other words, our "profit" is not what we earn, but what we save from our earnings. It is sad when you consider that so many people today labor without profit because they choose to spend every dime they earn. Just as no business owner would operate without earning a profit from his labor, no employee should agree to labor without a profit.

Guy Smith

***"Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written: "They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever." Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!"
2 Corinthians 9:6-15***

I have a tendency to be tight-fisted when it comes to spending money. I'd rather save almost every penny. Giving, on the other hand, is set apart and is so much fun. Thanks to passages like this one God has released me from hoarding and now I honestly can't wait to give to my church and other ministries.

Jen Smith

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." Galatians 5:1

Why it had the impact: Christ has created us for freedom beyond our comprehension. But it's so much easier to choose slavery to money, things, our jobs, or whatever the world says to. Whenever I think about why I'm online and recording podcasts I remember that there's a freedom available to everyone and maybe if they just knew another way to do things, they'll get a little closer to a glimpse of what Christ has set us free for.

Cameron Taylor

"Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:4-5

Shortly after getting married, my first business failed, leaving us with thousands of dollars of business debt. I began searching for a job. I was unemployed for six months as I searched for work. I applied for dozens and dozens of jobs and was rejected by each one. I had graduated with honors from business school, but I couldn't find a job. I got to the point that I was willing to work anywhere. I applied at a Sears customer service call center that paid \$6.50 per hour. Sears seemed to hire everyone so I was hopeful I would at least have a job with some income while I continued searching for a better job. I did the Sears typing test and mock phone calls, but I didn't make the cut.

I was devastated and frustrated. I had prayed for six months for the Lord to help me find a job with no success. In desperation, I knelt and prayed, "Lord, why can't I find a job?"

During my Bible study, I read the parable of the vine in John 15. I realized I was asking the wrong question. My question was, "Why can't I find a job?" I was putting my faith and trust in myself. I was trying to be the vine. I realized I needed to put my faith and trust in the Lord, and I began asking, "Lord, what would you have me do?" I was no longer trying to be the vine, but striving to be one of His branches. I recognized that without Christ I could do nothing.

As an instrument in the hands of the Lord, I was able to build several businesses that produced much fruit blessing the lives of many people. After the success of the businesses, I received recognition and awards, but I was quick to give all honor and glory to God for I knew the source of the fruit. It was not me. I was still the man who couldn't get a job at the Sears call center but once I abided in Christ and was an instrument in His hands, I was able to bring forth much fruit.

Dave @ Rich Fool

"But God said to him 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God." Luke 12:20-21

There are plenty of Bible verses on money, but the parable of the rich fool jumps out because of its relevance to how we structure our personal finances in 21st Century America. The parallel of the rich landowner in Luke 12 to our modern philosophy of wealth accumulation serves as a stern warning about the dangers of excess.

The rich fool parable gave me a gut check when I was starting to seriously pursue financial independence and early retirement. I see myself so clearly in the story that I took on the identity of The Rich Fool and started a personal finance blog. It continues to guide me as I strive for a life defined by radical generosity instead of comfort and security. Most of all, the rich fool illustrates the dangers of saving with no ceiling for a future that isn't guaranteed. Unfortunately, that's exactly how most people approach their finances today. Instead of giving generously out of a historically unprecedented abundance, we hoard our wealth. We operate with a scarcity mindset, planning for the "what ifs" and worst-case scenarios. Like rich fools, we build bigger barns. Of course, our barns look much different. Instead of stockpiling grain, we build bigger retirement accounts, college funds, and stock portfolios. The investment vehicles change, but the result is the same. We lay up treasure for ourselves without asking whether there's a higher calling for our possessions.

Debbie Todd

"The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is slave to the lender." Proverbs 22:7

This verse squarely addresses two key components of personal financial health; Savings and Debt. Today, roughly 180 million citizens in our country are at or near financial calamity. 57% of Americans have less than \$1,000 in savings, with 39% of those families having under \$400. We want more and better and we want it now. Debt is such a sneaky and insidious trap...in our country, people are lured by the "easy monthly payments" every single day. As a licensed CPA for nearly 2 decades, I have seen first-hand the devastation that poor money decisions can have on virtually all areas of a person's life. Mounting debt and decreased financial cushion are both cited as key contributors to divorce, family strife, stress, increased crime, addictions, and even death. Not only does debt shackle us financially, but it stops us from living in freedom to live out the purpose that He desires in our lives.

"Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." 1 Corinthians 15:58

The second verse actually is more my life verse...but relates just as well to stewardship as to any other area of our Christian walk. As the eldest child of a military family, we grew up living on very little money — right through high school. It was hard. Not wearing the cool new clothes, having the latest toys, or being brought to school in a shiny new car...BUT we learned to be patient, work hard and save for what we wanted. We learned to stand firm. We also learned that if we REALLY wanted something bad enough, we'd prioritize and make decisions that allowed us to realize our goals. These truths have held strong in my adult life for the last 35+ years. He also will bring support and help when you need it most. The Lord has amazing plans for each and every one of us...plans to prosper us and not harm us...but we have to do our part by pausing, praying and not derailing ourselves physically and financially.

SIMPLE WAYS OF *Connecting Daily* IN YOUR MARRIAGE

MarriageMissions.com

You take care of everything and everyone else, but do you take care of your marriage relationship? Do you connect with your spouse everyday? You were intentional in connecting together in conversation, spending time together, and such before marriage. If you hadn't, you probably wouldn't be married today. But now that you ARE married, are you doing what it takes to GROW your relationship in a positive direction? Or are you allowing everything and everyone else to smash into your everyday lives? Are other things, people and activities pushing you both farther and farther away from each other?

Tyranny of the Urgent

If you're anything like us, (and many couples we know) you find it's easy to allow the tyranny of the urgent —that which appears to yell for our attention, eat up our time. And before we know it, the day flies right by and it's time to flop into bed!

If we're not careful, though, our marriage can suffer BIG time if it doesn't get the attention that is needed! So here are a few tips we've used and still use, to help us to connect daily, so we're more than just roommates:

Tip #1: Start the day praying with each other and for each other.

We rarely miss a day (even if we're in different parts of the country) to pray together (even if it's over the phone). For us, it works best to start our day together in prayer. For some couples, this is how they end their day. It doesn't have to be a long time that you invest (or it can be). We kind of go with the flow of the day whether or not we have a longer prayer time together.

But in our 45+ years marriage, we believe that having that connection time in prayer with each other and with God, is vital to the health of our relationship. It starts the day off in a GREAT way!

Tip #2: Don't forget to kiss.

We embrace and kiss each other every morning after praying. Again, it's another GREAT way to start the day.

If you have the time, try the ten second kiss. It's something we heard David and Claudia Arp talk about in one of their marriage seminars. They encourage couples to:

"Practice the ten-second kiss rule. In the morning, before saying goodbye, and in the evening, when saying hello, [when you can] kiss for ten seconds."

It may seem a bit much at first to "plan" a kiss like this, or just to throw one in every once in a while when you can. But what we've found is that as you get into the moment your whole attitude changes for the better as you make a point of enjoying smooching with your sweetheart. Try it. It always brings a smile to our faces and to our hearts when we do. Hopefully, it will do the same for you.

Tip #3: Try to connect in some small way during the day.

It can be through a phone call, an email, text, a note tucked somewhere so they can find it. Also, it can be through meeting for lunch, or whatever you can do to let your spouse know that he or she is important to you —it's all good. (And try to be an encourager when you do make that contact.)

Tip #4: When you're able to eat together (breakfast, lunch, and/or dinner), pray together.

Ask God's blessing for the meal. And hold hands while you're doing this, as a married couple and as a family. It can make you feel closer emotionally, and physically, as well as spiritually closer to God.

Tip #5: Ask each other a couple of "Connection Questions" at some point in the evening.

It can be during a planned date or while eating dinner, or at some point in the evening. Maybe it can even happen before going to bed. But be intentional in talking to each other, finding out about each other's day. Here are the questions we ask:

- Did anything positive or exciting happen to you today?
- Did anything sad or disappointing happen to you today?
- What did God show you NEW today?

I have these typed out, put in a little frame, waiting at our kitchen table for us. It's a great reminder (and has also been a point of conversation for others, who visit our home) to catch up with each other on what the day's experiences have been for us. This gives us the opportunity to encourage each other, rejoicing together, sympathize with each other, learn from each other and from God, and connect in an important way as husband and wife.

In Closing:

Praying together, a simple kiss (or more), some type of contact during the day in some way, and asking simple questions ...they can sure make a great difference as you put intentionality in physically, emotionally, and spiritually connecting at different times of the day. Now, of course, this isn't all we do to grow our marriage... continuing to date each other, encourage each other, talk together, minister to others together in various ways, enjoy family, friendships and church and other activities together are all important too. But the tips listed above sure do help us to grow together, rather than growing apart as a couple who are committed to reveal and reflect the love of Christ within our marriage.

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God." (1 John 4:7)

TINY

By: Andrew Roebert

Giants

Sometimes we allow things in our lives to become too big. We develop mountains out of molehills. When things become giants in our lives they begin to hinder us and our progress. Often things that become giants in our lives begin as small things, but they develop to the point where they control our lives. God wants us free of things that would stand in the way of what He has for us. I once heard a story about an elephant. It was a circus elephant and when it was small a peg was driven into the ground and the foot of the elephant was tied to the peg. The elephant was small and could not break the grip of the rope. As the elephant grew he became used to the limitations of the rope and the peg to which it was attached. By the time the elephant was full grown it had completely adjusted to the limitation. The elephant had enough strength to simply pull out the peg. But the elephant never challenged the rope and the peg because the elephant believed the peg was stronger than he was. In this way the peg became stronger than the mighty elephant.

GIANTS

Things and situations can become giants in our lives when we allow them to become greater than what they should be. Giants hold us back and cause fear in our hearts. Giants also stop us from possessing what God has in store for us. I have discovered that what is a giant of an obstacle to one person is no problem or hindrance to the next person. There is a story in the Old Testament about David and Goliath. In this story the army of Israel was at war.

The enemy possessed one great threat to the army of Israel – a giant! They were so afraid of this giant that it paralysed the army and as a result they did not have victory.

1 Samuel 17:20-24 The Israeli army was leaving for the battlefield with shouts and battle cries. Soon the Israeli and Philistine forces stood facing each other, army against army. As he (David) was talking with them, he saw Goliath the giant step out from the Philistine troops and shout his challenge to the army of Israel. As soon as they saw him the Israeli army began to run away in fright.

In the same way, in our lives, we have giants that hinder and limit us!

TINY GIANTS – THE ROLE OF PERCEPTION

To the nation of Israel this huge giant (Goliath) was a tremendous obstacle. Goliath brought fear into the camp. The soldiers would remind each other of this great threat.

1 Samuel 17:25 “Have you seen the giant?” the soldiers were asking.

But David saw things differently. David was just a young small shepherd boy. He was not a member of the great Israeli army. He did not have the strength of the Israeli military machine, but the giant was not an obstacle to him.

1 Samuel 17:26 “Who is this heathen Philistine, anyway, that he is allowed to defy the armies of the living God?” Our perceptions play a great role when it comes to the giants that are allowed to develop in our lives.

Our perception is not always right. We must always remember that God is still part of the equation and nothing is too hard for Him!

THE RIGHT PERSPECTIVE

We must never limit God. God is the God who knows no limit. No situation, no circumstance, no issue is beyond the reach of God's hand. When we allow things to become greater than God in our lives, we create giants and these giants bring fear and intimidation. God is greater than any giant. With God any giant is a tiny giant! Look how David responds to the threat of the giant.

1 Samuel 17:32-33 "Don't worry about a thing," David told him. "I'll take care of this Philistine!" "Don't be ridiculous!" Saul replied. "How can a kid like you fight with a man like him (a giant)? You are only a boy, and he (the giant) has been in the army since he was a boy!"

But David knew that God was with Him and this gave him confidence. God is with you and you must let this be a source of confidence to you.

GOD IS GREATER

What is it that you are facing today that you believe is an impossible situation? Is there perhaps an aspect of your life that you think not even God could solve? Perhaps it is a failed marriage, or a financial situation. Perhaps it is broken relationships or failing health. It could even be a situation in which you feel powerless or hopeless. God is able!

1 Samuel 17:41-44 Goliath walked out toward David with his shield-bearer ahead of him, sneering in contempt at this nice little red-cheeked boy! "Am I a dog," he roared at David, "that you come at me with a stick?" And he cursed David by the names of his gods. "Come over here and I'll give your flesh to the birds and wild animals," Goliath yelled.

1 Samuel 17:45-47 David shouted in reply, "You come to me with a sword and a spear, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of the armies of heaven and of Israel—the very God whom you have defied. Today the Lord will conquer you, and I will kill you and cut off your head; and then I will give the dead bodies of your men to the birds and wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel! And Israel will learn that the Lord does not depend on weapons to fulfill his plans—He works without regard to human means! He will give you to us!"

1 Samuel 17:48-51 As Goliath approached, David ran out to meet him and, reaching into his shepherd's bag, took out a stone, hurled it from his sling, and hit the Philistine in the forehead. The stone sank in, and the man fell on his face to the ground. So David conquered the Philistine giant with a sling and a stone. Since he had no sword, he ran over and pulled Goliath's from its sheath and killed him with it, and then cut off his head. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they turned and ran.

When the giant is dead everything looks different! It is then that you realized that the way you saw things was wrong! God is greater than any giant you may be facing!

THE HINDERANCE THAT GIANTS PRESENT

Giants present hindrances in our lives. In the Old Testament we read how God had promised the nation of Israel a promised land. God had taken them out of captivity in Egypt and brought them to the edge of the Promised Land. Just before they were about to enter this Promised Land they sent in spies to 'investigate' what lay before them. The report from most of the spies was alarming.

Numbers 13:27-28 This was their report: "We arrived in the land you sent us to see, and it is indeed magnificent—a land 'flowing with milk and honey.' The people living there are powerful, and their cities are fortified and very large; and what's more, we saw giants there!"

Most of the spies could only see the problems.

Numbers 13:31-33 "Not against people as strong as they are!" the other spies said. "They would crush us!" So the majority report of the spies was negative: "The land is full of warriors, the people are powerfully built, and we saw some of the Anakim there, descendants of the ancient race of giants. We felt like grasshoppers before them, they were so tall!"

Have you perhaps allowed things to become giants in your life? Perhaps you have believed the reports of others and as a result you have lost hope. Let's deal with the giants and step over into that which God has for each one of us.

A DIFFERENT SPIRIT

I believe that God is calling us to have a different spirit. A spirit that will not stop possessing just because we see a few giants. Two of the spies that were sent to investigate the Promised Land came back with positive reports. Here is what they had to say.

Numbers 13:30 But Caleb reassured the people as they stood before Moses. "Let us go up at once and possess it," he said, "for we are well able to conquer it!"

This conquering spirit is what God is looking for. God is not impressed when we become intimidated and threatened. God is looking for a different spirit from us. God is looking for people who will not limit Him, regardless of how great the limitations may be. When we realize how great God is, we realize that the giants we have seen are tiny in God's eyes.

THE Wilderness EXPERIENCE

By: Andrew Roebert

We all go through seasons in our lives that are difficult and challenging. These can be times when we feel alone, barren, dry and even separated from God and His blessing. Most people find such seasons difficult, but almost everyone has experienced such a time. It is not something that is unique to some people but it is something common to everyone. The joy is that God wants to see us through our desert or wilderness experience and bring us out on the other side even more prepared for what He has in store for us.

THE WILDERNESS IS MORE THAN A PHYSICAL PLACE

Although we see many examples in the Bible of literal wilderness experiences, it is far more than that. The wilderness is also a figure of speech and speaks of a time of barrenness, dryness and longing. Geographically we can identify an area that is a wilderness or a desert on a map. In the same way we can often identify a period in our lives that we could call a wilderness experience. It is difficult to understand why we have to face such times and it is especially difficult to see the purpose when we are in the midst of it. The interesting thing is that God uses these times to work in our lives and bring about change. If you are facing such a time, don't get disheartened. God has a plan.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE

There are certain characteristics of a wilderness experience.

1. It is a time when we feel dry.
2. It is a place of barrenness. It is not a time of productivity.
3. It is a time of disorder, when things do not make sense.
4. It is a time of waste. It feels like so much time is wasted while not being productive.
5. It is a wild time when things feel out of control.
6. It is also a time when purpose seems to disappear.

I am sure you can identify with some of these characteristics.

MOSES AND HIS WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE

Moses is one of the best examples of a wilderness experience. God had told him that He wanted to use him and he ran away into the wilderness. Although Moses spent a long time in the physical wilderness, it was also in a spiritual wilderness running away from God. But God did not leave him there. It was while Moses was in the wilderness that God came to call him. God met with Moses when Moses saw the burning bush and as a result God began to turn the tide and an entire nation was delivered.

ISRAEL AND THE WILDERNESS

The nation of Israel faced a wilderness experience. They thought that it was the time of their deliverance and a time of emerging into their purpose. But instead they entered a wilderness season both physically and spiritually.

Exodus 15:22 Then Moses led the people of Israel on from the Red Sea, and they moved out into the wilderness.

Things seemed to get even worse as the nation of Israel moved from one wilderness to another.

Numbers 10:12 so the Israelites left the wilderness of Sinai, and followed the Cloud until it stopped in the wilderness of Paran.

We can see how that Moses and the nation of Israel went through a wilderness experience, BUT God had a plan.

JESUS HAD A WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE

It is almost unbelievable that even Jesus faced a wilderness experience.

Matthew 4:1 Then Jesus was led out into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit, to be tempted there by Satan.

It was a time when Jesus was isolated and harassed by the devil. The Bible tells us how the devil tempted Him and attempted in every way to see Him fall. Jesus passed His wilderness experience. Moses faced it, the nation of Israel faced it and even Jesus faced it. Perhaps everyone faces it. The issue is that we must pass the wilderness test! It is then that we can move on into the destiny that God has for us.

GOD USES THE WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE

God uses the wilderness experience to work in our lives. It is as if God allows these seasons to be able to work in our lives. Without these seasons we end up feeling self-confident and proud. So God allows these times so that we can remember that He is God and we must only look to Him.

Deuteronomy 8:2 Do you remember how the Lord led you through the wilderness for all those forty years, humbling you and testing you to find out how you would respond, and whether or not you would really obey Him?

If you are in a wilderness time I want to encourage you.
1. Put things right. If you have done things that you felt were right but knew were wrong, go and put them right.

2. Make restitution. Try and undo the damage.
3. Let God soften your heart. It is part of the process.
4. Obey God in everything that He tells you to do.

THE DANGER OF MURMURING

One thing that we must be very careful about during a wilderness experience is the aspect of murmuring. Murmuring is when we begin to complain, moan, whine and air our dissatisfaction. Murmuring is something that does not please God.

Numbers 21:5 they began to murmur against God and to complain against Moses. "Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die here in the wilderness?" they whined.

When we begin to murmur we begin to fail the test. This can prolong the wilderness time. Don't get critical, especially towards God.

Number 32:15 If you turn away from God like this, He will make the people stay even longer in the wilderness.

GOD CARES FOR US IN THE WILDERNESS TIMES

It is wonderful to know that God does not just leave us alone and let us suffer. He wants to care for us in our wilderness or desert season. That is exactly what God did for the nation of Israel.

Deuteronomy 1:31 And you know how He has cared for you again and again here in the wilderness, just as a father cares for his child!

God wants to carry us through.

Deuteronomy 29:5 For forty years God has led you through the wilderness, yet your clothes haven't become old, and your shoes haven't worn out!

Psalms 78:52 But he led forth His own people like a flock, guiding them safely through the wilderness.

THE WILDERNESS CAN BE A TIME OF MIRACLES

It can be an exciting time. We can expect miracles in the wilderness.

Joshua 24:16 He is the God who did mighty miracles before the eyes of Israel, as we traveled through the wilderness.

Notice that it was as they traveled through the wilderness that God performed miracles right in front of their eyes.

Psalms 78:15 He split open the rocks in the wilderness to give them plenty of water, as though gushing from a spring.

THE PROMISE

The wilderness or desert seasons are not meant to last forever. It is a time that we are meant to move through and on to the fruitful times that God has in store for each of us.

Isaiah 29:17 Soon—and it will not be very long—the wilderness of Lebanon will be a fruitful field again, a lush and fertile forest.

God wants to take those wilderness and barren areas and transform them into something wonderful.

Ezekiel 36:36 Then the nations all around—all those still left—will know that I, the Lord, rebuilt the ruins and planted lush crops in the wilderness. For I, the Lord, have promised it, and I will do it."

This is what God has promised and this is what we can look forward to. Let this be a promise for your own life.

KEYS TO A *Good Life*

By: Andrew Roebert

"Who wishes to live a long and pleasant life?" I suppose everyone would say, 'Who does not?' The Bible speaks of a 'good life'. The implication here is that we can enjoy real living in our lives. Our lives need not be drudgery. If we are going to experience this good life that God has for us is there anything we can do? I see that the Bible gives us some clues to this life that God has for each one of us. These keys can lead us to the GOOD LIFE that I believe God wants us to experience.

THE OFFER

We find in the Bible the offer of possibly enjoy a good life.

Psalm 34:12 Do you want a long, good life?

We see this offer of a good life being made in several places in scripture. We find in the New Testament in the book of Peter. We find it in the Old Testament in the book of Psalms and Proverbs as well as in various other places. This is obviously something that God has made available to us. One thing that I have determined in my own life is that I want all that God has for me and I am sure that the same is true for you. If God is offering this GOOD LIFE, I want us to take advantage of it.

THE KEYS (No.1) – WATCHING WHAT WE SAY

This is the first key to enjoying this good life that God has for us. Our tongues are a very powerful part of our lives.

Proverbs 18:21 The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

Psalm 34:12-15 Do you want a long, good life? Then watch your tongue!

We must learn to bridle our tongues, and be careful what we say.

Psalm 34:12-15 Do you want a long, good life? Then watch your tongue! Keep your lips from lying.

Keep thy tongue from evil speaking, lying, and slandering. This is key number one to enjoying a good, long life. It is surprising that such a small thing can play such a vital role.

THE KEYS (No. 2) – STAY AWAY FROM SIN.

Sin is the thing that robs us of the life that God intended for us to experience. Sin may seem like fun on the surface, but it has a bitter sting in its tail. Sin will constantly undermine the possibility of us enjoying a good, long life.

Psalm 34:12-15 Do you want a long, good life? Then watch your tongue! Keep your lips from lying. Turn from all known sin.

We must leave all our sins, and resolve that we will have nothing more to do with them. We must depart from evil.

John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

THE KEYS (No. 3) – DO GOOD

Here we see the third key to enjoying this life that God has for us.

Psalm 34:12-15 Do you want a long, good life? Then watch your tongue! Keep your lips from lying. Turn from all known sin and spend your time in doing good.



How we spend our time will determine what kind of life we live. It is not just a matter of not hurting others, but it is a matter of going beyond this to the point where we endeavour to do good. Is there any good that you can show? Our lifestyle should one of endeavouring to do good.

THE KEYS (No. 4) – LOOK FOR PEACE

Here is the next key.

Psalm 34:12-15 Do you want a long, good life? Then watch your tongue! Keep your lips from lying. Turn from all known sin and spend your time in doing good. Try to live in peace with everyone; work hard at it. For the eyes of the Lord are intently watching all who live good lives, and he gives attention when they cry to him.

We must seek peace and pursue it; we must show a peaceable disposition, study the things that make for peace, do nothing to break the peace. If peace seems to flee from us, we must pursue it. We must go for peace, spare no pains, no expense, to preserve and recover peace. These are the directions to a life that is good.

1 Peter 3:10-11 If you want a happy, good life, keep control of your tongue, and guard your lips from telling lies. 11 Turn away from evil and do good. Try to live in peace even if you must run after it to catch and hold it!

THE KEYS (No. 5) – HONOURING OUR PARENTS

Here is another key. The key is honouring our parents.

Exodus 20:12 Honor your father and mother, that you may have a long, good life in the land the Lord your God will give you.

It is one of the commandments and it is the one that has a promise attached to it. I have seen this key come into play in people's lives over and over. It does not say we must honour good parents or that we must honour parents who have treated us as we expected they should treat us. It simply says that we must honour, and then we can reap the reward. The reward is a long, good life.

Getting to know God better and better is the key. This has become a priority in my life. It should be a priority for all of us.

THE KEYS (No. 7) – OBEDIENCE

Obedience plays a vital role in our lives. It is a key to the GOOD LIFE God wants us to experience.

Proverbs 4:10 My son, listen to me and do as I say, and you will have a long, good life.

As we get to know God better, I believe that obedience becomes easier and easier. If we will endeavour to hear the voice of God and obey what He tells us to do we will find the life that God has promised. The Bible tells us that to obey is better than sacrifice. It is the preferred attitude that God is looking for in our lives.

1 Samuel 15:22 Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice.

THE KEYS (No. 8) – DOING THE RIGHT THING

Doing the right thing is another key to the good life.

Proverbs 4:11-13 I would have you learn this great fact: that a life of doing right is the wisest life there is. 12 If you live that kind of life, you'll not limp or stumble as you run. 13 Carry out my instructions; don't forget them, for they will lead you to real living.

This is where we need the Holy Spirit. We need the Holy Spirit to tell what is the right thing and to help us to do the right thing. The Holy Spirit wants to enable us to do what God wants us to do. Invite Him into your life! Jesus made it all possible.

1 Peter 2:24 He personally carried the load of our sins in his own body when he died on the cross so that we can be finished with sin and live a good life from now on. For his wounds have healed ours!

Let's enjoy what God has for us.

THE KEYS (No. 6) – LEARN TO KNOW GOD BETTER

This is an exciting and vital key. God has placed within each one of us a desire to know Him better. We must pursue this if we want to experience the good life that God has for us.

2 Peter 1:2-3 Do you want more and more of God's kindness and peace? Then learn to know him better and better. For as you know Him better, He will give you, through His great power, everything you need for living a truly good life: He even shares His own glory and His own goodness with us!

LESSONS FROM A GREAT *Love Story*

By: Andrew Roebert

Jacob had fallen in love with girl by the name of Rachel. Rachel was a beautiful girl in every way and Jacob loved her. He agreed to work for her for 7 years. These seven years passed quickly because he was so in love. On the night he was to be married he was deceived by his father-in-law, Laban, and was given her sister Leah instead. Leah had beautiful eyes. He was devastated. He agreed to work for another seven years in order to get Rachel, the one he loved. After a further seven years he finally saw his dreams fulfilled and he got to marry the girl of his dreams, Rachel. Leah was able to have children and she had many children. Rachel was unable to have children, but eventually God blessed and she had two children, Joseph and Benjamin. It was during the birth of Benjamin that Rachel died. God used this family and out of their line eventually Jesus would be born. Through this complicated family God blessed the entire world and Jesus was born from the decedents of one of the sons, Judah, and through Jesus Christ salvation became available to all.

LESSONS FOR THIS GREAT LOVE STORY:

ALL GOOD THINGS ARE WORTH THE WAIT AND THE WORK.

We live in a world in which everyone wants instant gratification. We want things now, we don't want to wait. We live in a world in which people are not patient. If it's not working, we will just abandon it and try something else. But the truth is that all good things require patience and hard work. If we apply patience and hard work to any situation, long enough, we are almost guaranteed to see success. We give up too soon, we throw in the towel too quickly. Everything that is really worth something in life requires patience and hard work. This applies to our careers, but also to our relationship and especially our marriages. Jacob worked 14 years to get the women of his dreams. It was worth the wait because He loved her. His dreams were fulfilled and he saw the fruit of his patience and hard work.



YOU WILL REAP WHAT YOU HAVE SOWN, SO SOW WELL!

In a strange twist of fate Jacob reaped what he had sown. The principle of sowing and reaping is one of the unshakable principles in God's word and in life. The wheel turns, and what goes around comes around and we reap what we have sown. Years before this love story Jacob had deceived his own father and got his brother's inheritance through trickery. Now years later he was tricked and did not get what was due to him.

If there is anything in life that I have seen over and over again in people's lives is that you reap what you have sown. So sow well. We all want to reap a good harvest and be successful, if it is in our marriage or in any other sphere of life. One of the lessons we can learn is to do unto others what we would have them do unto us - this is the golden rule. Let us sow well, so that we can reap a great and a wonderful harvest.

NOT EVERYTHING GOES ACCORDING TO PLAN.

Sometimes we think that everything will go according to plan. Often we have a picture in our heads of how things should work out. I have discovered that in most cases things don't go according to plan. Jacob loved Rachel and had worked 14 years for her and yet she could not have children. Leah on the other hand, the one he had not truly loved, was able to produce many children for Jacob. Why is the question we all want to ask when things don't go according to the plans we had. Often from our perspective it doesn't make sense and we can get frustrated and even angry. The best advice I can give you is to live one day at a time and make the best of what that day presents. God will work things out in the end.

THE GOOD THINGS AND THE BAD THINGS ARE ALL PART OF LIFE.

Life is not just made up of good things. Everything does not just run smoothly. But God remains good and God remains faithful. The good and the bad are all part of the rich fabric of life. Ultimately we are not in control, God is in control and He sees things from a different and an eternal perspective, so embrace every season. Rachel dies a tragic death during childbirth, but not before a miracle happens and she produces two sons. Joseph, who went on to save the nation, through a strange twist of good and bad that ended him up in a power position in the then known world and saved his nation. And Benjamin who was loved by his father and called the 'son of his right hand.'

AS WE TRUST IN GOD, HE WILL BRING ABOUT SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL IN ITS TIME.

The end result of this complicated love story comes the greatest story of all.

Out of the line and lineage of this family came the birth of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world.

If we will be patient and work hard...

If we will sow well...

If we will rest in His plan and not get discouraged when our own plans don't work out as we had planned...

If we will trust that He has the ultimate plan and that He uses the good and the bad and works them all out for our good... Then we will see His hand in our lives.

We will see His plans and purposes prevail and we will fit into His ultimate plan which is always the best thing we could have ever hoped for. In His perfect time He will bring forth something beautiful. So let us do these things and place our hand in His hand to lead and guide us each step of the way. If Jacob could look back today, I am sure he would be amazed at what God had done. We too can expect the same. For God has promised never to leave us or forsake us and He has promised to work things out.

Philippians 1:6 'I am certain that God, Who began the good work within you, will continue His work until it is finally finished.'

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