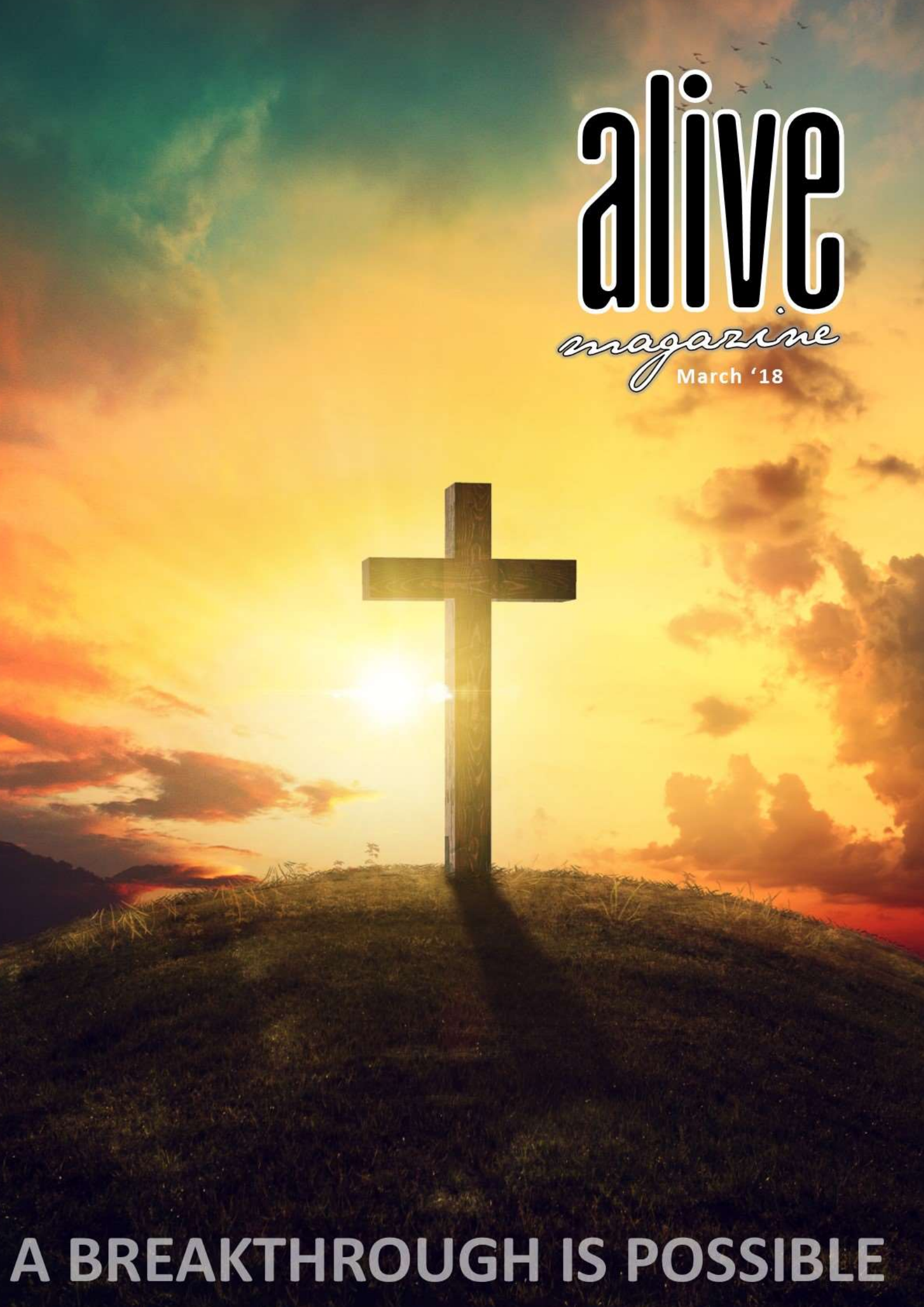

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LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT

By: Andrew W Roebert

The Holy Spirit has always played an important role. The Holy Spirit played an important role in the life of Jesus. The Holy Spirit had a crucial role in the lives of the Apostles. In the midst of all of this we find a wonderful truth, that the same Holy Spirit is available to each one of us. We can know the company of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Another great discovery is that there is a link between the Holy Spirit and power and there is also a link between the Holy Spirit and joy. The Holy Spirit was sent as the One who wants to walk beside us and the One who makes Jesus real to us.

THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND JESUS

Even before the birth of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit was playing a vital and essential role. The Bible clearly tells us about the all-important role of the Holy Spirit with the conception and birth of Jesus.

Matthew 1:18 These are the facts concerning the birth of Jesus Christ: His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But while she was still a virgin she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit.

Joseph was worried about the whole situation. The angel comes and confirms to Joseph that as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit, His wife will carry the Son of God.

Matthew 1:20 As he lay awake considering this, he fell into a dream, and saw an angel standing beside him. "Joseph, son of David," the angel said, "don't hesitate to take Mary as your wife! For the child within her has been conceived by the Holy Spirit.

As a result of what the Holy Spirit had done, the world would know a Saviour and you and I could know eternal life! The Holy Spirit always plays a vital role.

THE HOLY SPIRIT WAS ON JESUS

After being conceived by the Holy Spirit, Jesus also knew what it meant for the Holy Spirit to be on Him.

Luke 3:21-22 And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

Jesus also knew what it was to filled with the Holy Spirit. As a result of the Holy Spirit coming upon Him, He was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Luke 4:1 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan.

The Holy Spirit brought joy to Jesus' life.

Luke 10:21 Then he was filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit.

JESUS CAME TO MAKE THE REALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT REAL TO US

One of the main purposes that Jesus came to be with mankind was to make the Holy Spirit a living reality to humans. John the Baptist understood what Jesus was going to do.

Matthew 3:11 With water I baptize those who repent of their sins; but someone else is coming, far greater than I am, so great that I am not worthy to carry his shoes! He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

If Jesus needed the Holy Spirit, surely we must need Him more than ever.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS SOMEONE WHOM GOD MADE AVAILABLE TO US

God wanted to give us a good gift. The gift was the person of the Holy Spirit.

Luke 11:13 If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

Nothing has changed. Today God still makes this most precious of gifts available to you and I. We have only to ask. Can it be that simple? The answer is yes, we can approach God and ask Him to give us the gift of the person of the Holy Spirit. Prayer: Dear God, we want nothing less. We ask that you will give us your Holy Spirit, in Jesus name. Amen.

WE CAN RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

John 20:21-22 Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit".

What does it mean to receive? The dictionary definition tells us that it means: 'to take delivery of', It also means to accept, acquire and welcome. Is it possible that we humans could receive the Holy Spirit in such a practical way? I believe it is. Jesus intended that those to whom He was speaking would literally 'take delivery of' the Holy Spirit. I believe this offer is still available to us today. You and me, we can receive the Holy Spirit.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND POWER

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

The presence of the Holy Spirit changes things. Power was an outflow of the reality of the Holy Spirit on people's lives.

Acts 4:31 After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

The presence of the Holy Spirit made timid and fearful men bold and courageous.

THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS FOR US TODAY

The gift of the Holy Spirit, which Jesus said could be received, is still available to you and me today.

Acts 2:38-39 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off.

The promise of the Holy Spirit was for 'you and your children'. I believe that this is an inter-generational promise, and just as it was a promise to the first generation Christians, so it is a promise to you and I today.

Galatians 5:22-23 But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY

We can't mess with the Holy Spirit and think that we will get away with it. One of the most awesome stories is found in the book of Acts.

Acts 5:3-5 But Peter said, "Ananias, Satan has filled your heart. When you claimed this was the full price, you were lying to the Holy Spirit. 4The property was yours to sell or not, as you wished. And after selling it, it was yours to decide how much to give. How could you do a thing like this? You weren't lying to us, but to God." As soon as Ananias heard these words, he fell to the floor, dead!

The issue here is that these people had lied to the Holy Spirit. We must not resist, quench or grieve the Holy Spirit.

Acts 7:51 You stiff-necked heathen! Must you forever resist the Holy Spirit?

THE HOLY SPIRIT WANTS TO MAKE GOD REAL TO US

With the Holy Spirit in our lives we can get to know God better.

Acts 7:55 But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

The Holy Spirit is the one who encourages and strengthens us. In this way the strength of God can become a reality to us.

Acts 9:31 Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord.

The joy of God and the Holy Spirit usually go hand-in-hand.

Acts 13:52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

We can know a overflowing of hope because of the Holy Spirit presence in our lives.

Romans 15:13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.



MAINTAINED OR RENEWED

By: Andrew Roebert

In life we face many things that affect our lives and our well-being. We constantly need to be strengthened and enabled to continue. I believe that we can either maintain ourselves or be renewed by God. The second option is the better choice. God wants to renew us and give us the strength to carry on. God offers us His strength and His enabling power to bring new life within us so that we can be renewed. What will your choice be?

MAINTAINED

Maintenance involves effort. When we speak of maintenance we speak to going to the effort of keeping things up-to-date, running and in a state of repair. I recently became aware of how much time humanity spends on maintaining things. We maintain things in order to preserve things. Just think of buildings. They need to be constantly maintained and kept in a good state of repair. They cannot maintain themselves. Think about how much of your time is involved in maintaining existing situations or circumstances. When we are in maintenance mode our primary concern is to sustain ourselves so that we can carry on or simply keep up. God has so much more than this in store for us.

RENEWED

We can know what it means to be renewed. To be renewed means to be made as good as new. It can also include a form of restoration within us. We can be restored to freshness. Our strength is replaced. Renewal takes place from the inside out, while maintenance takes place on the outside. When we are renewed we are regenerated and revived. In the process we can be restored, refreshed and rejuvenated. What was lost is replaced and replenished. Nature has the capacity to renew itself. In nature things are not maintained they are renewed and this constant renewal sustains them.

Psalm 104:30 You renew the face of the earth.

We can know the renewing power of God in our lives.

GOD – A GOD OF RENEWAL

God wants to step into our lives and renew us from the inside out. He wants to bring new life and new strength and new hope into every aspect of our lives. The question is will we allow God to come and renew us? There needs to be a desire within each one of us that God would renew us. It usually starts with our hearts.

Psalm 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

If you are tired of maintaining yourself and long for God to step in and renew you, why don't you just ask Him to do this for you?

RENEWED STRENGTH

This is something we all need. We all end up spending so much of our time maintaining our situations and ourselves. This is an exhausting business. One area in which God wants to renew us is in the area of our strength. We all need our strength to be renewed from time to time. God wants to give us NEW strength.

Isaiah 40:29-31 He gives power to the tired and worn out, and strength to the weak. Even the youths shall be exhausted, and the young men will all give up. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

NEW LIFE

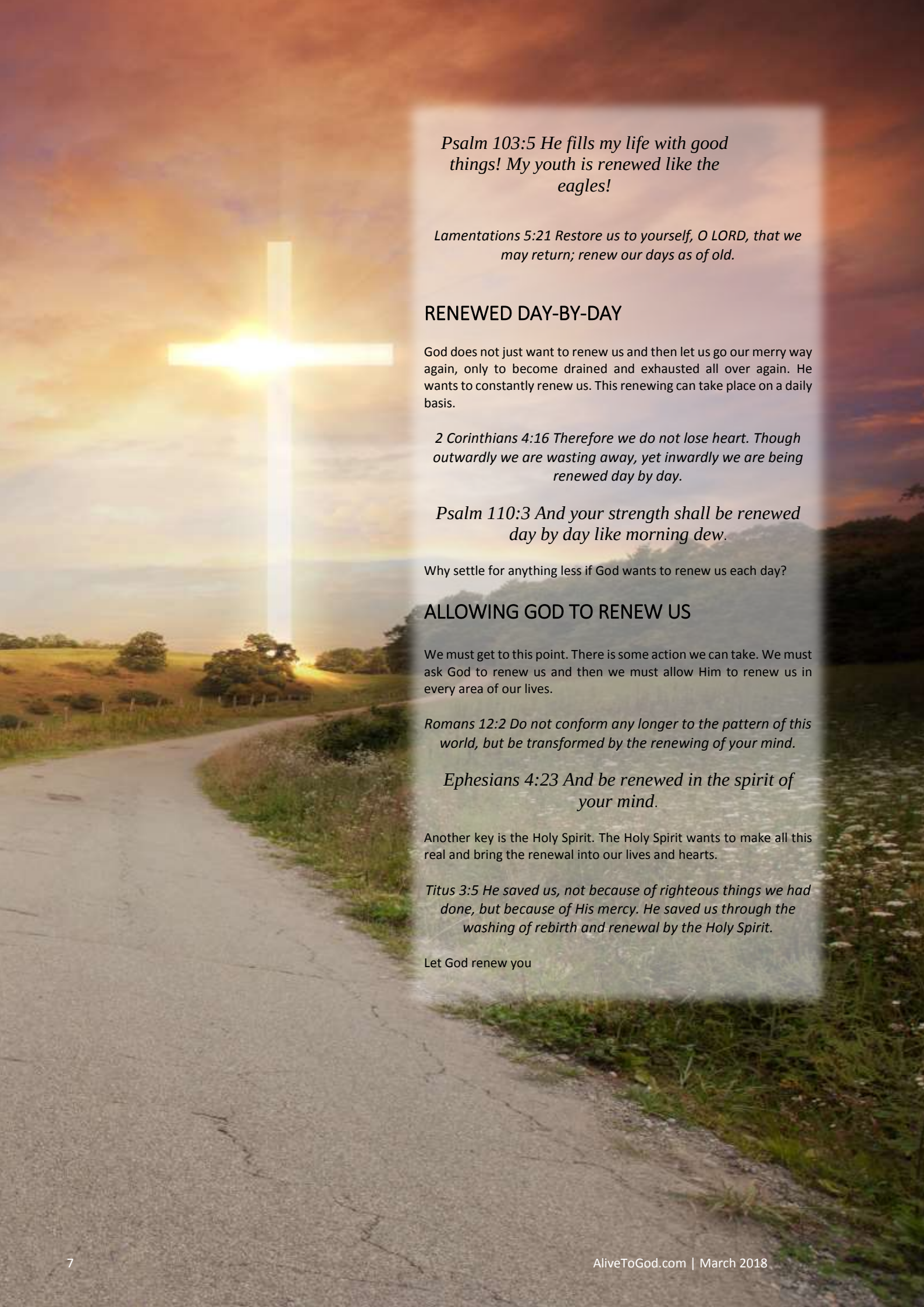
Another area in which God wants to bring newness is in the area of life. I have met people who I would consider to be 'living dead' people. It is like the light of life has just gone out even though they are still breathing. God wants to come and step in and bring new life.

Ruth 4:15 He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age.

Psalm 94:19 Lord, when doubts fill my mind, when my heart is in turmoil, quiet me and give me renewed hope and cheer.

NEW YOUTH

The Bible tells us that God even wants to renew our youth. Perhaps you just feel old. You have had to face so much and you feel so worn down that you no longer feel young at heart but instead you feel old within. God wants to step into this aspect of our lives and renew us.



Psalm 103:5 He fills my life with good things! My youth is renewed like the eagles!

Lamentations 5:21 Restore us to yourself, O LORD, that we may return; renew our days as of old.

RENEWED DAY-BY-DAY

God does not just want to renew us and then let us go our merry way again, only to become drained and exhausted all over again. He wants to constantly renew us. This renewing can take place on a daily basis.

2 Corinthians 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

Psalm 110:3 And your strength shall be renewed day by day like morning dew.

Why settle for anything less if God wants to renew us each day?

ALLOWING GOD TO RENEW US

We must get to this point. There is some action we can take. We must ask God to renew us and then we must allow Him to renew us in every area of our lives.

Romans 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Ephesians 4:23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind.

Another key is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit wants to make all this real and bring the renewal into our lives and hearts.

Titus 3:5 He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

Let God renew you

IS THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST TRUE?

GotQuestions.org

Scripture presents conclusive evidence that Jesus Christ was in fact resurrected from the dead. Christ's resurrection is recorded in: Matthew 28:1-20; Mark 16:1-20; Luke 24:1-53; and John 20:1–21:25.

The resurrected Christ also appeared in the Book of Acts (Acts 1:1-11).

From these passages you can gain several "proofs" of Christ's resurrection. First is the dramatic change in the disciples. They went from a group of men frightened and in hiding to strong, courageous witnesses sharing the gospel throughout the world. What else could explain this dramatic change other than the risen Christ appearing to them?

Second is the life of the apostle Paul. What changed him from being a persecutor of the church into an apostle for the church? It was when the risen Christ appeared to him on the road to Damascus:

Acts 9:1-6 Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

A third convincing proof is the empty tomb. If Christ were not raised, then where is His body? The disciples and others saw the tomb where He was buried. When they returned, His body was not there. Angels declared that He had been raised from the dead as He had promised.

Matthew 28:5-7 The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. 6 He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."

Fourth, additional evidence of His resurrection is the many people He appeared to: (Matthew 28:5, 9, 16-17; Mark 16:9; Luke 24:13-35; John 20:19, 24, 26-29, 21:1-14; Acts 1:6-8; 1 Corinthians 15:5-7).

Another proof of the resurrection of Jesus is the great amount of weight the apostles gave to Jesus' resurrection. A key passage on Christ's resurrection is 1 Corinthians 15. In this chapter, the apostle Paul explains why it is crucial to understand and believe in Christ's resurrection. The resurrection is important for the following reasons:

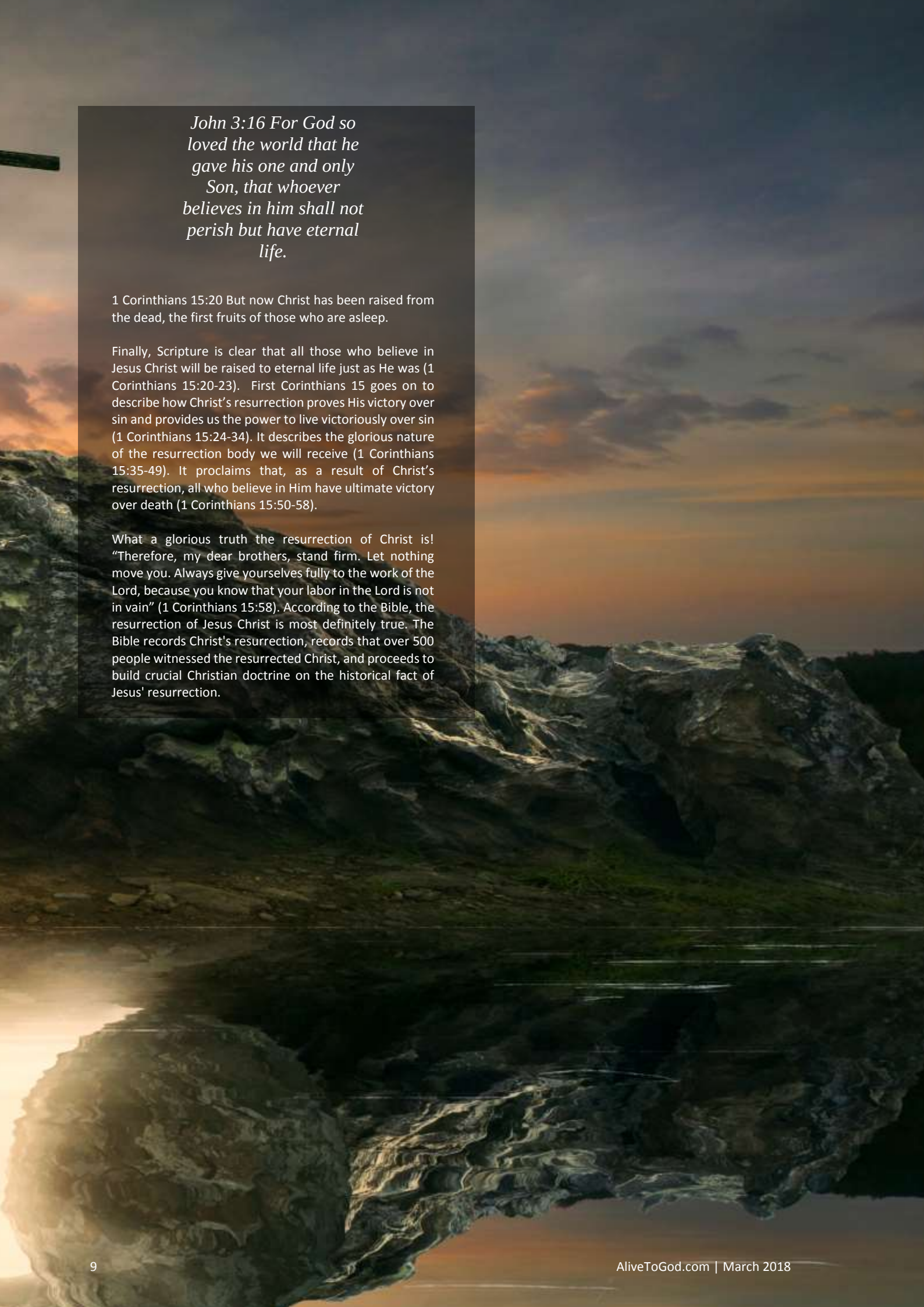
1) If Christ was not raised from the dead, believers will not be either

1 Corinthians 15:12-15 But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. 14 And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. 15 More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised

2) If Christ was not raised from the dead, His sacrifice for sin was not sufficient

1 Corinthians 15:16-19 For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. 19 If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

Jesus' resurrection proved that His death was accepted by God as the atonement for our sins. If He had simply died and stayed dead, that would indicate His sacrifice was not sufficient. As a result, believers would not be forgiven for their sins, and they would remain dead after they die. (1 Corinthians 15:16-19). There would be no such thing as eternal life.



John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

1 Corinthians 15:20 But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.

Finally, Scripture is clear that all those who believe in Jesus Christ will be raised to eternal life just as He was (1 Corinthians 15:20-23). First Corinthians 15 goes on to describe how Christ's resurrection proves His victory over sin and provides us the power to live victoriously over sin (1 Corinthians 15:24-34). It describes the glorious nature of the resurrection body we will receive (1 Corinthians 15:35-49). It proclaims that, as a result of Christ's resurrection, all who believe in Him have ultimate victory over death (1 Corinthians 15:50-58).

What a glorious truth the resurrection of Christ is! "Therefore, my dear brothers, 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). According to the Bible, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is most definitely true. The Bible records Christ's resurrection, records that over 500 people witnessed the resurrected Christ, and proceeds to build crucial Christian doctrine on the historical fact of Jesus' resurrection.

DIRECTED BY GOD

By Andrew Roebert

We continue to live in interesting times. There is so much Is it possible to know that our lives are being directed by God? I believe that the answer is yes. For those who will entrust their lives to God, there exists the very real possibility that they can know what it means to have their lives directed by the hand of God. God wants to lead and guide us. God wants to make sure that we reach our purpose and destiny in Him. God has a plan for each one of us and if we will allow Him, He will direct the affairs of our lives to bring us to that point, from where we can step into the greatness that He has for us. Do you desire God to direct your life? I do.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN

What does it mean to have our lives directed by God? I have done a lot of directing to television purposes. The process involves coordinating people and equipment in order to produce a product that can be used. Each element on its own cannot produce the end result. But together, when all the elements are directed together, a great product is produced. It is much the same in our lives. God has the big picture and He is able to direct affairs so that the end product of our lives can be something useful and beautiful. When God directs our lives, He directs the activities and the course of our lives. He wants to energize and supervise the aspects of our lives to bring us into the place He has designed for us. He wants to lead us!

LIKE A SHEPHERD

A shepherd has a way of working with sheep. A shepherd guides and directs his sheep each step of the way. That is exactly what God wants to do in our lives. God wants to gentle lead and direct us each step of the way.

Psalm 23:1-2 The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside quiet waters.

God wants to be a Good Shepherd to you today. He knows what is in our best interests and He wants to lead, guide and direct us to that point.

OUR DELIGHT SHOULD BE TO BE DIRECTED BY GOD

We should desire to be directed by God. Deep within us there should be a longing for God to direct our lives and the affairs of our lives. I believe that within each of us, God has placed such a desire. But sometimes we just get so busy directing our own lives that we do not allow God to give us the direction that we are looking for.

Psalm 119:35 Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight.

There comes a time in everyone's life where they want to totally entrust their lives into the hands of another. There is only one whose hands can be depended on to lead and direct us into the best thing for us and His name is Jesus.

GOD'S DIRECTION

Psalm 37:23-24 The steps of good men are directed by the Lord. He delights in each step they take. If they fall, it isn't fatal, for the Lord holds them with his hand.

In what ways does God want to direct our steps? I believe that God wants to point us in a specific direction. He wants to move us towards something that is what we were appointed or created to do. He wants to show us the way we need to go. He wants to point out the course that He has destined for us. He wants to guide us every step of the way.

IF GOD DIRECTS US WE CAN BE CONFIDENT

If God, who is the creator of the universe, can direct us as individuals, we can have confidence. God's plans for us are for our good.

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

If we will allow God to direct us then He will bring these plans to pass. As God is allowed to protect us there is protection.

Psalm 119:133 Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me.

If God is allowed to direct our footsteps, we can be confident.

IN GOD'S PLAN, HE IS THE DIRECTOR

Mankind feels that they should be in charge of their own destiny. I keep hearing phrases like: 'the individual is sovereign'. Directing our own lives is the philosophy of the day. But what was God's original plan and intention for us, His creation?

Jeremiah 10:23 I know, O LORD, that a man's life is not his own; it is not for man to direct his steps.

It is so different from what the world is telling us. It is God's responsibility to direct our steps and be the director of our lives, not ours.

TRUSTING GOD TO DIRECT US

In our day-to-day lives we need to begin to trust God to direct us. There must be this constant expectation that God wants to lead and direct us. We must begin to rely more and more on Him and his direction in our lives. This journey of dependence is vital. Begin by expecting God to direct you in the small things and then begin to depend on Him for the big things. In the process we will learn what it means to be dependent on God and will be directed by Him in the process.

Proverbs 16:9 We should make plans—counting on God to direct us.

PUTTING GOD FIRST

This is a very important aspect. If we will put God first in our lives, then we can expect that He will direct our lives. Putting God first in all you do is something you need to do. We must put God first, making Him our priority. There is a reward! He will direct our efforts. He will give us success. What more could we want?

Proverbs 3:6 In everything you do, put God first, and he will direct you and crown your efforts with success. (Living Bible)

Proverbs 3:6 in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. (NIV)

Proverbs 3:6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. (NKJV)

MAY GOD DIRECT YOU

This is my desire for each one of us. That we would know the hand of God directing our lives is the greatest joy that the human heart can ever know. My prayer for you is that you would know God's direction in your life. When we directed by God we discover that we have found His love for us.

2 Thessalonians 3:5 May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.

May God lead, guide and direct you into His love today.

DEALING WITH DISAPPOINTMENT

By Andrew Roebert

It is a strange fact of life, but it remains the truth, we all face disappointment. It is simply a reality of life. I have seen some people crushed and broken by disappointments. I have seen others challenged and survive disappointment to go on to become stronger individuals. We see many of the men and women in the Bible grappling with these very issues. It is in dealing with disappointment that the key to success lies.

WHAT IS A DISAPPOINTMENT?

Disappointment occurs when things in life do not work out according to our expectations, desires or hopes. Disappointment sets in when our hopes and expectations are defeated or do not realise. I am sure that as you take a moment, you can also think of times in your life when you faced some sort of disappointment. People can disappoint us. Things that don't work out in our favour can disappoint us. Opportunities missed can be a source of disappointment. Lastly, regrets can also be the result of disappointments. We face these types of things every day and we need to know how to deal with them.

EVEN JESUS FACED DISAPPOINTMENT

We see a very interesting story in the garden of Gethsemane. It was about time for Jesus to die and He goes to the garden with His disciples to pray. He asks His disciples to pray and then He moves further away to pray as He was facing the greatest distress of His life. But His disciples fell asleep. Jesus was very disappointed.

Matthew 26:36-40 Jesus brought them to Gethsemane. He took Peter with him and James and John, and began to be filled with anguish and despair. Then he told them, "My soul is crushed with horror and sadness to the point of death . . . stay here . . . stay awake with me." He went forward a little, and prayed, "My Father! If it is possible, let this cup be taken away from me. But I want your will, not mine." Then he returned to the three disciples and found them asleep.

A MATTER OF WHEN NOT IF

The matter is simply a matter of when we face disappointment not if we face disappointment. The sooner we realise and understand this fact the better chance we have of overcoming disappointment. Not only is it a matter of when but also the truth of the matter is that everyone faces it. I have discovered that some of the people I think have no problems are usually facing greater disappointment than I can imagine. Some of the greatest explorers and inventors went through many disappointments before finding success.

Psalm 37:39 The Lord saves the godly! He is their salvation and their refuge when trouble comes.

DEALING WITH DISAPPOINTMENT

We need to learn how to handle and process disappointment quickly and effectively so that it does not settle in our hearts and begin to destroy us. Unresolved disappointment is like a cancer and can slowly eat us up from the inside out. I knew a man who faced several disappointments. He was unable to process these disappointments. Bitterness began to set in and this bitterness began to eat at his very soul and eventually lead to a premature death. In the majority of cases disappointment is directed at another individual or a group of individuals. Here are some keys to help us handle and overcome disappointment.

FORGIVENESS

Perhaps the greatest key of all is the key of forgiveness. It is also one of the most difficult steps to take. Forgiveness means letting go of our disappointment. This is not always easy but it is essential that we get to that point if we are ever going to overcome disappointment.

Matthew 6:14-15 Your heavenly Father will forgive you if you forgive those who sin against you; but if you refuse to forgive them, he will not forgive you.

Even Jesus understood this important action and left us an example of how to handle disappointment.

Luke 23:34 "Father, forgive these people," Jesus said, "for they don't know what they are doing."

Forgiveness is a choice and a free gift that only you can give.

RELEASE

The next important step is to release. I am reminded of that famous statement: 'We will forgive but we will never forget'. Right there is the greatest obstacle in dealing with and getting over disappointment. We need to release those who have hurt us and get to point where we can even bless them.

Jeremiah 34:17
Therefore, says the Lord, because you will not listen to me and release them, I will release you to the power of death by war and famine and disease.

The moment we release our disappointment we can experience release in our own lives to be able to move on. For the Bible tells us that we will reap what we have sown.

SURVIVING DISAPPOINTMENT

Disappointment can be a stepping-stone to greater things that God has in store for us. Many people have survived disappointment only to go on to far greater heights than they could ever have imagined. We can survive disappointment if we will only forgive, release and move on. If we stop at the point of our disappointment, we will stay there and destroy ourselves.

Isaiah 43:18-19 Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.

SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE

As we face disappointment is there anything that we can be sure of? We can be sure of God's love for us. God's love for us is a constant stream of love. Success does not mean God loves you more. Failure does not mean God loves you less. God's love for you knows no limits and no end.

Jeremiah 31:3 I have loved you with an everlasting love.

God loves you and He wants to be there for each one of us as we face the disappointments that life may bring across our paths.



Why did Jesus have to die?

GotQuestions.org

Jesus died on the cross to bear sin's punishment for believers. Many people have doubted Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection from the grave, despite historical evidence.

The Scripture explains that Jesus Christ died for our sins:

> *"Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3b-4).*

The cross to pay the punishment for believing sinners. Let's study the Scriptures, the Bible, to find out why Jesus' death and resurrection provide the only entrance for sinners into paradise.

The punishment for sin is death

The Bible says the holy God created earth and man perfectly. But Adam and Eve fell to the temptation of Satan and disobeyed God. Ever since Adam's sin, sin has infected the human race. Each person is guilty: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Sin is not just big things like murder or blasphemy but also includes lying, lusting, and stealing. Even the love of money or hatred of enemies is sin, according to the Bible. Good works cannot make up for wrongs against the holy God. Compared to His holiness, "all our righteous acts are like filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6b).

Having sinned against God, we deserve His punishment. A judge who pardons lawbreakers isn't a good judge. Likewise, God will not overlook sin. He pours out His righteous wrath against sinners (Romans 2:1-11). Unbelieving sinners pay for their sin by suffering eternal death in hell: "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23a).

The promise required an innocent death

Although God banished Adam and Eve from the garden and the tree of life, He gave them hope of salvation and paradise. He promised to send the woman's offspring—Jesus—Who would conquer Satan (Genesis 3:15). Until then, men would sacrifice innocent lambs as a substitute for the punishment they deserved. Sacrificing an animal showed men's humble acknowledgement that their sin required death and showed their faith in the future offspring and sacrifice from God—Jesus—Who would bear the believer's penalty once and for all.

The prophets foretold Jesus' death

From Adam to Jesus, God sent prophets to mankind, warning them of sin's punishment and foretelling the coming Savior. Seven hundred years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah described Him:

> ***"Who has believed what they heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment, he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:1-12).***

The prophet compared the coming Savior to a lamb, slaughtered for the sins of others.

Centuries later, Jesus fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy. Although Jesus is eternally one with God, God the Father sent His Son to earth (John 3:16). Jesus is the promised offspring of the woman (Genesis 3:15), born in human flesh to the

virgin Mary. God witnessed that Jesus is His own Son (Matthew 17:5). On seeing Jesus, the prophet John the Baptist cried, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

Taking the sin of the world as the sacrificial Lamb of God is why Jesus had to die. He came to take the punishment for sin—death.

Jesus prophesied His own death many times: "And taking the twelve, he said to them, 'See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise'" (Luke 18:31-33).

God sacrificed Jesus for sin

During the life of Jesus, crowds thronged around Him for healing and teaching, but the religious leaders scorned Him. They arrested Him and charged Him with blasphemy for claiming to be the Son of God (Luke 22:70). Mobs cried out, "Crucify Him!" Soldiers beat, mocked, and crucified Him.

On the cross, Jesus bore the punishment of sin. At His death, He cried out, "It is finished" (John 19:30b). Jesus finished paying the punishment for sin as the perfect Lamb of God.

As Isaiah prophesied, Jesus was crucified in between two criminals and was buried in a rich man's tomb. But Jesus didn't remain in the grave. As He prophesied, Jesus rose from the dead, proving His victory over sin and death.

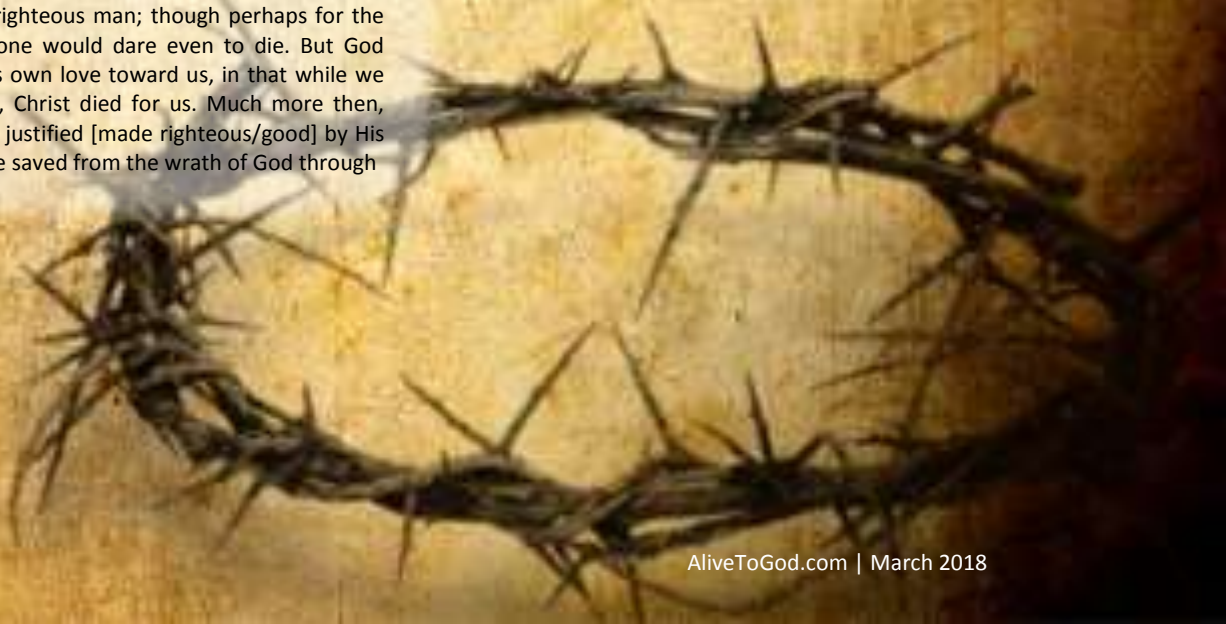
Why did Jesus have to die?

Jesus died for believing sinners. We cannot reach paradise on our own merit. Remember, the holy God will not let sin go unpunished. If we bore our own sins, we would suffer judgment in the flames of hell. But God sacrificed Jesus as the believer's perfect Substitute.

The Scripture says, "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified [made righteous/good] by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation [restored relationship].

"Therefore, just as through one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned. . . . So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 5:6-12; 18-21).

Jesus died to provide the only way to eternal life. If God is showing your sin and need of Jesus, repent, turning from your sin and own way of trying to please God. You cannot fix yourself. Believing the Bible's truth about Who Jesus is and what He did, trust in Jesus as Savior from sin and follow Him as the Lord of your life. He will lead and strengthen you through His Word, the Bible.



A BREAKTHROUGH IS POSSIBLE

By Andrew Roebert

Many people are battling with discouragement, despair, hopelessness and depression. Perhaps you are feeling like this today. You are not alone. Even the great people of God went through experiences like this. Like Moses, Abraham, Joseph and David. The prophet Jeremiah also faced difficulty and discouragement.

EVEN THE GREAT GET DOWN-HEARTED

Jeremiah was a great prophet who had been used by God He was the one who brought us these great scriptures:

Jeremiah 29:11 'For I know the plans I have for you says the Lord. They are plans for good and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.'

Jeremiah 33:3 'Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.'

These are some of the best-known and loved scriptures, yet there was a time when Jeremiah was discouraged. We find it in:

Jeremiah 15:18 'Why is my pain perpetual and my wound incurable, refusing to be healed? Will you indeed be to me like a deceitful brook, like waters that fail and are uncertain?'

Can you see the doubt and discouragement?

GOD'S RESPONSE

God responds to Jeremiah in his discouragement. God gives him some advice to help him out of the hole that he had found himself in.

Jeremiah 15:19 'Therefore thus says the Lord (to Jeremiah): 'If you return (and give up this mistaken tone of distrust and despair), then I will give you again a settled place of quite and safety, and you will be My minister; and if you separate the precious from the vile (cleansing your own heart from unworthy and unwanted suspicions concerning God's faithfulness you shall be My mouthpiece. (But do not yield to them). Let them return to you - not you to (the people).'

Let's look at God's response:

a. RETURN TO GOD

The first thing that God does is to offer him the option of returning. Oftentimes when we are discouraged we become self-focused and self-orientated. We begin to feel sorry for ourselves. This self-orientation needs to be replaced with a returning to God and becoming God-orientated. We need to become God-conscious and remind ourselves that God is all-powerful and limitless. We must stop limiting God and return to a pace of faith in God.

Jeremiah 15:19 Therefore thus says the Lord (to Jeremiah): 'If you return'

b. A MISTAKEN TONE

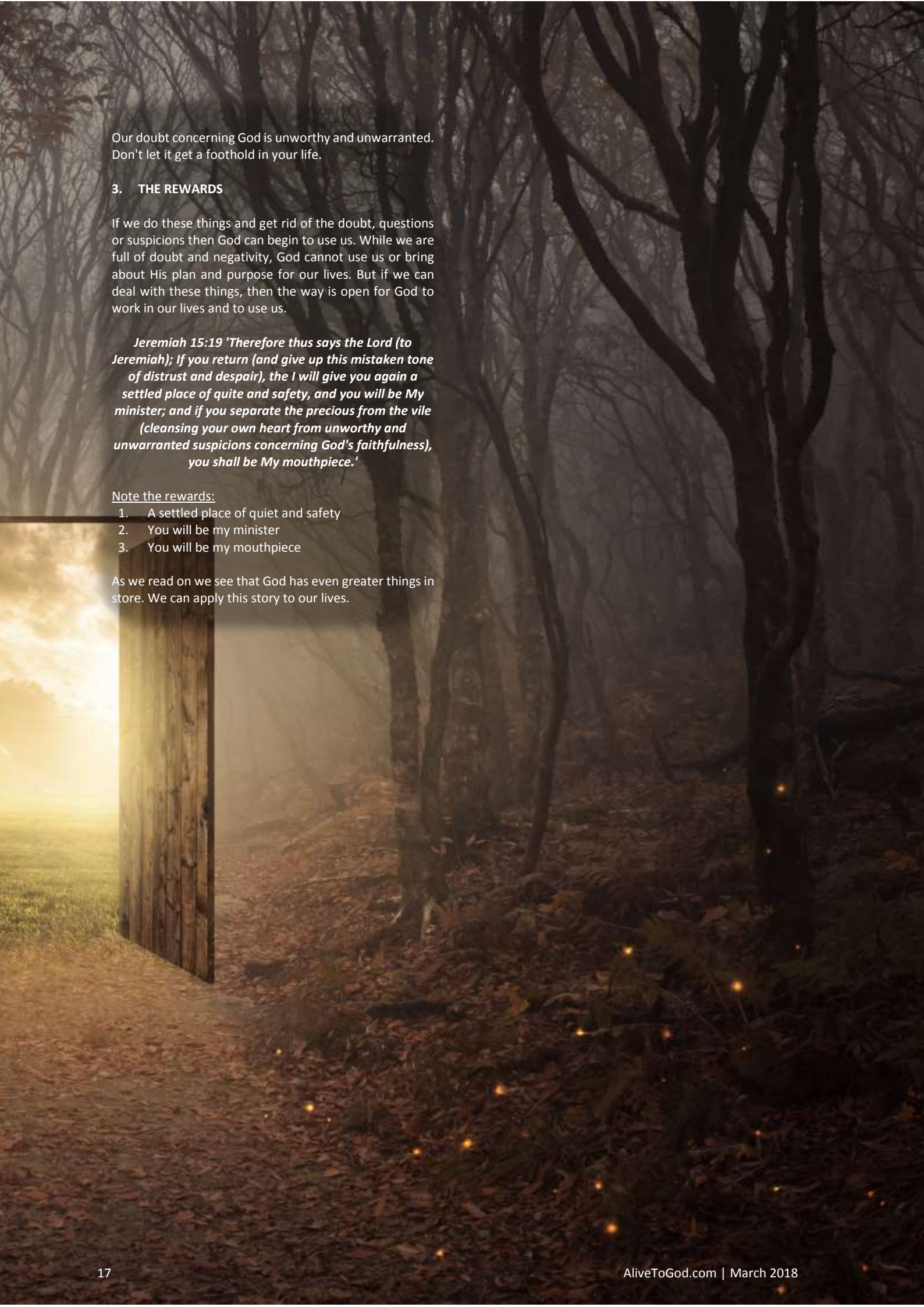
Have you ever discovered that when we are going through a hard time we can begin to sound like we are going through a bad patch? Jeremiah had begun to develop this tone. It was a tone of distrust and despair. Perhaps he was saying things like: 'God has forgotten about me' or 'God does not have a plan for me', or 'trusting God is not really helping me'. Moaning or distrust and despair do not move God, God is moved by faith. When we develop this tone we need to take decisive steps to give up and let go of this attitude so that God can begin to use us again.

Jeremiah 15:19 Therefore thus says the Lord (to Jeremiah): 'If you return (and give up this mistaken tone of distrust and despair)'

c. GET RID OF THE DOUBT

When we develop doubt, we set ourselves up for disaster. Doubt and suspicions about God and His faithfulness are unacceptable and vile to God.

Jeremiah 15:19 'and if you separate the precious form the vile (cleansing your own heart from unworthy and unwarranted suspicions concerning God's faithfulness)'



Our doubt concerning God is unworthy and unwarranted. Don't let it get a foothold in your life.

3. THE REWARDS

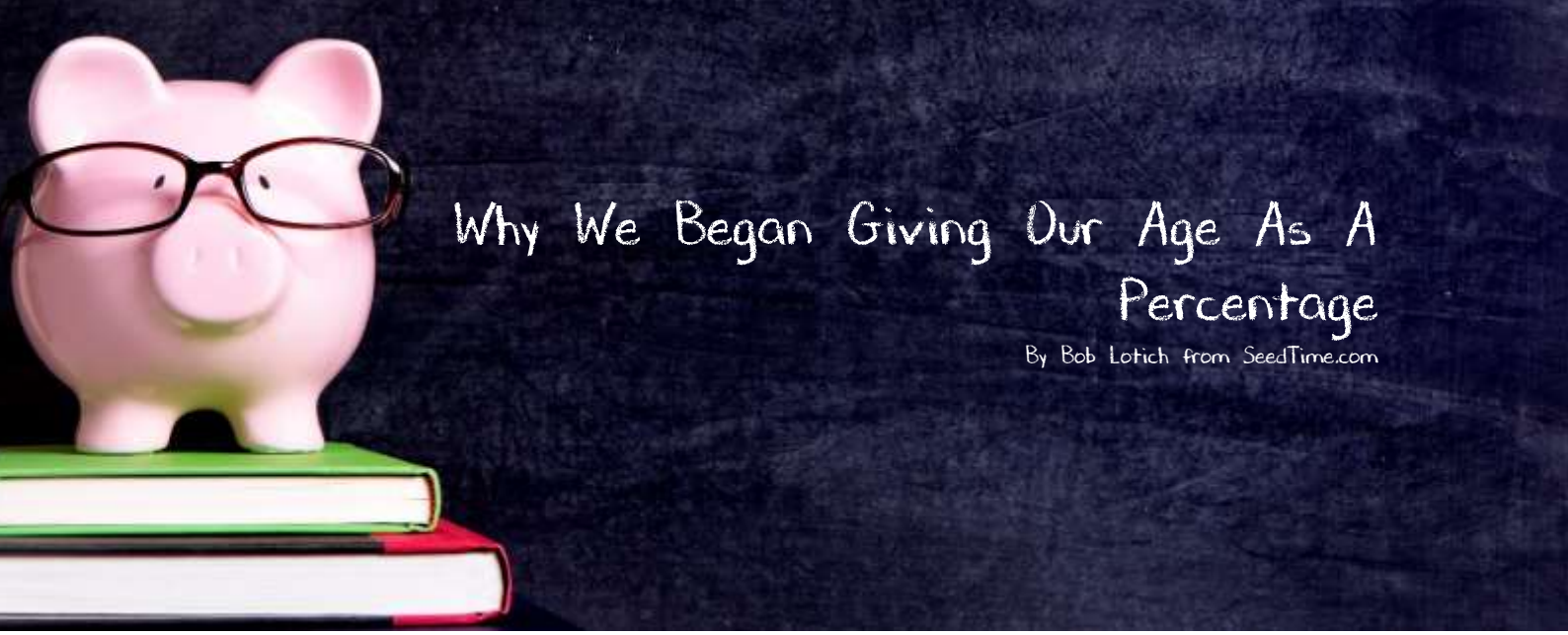
If we do these things and get rid of the doubt, questions or suspicions then God can begin to use us. While we are full of doubt and negativity, God cannot use us or bring about His plan and purpose for our lives. But if we can deal with these things, then the way is open for God to work in our lives and to use us.

Jeremiah 15:19 'Therefore thus says the Lord (to Jeremiah); If you return (and give up this mistaken tone of distrust and despair), the I will give you again a settled place of quite and safety, and you will be My minister; and if you separate the precious from the vile (cleansing your own heart from unworthy and unwarranted suspicions concerning God's faithfulness), you shall be My mouthpiece.'

Note the rewards:

1. A settled place of quiet and safety
2. You will be my minister
3. You will be my mouthpiece

As we read on we see that God has even greater things in store. We can apply this story to our lives.



Why We Began Giving Our Age As A Percentage

By Bob Lotich from SeedTime.com

I can still remember exactly where I was standing in the middle of that field when He dropped it on my heart. I was in my secret place (that wasn't really that secret). It was technically a construction site for an upcoming phase in our subdivision high up on a hill. For whatever reason development had been put on hold and this cleared 5-acre piece of beautiful land had become a little overgrown. Because it was high up on a hill – a plateau of sorts – it was a pretty secluded area that I could go and think and pray. It was God's treat to me and I wish I had spent more time there before they put houses all over it, but I digress… About 6 years ago one winter day when it had warmed up a bit, I went to the field and was telling God about some of the big financial goals that I was hoping for in my future. And though it wasn't an audible voice, He communicated as clear as could be to me that if we wanted to see those things come to pass we should begin **giving our AGE as a percentage** of our income. At the time we were consistently tithing (10%) and giving probably 5% on top of that to various charities and ministries near and dear to our hearts. Since I was 31 at the time, giving 31% of our income represented a huge jump in our giving. Our blog business had been doing pretty well at the time and because we had been budgeting for giving, we actually were able to give 15% of our income pretty comfortably. Doubling it to 31% on the other hand? Not the same story. It required a big leap of faith.

Side note: I just need to interject that budgeting for giving was by far the biggest game-changer for us to fully ENJOY giving. We had always gotten joy from it, but when we added that budget category *it created a practical shift to a spiritual truth (that it wasn't actually OUR money) and made it so much easier to give. We were no longer deciding whether to use this $100 to buy shoes or give it. It was in a separate category and it wasn't ours anymore.*

A Faith Test

The first half of Hebrews 11:6 can be a little scary…

> "And without faith it is impossible to please God "

But, the inverse is really encouraging. God is pleased when we step out in faith. My assumption is that this especially applies to things that He instructs us to do. This was critically helpful for us as we began giving our age as a percentage of our earnings. I knew that I wasn't making this up in my head. I had seen God work miraculously in our finances multiple times as we consistently tithed over the years. I knew that we could NOT "outgive" God. I knew that as we stretched our faith in giving, more was going to come back to us and the cycle would just continue. RG LeTourneau was a Christian businessman and inventor in the early-mid 20th century who spent many years **reverse tithing** (giving 90% of his income and living off 10%) and he has this great quote I love:

> I shovel (Money) out and God shovels is back, but God has a bigger Shovel.
>
> RG Le Tourbeau

Lest You Think I Am Boasting

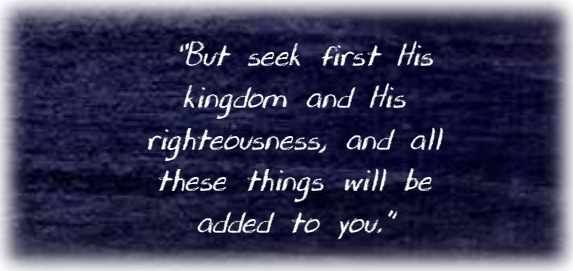
Honestly, one of my greatest fears is to be misunderstood. Which is pretty hilarious because I share my thoughts and ideas on the internet for a living. I mean, good luck posting that 2+2=4 on Facebook and have someone NOT claim that it is a political statement. That is just the world we live in. Being misunderstood is part of 21st-century life. And for 6 years I have wanted to share this idea publicly, but I have held back because I was afraid it might be misinterpreted as boasting or violating Matthew 6:2-4:

"So when you give to the needy, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be praised by men. Truly I tell you, they already have their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

But recently, God has been making it clear to me that part of my calling is to encourage people (like you) in this area. Additionally, that trying to get attention and applause as you give a gift is a very different thing than encouraging believers with testimonies of His goodness. It is a matter of the heart for sure. My heart's desire to share this as an encouragement and because I know for some of you it will inspire your faith. And even if giving your age is a stretch at the moment, I know some reading this will think to themselves "maybe I can't do that right now, but surely I could _____" And that is the goal.

Why We Do This

Some people don't get why we do this. That's okay. Even if it weren't out of obedience to God, we have a passion to use what He has given us to help further His plans. I may not be a preacher or evangelist, but if I can use what God has given me – a little extra money – to help spread the gospel and send more people to heaven, sign me up! Not surprisingly as we keep stretching in our giving, He continues to take care of all of our needs and provides many wants as well. Matthew 6:33 says it well:



Where We Are Today

By the grace of God we have been able to continue giving our age over the last 6 years and are currently at 37%. Some years have been tougher than others to pull off, but I have no plans of stopping now. And I have confidence that God will continue to provide all our needs according to His riches in glory (Phil 4:19). My hope is that someday soon we will be able to reach that 90/10 reversal that many others with the gift of giving have reached.

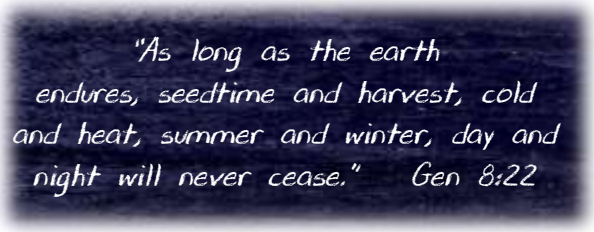
What I Learned

Recently I started playing a game called Minecraft with my 4-year-old son. First off, the game is really old and is way past its prime, but what I love about it is that it is one of the few games that is clean enough for my 4-year-old to play. In it, the world is a simplified version of our world where if you want to build a house, you cut down a tree. If you want light, you build a fire (or torch). And if you want food to grow, you plant seeds. And in its simplicity, you quickly realize that if you want to have a big garden you just need to keep planting more and more seeds. When they mature, you reap your harvest – which provides you food and more seeds. And then you just keep planting seeds and very quickly you have an abundance – way more than you need to survive.

We All Know This, Don't We?

This is common sense and I think we all know this subconsciously, but as a society where most of us have never had to plant seeds, I feel like we miss the depth of this revelation. And the simplicity of it as well. If you want more of something, you plant seeds.

In a nutshell, that is how I have felt about our financial journey the last 10 years. We have just continued to turn as much of our income as possible into seeds (by giving) and as we have it has just seemed to grow. It hasn't been easy, but it has been that simple. I have learned that if you want more money to be responsible for *(see the* Parable of the Talents*)*, you give more (plant seeds) and manage it well *(*be a good steward*)*.



Like so many other Biblical principles, it seems counter-intuitive and requires FAITH – and that is exactly where God likes to work.

Does This Resonate With You?

I happen to know that lots of our readers share this desire to give beyond 10% and some are probably at the 90% (reverse tithing) mark. I think they would agree and say that if this is a desire of your heart to be used this way, start giving what you have – just start planting seeds. The woman who only had two widows mites (Luke 21:1-4) to give is still being talked about thousands of years later because of her willingness NOT to despise the smallness of what she had to offer and to give what she had in faith. It cost her something. It hurt a little. This is why I have learned that it is better when I give and it is uncomfortable, rather than waiting for the next raise to come around or the next bonus. It seems that something is activated when we step out in faith this way. Regardless Of Where You Are On Your Giving Journey… Let me ask you, what would happen if you planted a few more seeds this month?


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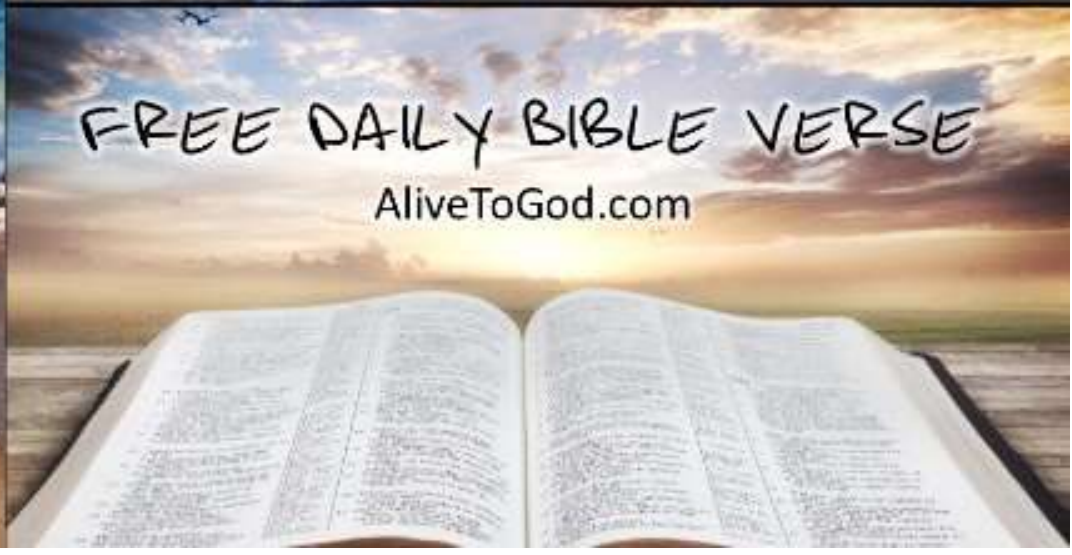

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