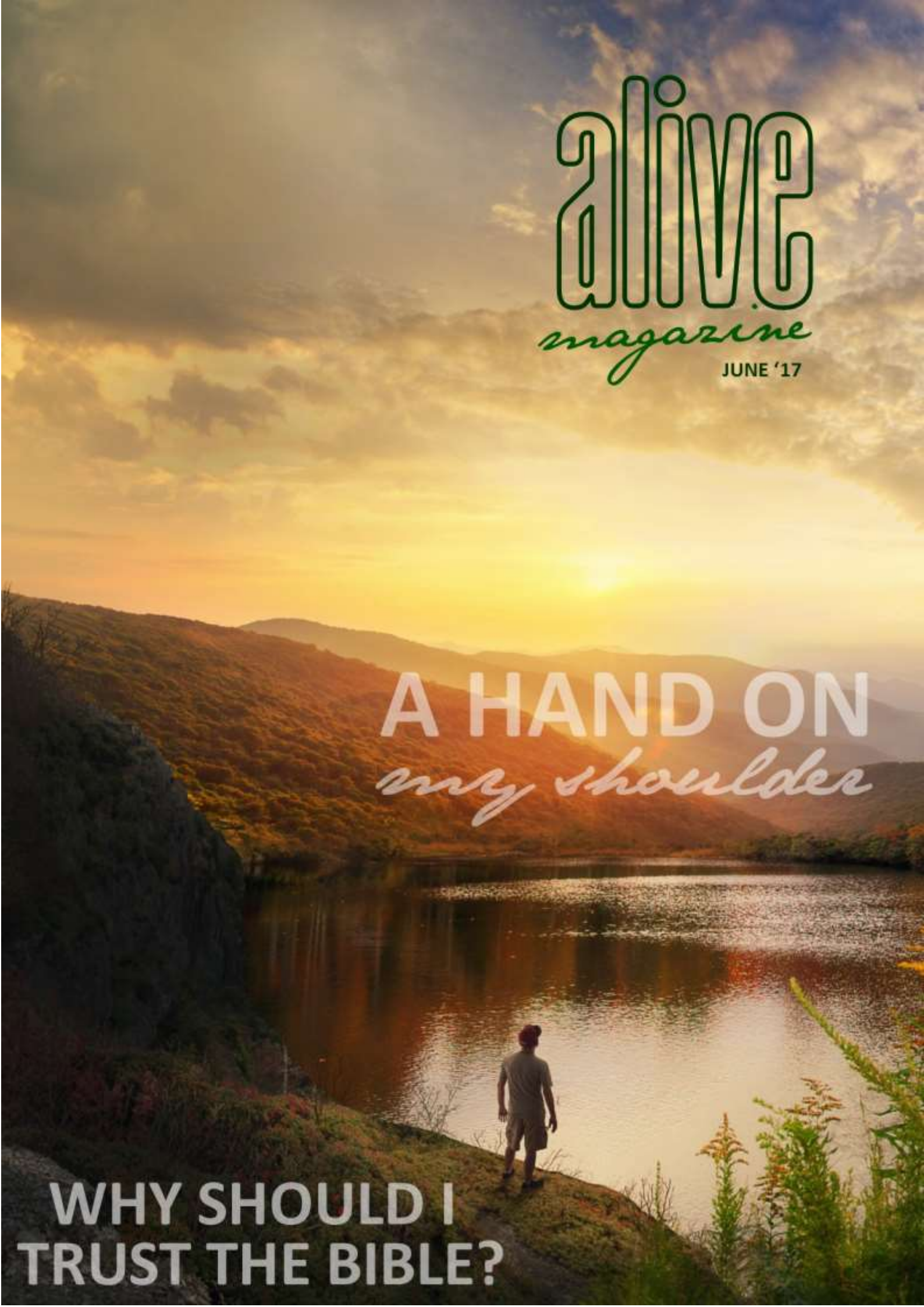




alive
magazine
JUNE '17

A HAND ON
my shoulder

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Andrew & Vanessa Roebert

ALIVE TO GOD

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A HAND ON MY SHOULDER

By: Andrew Roebert

We all need to know that God's hand is with us and on us. To live life without this knowing that God is with us can be a very difficult life. However, when we live our lives in the knowledge that we are in the hand of God and that His hand is on our shoulder, to direct, lead and guide, we can know the sure confidence that comes when He is a reality to us.

I have known God's hand on my life and I have experienced His carrying power, through the storms and through the sunshine. This is what God wants us to experience in our lives.

GOD'S HAND IS POWERFUL

We must never underestimate the hand of God in our lives. To know the hand of God in and on our lives is one of the greatest joys the human soul can experience.

Isaiah 11:15 The Lord will dry a path through the Red Sea and wave his hand over the Euphrates, sending a mighty wind to divide it into seven streams that can easily be crossed.

Isaiah 14:27 The Lord, the God of battle, has spoken—who can change his plans? When his hand moves, who can stop him?

When God's hand moves on our lives, no other human being can stop what God wants to do. Who can change His plans? NO ONE!

IN THE STORM

We do face storms in our lives. We do pass through difficult seasons. It may feel like you are being tossed to and fro by the storms that come in the process of life. But God wants to carry us through them all. He wants to carry you through the night and lead you on.

Isaiah 49:2 He has hidden me in the shadow of his hand; I am like a sharp arrow in his quiver.

If we know God's hand on our lives we can face the storms when they come. It is not a matter of IF they come, it is a matter of when they come.

AN ABIDING HAND

God's hand does not come and go. No matter what we may be going through. No matter what you may be facing or challenged with, God wants you to experience His hand in your life.

Isaiah 46:4 I will be your God through all your lifetime, yes, even when your hair is white with age. I made you and I will care for you. I will carry you along and be your Saviour.

Hebrews 13:5 For God has said, "I will never, never fail you nor forsake you."

God is reaching out to you today. Take hold of His hand today!

OUR GUIDE

God is there to point the way for us. He wants to be our guide.

Psalms 32:8 I will instruct you (says the Lord) and guide you along the best pathway for your life; I will advise you and watch your progress.

Isaiah 58:11 And the Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy you with all good things, and keep you healthy too; and you will be like a well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring.

WE MAY FALL

Sometimes we may even fall. We remain human, and as such we are weak and will fail and fall, but God is ready to lift us up and hold us up.

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.

Because God has made His hand available to us, we can know His strength and His almighty hand and this should give us confidence. If you have fallen in some way or another, it is time to grab His hand. It is only when we fall that we realize how much we actually need His hand in our lives.

WHOSE HAND ARE YOU IN

Let us make sure that we place ourselves in His hands. It is something that we can do. We can approach God and place our lives in His hands and expect that as He has done for others, He will do for us and He will reach out and rescue us.

You may find yourself in the grip of the hand of something else today. There are many things that can take hold of our lives. God can deliver us from every one if we will take hold of His hand.

Jeremiah 42:11 Don't fear the king of Babylon anymore, for I am with you to save you and to deliver you from his hand.

AN EXAMPLE FROM THE LIFE OF JESUS

In the story about the disciples of Jesus on the lake, we see how Jesus stepped in to rescue.

Matthew 14:25-31 About four o'clock in the morning Jesus came to them, walking on the water! They screamed in terror, for they thought he was a ghost. But Jesus immediately spoke to them, reassuring them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. Then Peter called to him: "Sir, if it is really you, tell me to come over to you, walking on the water." "All right," the Lord said, "come along!" So Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. But when he looked around at the high waves, he was terrified and began to sink. "Save me, Lord!" he shouted. Instantly Jesus reached out his hand and rescued him.

This is the very character of Jesus. God is reaching out to you today.

PLACING OURSELVES IN HIS HANDS

This is where we need to be. Safely in the hands of the living God. It is from this place that we can experience His hand on our shoulder.

Psalm 48:14 For this great God is our God forever and ever. He will be our guide until we die.

Job 12:10 For the soul of every living thing is in the hand of God, and the breath of all mankind.

Let's entrust our lives to Him. Let's entrust our situations and circumstances to Him. As we trust Him we will not need to fear.



Should a Christian use credit cards?

SeedTime.com

It seems like every day you get a new credit card application in the mail.

One promises 10% cash back on Amazon purchases. Another promises free airline miles. And yet another offers you rewards from your favourite department store every time you make a purchase.

You begin thinking — if you make every purchase on a cash back credit card, you could earn a lot of cash back. It would be kind of like using a coupon for every purchase.

That's good stewardship, right?

But you've also may have heard that Christians shouldn't use credit cards.

Confused? Let's set the record straight.

SHOULD A CHRISTIAN USE CREDIT CARDS?

To be clear, the Bible doesn't plainly say Christians should or should not use credit cards. Obviously, credit cards did not exist in Biblical times.

However, the Bible does have a lot to say about debt, stewardship, and greed. And the Biblical principles about debt, stewardship, and greed can be helpful in deciding whether or not it's wise to use credit cards.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT DEBT

Let's begin with debt. Does the Bible say it's wrong to be in debt?

Not exactly. The Bible does have some strong words about debt, though.

First, the Bible is clear that if you borrow, you must repay.

Psalms 37:21 (ESV) says, "The wicked borrows but does not pay back, but the righteous is generous and gives."

Second, the Bible points out a downside to borrowing.

Proverbs 22:7 (ESV) says, "The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is a slave to the lender."

Whenever we borrow money, whether via a credit card or some other means, we have certain obligations to the lender. We must repay what we borrow.

What that means is if we owe money, paying that money back must become a priority. If another great financial opportunity comes along while you are in debt, you may



have to turn that opportunity down if you owe money on your credit card.

Credit card debt can affect your ability to qualify for a home loan, to pay for a vacation, or even to take time off work to go on a short term mission trip.

When you carry credit card debt, you truly are a slave to the credit card company.

Finally, the Bible is clear that it's never a good idea to bank on an unknown future.

James 4:13-15 (ESV) Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit" — yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that."

Nobody knows what the future brings. It is a bad idea to purchase something on a credit card, thinking you can pay it back when you get your big bonus next month. What if that bonus doesn't come? What if you lose your job?

Don't finance an uncertain future.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT STEWARDSHIP AND GREED

The Bible has a lot to say about being a good steward of what we have been given, whether that's money, health, or any other blessing.

A look at the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30 provides a good example. The man who was given 5 talents and invested wisely to double his money was praised by his master. The man who buried his one talent in the sand and didn't even put it in the bank to earn interest was chastised.

When God gives us anything – money, talents, a good job – we are to use it to the best of our ability. A case could be made, then that using a cash back credit card is a good use of money.

But that's not all the Bible has to say about money.

Hebrews 13:5 (ESV) warns against greed when it says, *"Keep your life free from the love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'"*

And 1 Timothy 6:10 (ESV) says, *"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs."*

We are to be content with what God has given us, even when we don't have as much as our neighbour. Even more important than that, our use of money should reflect our love for God. Using credit cards to pay for something outside of your budget because you are discontent or greedy, then, would be wrong.

SO WHAT IS THE VERDICT? SHOULD CHRISTIANS USE CREDIT CARDS?

As a Christian looking at all the Bible has to say about debt, greed, stewardship, and contentment, I would say it is OK for Christians to use credit cards.

But just because it's OK to use credit cards doesn't mean it's always wise. A credit card is just a tool to help manage your money, and like any tool, it can be used wisely or unwisely.

If you're going to use credit cards, make sure you pay off the balance each and every month.

If you can't pay your balance, you are banking on an uncertain tomorrow, contrary to what James 4:13-15 says.

One way to make sure you can pay your balance each month is to track your credit card spending in your budgeting app or checkbook register.

By treating credit card purchases as money already spent, rather than a balance to be paid in the future, you can earn your cash back rewards while being certain you can pay the bill at the end of the month.

If you don't have the discipline to pay off your card every month, it's not worth using credit cards. Again, the borrower is slave to the lender (Proverbs 22:7). No amount of cash back or other rewards is worth being a slave to someone else.

Finally, be sure you are not using credit cards to fill a need that only God can fill. Don't try to keep up with the neighbours or put your trust in your credit card's ability to pay your bills.

Honour God with your money. If you're doing that, you'll be just fine, whether you decide to use credit cards or not.





Loving Takes Intentionality

MarriageMissions.com

Just because you fell in love “once upon a time” it doesn’t mean you will assuredly “live happily ever after.” The probability that your once passionate love for each other will eventually fizzle (and in some cases, even explode) is a pretty sure thing. Just look at the divorce statistics, for just one clue, among many. Loving takes intentionality.

To fall in love is no big feat. You kind of trip into that situation. But to continue in love —that’s the challenge. However, without intentionality involved in growing your relationship, I’m afraid it’s not likely your love will grow in a positive direction.

Yet by doing what it takes to LEARN how to continually grow your love relationship, it’s not the impossible dream.

SOMETHING WE LEARNED

That’s what Steve and I learned the hard way. We met over 47 years ago when I called into the college radio program he was disc-jockeying. (That term in itself is a blast from the past.) He was begging people to call in song requests and I was one of them who did. We started talking, and really hit it off to the point where we decided to meet each other at the radio station the next day. The rest is history. That was the start of our “journey in love.”

It didn’t take long for us to become infatuated with each other and eventually to “fall in love.”

We dated for two and a half years and then married. We were sure that ours was a love like no other and that we would be the model couple showing others how love was to be lived out.

Were we wrong! Our first year was pretty great. But eventually life has its way of getting between even the strongest of couples and inching us away from enjoying being with each other. It came to the point where we even hated being together more times than not.

There are a lot of reasons for this, some of them being youth, naivety, lack of the type of maturity it takes to forge a marriage partnership, lack of knowledge of how to resolve conflict in healthy ways, life itself delivered a few punches in health issues and financial setbacks... to name a few.

LOVING TAKES INTENTIONALITY

But eventually the Lord helped us to wake up just before it was too late and we started applying ourselves to learn

how to live with each other in more understanding ways and to rebuild and then continue to grow our love. All of that took intentionality. There's that word again, but it's true. God showed us we needed to have a purpose driven marriage, which would take intentionality on our part to develop and to grow our love for each other.

This week, I came across some things written and spoken by Dr Pat Love.

She wrote on the topic of staying in love with your spouse. It holds a lot of truth and is worth applying as we work to grow our marriages (Steve and mine, and yours). While Pat doesn't put it into a biblical context, it definitely goes along with biblical principles pointing out that love is not only a noun, but also a verb. It's what we do, which best shows and grows our love.

Here's a shortened version of what Dr Pat Love explains as "the four basic keys to loving." She wrote:

(1) You've got to show up. You've got to be present. And you have to be under the same roof. You've got to log in some hours with each other. You don't just show up for what's fun for me. If it's important to you, it becomes important to me.

(2) You've got to tune in. Attunement means that when I'm present with you, that I am not multi-tasking... You cannot be intimate when you're multi-tasking. So, during those important moments when I look at you, I really see you. And you can tell when I look at you with soft eyes and I really hear you and I'm present, so I tune in. I mean, there's such a difference in taking someone's hand and holding their hand and feeling their hand.

(3) Tune in long enough to understand, to see how you are different. I tune in long enough to get you or understand you...

(4) Behaviour, will be congruent with that understanding... We love people who love us. It's pretty simple. But we really love people who get us. And their behaviour shows it in those subtle little ways.

I believe there's so much truth in what Pat explains. And when think about it, aren't those points, which helped you to first fall in love with each other? You were "present" in your relationship —spending time together, learning more and more about each other. You "tuned in," as far as how you interacted with one another, so that you could better "understand" more about the person you would one day marry. You were supportive and loving, and your behaviour showed it both in little and big ways.

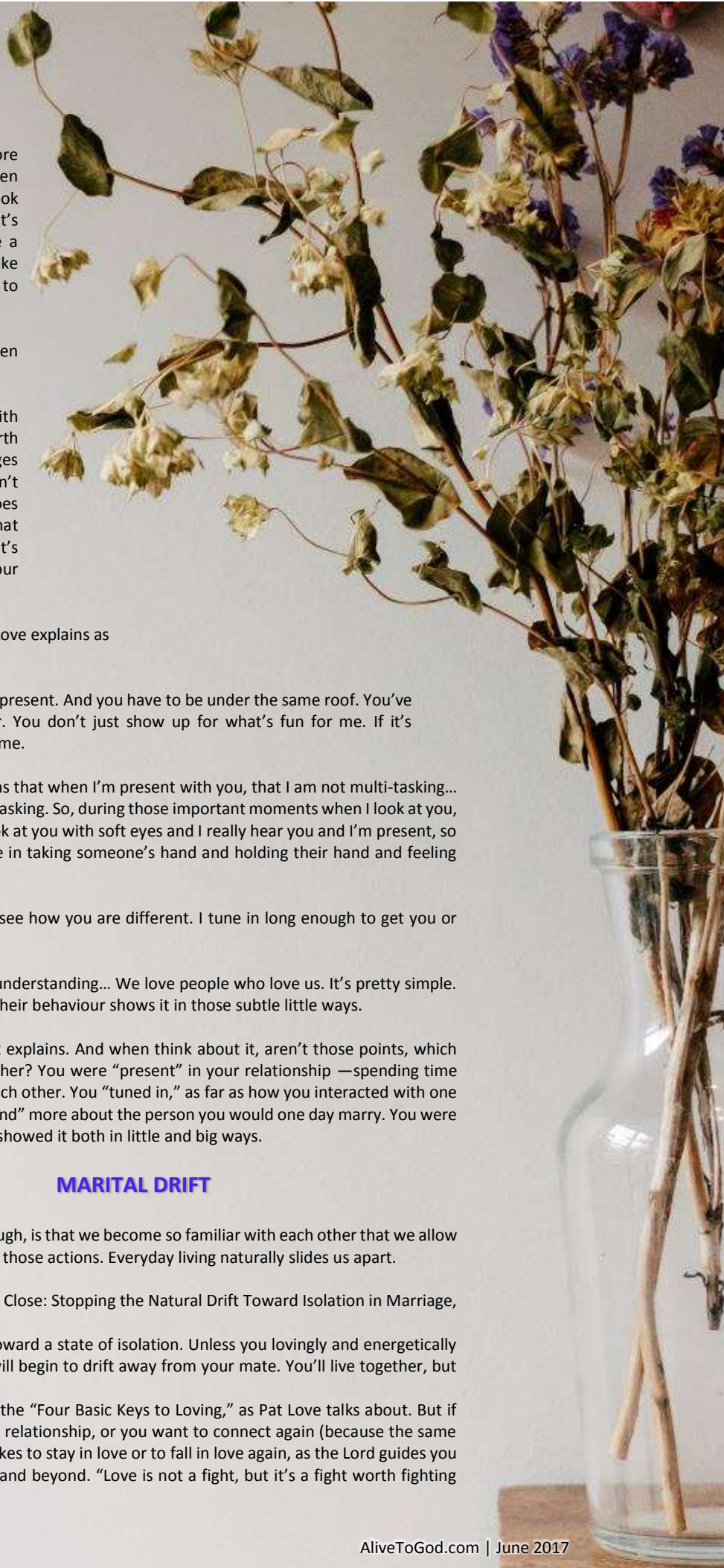
MARITAL DRIFT

What happens too often after marrying though, is that we become so familiar with each other that we allow ourselves to slide out of continuing on with those actions. Everyday living naturally slides us apart.

As Dennis Rainey states in his book, *Staying Close: Stopping the Natural Drift Toward Isolation in Marriage*,

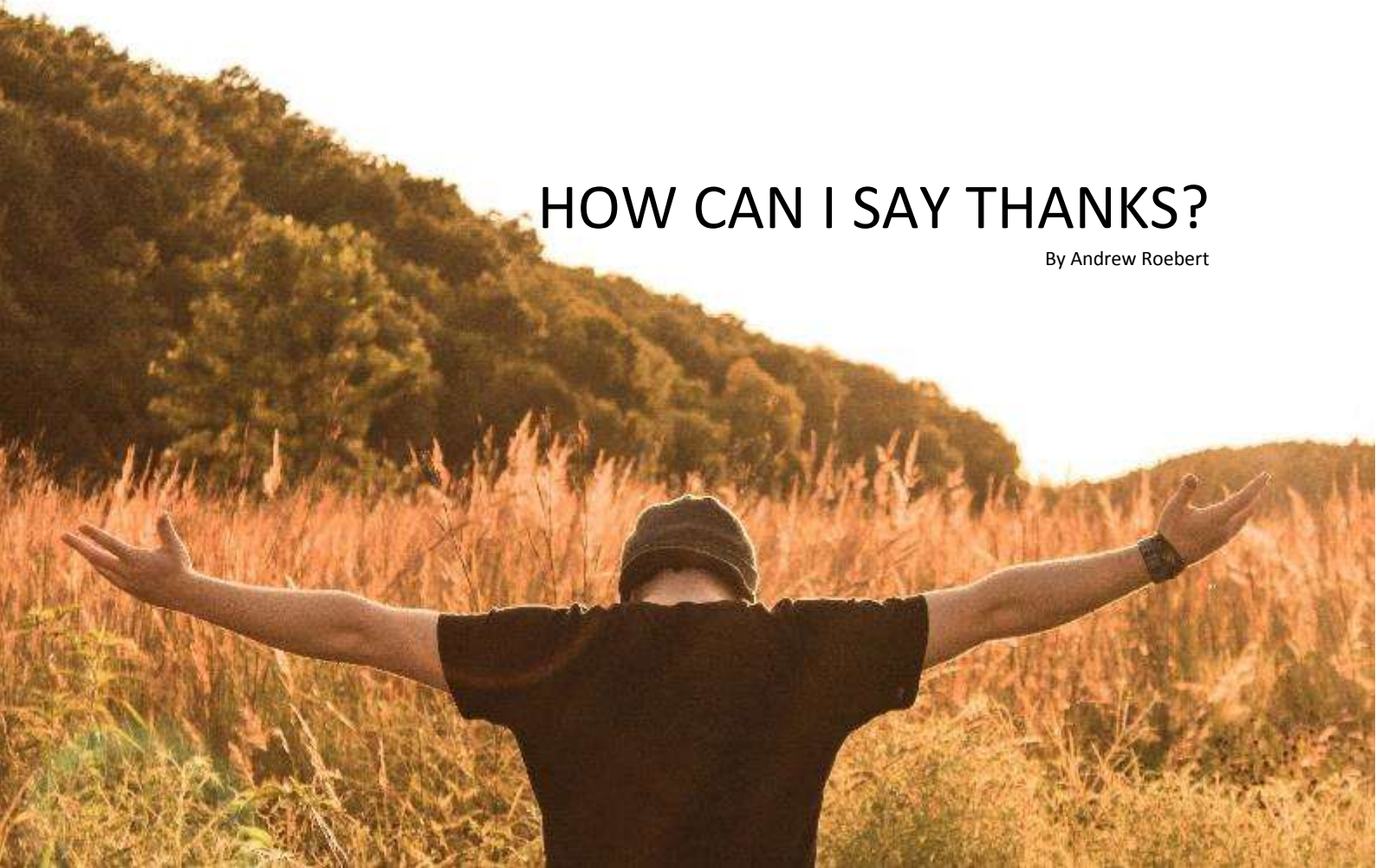
"Your marriage will naturally move more toward a state of isolation. Unless you lovingly and energetically nurture and maintain your marriage, you will begin to drift away from your mate. You'll live together, but will live alone."

It's true. It will take intentionality to apply the "Four Basic Keys to Loving," as Pat Love talks about. But if you want to stay connected in your marital relationship, or you want to connect again (because the same "rule" applies here too), you'll do what it takes to stay in love or to fall in love again, as the Lord guides you to apply the principles of 1 Corinthians 13 and beyond. "Love is not a fight, but it's a fight worth fighting for."



HOW CAN I SAY THANKS?

By Andrew Roebert



Thankfulness is important to God. Thankfulness should be important to us. Being thankful is important.

During the course of life we are exposed to many things. The things that we pass through have the potential of affecting our lives. But it is oftentimes, only as we look back, that we begin to realise what God has done and how wonderful the things were that He did. When you look back on your life can you really be thankful?

God is looking for those people, who despite what they have been through have thankfulness and hearts full of thankfulness.

There is a great song and the words are as follows: 'How can I say thanks, for the things you have done for me. Things so undeserved yet you gave to prove your love for me. The voices of a million angels could not express my gratitude. All that I am and ever hope to be, I owe it all to Thee. To God be the Glory.'

THE 10 LEPERS

Luke 17:11-19 As they continued onward toward Jerusalem, they reached the border between Galilee and Samaria, 12and as they entered a village there, ten lepers stood at a distance, 13crying out, "Jesus, sir, have mercy on us!" He looked at them and said, "Go to the Jewish priest and show him that you are healed!" And as they were going, their leprosy disappeared. One of them came back to Jesus, shouting, "Glory to God, I'm healed!" He fell flat on the ground in front of Jesus, face downward in the dust, thanking him for what he had done. This man was a despised Samaritan. Jesus asked, "Didn't I heal ten men? Where are the nine? 18Does only this foreigner

return to give glory to God?" And Jesus said to the man, "Stand up and go; your faith has made you well."

GOD IS READY TO HEAR OUR CRY

Jesus had been traveling for a period of time. He had reached the border area between Galilee and Samaria. The Bible tells us that He was arriving at a village when these 10 individuals confronted Him.

Jesus must have been tired and exhausted, but He always had time for those who would call out to Him. The Bible tells us that these ten lepers cried out to Jesus. In the KJV it says they lifted up their voices. In the NIV it says that they called out in a loud voice. These people knew their predicament and they knew that without Jesus' help they would be lost. Jesus was ready to stop and hear their cry.

In the same way, today, Jesus is still ready to hear your cry, no matter how sick or dirty you are.

AT A DISTANCE

Another aspect we see is that because of the disease that these people had that were disconnected from society and from Jesus. The issue is that even in their disconnected state they knew where to go for help. Even from a far off they recognized Jesus and they knew, from what they had heard, they He would help them.

Your life may distant from God. Perhaps things that you have been through have kept you away from God and you think that you are too far from God for Him to hear and answer your call. No matter what the distance and no

matter what your condition may be, Jesus is there and He is ready and able to receive you and touch your life.

OBEDIENCE

Obedience is important to God. As these people called out to God for healing from this deadly disease He responded in a way that was perhaps unexpected. He did simply say you are healed go in peace. But rather he issued an instruction to these people. Jesus told them to go and show themselves to the priests.

I can imagine that they must have been challenged. They were not healed yet and here Jesus is telling them to go and show themselves to the priests so that the priests could confirm the healing, which had not yet happened.

Perhaps they were discouraged or even angry as they stood there contemplating if they should go to the priests or not. This was a test that they had to pass.

AS THEY OBEYED

As they obeyed, something wonderful happened. The Bible tells us that as they went they were healed. 'And as they were going their leprosy disappeared'

The question that I always ask myself is did they all go that far and get to the point where they were able to notice that they were in fact healed? Did some of them get discouraged and pull out of the task of going to the priests? Who knows how far they had to go before the healing began to become apparent?

What we do know is that Jesus healed them all. They had to obey and follow His instruction and as they did the healing became a reality.

Sometimes we stop too soon. We must keep on obeying God no matter what happens.

THE MIRACLE

As the remaining lepers were traveling to the priests, one noticed that He was healed. Where were the others? What happened to them? Did they go on to see the priest? Perhaps they were so excited to be healed that they went home to see their families. Perhaps they were so excited to be healed that they completely forgot about who had healed them? Who knows?

What we do know is that this one individual recognized that he was healed and the moment he realized what had happened he turned around and ran back to Jesus. God has a miracle in store for every person who will call on Him. We just need to call and obey whatever He tells us to do. God has got a miracle in store for you.

HOW CAN I SAY THANKS

This one individual ran back to Jesus. He was so thankful that he could hardly contain himself. It says that he

glorified God with a loud voice. We need to notice three (3) things:

1. He was in a hurry to be thankful.

We need to be speedy in bringing our praise and thanks, and not delay, in case in time we forget the mercy that has been shown to us.

2. He did not care what anyone thought.

He ran to Jesus, making a big noise all the way. He had just one thing on his mind and that was to get to Jesus and say thanks. He was completely determined that he would thank Jesus for the miracle.

3. He was humble.

He was prepared to throw himself down at the feet of Jesus. He was humble in his thankfulness. When we are thankful it should be the same.

GOD IS LOOKING FOR THANKFUL PEOPLE

The first thing that Jesus asked of this one individual was about the whereabouts of the others. "Where are the nine? Why did not they return to give thanks?" This intimates that ingratitude is a very common sin.

Of the many that receive mercy from God, there are but a few, very few, that return, to give thanks in a right manner (scarcely one in ten). God has done so much for us and we need to be thankful.

THANKFUL FOR WHAT GOD HAS DONE

If I look back on my own life I can just marvel at what God has done and at how He has used my family and me.

I could never have imagined that God could do such a marvellous thing. I remember years back how God gave my father a promise:

Habakkuk 1:5 Look among the nations and watch—Be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days, which you would not believe, though it were told you.

That is exactly what God went on to do. It is important that we, from time to time, look back and reflect on what God has done and that we allow this to generate thankfulness within us.

Psalms 105:1 Give thanks to the LORD, call on His name; make known among the nations what He has done.

THANKFUL FOR WHAT GOD IS DOING

Not only has God done things but He is also busy doing things. Just because we do not see much happening on the surface does not mean that God is not moving and working. Perhaps God is being good to you right at this moment.

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a red dress, is shown in profile from the waist up. She has her hands clasped in prayer and is looking upwards towards a bright, hazy sky. The background is a soft-focus field of tall grass and trees.

let us be thankful people

God has been working within my own life. It is not that it is always easy, but it is great to know that God is working within us. If God has been working and doing something in your life, don't forget to be thankful. Let's open our mouths and express our thanks to God.

Psalm 107:8-9 Let them give thanks to the LORD for His unfailing love and His wonderful deeds for men, for He satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.

1 Chronicles 16:41 give thanks to the Lord for His constant love and mercy.

THANKFUL FOR WHAT HE IS GOING TO DO

God is not finished with us. There is still so much more that God wants to do. God wants to use you and I in ways that we have yet to understand and discover. There are still many promises that need to come to fulfillment. God still wants to be good and show us His loving kindness.

If you are trusting God in some way or another, continue to trust, continue to be expectant and continue to be thankful.

Psalm 106:47 Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from the nations, that we may give thanks to Your holy name and glory in Your praise.

1 Chronicles 16:34 Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love and His kindness go on forever.

Daily Prayer for Protection

By Derek & Ruth Prince

Father God, I come to you in the Name of Jesus, declaring that no weapon that is formed against us shall prosper and every tongue which rises against us in judgement we do condemn. This is our heritage as servants of the Lord and our righteousness is from You, O Lord of Hosts (Isaiah 54:17).

If there are those who have been speaking or praying against us or who have rejected us, even cursed us, we forgive them and, having forgiven them, we bless them in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 5:43, Romans 12:14).

Now we declare, O Lord, that You and You alone are our God, and besides You there is no other God. You are a just God and Saviour: You are Creator, Redeemer, Faithful, Loving God. You are Father, Jesus the Son and Holy Spirit – and we worship You!

Your Word says: "Submit yourself to God, resist the devil, and he will flee from you." So we submit ourselves afresh to You in unreserved obedience. Having submitted to You, Lord, we do as Your Word directs. We resist the devil: all his pressures, his attacks, his deceptions, every instrument or agent he would seek to use against us. We do not submit! We resist him, drive him from us and exclude him from us in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Specifically we reject and repel:

- Every form of witchcraft. Every influence of the occult.
- Every spirit of infirmity: infections, malignancies, viruses, pain, inflammation, and allergies.
- Every spirit of depression and heaviness; confusion and deception.
- Every spirit of accusation and condemnation.

Thank You, Father, that You confuse the plans the enemy has against us.

Finally, Lord, we thank You that through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, we have passed out from under the curse and entered into the blessing of Abraham, whom You blessed in all things (Galatians 3:13-14, Genesis 24:1).

Thank You for Your favour, Your presence, Your provision, Your protection. Thank You for good health, victory, exaltation, reproductiveness, and prosperity. Amen

HUMAN AGAIN

By: Andrew Roebert

God has meant for us as humans to enjoy and experience hope on an ongoing basis. God is the God of hope and as such hope is one of the gifts God gives us. However, often we lose hope and get discouraged. Discouragement should be nothing more than a temporary moment on the road back to hope. We need hope in our lives. We cannot live without hope.

- HUMAN AGAIN

In the movie 'BEAUTY AND THE BEAST' released by DISNEY there is a wonderful lesson. In the movie we see how the prince is turned into a beast and all the people in the palace are turned into various pieces of furniture. Everything stays this way until the prince (now a beast) can learn to love. One day Beauty arrives at the palace and suddenly the people in the palace, who have been turned into furniture, realize that things could change and that they could once again become real people. As a result they start to sing a song: 'We will be human again, oh so human again.'

Without hope we can feel like life is not worth living. As human beings we were meant to experience constant hope. When we have hope we can feel human, like God intended us to be.

- THERE IS HOPE

There is hope. No matter what you are facing or what you are going through, there is hope. As long as you are alive and breathing there is hope. Things can change.

Ecclesiastes 9:4 Anyone who is among the living has hope. (NIV)

Ecclesiastes 9:4 There is hope only for the living. (Living Bible)

But you may say to me that your life is not worth living or perhaps it is a living death, but I say that there is still hope. You may have written yourself off. You may even have given up. Perhaps you have resigned yourself to the current situation you are facing. It does not matter – there is still hope!

- EVERYONE GETS DISCOURAGED

In the Bible we see how many of the great people God used got discouraged. The great King Solomon got discouraged. He was the wisest man that ever lived. He was the king and yet he got to a stage where he felt like it would be better to be dead.

Ecclesiastes 4:2 So I felt that the dead were better off than the living.

Even the Psalmist David got discouraged.

Psalm 142:3 For I am overwhelmed and desperate.

We do face discouragement in the course of life. Things do go wrong and things can turn out differently to what we had hoped. When we get discouraged we can know that we are in good company. BUT, we must not stay discouraged. We must fan the embers of hope until they are a roaring fire!

- IT IS BETTER TO BE ALIVE

When we get discouraged we can even get to the point where we feel that life is not worth living. I want to assure you that it is better to be alive. While we are alive, things can change.

There are many advantages that the living have. While there is life there is hope. While you are breathing, there is hope. While you are alive you can do something. Once you are dead you can do nothing. While there is life there is opportunity. We must make the best use of life that we can while it does last, and manage wisely what remains of it.

- CHANGE IS POSSIBLE

I have seen the most impossible situations change. I have seen people who had practically given up on life, turn around and embrace life with wonderful results.

As long as you are alive, things can change and change is possible. If you are in a bad situation there is hope that those circumstances can change. If your heart is hard, bitter or evil, there is hope! Change is possible. Even if you have been thrown aside there is hope that you could take root again and be fruitful.

- WE MUST CHOOSE

It calls for us to make a choice. We must choose hope instead of discouragement and despair. We have a choice to make: 'With all who live, there is hope'.

Hebrews 7:19 But now we have a far better hope, for Christ makes us acceptable to God, and now we may draw near to him.

Notice what this scripture say: we have a hope!

Zechariah 9:11 Come to the place of safety, all you prisoners, for there is yet hope! I promise right now, I will repay you two mercies for each of your woes!

Choose hope today and let go of your discouragement and hopelessness. The God of all hope is there for you!

- GOD IS YOUR HOPE

You have a God who loves you! It really does not matter what you may be facing or experiencing. God loves you.

Lamentations 3:21-26 Yet there is one ray of hope: His compassion never ends. It is only the Lord's mercies that have kept us from complete destruction. Great is His faithfulness; His loving-kindness begins afresh each day. My soul claims the Lord as my inheritance; therefore I will hope in Him. The Lord is wonderfully good to those who wait for Him, to those who seek for Him. It is good both to hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

Hebrews 6:18-19 He has given us both His promise and His oath, two things we can completely count on, for it is impossible for God to tell a lie. Now all those who flee to Him to save them can take new courage when they hear such assurances from God; now they can know without doubt that He will give them the salvation He has promised them. This certain hope of being saved is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls, connecting us with God Himself behind the sacred curtains of heaven

I will hope
in the Lord!



What are the names of God and what do they mean?

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Each of the many names of God describes a different aspect of His many-faceted character. Here are some of the better-known names of God in the Bible:

EL, ELOAH [el, el-oh-ah]: God "mighty, strong, prominent" (Nehemiah 9:17; Psalm 139:19) – etymologically, El appears to mean "power," as in "I have the power to harm you" (Genesis 31:29). El is associated with other qualities, such as integrity (Numbers 23:19), jealousy (Deuteronomy 5:9), and compassion (Nehemiah 9:31), but the root idea of "might" remains.

ELOHIM [el-oh-heem]: God "Creator, Mighty and Strong" (Genesis 17:7; Jeremiah 31:33) – the plural form of Eloah, which accommodates the doctrine of the Trinity. From the Bible's first sentence, the superlative nature of God's power is evident as God (Elohim) speaks the world into existence (Genesis 1:1).

EL SHADDAI [el-shah-dahy]: "God Almighty," "The Mighty One of Jacob" (Genesis 49:24; Psalm 132:2,5) – speaks to God's ultimate power over all.

ADONAI [ædō'nai; ah-daw-nahy]: "Lord" (Genesis 15:2; Judges 6:15) – used in place of **YHWH**, which was thought by the Jews to be too sacred to be uttered by sinful men. In the Old Testament, YHWH is more often used in God's dealings with His people, while Adonai is used more when He deals with the Gentiles.

YHWH / YAHWEH / JEHOVAH [yah-way / ji-hoh-veh]: "LORD" (Deuteronomy 6:4; Daniel 9:14) – strictly speaking, the only proper name for God. Translated in English Bibles "LORD" (all capitals) to distinguish it from Adonai, "Lord." The revelation of the name is first given to Moses "I Am who I Am" (Exodus 3:14). This name specifies an immediacy, a presence. Yahweh is present, accessible, near to those who call on Him for deliverance (Psalm 107:13), forgiveness (Psalm 25:11) and guidance (Psalm 31:3).

YAHWEH-JIREH [yah-way-ji-reh]: "The Lord Will Provide" (Genesis 22:14) – the name memorialized by Abraham when God provided the ram to be sacrificed in place of Isaac.

YAHWEH-RAPHA [yah-way-raw-faw]: "The Lord Who Heals" (Exodus 15:26) – "I am Jehovah who heals you" both in body and soul. In body, by preserving from and curing diseases, and in soul, by pardoning iniquities.

YAHWEH-NISSI [yah-way-nee-see]: "The Lord Our Banner" (Exodus 17:15), where banner is understood to be a rallying place. This name commemorates the desert victory over the Amalekites in Exodus 17.

YAHWEH-M'KADDESH [yah-way-meh-kad-esh]: "The Lord Who Sanctifies, Makes Holy" (Leviticus 20:8; Ezekiel 37:28) – God makes it clear that He alone, not the law, can cleanse His people and make them holy.

YAHWEH-SHALOM [yah-way-shah-lohm]: "The Lord Our Peace" (Judges 6:24) – the name given by Gideon to the altar he built after the Angel of the Lord assured him he would not die as he thought he would after seeing Him.

YAHWEH-ELOHIM [yah-way-el-oh-him]: "LORD God" (Genesis 2:4; Psalm 59:5) – a combination of God's unique name YHWH and the generic "Lord," signifying that He is the Lord of Lords.

YAHWEH-TSIDKENU [yah-way-tzid-kay-noo]: "The Lord Our Righteousness" (Jeremiah 33:16) – As with YHWH-M'Kaddesh, it is God alone who provides righteousness (from the Hebrew word tsidkenu) to man, ultimately in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, who became sin for us "that we might become the Righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

YAHWEH-ROHI [yah-way-roh-hee]: "The Lord Our Shepherd" (Psalm 23:1) – After David pondered his relationship as a shepherd to his sheep, he realized that was exactly the relationship God had with him, and so he declares, "Yahweh-Rohi is my Shepherd. I shall not want" (Psalm 23:1).

YAHWEH-SHAMMAH [yah-way-sham-mahw]: "The Lord Is There" (Ezekiel 48:35) – the name ascribed to Jerusalem and the Temple there, indicating that the once-departed glory of the Lord (Ezekiel 8–11) had returned (Ezekiel 44:1-4).

YAHWEH-SABAOTH [yah-way-sah-bah-ohth]: "The Lord of Hosts" (Isaiah 1:24; Psalm 46:7) – Hosts means "hordes," both of angels and of men. He is Lord of the host of heaven and of the inhabitants of the earth, of Jews and Gentiles, of rich and poor, master and slave. The name is expressive of the majesty, power, and authority of God and shows that He is able to accomplish what He determines to do.

EL ELYON [el-el-yohn]: "Most High" (Deuteronomy 26:19) – derived from the Hebrew root for "go up" or "ascend," so the implication is of that which is the very highest. El Elyon denotes exaltation and speaks of absolute right to lordship.

EL ROI [el-roh-ee]: "God of Seeing" (Genesis 16:13) – the name ascribed to God by Hagar, alone and desperate in the wilderness after being driven out by Sarah (Genesis 16:1-14). When Hagar met the Angel of the Lord, she realized she had seen God Himself in a theophany. She also realized that El Roi saw her in her distress and testified that He is a God who lives and sees all.

EL-OLAM [el-oh-lahm]: "Everlasting God" (Psalm 90:1-3) – God's nature is without beginning or end, free from all constraints of time, and He contains within Himself the very cause of time itself. "From everlasting to everlasting, You are God."

EL-GIBHOR [el-ghee-bohr]: "Mighty God" (Isaiah 9:6) – the name describing the Messiah, Christ Jesus, in this prophetic portion of Isaiah. As a powerful and mighty warrior, the Messiah, the Mighty God, will accomplish the destruction of God's enemies and rule with a rod of iron (Revelation 19:15).

Why should I trust the Bible?

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We all trust in something. Even the most sceptical among us exercises complete trust in many things. When we stand up, we trust that our legs will hold us. When we sit down, we trust the chair. We trust that, when we inhale, the right amount of oxygen will be present to sustain us. When we go to bed, we trust that the earth will continue its rotation so that morning will come. We have chosen to place trust in these things because of their past reliability. We choose to trust; otherwise, we would live in a constant state of fear and uncertainty.

When it comes to God and the Bible, the same principles apply. We choose what we trust. Faith in God means that we have chosen to trust that He exists, that He is who the Bible says He is, and that our trust—or lack of it—will radically impact our lives and eternity. However, the alternative to faith is not “lack of faith.” To choose against faith in God also requires trust. We must trust that God does not exist, that He cannot be known by us, and that this choice has no impact on our lives and eternity. Denying God’s existence takes an even bigger leap of faith because the questions raised in the Bible still demand to be answered. Those who discount the Bible must supply answers themselves to countless questions with no ready answers, such as those dealing with the meaning of life and the complexity of design seen in the universe. Many who choose to trust something other than the Bible must finally agree with atheist Bertrand Russell, who concluded that, if life beyond the grave is a myth, then life before the grave has no meaning.

When choosing where to place our trust, we must consider the reliability of each option. The Bible makes some startling claims about itself. Some people think they can pick and choose which parts of the Bible they consider true, but the Book itself never gives us that option. It states that it is the inspired Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16), that it is true (Psalm 119:160; John 17:17), and that it is the guidebook for our lives (Psalm 119:105; Luke 4:4). To trust that this is not true means that everything else the Bible claims is suspect; therefore, claiming the promises while ignoring the commands is irrational.

To declare that the Bible is untrustworthy means we must find another reasonable explanation for its miraculous nature. For example, of the nearly 2,500 prophecies given in the Bible, hundreds or thousands of years beforehand, 2,000 of them have been fulfilled, with the remaining 500+ unfolding with time. The probability of all these

prophecies being fulfilled without error is roughly one in 1020000. So, to trust that the Bible is not a miraculous book is mathematically inconsistent.

There are several factors to consider in determining the trustworthiness of the Bible, the first being the oft-challenged statement that the Bible is true because it says it is true. It would indeed be foolish to base trust on that factor alone. We would not hand over our checkbook to a stranger who says we can trust him because he is trustworthy. But we can start with the Bible’s claim of trustworthiness and then look for supporting evidence to validate it.

Helping us trust the Bible are the claims of the writers themselves. The Old Testament authors declared that they spoke the very words of God (Exodus 20:1–4; Deuteronomy 8:3; Isaiah 1:2; Jeremiah 1:1–13). Certain men were designated by God as prophets, kings, or leaders and were recognized as such by the people they served. The prophets qualified most of their pronouncements with the words, “So says the Lord” (e.g., Jeremiah 45:2; Zechariah 7:13). This declaration was often met with rebellion and persecution (Matthew 23:37; 1 Kings 19:10; Acts 7:52). There was no earthly reason for a prophet to declare unpleasant truths to people who were likely to stone him. Yet, the prophets continued to proclaim their message because they were completely convinced that the Lord held them responsible to represent Him faithfully. The words of the prophets were then recorded for future generations and accepted as the words of God, even by Jesus Himself (Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:8).

The New Testament authors identify various reasons for writing. Luke, for example, was a respected physician and historian who travelled with Paul on his missionary journeys. He explains the purpose for his book in the first chapter: “Just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught” (Luke 1:2–4). Luke personally researched the claims about Jesus in order to verify the veracity of the gospel narrative and wrote the twin books of Luke and Acts.



Paul's letters to the churches were received by the intended audience as having come from the Lord (1 Thessalonians 2:13). It is also critical to note that most of the New Testament authors were martyred for their words. It is highly unlikely that such a wide assortment of men, all claiming a single truth, would suffer extreme persecution and eventually be murdered for words they knew to be a lie.

Another factor helping us trust the Bible is the life-changing impact the Bible has had for thousands of years. The Bible has withstood the attempts of kings, dictators, and whole societies to abolish it and still remains the top-selling book of all time. Its words contain a hope not found in any other religious writing and has transformed the lives of millions. Other world religions claim loyal adherence, but the glue that holds most of their faithful is fear, intimidation, or human effort. The Bible promises what no other book does: life, hope, and purpose as a gift from Almighty God. Its words have transformed murderers, tyrants, and nations because the Bible resonates as truth in the deepest part of the human soul (Ecclesiastes 3:11). The Bible may be rejected, hated, or ignored, but its impact on those who heed it cannot be discounted.

Ultimately, God has given each of us free will to choose what we believe. But He has also placed His fingerprints all over His creation, and He has written an instruction manual so we would know how to live (Psalm 19:1; 119:11; 1 Peter 2:11–12). His Word has given us ample evidence that it can be trusted, and those who do trust the Bible have a solid foundation upon which to build their lives (see Matthew 7:24–28).

WHO AM I IN CHRIST?

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According to 2 Corinthians 5:17, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" There are two Greek words which are translated "new" in the Bible. The first, *neos*, refers to something that has just been made, but there are already many others in existence just like it. The word translated "new" in this verse is the word *kainos*, which means "something just made which is unlike anything else in existence." In Christ, we are made an entirely new creation, just as God created the heavens and the earth originally—He made them out of nothing, and so He does with us. He does not merely clean up our old selves; He makes an entirely new self. When we are in Christ, we are "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4 KJV). God Himself, in the person of His Holy Spirit, takes up residence in our hearts. We are in Christ and He is in us.

In Christ, we are regenerated, renewed, and born again, and this new creation is spiritually minded, whereas the old nature is carnally minded. The new nature fellowships with God, obeys His will, and is devoted to His service. These are actions the old nature is incapable of doing or even desiring to do. The old nature is dead to the things of the spirit and cannot revive itself. It is "dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1) and can only be made alive by a supernatural awakening, which happens when we come to Christ and are indwelt by Him. Christ gives us a completely new and holy nature and an incorruptible life. Our old life, previously dead to God because of sin, is buried, and we are raised "to walk in newness of life" with Him (Romans 6:4).

If we belong to Christ, we are united to Him and no longer slaves to sin (Romans 6:5-6); we are made alive with Him (Ephesians 2:5); we are conformed to His image (Romans 8:29); we are free from condemnation and walking not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit (Romans 8:1); and we are part of the body of Christ with other believers (Romans 12:5). The believer now possesses a new heart (Ezekiel 11:19) and has been blessed "with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 1:3).

We might wonder why we so often do not live in the manner described, even though we have given our lives to Christ and are sure of our salvation. This is because our new natures are residing in our old fleshly bodies, and these two are at war with one another. The old nature is dead, but the new nature still has to battle the old "tent" in which it dwells. Evil and sin are still present, but the believer now sees them in a new perspective and they no longer control him as they once did. In Christ, we can now choose to resist sin, whereas the old nature could not. Now we have the choice to either feed the new nature through the Word, prayer, and obedience, or to feed the flesh by neglecting those things.

When we are in Christ, "we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (Romans 8:37) and can rejoice in our Saviour, who makes all things possible (Philippians 4:13). In Christ we are loved, forgiven, and secure. In Christ we are adopted, justified, redeemed, reconciled, and chosen. In Christ we are victorious, filled with joy and peace, and granted true meaning in life. What a wonderful Saviour is Christ!



Is caffeine addiction a sin?

First Corinthians 6:12 declares, “Everything is permissible for me—but not everything is beneficial. ‘Everything is permissible for me’—but I will not be mastered by anything.” The Bible nowhere mentions caffeine, so the subject of caffeine addiction is not directly addressed in the Bible. All that can be done is take biblical principles that apply to being addicted to anything, and then apply those truths to caffeine addiction. First Corinthians 6:12 is likely the most applicable scripture. While the context is dealing with sexual immorality, Paul’s words clearly go beyond sexual immorality when he says, “I will not be mastered by anything.”

Similar to gluttony, caffeine addiction is something that Christians are often hypocritical about. Christians are quick to condemn addiction to alcohol and tobacco, but tend to ignore other more “socially acceptable” addictions such as over-eating and caffeine. Alcohol clearly can have more dangerous effects on behaviour and can be harmful to health when abused. Tobacco is

harmful to health in even small quantities. In comparison, caffeine might not seem so bad, but “it’s not as bad as...” is not something Christians should live by. Rather, Christians should live by “Is it right? Is it honouring to God?”

Caffeine, in reasonable quantities, is neither overly harmful to health nor addicting. Caffeine, in excessive quantities, is both harmful to health and addicting. Is it wrong to have a cup of coffee in the morning to help yourself wake up? No, of course not. Is it wrong to be so hopelessly dependent on coffee that you cannot function in the morning until you have had your cup(s) of coffee? According to 1 Corinthians 6:12, the answer has to be yes. We should not be addicted to anything. We should not allow ourselves to become mastered/controlled or enslaved by anything. This surely includes caffeine. When consumed in moderation, caffeine is not a sin. When one is addicted to and dependent on caffeine, that is when it becomes a spiritual issue, and a sin that needs to be overcome.

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