

Fragrance Series

Scarecrows

in my

Cerebellum

The fragrance of confidence

C. Yvonne Karl

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The Fragrance Series addresses ambiguity in concepts and relationships that impact both head and heart. It deals with topics relating to the nitty gritty of everyday life interwoven with personal anecdotes and applications that are both scriptural and comprehensible.

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ISBN

DEDICATION

Dedicated to Caroline and Robert, my daughter and son, who have comforted me and cheered me on, continually reminding me of what great love God has for me. I have no greater joy than to know that my children have chosen to be disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ; and to Nicole whose recent addition to our family has multiplied our joy.

The Fragrance of Confidence

*For the Lord will be your **confidence**,
and will keep your foot from being caught.*

-Proverbs 3:26

*For we have become partakers of Christ
if we hold the beginning of our **confidence**
steadfast to the end.*

-Hebrews 3:14

*Therefore do not cast away your **confidence**,
which has great reward.*

-Hebrews 10:35

*Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us,
we have **confidence** toward God.*

-1 John 3:21

*Now this is the **confidence** that we have in Him,
that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.*

-1 John 5:14

Confidence

is the translation of the Greek word *parrhesia*
which means free and fearless,
stable and certain
cheerful courage, boldness, and assurance,
without need of comparing or concealing.

LIFE APPLICATION

The Fragrance of Confidence

In many geographical areas of the United States it is common to see scarecrows hanging from trees over the garden, sitting atop fence posts, or just staked here and there among the growing crops. Scarecrows are lifeless, man-made creations put out to keep the crows from eating the garden crops, the fruits, and the flowers. As individuals, we are frequently confronted with situations that scare us; this fear keeps us from reaping the fruit of our labor. It is as if this imagery is planted in our cerebellum—the part of the brain concerned with the coordination of muscles and the maintenance of bodily equilibrium. Since it is situated between the brain stem and the back of the cerebrum, which is the seat of the conscious and mental processes, it appears likely that fear first paralyzes our coordination resulting in an imbalance in our equilibrium. In my words, mental scarecrows enter our feelings through our senses—hearing, seeing, feeling, smelling, tasting, touching—and then cause a disparity which serves as a roadblock to a conscious, logical, rational approach to dealing with problems.

Little things, not monumental situations, steal our time, our talents, and our trophies. We seem to be capable of surviving traumatic events, but fail to pass the test of the trivial. Confidence is meager. Discouragement flourishes. Scarecrows are plentiful.

In the parable of the talents Jesus told about a servant whose master had given him money to invest. However, the servant hid the money for fear of losing it with the excuse that the master was a cruel man and he was afraid of him.¹ As a result of his apprehension, he acted irresponsibly and lost not only his investment but his life. If only we could learn a lesson from him! Fear cancels out faith—faith in God and faith in the abilities He has put within us. If we can grasp this fact, we will remember that fear has never won a battle, but faith is a winning warrior.²

The Lord told Isaiah that no opposition formed against him would succeed.³ If we can grasp this fact, we will be able to ignore, defy, and defeat all the scarecrows that seek to deceive, destroy, and demean us. Ah, how free we are when confidence returns!

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CHAPTER 1 SCARECROWS IN MY CEREBELLUM

It's intimidating...

And Joshua said, By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Hivites and the Perizzites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Jebusites.⁴

Scarecrows appear in strategic situations throughout our life and often stop us from receiving the best God has for us or becoming all He has planned for us. If there were no crop to protect, the farmer wouldn't hang out the scarecrow to keep the birds from eating it. The fact that we have encountered something in our life that intimidates us may indicate that a victory is very close. If we don't *cast down imaginations and everything that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*,⁵ then we are allowing those scarecrows to imbed themselves in our brain and deprive us of intelligent thinking and wise decision making. I am all too well acquainted with this method of intimidation.

Rev. Whitcomb accompanied me for my first day on campus at Agape Bible College in Ghana, West Africa. As director of ABC, he called a morning assembly of all students to introduce me as their guest lecturer for the term. As I sat in front of the more than one hundred ABC students, I was being bombarded with feelings of inferiority, intimidation, and inadequacy. Not yet responding well to the tropical climate, I felt insecure—my face dripping with perspiration, no make-up to cover the freckles on my face, and my limp hair laying flat on my head. All of my outer security blankets had been removed. Thoughts of failure were racing through my head. They sang a song or two, after which Rev. Whitcomb introduced Margaret Preston who had come to help in the ministry. Next, he introduced me telling the students he had known me several years, had preached in my church, and some other “nice” things I was not paying attention to, and concluded his remarks by saying I would now come to greet the students.

I do not know exactly what I said, but am sure I related that my Heavenly Father had said “Go” because that moment of His command is burned into my spirit and mind. Whatever my words were, they were like distant echo chambers. Then it happened. Rev. Whitcomb was talking. As he spoke, I felt he, too, was crying out to God, “Let it not be a mistake that I invited her to come! God, if You don't help her, she doesn't have a chance!”

He said to the students, “Appearances are deceiving; she is a powerful woman of God.” My mind was racing and I was casting down feelings and imaginations, praying quietly in the Spirit (building myself up on my most holy faith!) desiring to believe that his words were prophetic. “Oh God,” my soul cried out, “Let Rev. Whitcomb's words be like Samuel's that none of them will fall—for Your sake, for the students' sake, and for Rev. Whitcomb's sake.” My prayer continued: “Lord, I'm sitting here for no reason except You told me to come. Please help!”

Moments later, the assembly was dismissed and I was escorted to my first class. The instant I opened my mouth to speak to the students, my mind was clear, my spirit was at peace; the battle was over. I knew I was abiding in God's perfect will and He would give me wisdom, words, and strength to accomplish His purpose for taking me there. I rested in Him! The scarecrow of intimidation was defeated. What a glorious time we had in those three classes—and it lasted throughout the whole term of study.⁶

I'm just an ordinary person, but I serve an extra-ordinary God!

All that I'm not, He is; All that I can't, He can; All that I lack, He supplies my need.

He gives me a reason to be!⁷

Scarecrows are identifiable forms of psychological stop signs

Everyone has scarecrow stories. Since I'm not a crow, I call them scare-me stories. These are people, ideas, situations, and feelings that have kept us from getting the best—from eating the good fruit of life's garden. What do all scarecrows have in common? They are fake. They are not real. Appearance is deceiving. If we could talk to the crows we would tell them how foolish they are to sit and starve just because of that ugly stuffed shirt hanging on the pole. We would call them cowards. What about us?

It's useless to know where the fruit is if we're not willing to face the ugly scarecrows and claim it. Satan is like a roaring lion, but he isn't a lion. Scarecrows look gruesome, but they can only frighten us. No weapon (scarecrow) formed against us can keep us from doing what God assigns us. Only if we permit a lack of faith to open doors of fear and disobedience will the scarecrow have any power in our life. We should not fear ridicule and criticism: they can't hurt us spiritually. Oh, they might hurt our pride and harm our reputation, but they won't keep us from God's garden—from partaking of His fruit—once we recognize them for what they are.

Many students have their talents by not developing them. Many people have lost their brains by not using them. Many disciples have lost their anointing by not using it. We never pass a real opportunity without seeing a scarecrow. It seems every time we want to do something more, to go a step higher, to push on toward excellence, there is an obstacle in the way. We cannot deny the existence of psychological scarecrows any more than the Israelites could deny the existence of the tribes they had to conquer. The moment we seek to pursue our dreams, our call, or our gift from God, there are hardships to be faced. To realize the joy of serving Jesus and accomplish what He wants us to, we first face and pull down those terrifying scarecrows. With God's help, all fears can be defeated.

The Lord told the Israelites to go into Canaan and possess the land. However, they experienced psychological stop signs in the form of giants which made them feel like grasshoppers.⁸ The problem was not the giants, but their own sense of inadequacy to overcome them. Most of us understand this well. Our own insufficiencies are all too familiar. We feel inadequate to meet responsibilities assigned to us. We feel that we'll make things worse instead of helping. We say, "Oh, I could never do that!" all the while wishing we could get up the courage to take action. Then the Lord taps us on the shoulder and says, "Get with it! I want to be strong in your

weakness.”⁹ If we don’t have to totally rely on the Lord to get a job done, we don’t understand what it means to trust Him and walk by faith. As we hear often today, God is not counting on our talents and ability but on our availability.

Dealing with scarecrows

Nearly two decades ago, I was invited by *The Happiness Is* to speak at their women’s retreat at Blue Water Shiloh in Wallaceburg, Ontario. It was there that the late Sharon Wilson gave a talk which first planted the seed and awakened my curiosity for studying the names of the Old Testament tribes and using them as analogies to our present day life.

For years before her death, Sharon traveled with Nola singing as *The Happiness Is*. The Lord brought them into my life at a time when things were pressing in on every hand. They helped out in our church and church school and took me away for times of refreshing. They prayed with me and for me. Nola went to bus driver’s training, became licensed, and drove our church school bus. Sharon finished teacher’s training so she could work in the school. She played auto harp and keyboard, but rarely publicly. Nola played guitar accompaniment to their music—much of which they wrote themselves.

In high school I took a dexterity test and the results said that I would not succeed in typing or playing piano. My fingers were too clumsy. Those results were proven wrong. Not only was I awarded a typing certificate for 90 wpm (on an old standard typewriter!), but also accomplished basic skills in piano (though I’ll never win any contests there!). During the twelve years I was a student in public school, I walked the two miles roundtrip to Mrs. Alderson’s house and back for my thirty-minute weekly piano lesson. I learned how to read music, play basic hymns and a little classical music. To say the least, I was not an accomplished pianist. Nola, however, was a gifted guitarist and as such knew chords. She and Sharon would sit with me for hours at the church piano trying to help me comprehend how to play chords. Though they would never admit it, I knew they often wished to turn down the sound so my disharmonious piano playing would not clash with their singing in services! I persevered because I was determined to defeat the intimidating scarecrow.

The Happiness Is invited me play piano for their last studio recording—an experience I’ll always treasure—but there was also an excellent pianist there and my piano playing was on a separate track so when they mixed the recording they pulled my playing in here and there for embellishment. They went to any extreme to accommodate and affirm me—and help me defy the scarecrow of intimidation.

A scarecrow is anything that keeps us from enjoying the benefits of our work, our talents, our abilities, and our spiritual gifts. Dealing with scarecrows is a part of our everyday life. For example, the Lord told Moses He would deliver His people from the oppression of the Egyptians and bring them into a land flowing with milk and honey. However, in order to realize that promise they would have to overthrow the tribes that presently occupied the land: *I, the Lord, will cut them off...but you shall utterly overthrow them and break down their images.*¹⁰ The

victory would be a cooperative effort: God is the helper—He cuts them off. We are the doers—we overthrow them and command their influence to be gone. God is the One who saves; but we are the ones who put off the old ways and put on Christ's ways. At the death of Moses, Joshua became the leader and gave this encouraging word to the Israelites: *Today you will know that the living God is among you, and that He will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Hivites and the Perizzites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Jebusites.*¹¹

Seven tribes of Canaanites are mentioned in this verse, but they are by no means representative of all the enemies the Israelites had to conquer. In the book of Genesis, ten tribes are mentioned, and in the book of Joshua, we learn there were thirty-one kings and their clans that had to be overthrown. No matter how many there were, the Lord warned that when they approached the fertile land scarecrows would confront them and try to keep them from claiming their promise. It was their responsibility to defeat them. We have the same assignment in the time we live—only our scarecrows are spiritual, symbolic, and figments of our imaginations. When we identify the scarecrows, we find the best food available. Any intelligent bird knows that no man ever sets up a scarecrow in an empty garden or in a desert. A scarecrow is an invitation to dinner! It is a promise that the garden is full of plenty to eat. If we are content to live a life of inaction, there are no scarecrows to frighten us out of the path. If we refuse to accept any kind of responsibility, that's easy,¹² but there are also no rewards.

Our scarecrows are just like those the children of Israel faced as they journeyed toward the Promised Land. Interestingly enough each of these ancient enemies not only symbolizes but designates the enemies we face today. We have to do our part in overthrowing them even though the challenge and battles may be difficult.

In the Old Testament, names were used symbolically. Keeping in mind that the Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites and the Jebusites were all tribes in Canaan—thus Canaanites, in the following pages we will consider the applicable, contemporary symbolism of these tribes which were all scarecrows confronted by the Israelites.

LIFE APPLICATION

What gifts, talents, and abilities would be evident in my life if I conquered the intimidations that have kept me from developing and using them to their fullest?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I break down the mental and emotional images of the scarecrows that have kept me from tasting the goodness of the abundant life You came to give me. I cast down opinions and fears that are contrary to how You made me, and replace them with the wisdom and knowledge that You give me in Your Word. In Jesus' Name, I pray.

CHAPTER 2

CANAANITE SCARECROWS: DISCOURAGEMENT

I can't...

*By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will without fail drive out the Canaanites from before you... but you shall utterly overthrow them and break down their images.*¹³

In New Testament times, the Greek name for Canaanites was translated “red purple” which was an important product of the region. However, the Canaanites in the Old Testament were the inhabitants of the whole territory West of Jordan,¹⁴ or of a limited area at the coast and on the plain.¹⁵ The linguistic roots of the name *Canaanite* in the Old Testament comes from *kawnah* which means to bend the knee, to come down low, to bring into subjection, to humiliate.¹⁶ Anyone who has ever felt humiliated and discouraged has encountered the tribe of the Canaanites. The possibility of failure casts a spell and baptizes one with depression. The result is to say, “I can’t,” and to stop trying. Sometimes this originates with family, friends, or authority figures who berate us incessantly—especially in our childhood and youth. Such depression rarely invades the mind and spirit of one who was affirmed, challenged, disciplined, and loved consistently from infancy.

As a boy, he worked long hours in a factory in Naples. He yearned to be a singer. When ten years old, he took his first lesson in voice. “You can’t sing. You haven’t any voice at all. Your voice sounds like the wind in the shutters,” said his teacher. The boy’s mother, however, had visions of greatness for her son. She believed that he had a talent to sing. She was very poor. Putting her arms around him, she encouragingly said, “My boy, I’m going to make every sacrifice to pay for your voice lessons.” Her confidence in him and constant encouragement paid off! That boy became one of the world’s greatest singers—Enrico Caruso.¹⁷ He was made to feel inferior at the knee of his teacher, but his mother’s confidence set him on the path to liberation.

Selective failure

Before we learn to play tennis, chess, golf, and so forth we have to risk failing. My attempts at tennis ended when my racket came in contact with the face of my partner and he nursed a few bruises for a day or two. As a child, I had both roller skates and a scooter and enjoyed the thrill of rolling along on the street in front of our house. As an adult, I put on roller skates a few of times but always holding on to my husband or friend. Of course by that time, I had suffered a couple of sprained and broken bones. I was both fearful and unwilling to try. The first and only time I put on ice skates is still memorable. A friend of ours had just broken his leg skating the week before. I laced my shoes, stood on my feet with the help of my husband, walked once around the ice rink holding on to the side rails all the way, came back, sat down, and took off my skates! That is the sum total of my ice skating experience. I did not believe I could keep my balance on those ice skates so decided I’d rather fail at ice skating than live with a broken leg. That’s what I call “selective failure.”

I have always enjoyed bicycle riding since the time I learned to ride my neighbor's bike at the age of twelve. Kathleen was so gracious to share her brand new bicycle and I was determined to ride. After that year, sixteen years passed before I would ride again. My husband bought me my first bicycle. In my excitement, I rode up on the curb and across some gravel, got thrown off and ended up with skinned up knees and arms. This time, however, I would not be defeated. I loved riding that bike with my hair blowing in the breeze. Soon my husband and I rode ten to fourteen miles nearly every evening after dinner—and further on weekends. When our children came along, we were eager for them to have their own bikes and ride with us. Oh the stories we could tell about family biking! Many times I have given thanks that I did not allow the fear to discourage me and thereby deprive us of the fun times as a family riding our bikes through our neighborhood and Hines Park.

Quitters never win

“If you study the history of the Presidents of the United States, you will find that an overwhelming majority of them ran for many elections and lost before finally succeeding in winning an office. Had they said, “I can’t,” we would never know their names. For example, when you think of Abraham Lincoln, what qualities come to mind? Compassion? Concern for the common man? Justice? Humor? I think that if we really knew Lincoln, we would see that overriding quality of character was nothing other than perseverance. Abraham Lincoln may have been one of the most successful failures who ever lived. Consider his final resume:

- At the age of
- 22, he failed in business (1831).
- 23, he ran for legislature and was defeated (1832).
- 24, he again failed in business (1833).
- 26, his sweetheart died (1835).
- 27, he had a nervous breakdown (1836).
- 29, he was defeated for Speaker (1838).
- 31, he was defeated for Elector (1840).
- 34, he was defeated for Congress (1843)
- 39, he was defeated for Congress again (1848)
- 46, he was defeated for Senate (1855).
- 47, he was defeated for Vice President (1856).
- 49, he was defeated again for Senate (1858).
- 51, he was elected President of the United States (1860).

What if his failures had discouraged him and he had said, “I can’t” and “I quit.” When we consider the record of a man who failed so many times before finally achieving such wonderful success, we should be ashamed of the number of times we have given up. A quitter is a loser. President Lincoln was never a loser because he never quit. Who among us can even dream of what God could do in and through us if we yield ourselves wholly to Him and never quit.”¹⁸ Think of the pages that would be missing from our history books and not seeing the all too familiar face coined on our pennies. If President Lincoln had succumbed to discouragement, we would not even know his name.

Remember Abigail? King David and his men had protected the servants and sheepshearers of Nabal and Abigail in the wilderness. Later David sent some of his men to their house to request food and supplies for himself and his army. Nabal (whose name means “fool”) refused to grant the provisions. Abigail had every reason to accept her husband’s decision and save herself much extra work, but when she heard what had happened, she immediately prepared food and led the entourage to take it to David. She was grateful for what he had done for them. She refused to give in to the possibility that she would be rejected. She knew this was what God would want her to do. She didn’t allow her husband to discourage her and steal her blessing.¹⁹

Failure can be the incentive to try again

We’ve heard and read about hundreds of people who succeeded against all odds. Why is it that perfectly normal, intelligent human beings, then, are unwilling to push themselves to eradicate depression and do something worthwhile? Thomas Edison is credited with the maxim, “Success is two percent genius and ninety-eight percent honest effort.” Perhaps he also originated the axiom, “Invention is five percent inspiration, and ninety-five percent perspiration.” In other words, success requires some heavy duty work—whether mental or physical. He should know since he failed thousands of times in various innovative projects before finally giving us the electrical lights that are now so common. Biographers have collected an estimated five million pages of Thomas Alva Edison’s technical, business, and personal papers.²⁰ Most of us do well to leave behind one handwritten note. What is the difference? He refused to be discouraged! No scarecrow of failure was going to dampen his excitement for new discoveries.

Someone has said the supreme failure is to be so afraid of failing that you refuse to try. Often people are discouraged from praying for a sick person or for finances or because they fear the prayer might not be answered. We need to bore open our spiritual ears to hear the Lord say to us: *My Angel will go before you, and I will cut off...* the discouragement that keeps us from feeling inadequate incompetent, and unbelieving. We pray out of obedience, based on what the Scriptures say, and accompany prayer with any action we may need to take in bringing about the answer. Then we commit the situation to the Lord who is able to transform every defeat into victory—and it’s victory if He gives us grace to endure.

The first time I ever stood to speak before a few thousand people, I was choked up. I couldn’t breathe. My trembling words squeaked out. I had convinced myself that I couldn’t do it. Once this “I can’t” takes hold in our mind, the discouragement overwhelms our emotions. Our faith in God can help break down that image. By God’s grace, we come into the Throne Room and He gives us what we need at the time.²¹ Believe it. It’s true.

One summer I was asked to teach the third grade boys in a Vacation Bible School class at Pennway Church. Since I was a high school teacher at the time, I guess they thought I should be able to teach any age anywhere. Although I knew better, I agreed to take the assignment out of respect to help Pastor Hazen and Christian Education workers. When the first session was over, I was in tears—a woman in my twenties overcome by a few third grade boys! I felt I hadn’t related

to them. I didn't understand the psychology of "wriggling." They didn't appear interested in the class projects. I was discouraged! I agreed to try again, but quit on the second day. What did I learn from this? There are people who are called and chosen to teach third grade boys and I am not one of them! I had neither the gift, nor the ability, nor the talent, nor the desire to teach third grade boys.

However, if we never fail badly at something that is important to us, we won't understand victory. We get discouraged when we fail because we don't trust God. We forget that it's His work, not ours. He gets the credit, not us.

Without Him we can do nothing. We'll always find someone who can do it better (and worse). People are quick to tell say, "The last teacher I had...did such and such," or "Our last pastor didn't do it that way," and so forth. As we avoid comparing ourselves with others and are obedient to the Lord, we will refuse to permit the scarecrow of discouragement to keep us from doing our job.

One lovely fall evening, I had an unforgettable experience as I was going door-to-door with an evangelism team. We knocked on doors, shared the gospel briefly, left some Gospel literature and our name in case they wanted to call us to talk. On this particular evening, the lady of the house answered my knock; I cordially introduced myself and said, "I know someone who really likes you a lot!" Her face lit up. She quickly asked, "Who?" I told her, "Jesus!" She slammed the door in my face so quickly I still feel the sting. Was I discouraged? Absolutely! Did I go back again? Yes! Many prayers were offered for her. Perhaps I didn't use tact, but obviously she needed the message of how Jesus loved her. Did I stop telling people about Jesus? Of course not. A door slammed in my face could not discourage me from sharing with people that I know the cure for death!

Hiding behind discouragement

In special church services people are often asked to give their favorite scripture. Often it is like women exchanging favorite recipes—they sound so good at the moment, but are seldom used. Many people are simply scripture collectors, scripture recipe collectors, scripture diet collectors. They serve no purpose just having them in a file. We have the scriptures yet become discouraged because we don't apply them. No scripture does any good unless we are willing to follow it step by step all the way through.

Some of us have experienced the same desire as King David to flee our problems. When fearfulness and trembling came upon him, he wished he was a dove and could fly away to escape the problems that were overwhelming him.²² Instead of aggressively strengthening his relationship with God, he was having a big pity party and succumbing to discouragement. Sound familiar?

Others of us are like Saul. He got tired of war, tired of fighting, and went home, put up his tent under a Pomegranate Tree.²³ He quit! We all experience this temptation from time to time—

instead of doing what needs to be done, we want to escape the responsibility that is ours. Discouragement becomes a tree under which we hide.

The Spirit of the Lord came upon Elijah and he won a major victory over the priests of Baal. We've all learned that the only place to go from a mountaintop is down, and that's precisely what happened to this great prophet. Immediately after his triumph, he got a letter from Queen Jezebel threatening to kill him for what he had done in the Name of the Lord: her gods were dead. Elijah ran for his life. When he got out into nowhere land, he settled down under a Juniper Tree and requested to die. He quit! He was discouraged and felt the Lord had abandoned him. Guess what? The Lord knew where he was even though Elijah may have thought he was hiding. An angel awakened him and gave him orders on what to do next.²⁴

This is our day to be awakened—to get out from under our Pomegranate and Juniper trees, attack our discouragement and remember the Lord our God who has promised to go before us and strengthen us to be overcomers. We are not quitters. We need to search out what God's Word says about our situation and realize that being full of the Word doesn't exempt us from attack, but it does exempt us from defeat if we keep on getting up and trying again.

We need to enthuse ourselves. "Enthuse" means to "be filled with God." This doesn't happen because we have good feelings. It happens because our spirits are made clean and our minds are renewed through the Word.²⁵ We are not washed by our trials and tribulations. They are designed to destroy us, but by special divine input, they actually make us strong. The enemy wants us to go into hiding in an attempt to avoid or escape the trials. God wants us to confront them with His Word and get the victory over discouragement.

We need to do what needs to be done regardless of what our circumstances are. When the floor is dirty, there is only one way to get it clean: scrub it! When the mail is piled up, there is only one way to deal with it: sort it out and answer it. We come out from our hiding places and put our character above the circumstances. We put our cause above the conflicts and our conviction above the crisis. We keep our eyes on God, not on the circumstances, the conflicts, or the crisis. Our victory over discouragement comes from knowing and doing the Word.

My daughter got up again

When she was six years old, my husband purchased a little violin for our daughter and we hired a private teacher for her. After three or four months, the teacher told us, "She's tone deaf. She'll never play." We allowed her to discontinue the violin lessons, but she was progressing nicely in piano. Several years later, I purchased a full sized violin at a garage sale and brought it home. Caroline picked it up and started playing hymns in perfect tune. Soon I found and purchased a cello—also at a garage sale. Even though the string notes are different, Caroline could play it well and decided that was her instrument. I took her to audition for the Livonia Youth Philharmonic Orchestra, and she was accepted—without lessons! Soon we found a cello tutor for her. After a few months, at age fifteen, she auditioned for the University of Michigan Youth

Symphony and was accepted. During that season, the director announced that the cello professor from the university had agreed to critique three students. Caroline immediately volunteered.

We prayed and I accompanied her to the session and we sat there with her garage sale cello while looking around at the instruments which obviously cost thousands of dollars. Caroline had not yet completed one year of private instruction, while the other two students had been taking lessons since they were preschoolers. Talk about intimidation and discouragement! When it was her turn to play, I was the proud mom hearing only the lovely music of my daughter who years before had been declared tone deaf. When she finished playing her solo, the professor gave her a few pointers, then he picked up her cello and banged on it several times and asked, “How can you play on this instrument? Doesn’t it frustrate you?”

We came home and told Dad about it and he began going to music stores and pricing the cellos. He discovered that most of them had come from German manufacturers, so he planned a trip to his native Germany to buy his daughter a “real” cello. He and Caroline flew to Germany, stayed with relatives, rented a car, and visited numerous little cello factories throughout southern Germany and into Austria. They brought their chosen instrument home. A couple of months later, Caroline had her application approved for audition to enter the School of Music at University of Michigan. She had none of the skills and technique that the other applicants had, but we prayed, and she approached the audition with an attitude of, “I’ll do my best.” The same professor who had critiqued her a few months earlier held the outcome in his hands. Enrollment was extremely competitive and he would have to turn students away. After the audition, he came into the hallway where I was sitting. Recognizing me, he said in a matter-of-fact tone: “I’m going to admit her. She’s got guts!”

She had conquered that mountain of discouragement by defeating every Canaanite that came her way. Had she allowed discouragement to dominate her life, she would not have earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees in music education, and be an orchestra teacher today. We give all glory to God for we prayed together every step of the way, and He strengthened her to overcome intimidation and discouragement and push through.

Hang onto your crowns

The Holy Spirit provides an atmosphere of victory in our lives. He equips us for every good work. He wants to do signs and wonders in our life through His power at work²⁶ in us, yet He understands how easily we can be discouraged. Paul admonishes us not to get tired of doing what is right—eventually we’ll see the fruit of our labors provided we don’t give up and quit.²⁷ If we focus on disappointments, it scares us into losing our vision. We are told to hold fast what we have so that no one may rob us and deprive us of our crown.²⁸ Hold fast! Hang onto it! Don’t turn it loose for even a second. Why? Because Jesus said to!

A crown is worn on the head as a symbol. If we let go of it, we’ll be robbed or deprived of everything it stands for: honor, victory, authority and power. This deprivation creates the throne in our hearts and minds on which reigns the scarecrow of discouragement. The language of this

kingdom contains only two words: “I can’t.” With this knowledge, we defy the scarecrow and hold onto our crowns.

Crown of Righteousness: *There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day.*²⁹ Originally the word righteousness meant “right wise-ness.” It is the way we direct our lives, our behavior, our attitudes, and our thoughts based on Jesus’ love for us. When we are free from guilt by the blood Jesus shed for us on Calvary, we become the righteousness of God.³⁰ We are kept clean by the Word³¹ which we continually feed upon. Who may enter the throne of God? He who has *clean hands and a pure heart*.³² When we are living right, talking right, behaving right then our crown reflects the honor God bestows upon us—His reward. He doesn’t love us less when we mess up and are ungodly, but we have no basis for rewards. This does not mean we are saved by our works, but we are rewarded for them even in this life. See how reasonable and sensible the Scriptures are: When we live right, we can hold our heads high and are considered honorable people. When we refuse to give in to the scarecrow of discouragement, we push through and win the victory. When we live according to God’s principles, we become role models for others—thus we have authority. We hang onto our crown of righteousness!

Crown of Riches: *The crown of the wise is their riches.*³³ This would include material possessions, assets, investments, and so forth. Scripture is clear about the mandate to give a tithe (tenth) of our income to the Lord. It is also clear that we should save a portion of our income and suggests we study the ant’s behavior as incentive.³⁴ The Lord promises to bless our savings account. Jesus says, *to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.*³⁵ Think about it. If we have some type of savings, we can expect interest to be added to it, we won’t have to borrow for emergencies, and we won’t be someone’s slave because we owe money.³⁶ Scripture also cautions us about co-signing with anyone.³⁷ Our Lord does not want us to act irresponsibly and have to live in discouragement about our finances.

God's Word has given me freedom in finances in my own life. I grew up during the post World War II period. Many had suffered want due to the Great Depression and now had jobs and money to spend. “Charge-as-you-go” became the American way of life. They could get what they wanted now and pay for it later. I was in my twenties before I awakened to this irresponsible appropriation of finances and discovered how Godless our nation as a whole had become in the area of personal finances. God cannot bless people financially when they do not abide by His principles.

As children of God, we learn to seek God's will in using the money He entrusts to us. In His Word, we find specific direction for our life and it is up to us to obey it. We impose on ourselves the discipline required in order to accomplish God's divine plan for our life. Only then will we enjoy abundant life here on earth. Everyone has an innate desire to be free from debt and from the pressure of bills, and it is possible. We search the scriptures, reorganize our priorities, follow

what the Bible says, and get ready to enjoy God's prosperity—the crown of riches. That may not mean we'll have a lot of money, but it does mean we'll have enough.

Crown of God's Goodness. *Crown the year with [God's] goodness.*³⁸ We need to meditate on God's kindness and integrity. He never said we wouldn't have trials, conflicts, and all manner of difficulties, but He did say He would always be with us.³⁹ He experienced all these emotions as did His followers. We are no exception. Like David, we need to remember that goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our life. We get robbed of our crown when we focus on the circumstances, the bad reports, the problems we face, the pain or the grief we experience, instead of on the goodness of our God. As followers of Jesus Christ, we do not yield to these thoughts but bring them into captivity—to the obedience of Christ.⁴⁰ This action results in others seeing our good works and, in turn, they glorify our Father in heaven.⁴¹

When we act on counsel from the ungodly, we get robbed of our crown.⁴² In a sense, nearly every conversation we're involved in contains some elements of counsel. We receive other people's ideas, opinions or hear their attitude expressed and it presses in on us to conform. Wise counsel is of necessity in the body of Christ, and it comes from speaking the Word of God as well as from relating our spiritual experiences—our testimonies. In order to hang onto our crown of good judgment we need to hear the voice of the Lord and not the voice of a stranger—an unbeliever, one who lives and thinks contrary to the Scripture. Those who have chosen to be followers of Jesus Christ, should read His manual on how to parent, how to be a husband/wife, how to manage finances, how to repair and restore relationships, and so on. There are also many wonderful books written by sincere Christian believers that elaborate on the Scripture and give life applications and illustrations for all conflicts in life. Whenever we act on the counsel of unbelievers in these major areas of life we lose our focus, and the scarecrow of discouragement is there to rob us of confidence.

We are to have a *sound mind* which will give good judgment in various life situations. It might even fall into the category of common sense. It will banish discouragement. We hang onto our crown of good judgment.

Crown of Rejoicing. *What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing?*⁴³ Rejoicing is an attitude of the heart and is not a reaction to problems or circumstances. As a matter of fact, it is the rejoicing that propels us through the problems with no ill effects. The redeemed receive beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praises for the spirit of heaviness.⁴⁴ They go to battle with the full expectation of victory, and return home with a crown of rejoicing!⁴⁵ We don't want to lose our crown by murmuring. We steadfastly rejoice through all situations—not because we ignore them or deny them, but because we serve a God who is bigger than all of them.

Crown of Life: *Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*⁴⁶ Jesus does not desire His brothers and sisters to merely survive, or eke out their existence. He came to give

life and that abundantly!⁴⁷ Too many Christians are barely making it, living life as if it were an endurance course. Not us. We hold fast to our crown seeing to it that no man takes it away from us by deceiving or discouraging us. We keep our eyes on Jesus and His promises.

There are others crowns mentioned in the Bible and stories about people who lost them. When Job was going through his affliction, he felt that God had stripped him of his glory and taken the crown from his head.⁴⁸ When that scarecrow of discouragement shows up in our life, we, too, may feel that something is missing. We check to be sure that our helmet of salvation is in place, command the scarecrow to depart, and wear our crowns with thanksgiving. We hold our shoulders high and let the world know that we are favored by the Most High God. We are the apple of His eye. We are honored. We are victorious. We walk in authority and power. We hang onto our crowns except when we come into the Presence of our Lord and Savior. There we cast our crowns at His feet for He is worthy to receive all the glory and honor and power because He has created all things for His pleasure. He is worthy!⁴⁹

We wear our crowns as we leave the intimacy of His throne to go into the fields to work and live in authority, victory, and power with rejoicing and knowing that everlasting life is ours through Christ Jesus.

We will not bow to the Canaanite scarecrow of discouragement which lies to us and deceives us. We will not buy that lie, rather we will discern the scarecrow for what it is: fake!

*My angel will go ahead of you and bring you into the land of the...Canaanites...and I will wipe them out. Do not bow down before their gods or worship them or follow their practices. You must demolish them and break their sacred stones to pieces.*⁵⁰

LIFE APPLICATION

What scarecrow of discouragement is overwhelming my mind and emotions and smothering my dreams?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I thank you that I am a winner through Jesus Christ because I live in Him and He lives in me.⁵¹ My accuser has been cast down!⁵² I have overcome by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of my testimony.⁵³ The Lord is my rock and my salvation.⁵⁴ I have faith in Him and He gives me victory in every situation.⁵⁵ Therefore I do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord, no matter what happens, remembering the great reward it brings me.⁵⁶ In Jesus' Name, I pray.

CHAPTER 3

HITTITE SCARECROWS: FEAR

I'm afraid...

By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will without fail drive out the Hittites from before you...but you shall utterly overthrow them and break down their images.⁵⁷

Inevitably, we all encounter the tribe of the Hittites whose name means terror or to be afraid.⁵⁸ The scarecrow of fear is lurking everywhere. It got in the way of the Israelites and still today often keeps us out of God's garden. It grips us. It paralyzes us. Jesus tells about a man whose master gave him some money to invest. Unfortunately, instead of investing he hid it in the ground, offering the excuse that he was afraid of the master because he was known to be a hard man.⁵⁹ In other words, he thinks his master is not fair, not just, not going to give him a square deal. He uses fear as an excuse for being negligent and lazy and not developing the gift He has been given.

Some people feel the same way about God. They don't think clearly enough to state it so plainly, but they have the same mistrust. That's why they won't tithe. They don't really believe the Lord will provide their needs so are afraid to give that ten percent to Him. That's why they won't quit a habit—why they won't crucify the flesh and deny its cravings. They fear the withdrawal and don't trust God to give them enough strength to overcome. That's why they look at other saints of God and wish they could be like them rather than being who God wants them to be. They fear the task is too great for them. They fear it is beyond their feeble strength. Guess what? They're right! That's where the problem lies: trusting in self instead of Almighty God. When we trust God completely, that's faith, and faith cancels out fear in the realm of obedience to God.

Fear of faces

Miss Richardson was my ninth grade Civics teacher. She was known as an old-maid, in her sixties, and had earned a reputation for being very strict. The classroom was always orderly. The mere mention of her name still brings memories of my trembling extremities. My grades, my tests, my homework so far had been acceptable and my grade was "A." Then came the fateful day. We had to approach her desk to hand in our homework and she visually inspected each set while we stood at attention. It was mandatory that the work be neat in every respect. I had labored over mine craving her acceptance, my heart pulsating at the possibility of rejection. Praise was not a part of her teaching technique. I presented her with my assignment and waited. After reading through it, she returned it to me saying she could not accept it with the lipstick smudge. I would have to do it over. Did I try to defend myself? No way! I took it back and did it over—although I did not wear lipstick and there was no lipstick on the paper. The red margin line on the left appeared a bit smudged from the printing. There was no stain. From then until the end of the year, I feverishly inspected every sheet of notebook paper before writing any assignment. I feared her face—and her wrath. My fear of rejection did not end there.

More than a decade later, while taking a class in Christian Education at the Anderson School of Theology, I had to observe a pre-school class at a nearby nursery school. I was thankful the requirement was to “observe” and sat back in a corner and watched. I was scared of those little one and two-year-olds. My psychology classes had taken their toll, and I feared I would say or do the wrong thing while interacting with them. Ridiculous? Of course! I could have been a great help to that teacher if only I had let go of my fear, torn down its intimidating image in my mind, and gotten down on the floor face to face with those precious little toddlers. In retrospect, I realize I was intimidated by the supervisor’s presence and the criticism she could level against me. After all, she did have a reputation for being “the best,” and I was still fearful of measuring up to the expectations.

Sometimes we are overtaken by fear because of the way someone looks at us. Afterwards we say, “Lord, how can I go back in there and teach (or sing, or minister, or work) in the presence of that person? Did you see that face? Please, Lord, don’t make me go.” I learned my lesson about this scarecrow many years ago when I was asked at the last minute to fill in for the ailing national director of Christian Education at a state conference. My pastor had volunteered me to substitute. He had no idea that I had a scarecrow of mountainous proportions and feared speaking to people. I guess I came across as confident and capable. I respected him and could not say no (besides my new husband insisted I accept the invitation). I studied prepared, prayed, and went, trembling, to teach my class on Sunday School Administration and Supervision. I knew the enrollees would include pastors and teachers with many years more experience than I had. Nevertheless, there I was in front of a group of one hundred or so smiling faces—minus one. I was continually drawn to the expressionless face of a man in the audience. It appeared he had totally tuned me out. There was no reaction from him at all. I felt the paralysis of fear starting in my toes and knew it was on the way to my head and mouth. I had rehearsed so much that I was on “auto pilot”. The session couldn’t end soon enough for me. I would be so relieved just to see that man walk out the door and not have to cope any longer with his expressionless face and folded arms.

After class, instead of walking out the door, he came straight to the front to speak to me. “Are you repeating this same lecture this afternoon?” he asked. Reluctantly, I muttered that I was—thinking he was probably going to the conference director to ask that I be dismissed. My thoughts were interrupted when I realized he was still talking. “Good,” he said, “because I’m going back to the office and round up all my staff and instruct them to attend your afternoon session. My church needs this teaching.” Wow! How wrong I had been. That afternoon I discovered he was the pastor of a large church in the area. Fear was designed to destroy my confidence and ability and to rob his staff of the information he felt would benefit them in carrying out their responsibilities to the church. Eventually, I remembered what the Lord said to Jeremiah: *Do not be afraid of their faces, for I am with you to deliver you.*⁶⁰

I have experienced this again and again in myself as well as in others. In supervisory positions, it was not at all uncommon for workers knew the explosive personality of another and did not want to rile the person; therefore they were not willing to point out the flaw or the error or their difference of opinion. They could not hold the person accountable for actions or reactions. When

it fell my lot to make the confrontation and it later came back on them, the others would deny knowing or saying anything about the reason it was necessary. Why? Because they didn't want the person to be angry with them. However, when we allow actions and words to go unchecked, we become discouraged about ourselves as well as with the others involved. When we give in to this fear, it not only makes us come off looking like a fool but causes us to avoid confronting others when we know they are wrong.

Fear of battles

However, I quickly admit to being guilty of the same dislike and fear of confrontation. This was especially true with my husband. There were times when I could see that his actions would likely result in damage or despair yet I prayed that someone else would show him (God?) and I would be spared the hurt and instead could be the instrument of healing after the fact. In retrospect, I saw that abdicating responsibility in these areas often caused more pain than it would have relieved. He would have fared better had I been willing to endure the misery for the moment. It would have been misery for me because I didn't like to have any conflict between us. It is better to be the friend who openly shares the truth and is rejected, than to succumb to the fear and never try to warn or correct. After all, scripture tells us that when we love, we do not dread or fear others.⁶¹ This is a sobering thought.

Remember Jael? She's the Israelite wife married to the Kenite. In our day we would say she was a believer married to an unbeliever. Her husband was a soldier in the enemy's army and had gone off to war fighting against Israel in an effort to destroy God's people. When the enemy's Captain Sisera came by Jael's tent, she invited him in to rest. While he slept she drove a tent peg into his temple killing him, thus the battle was won by a woman as Deborah had prophesied. Then Israel had peace for forty years.⁶² Most likely Jael had prayed many times, "Lord, what can I do? I'm just a housewife—and married to an unbeliever at that!" Then on this wonderful day, God answered her prayer and told her what to do. What if Jael had missed this opportunity by allowing the scarecrow of fear to paralyze her and keep her from doing her part to win the victory for thousands of her nation?

Obviously, we are not to murder people; but we do need to kill the thoughts and actions that bring the scarecrow of fear to our lives so we can realize the potential and utilize the gifts God has put within us. Fear to step out and act intelligently in situations that look impossible will paralyze us and may ultimately lead to our destruction—physical, emotional, and/or spiritual.

War is no stranger to God's people. From Genesis to Revelation and from Adam to our current day and time, it is a familiar scenario. Either those chosen of God are being bombarded by outsiders who want to steal their blessings and take their land, or these chosen ones disobey God and get involved in one struggle after another. One thing is certain, God is continually warning His people to arm for combat—not with guns and swords, but with the Word of God, a changed heart, and a sober mind—because the enemy is always sowing strife into our lives.⁶³ In other words, be ready for war. Be on the alert. This is not a ground war of country against country, but

a mind war of good against evil, of morality against immorality, of the ethical against the unethical, and of godly principles against ungodly philosophies.

Remember the parable Jesus told about the ten virgins? Five were wise and five were foolish. The foolish virgins did not think ahead and see to it that they had plenty of oil to last through the time of waiting. Most people have a tendency to wait until a need arises to do something about it. Wise are those who are prepared in advance. The Psalmist confirms this when he tells the Lord that he memorizes the Word and keeps it in his heart to meditate upon and give him direction so he won't sin.⁶⁴ Preparation alleviates fear. When the enemy attacks, he looks for our vulnerable spot. We hide the Word in our heart to draw upon, cover us, and sustain us during these attacks.

We keep our spiritual batteries charged by keeping the communication between us and our Lord flowing. Our life depends on it. We maintain our relationship to Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit so we will have light and strength for each new battle. Above all, we keep our heart right with God. We do not permit fear to come in and separate us from Him. He has promised to be with us always, through the fire, and through the flood, even to the end of the earth.

Let us not be caught off guard. We wear the full armor of God so that we may withstand the strategic, destructive plans of the enemy.⁶⁵ The Truth will protect our heart and emotions. Righteousness will keep our soul. The "peace shoes" we wear will guide us in the right path. The helmet of salvation will keep our mind in Christ Jesus. The sword of the spirit will pierce through each obstacle with the Word of God. *The Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear?*⁶⁶

Charles Naylor suffered a tragedy as a young man when a tent post fell on him leaving him paralyzed while preparing for a revival meeting, yet he determined not to fear life or what lay ahead because of his love for and faith in Jesus Christ. Naylor wrote his story and testimony of assurance in his book, *The Secret of the Singing Heart*. In this 1907 hymn written by Naylor after his accident, we can sense his confidence and fearless determination to be strong:⁶⁷

Be an overcomer, only cowards yield
When the foe they meet on the battlefield.
We are blood-bought princes of the royal host
And must falter not, nor desert our post.

Be an overcomer, He who stands with you
Is a Mighty One who is always true.
In the sorest conflict you shall win the day,
Face the legions dark till they flee away.

Be an overcomer, forward boldly go.
You are strong enough if you count it so—
Strong enough to conquer through sustaining grace

And to overcome every foe you face.

Never yield a step in the hottest fight;
 God will send you help from the realms of light.
 In Jehovah's might put the foe to flight
 And the victor's crown you shall wear at last.

Let's declare war on the enemy instead of letting him attack us with fear. Let's launch an aggressive attack on his game plan and eradicate our fear of the unknown, our fear of having to fight battles, and our fear of losing. Let's be sober—not deceived. Let's be vigilant—not taken by surprise. Let's intercept the enemy's missiles with our patriot shield of faith thereby fending off those fiery darts. Should one invade our territory, let's get busy cleaning it up immediately. We apply forgiveness, love, and understanding, and quickly move on. Let's be on guard—never compromising with the enemy.

If we compromise with the enemy we may avoid a fight but lose the battle. Satan will try to make us think we could avoid fighting if we would just talk about the problem and pursue peace. In reality, that is his tactic for staging a take-over in our life.

Take fear captive

This became very clear to me a few years ago when we were going through the severing of some long time relationships and hearing fabricated stories that were being circulated about my husband. For several weeks, I was going about my duties and responsibilities routinely while inwardly my heart was aching. Mentally and emotionally I was engaged in a fierce battle. I could literally feel the heat from the fiery darts being hurled at me, but it was as if I was in a bubble—being protected yet feeling the heat. I worked and prayed while taking the shield of faith with which [I was] able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.⁶⁸ The Scriptures gave me strength, hope, and overcoming power: I was not afraid of the terror by night nor the arrows that were flying by day⁶⁹ from the mouths of my enemies.

We were awakened by the ring in the middle of the night. The male voice on the other end of the phone line warned, "My gun is loaded and I'm coming over to kill you." The man had suspected they would come to us. It was one of several times we had taken people in for the night because of abuse in their home. The mother and daughter had shown up at our door the evening before relating their fear of his threats as he brandished the gun before the fled earlier that day. We fed them and bedded them down for the night with a promise to help them find shelter the next day and try to resolve the situation. This nighttime phone call validated those fears. Nevertheless, my pastor-husband and I chose not to awaken them, but prayed and went back to bed and slept. No one came. The next day we found them a place to stay at an address the man would not know, with people who were familiar with these types of situations. Weeks passed and with some godly counsel and minor adjustments the family was reunited and back in church together. They remained together until his death a few years later.

Some time passed and my life was threatened again by a single man in his late thirties. He had attended our church services for several months when he began greeting the ladies with a kiss. Of course, this made them very uncomfortable and when he persisted in his behavior our elders were immediately instructed to surround him and escort him out. More and more we became aware of his mental problems. If I was the speaker of the day, he would get up and walk out of the service. It was his custom to stop by our house unannounced from time to time. I would make him something to eat and my husband would sit down and talk with him. For some reason, he developed a dislike for me. One day he phoned to warn he was coming over soon to kill me. A few days later, I answered a knock at the door and found myself face to face with him. This time, I was home alone. The outside storm door was not locked and he had his foot already in the house as I opened the door. In a flash, I remembered his threat. He pushed past me muttering. Before I had a chance to decide what to do, a delivery truck pulled up in front of the house. My recently ordered mattress was being delivered at that very moment. Prayers of thanksgiving erupted from my heart. God was right on time! With the help of the delivery men, we were able to get the perpetrator out.

One Saturday I went to the church early in the morning as was my custom. I unlocked the door, entered the building, and as I was walking toward my office, I heard a door open. I looked in the direction of the noise and saw a man coming out of the kitchen. Immediately I recognized him as a homeless man who had stopped by the church the day before. My husband had fed him, clothed him and taken him to the Salvation Army several miles away. I asked what he was doing there and he quietly told me he didn't like the shelter. He had walked back to the church, entered the building the night before while we were having prayer meeting, gone to the attic over the kitchen, and after everyone left the church, he came down and helped himself to crackers in the cupboard and slept on some foam pads leftover from a kids' production.

Immediately I told him to come into the foyer area and sit down while I called my husband. He obeyed without hesitation. Of course, my husband was quite concerned for my safety as well as the break-in. He called people who lived beside the church to come there and wait with me. Then he called the police to come and take him away. No, he didn't press charges. He just wanted the man to know that the law is there for the protection of the righteous.⁷⁰ The man's needs had been taken care of the day before but he had walked away from those provisions. It never occurred to me to be afraid. God has not given me a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.⁷¹ Fear paralyzes, but a sound mind helped me act rationally.

Let's not permit any Hittite scarecrow to cast fear on us and halt our confidence. *My angel will go ahead of you and bring you into the land of the...Hittites...and I will wipe them out. Do not bow down before their gods or worship them or follow their practices. You must demolish them and break their sacred stones to pieces.*⁷²

LIFE APPLICATION

What scarecrow of fear is keeping me from pursuing the changes of behavior and venue that will bring joy and peace to my life?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, forgive me for allowing apprehensions to cancel my faith in You. This day I choose to trust You to help me as I move out of my fear zone into areas that will allow me the freedom to be all that You want me to be. In Jesus' Name, I pray.

CHAPTER 4

HIVITE SCARECROWS: DECEPTION

I can't tell the difference...

*By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will without fail drive out the...Hivites from before you...but you shall utterly overthrow them and break down their images.*⁷³

Another tribe the Israelites had to conquer was the Hivites. The meaning of the name is uncertain but Wellhausen derives it from “serpent,” in which case the Hivites were originally the snake clan.⁷⁴ Since the serpent deceived Eve, we get the analogy here that the Israelites had to battle deception in order to take the Promised Land. The same is true of God’s people today. We are faced with deception on every hand, but just as the Lord told the Israelites that the angel would go before them and they would utterly cut off the Hivites, so we too stay prepared to deal with deception from day to day as it comes in many forms. Scripture warns us not to believe every spirit, but to test them to see whether they are of God since we know there are many false prophets in the world.⁷⁵

Deception causes us to take detours through life that slow us down, get us off course, cause us to be disillusioned, and steal our joy and assurance of eternal life in Christ Jesus. We need to exercise our senses to discern both good and evil.⁷⁶ It is something we practice regularly otherwise deception creeps in and does its damage before we know what is happening.

When my husband and I visited the vibrant town of Tijuana, Mexico, we were admiring the multihued serapes on the zebra-striped donkey and cart in the middle of the street. A voice called out to us: “Vengan, Señores, I will take your picture.” The little man stepped out from his hiding place with a Polaroid camera. We parted with five dollars, climbed up onto the little cart attached to the donkey, and smiled. The camera clicked. We waited five minutes and the little man handed us our beautiful photo—in black and white! We had been deceived. It never occurred to us to ask him if he had colored film.

Candid Camera television program mastered the art of deception and gained lasting popularity because people love to watch and laugh at others being deceived. Then, of course, there are the magicians who have been around for thousands of years. The benign ones are those that do slight of hand and little tricks for children.

Sometimes deception and ignorance go hand in hand. My dad always let it be known that he did not like pumpkin pie—never did and never would—but he was quite fond of butterscotch cream pie with mother’s perfect meringue. One holiday, mother played a trick on him and put whipped cream on the pumpkin pie and served it to him. Without thinking, seeing only the color, he gobbled it up, finally realizing it wasn’t butterscotch but it surely was delicious! Thereafter, he ate pumpkin pie.

My husband loved to play tricks on me and was continually thinking of a new one. During our first years of marriage, if he arrived home before I did he would hide in the closet when he heard me coming. I would come in, look around, assume he wasn't home, then he would jump out to scare me. Years later, he was doing some woodworking with the table saw in the garage and began screaming "Help! Help!" Both of our children went running to daddy, but I recognized that his voice did not indicate pain. Nevertheless, when I arrived to the garage, there he was showing the children his fist minus a thumb—which he had bent under to make them think he had cut it off. When I laughed, the children were confused. For a moment they still believed him. He played so many tricks that I was sometimes concerned he might actually be hurt one day and we wouldn't realize it.

On a more serious note, a pastor friend of ours worked with a recovered alcoholic whose life seemed to be transformed since he had repented and made a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ. After a few years he had established a track record and was trusted by the people of the congregation. They agreed to let him work with the young boys in the church. To their horror in a short time they discovered he had molested several of them. He was arrested, found guilty and sentenced to many years in prison. Deceptive situations like these occur more frequently than we might realize. Oh how much we need the Holy Spirit's gift of discerning spirits to be operating in our personal lives and in the life of our congregation.

This brings to mind another true story of deception. A young man moved to the community and began attending a local church. Soon he was actively involved in many of the programs. A Christian young lady also active in the church found him delightful and fell in love with him. He had been working faithfully in the congregation for quite some time and was highly recommended by all who knew him. He told everyone he had no surviving relatives and had moved to their state for employment. The couple married and soon she was pregnant. However, before the baby was born there was a knock at the door. The detectives had come to arrest her husband. Seems he was a fugitive from the law, had been married before, had served time in prison for various offenses, and for several years had eluded the police. What a tragic ending to an experience of deception.

Some major deceptions in the Bible

There are numerous stories in the Bible about how one person deceived another for various reasons. Although some Bible historians defend her actions because of her right to motherhood in the culture of her day, Tamar dreamed up a major deception of her father-in-law, Judah. She had been married to his son, who died and left her childless. According to Mosaic Law, her husband's brother was to take her for a wife and give her children. When she had lost two husbands, both of whom were brothers, and was refused the remaining young brother, she dressed up in harlot's clothing and lay in wait for her father-in-law, seducing him as he came by. Judah made advances to her, and smart woman that she was, she asked him for a pledge of his ring, his bracelets, and his staff. He gave them to her. She did not remove her veil. Three months later, word came to Judah that his daughter-in-law was pregnant having acted as a prostitute. This

angered Judah and he ordered that Tamar be burned, but when she came to receive her punishment, she was holding his ring, bracelets and staff. She was vindicated.

Samuel gave King Saul orders from the Lord to destroy Amalek and every person and animal with him. After the conquest, Samuel heard the bleating of sheep and the lowing of the oxen. He asked Saul to be accountable, *What do these sounds mean? Did God not say to destroy everything?* Saul was caught in disobedience and deception; nevertheless he continued trying to deceive by telling another lie. He blamed the people and told Samuel they had saved the best to sacrifice to the Lord..⁷⁷ However, that was not God's command to him. Saul's act of deception cut him off from God's blessings.

Some people live as though they believe God can't really see what they're doing. Remember Ananias and Sapphira? They sold a piece of property and pretended to give all the proceeds to the local congregation. They tried to deceive the man of God, but Peter was in tune with the Holy Spirit, had the gift of discerning of spirits, and called their bluff. Their attempt to deceive cost them their lives. What would have happened had they simply been honest and put in part of the proceeds instead of pretending to put in the total amount? Based on biblical principles, they would have been blessed.

We are to have no part in the scarecrow of deception: neither in deceiving nor in being deceived. Abraham Lincoln said: "You may be able to fool all the people some of the time, some of the people all the time, but not all the people all the time." If we try to deceive, one day we will be found out! We are admonished, on the one hand not to deceive with our mouth⁷⁸ and on the other hand to train ourselves to detect deception wherever it arises.⁷⁹

Deception disguised as education

Jesus said, *Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; but be therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves.*⁸⁰ Everyone who has read about sheep is aware that they have a tendency to be stupid. That is reason enough for Jesus to command us to be wise. It doesn't just happen. We have to be alert. We have to watch and pray. Far too many Christians have had no discernment, therefore have exercised little or no wisdom in many facets of life. While they sought after material wealth, a humanistic plot to kidnap the children was successfully underway. Vain philosophies prevailed. Deception was disguised in the cloak of education and information. We continue to reap the disastrous results: insecurity, incompetence, and insensitivity.

In a recent special report, noted news reporter Hugh Downs spoke of the rapid decline in the quality of education in our country. According to Downs, only four out of ten high school graduates go on to college. He displayed a chart showing the seventeen top industrialized nations in the world with the United States at the bottom in education. He further pointed out that our country is in the bottom ten percent in science and math in spite of the fact that education has been a priority of the past five presidents.⁸¹

Having earned graduate degrees in education and having spent more than three decades as teacher, counselor, administrator in secondary school and university, I have formed my own ideas as to why the quality of education continues the downward spiral. Observe the logical progression of this decline.

Insecurity. In college pedagogy classes prospective teachers were taught to accept any response a child might give. While the answer may be factually incorrect, it was to be considered acceptable since it was the child's opinion or perspective. To tell children, "No, that's incorrect," was considered damaging to their self-esteem.

On the surface, this may sound good and noble, but at the heart of the issue is the subtle removing of absolutes. The end result is that the child thinks he can say or do no wrong. In fact, this methodology eliminates the very existence of right and wrong. Several generations were educated over the last half century with this philosophy. As a result, when they became parents, they threw up their hands in despair fearing they would lose their children or ruin their self-esteem if they corrected or disciplined them. Had wisdom prevailed, they would know God's Word says that *the rod and correction give wisdom; but a child left to his own ways brings shame to his mother.*⁸²

These insecure parents began to run from one seminar to another to learn how to be "effective parents." Sadly, the Book of Books with the only wisdom for them was still sitting dust-covered on the shelf unopened, while their children were growing up scorning authority, committing suicide, feeling inadequate, insecure and incapable of fitting into society. They became hippies, yippies, runaways, castaways, rebelling against any law, standard, expectation or norm—and their parents fought for their right to do it. Many of those who survived this period of self-expression have, in some respects, returned to the norm of that which is culturally acceptable in a civilized democracy such as exists in the United States of America. The residual effects linger in those who were survivors of the rebellion against classical literature, the race riots, the Viet Nam war era. Others remain crushed somewhere in the system or on the streets. A part of the educated remnant continues to demand legislation to give absolute freedom from any laws relative to moral issues of right and wrong. When they reach the point of insecurity, deception rules. Deception breeds discontent. Discontent breeds lawlessness.

Incompetence. Concurrent with the removal of delineating right and wrong, came the elimination of anything that required rote memory. My generation was among the last to have the opportunity to study Latin. It was dropped from the curriculum upon the recommendation of the professionals who considered it a dead language that required too much memorization. Originally, the study of Latin was a requirement for all students who planned to attend college. Why? Many of our English words are derived from Latin, and it was widely used in the medical field. It is the mother of the Romance languages: Romanian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian, all of which are easily learned after studying Latin. Aside from these issues, it was well recognized that the study of Latin developed and enhanced various learning techniques applicable to other subjects. However, all valid reasons for its study were dismissed.

Along with Latin, transformational grammar went out of style because diagramming sentences was considered a meaningless activity. We are hard-pressed to find anyone under sixty-five years of age who considers this an exercise of value. Nevertheless, it is incumbent on the mind to be disciplined in order to speak or write the language fluently. The fruit of this discipline is good written and verbal communication with beauty and good form. Since students are no longer required to know how the language is put together and how the parts thereof function, they are also unable to use it effectively. The sound approach to reading and spelling was substituted with the sight approach. The disastrous results were no more evident than when I served on a staff committee to read and evaluate essays for freshman applicants at Indiana University. These were students with standardized test scores high enough to qualify for admission yet their essays were overwhelmingly defective and elementary in sentence structure and punctuation as well as lacking any critical thinking skills.

In a speech given to future journalists at Focus Hope in Detroit, a local TV news anchor told how they have to plan their newscasts on a fourth grade level of comprehension. Newspapers and periodicals must be geared to a sixth grade reading audience since fewer than half of all adults read with adequate comprehension. Why is this? In most school districts, the classics have been removed from the Literature reading lists and replaced with contemporary novels—another way to dilute levels of comprehension and expression.

During this renovation of education, math facts of addition subtraction, and multiplication were to be learned by use rather than memorized. This coupled with the aforementioned eliminations has rendered a generation of functional illiterates. They substituted reason for rote memory and hands-on experience was considered more important than studying. Thus the foundation was laid for the experience oriented society we have today.

Based on this premise, it was obviously not popular to require students to memorize Scripture, therefore no Word was hidden in their hearts to keep them from sinning against their God.⁸³ Some board members from one of our churches protested to my husband when he was teaching a class of teenagers and required them to memorize The Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments.

Educators have been deceived so they inadvertently deceive their students. That deception has resulted in insecurity which fertilizes the breeding ground for protests against anything and everything that demands measuring up to standards, or that requires evaluation, scores, grades, or assessments. People feel they should be allowed to do as they please regardless how it impacts others. This is, of course, a perversion of freedom. When we reach the point of incompetence, deception rules. Deception breeds discontent. Discontent breeds lawlessness.

Insensitivity. Freedom was further perverted in the 1950's by the introduction of mandatory group showers after gym classes. This broke down inhibitions, modesty vanished, and the way was paved for boys and girls to undress before each other without pangs of conscience which

may well have planted seeds for gay-lesbian and adulterous relationships. Dissident groups around the country then convinced Boards of Education that children needed sex education. Since parents had already yielded their authority over the children, the program got off the ground with little opposition. The consequence was that teenage pregnancies escalated and abortion became an acceptable form of birth control with total insensitivity to the murders. At this time, Health Clinics are embedded in public schools all over the nation. Under the guise of giving medical treatment, they dispense contraceptives, contract for abortions, and flaunt homosexuality. In many states, parents are not privy to their records or information even when their own children are involved. This is not freedom. It's the result of calculated deception.

For decades idle children have sat in front of television sets, and in recent years watching videos and playing computer games. This resulted in laziness; Scripture says, *Laziness casts one into a deep sleep, and an idle person will suffer hunger*.⁸⁴ They ate sugar snacks all day, then their parents complained that they were hyperactive and the doctor prescribed drugs to calm them down. Parents did not pay attention to them and see to it that they were given proper diet and adequate sleep, plenty of love, chores and discipline. With this lack of supervision, the children grew up insecure and insensitive. How could they be expected to have discernment when it came to drugs? They didn't, so the door was opened for drug education to be added to the school curriculum. The outcome? Drug usage multiplied as statistics now prove.

*And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.*⁸⁵ Not all false prophets are found in the religious community. Television education arrived on the scene in time to rescue parents from their dilemma. Mothers felt justified in letting TV take on the parent role since the so-called educational programs were teaching alphabet and numbers. They didn't have the discernment to see they also taught children it is acceptable to have tantrums and demand their own way, to be gluttons and gobble down as much food as desired, and to look to the odd ones to be their patterns and role models. Television, movies, and videos took the place of imagination in their children's minds. By their good words and fair speeches they deceived the hearts of the simple.⁸⁶

The result? The children are desensitized to nearly every evil around them, and it all happens very subtly while the sheep are admiring the wolves. The wolves court them carefully, but their objective is to wipe out God's Family. He created little bodies with a desire to wiggle and squirm—not to sit for hours in front of television or computer. The movement is a prerequisite for work! Those kids need some chores to sensitize them to adulthood that comes knocking all too soon. Instead they are desensitized to the concept of work and will go to any extreme to avoid it. When they reach the point of insensitivity, deception rules. Deception breeds discontent. Discontent breeds lawlessness.

Because these adults are captives of deception, they have resorted to lawsuits—not to mention violence—to retaliate for freedoms they feel have been denied them. Daily newsrooms are inundated with reports of aggressive attacks and disappointment lawsuits. A soccer dad disagrees with the call and kills the umpire. A baseball dad sues his son's high school coach for not choosing him to pitch. A cheerleader sues her advisor and school when she accidentally cut her

ear. A disgruntled customer sues the fast food chain for burns suffered from hot coffee. These are only a sampling of the people who expect the world to revolve around them and their desires—always looking for someone to blame, never accepting responsibility for their own actions. They find it impossible to believe that sometimes we just don't get our own way. Is there any hope for overcoming this deception?

Seasons come and go

As long as we live, we have a glorious hope of changing our circumstances, our outlook, our philosophies, and our ultimate destiny. We live in a world of changes. Precious babies turn into toddlers, then adolescents, then adults. No season lasts forever; we go from winter into spring, then summer, and fall. Day turns into night, then night into day again. If we wait long enough, the next season will come. There are births and deaths, weddings and funerals. The clearest sky will surely become clouded, and the cloudy sky will of certainty become clear. Everything under heaven has a season and is therefore changeable.⁸⁷ How reassuring it is to serve a God who does not change. We need a stabilizing force in our lives to give us hope for a new day—to bring back into our lives some security, competence, and sensitivity.

Only those who are born into this world as human beings can be born again between birth and death. That is the abundant life Jesus came to give us here with the assurance of eternal life with Him. In another sense of the word, there is a time for the birth of ideas, of visions, of dreams and desires. How often do these seem to die only to have the Lord resurrect them and bring them to pass?

We plant potatoes and carrots, and tomatoes, but we cannot watch them grow because they grow underground. This same concept is true of deception, but it is also true with the Word of God. We plant it in our hearts, then dig it up to use it. By the same token, religious traditions are planted in our lives—many of which are vain substitutes for a vital relationship with Jesus Christ. These traditions must be plucked up like weeds for they cause the gospel to have no effect in our lives. *For you ignore God's specific laws and substitute your own traditions.*⁸⁸ We have had guilt heaped upon us—or we put quilt on ourselves—for not conforming to religious rites and traditions. Jesus set us free from this bondage to man-made rules. He defied all the religious expectations of His day even though He was a trained Rabbi. We have been deceived into thinking that keeping the sacraments, attending church services regularly, keeping the Bible in a visible spot, and giving some money to the church is being a Christian. “Being” is a state. Apostle Paul says, “I live and move and breathe, and have my being in Him.”⁸⁹ It is a continuous relationship with Jesus Christ—where we find our security, our competence and our sensitivity toward ourselves and each other.

We have to mortify or kill the deeds of the flesh and then heal the emotional hurt caused by them. We kill the giants in our life, and then hasten to bring healing to those around us who were affected by them. We break down old habits, wrong thinking, defective behavior, and negative attitudes and substitute them with new habits, right thinking, godly behavior, and positive attitudes according to the Word of God. This can all be done when we commit our lives to being

followers of Jesus Christ and His love pours through our lives into the lives of others. *Stop fooling yourselves. If you think you are wise by this world's standards, you will have to become a fool so you can become wise by God's standards.*⁹⁰

Let's not be content to say "I can't tell the difference" and allow the Hivite scarecrow to deceive us into making wrong decisions and following wrong directions. *My angel will go ahead of you and bring you into the land of the...Hivites...and I will wipe them out. Do not bow down before their gods or worship them or follow their practices. You must demolish them and break their sacred stones to pieces.*⁹¹

LIFE APPLICATION

What scarecrow of deception is creeping around attempting to take me captive?⁹²

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I thank you that I do not believe every spirit, but test them to see whether they are of You because many false prophets have gone out into the world.⁹³ Thank You for the manifestation of Your Spirit in my life helping me to discern their deceptive words and actions.⁹⁴ In Jesus' Name, I pray.

CHAPTER 5

PERIZZITES SCARECROWS: IGNORANCE

I didn't know any better...

By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will without fail drive out the Perizzites from before you...but you shall utterly overthrow them and break down their images.⁹⁵

Ignorance is a prominent and ominous scarecrow that interferes with our productivity. It is represented by the tribe of the Perrizites whose name literally means a village without walls.⁹⁶ This is precisely our condition when ignorance dominates certain areas of our life. Anything goes. When we have no knowledge to guide us, there are no limits or boundaries established to separate the false from the real or the good from the bad, thus any idea can run rampant in our minds to the point of destroying us.

There are many bright, loving, godly young people who have responded to the Lord with willing, open hearts and are a blessing to their parents and other authorities in their lives. I know godly teenagers whose parents are not serving the Lord. We thank God for them and for their determination to spread the good news of salvation. By God's grace they will minister healing and truth to their generation and re-establish the path of righteousness for generations to come. On the other hand, we have raised a generation young people who are ignorant of right and wrong. They are *disobedient to parents, inventors of evil...*⁹⁷ Many Christian parents been influenced by current humanistic philosophies and have mixed them with scripture. In so doing they have unwittingly established an insecure environment for their children. Parents are wringing their hands, asking what went wrong, and going for counseling. However, just as there is no salvation outside the name of Jesus, so there is no effective counseling outside the Scripture. Jesus said the people who both listen to His Words and do them are the blessed ones—the satisfied.⁹⁸ Just as we deposit money a little at a time in savings and allow it to grow to realize the benefit, so we deposit the scriptural correction and discipline in our children from infancy and allow it to grow.

Certainly parents must pray without ceasing for their children, model a godly lifestyle for them without compromise, and read the Word of God to them without excuse. This will preempt the scarecrow of ignorance.

A river without banks is a swamp

Ideally, parents always want the most excellent for their children and are continually seeking counsel on how to raise them to become the best: the best adjusted psychologically, the best controlled emotionally, the best academically, and on and on. They overextend themselves to get the children involved in all types of activities which in and of themselves may be good. However, the underlying factor of all success in life is *the fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom*. When we eliminate the fear of the Lord, our children have no wisdom. They fear no authority: not God, not parents, not government. They are ignorant and subject to destruction.

It is common knowledge that a swamp is a piece of wet, spongy land that has a growth of certain kinds of trees but is unfit for cultivation. From this term comes our expression, "I am swamped..." which means to be plunged into or overwhelmed with activities, problems, or situations. This is exactly what has happened to the children: there were not high enough banks in their life to keep the river flowing. As a result they have been "swamped."

In my thirty-plus years of working in education, I conclude that the biggest area in which we fail our children is by letting down the walls that serve to protect them. We have substituted a mushy acceptance of all behavior and called it *love*, when in actuality the scripture says that he who loves his child will discipline him diligently.⁹⁹ *ALL correction at the time is grievous, but in the end yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness.*¹⁰⁰ Yet parents have not been willing to have the grievous times. They somehow got the notion that the experience at the moment had to be positive, but the scripture tells us that in the end—not at the time—we get positive feelings and relationships.

Why do teenagers have such a difficult time staying within the boundaries set for them at home, at school, at work, and yes, even at church? Scripture tells us: *Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*¹⁰¹ Beginning in infancy, parents are conditioning (training) their children either how to get their way or how to obey. The method by which the children are trained when they are very young will likely determine how they act when they are teenagers and carry over into adulthood.

We train children by setting limits and sticking to them. For this reason, playpens are excellent for training children. Yes, playpens restrict the freedom of the little ones—for their protection. They learn to stay within defined limits. If children don't have restrictions as youngsters, they won't know how to deal with them when they are teenagers. Instead they will be accustomed to exploring whatever/whenever they wish, and will continue to do this. However, their exploration now goes beyond the house into the world of drugs, alcohol, violence and immorality. They are swamped and ignorant as to why they should avoid these vices and even more incapable of dealing with the consequences which they deem unfair—all because they've never had limits imposed on them.

We train children by defining prohibited access areas. We do not clear off tabletops to prevent the little ones from breaking decorative items. We simply impose off limits to them. Of course, treasured pieces should be put away; even adults have accidents and bump into things and break them. Children should be taught DO NOT TOUCH THAT! This is one of the most important ways to train children so that when they are later faced with temptations to which they should say NO! they will hear the voice of the Spirit (or the parent) saying, "Do not touch that!" They will hear and obey, thus avoiding the swamp. Otherwise, their ignorance leads them right into deception and destruction.

We train children by keeping our word and being consistent. We have all witnessed toddlers making demands of a parent and the parent saying NO! They want to buy something in the grocery store, or they want to go to potty or get a drink during church service. Once refused, they demand again—a little louder than before. Each time they hear **NO!** their tone of voice escalates until they are loud enough to embarrass the parent. To keep them quiet, the parent gives in to the demand. The banks of the river just caved in. They have learned how to manipulate and get their way. The toddlers have just become a swamp.

Carla's Story

Years ago when I was a counselor in a public school a classroom teacher sent a young teenage girl to me for disrupting her class. When Carla came into the office I realized she was troubled. We sat down and talked for a while and before long her problem came pouring out. There was to be a school dance that night and a teenage classmate had invited her to be his date. She did not want to go, but her friends were excited about it. She told the boy she would have to ask her mother's permission. She did, and her mother said **NO!** Carla was relieved, but instantly realized she would have to face her friends who would laugh her to scorn. What to do now? She threw a temper tantrum, told her mother how ALL the other mothers let their daughters go to the dance with boys and she would be the **only one** whose mother deprived her of the privilege. She screamed, cried, begged, and demeaned her mother. What did mother do? She gave in. She said, "Okay. If it means that much to you, then go." Carla was devastated. She had hoped her mother would not change her mind. I asked Carla why she didn't just accept her mother's first answer of "no" since she didn't want to go. She replied that she had to let her friends know that she made a big fuss, but she hoped to be able to tell them that her mom still said no. How ignorant her mom was, yet typical of many parents today.

There Carla sat in my office, kicked out of her class, angry with her mom, feeling uncomfortable about the upcoming evening with her friends all because neither she nor her mom knew how to say "no". In Carla's case a parent's "no" became "yes". The banks were not high enough to contain either of them. She didn't want them to cave in. She wanted her mother to be the banks that would rise high enough to protect her. Carla was now swamped.

As parents our "yes" must be "yes" and our "no" be "no".¹⁰² We cannot not give in to their screaming whether they are babies or teenagers.¹⁰³ Otherwise when they are old, they will not know the way.¹⁰⁴ Too many times parents think the children are mature enough to make decisions for themselves, and they don't realize that's why children (yes, even teenagers) have parents. They need protection. They need to be told NO! It provides them with boundaries and makes them feel safe. They will beat their heads against the walls, but if they don't fall the children will feel secure and loved. Parents need to have perseverance and accept responsibility realizing they might be disliked at the time but will be loved and admired when the children are older. Remember, a river without banks is a swamp. Let's not expect our teenagers to flow like a river with our plans and dreams for them if we haven't maintained good, high banks from infancy

Let the river flow!

Many adults who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior have difficulty accepting Him as Lord. They want salvation without having to change their lifestyle. As a result they do not have the victory. They cause strife and division in their marriages, in their places of employment, and in their churches because they have never learned to accept authority over them. They grew up throwing temper tantrums and getting their way. As they got older they continued to bamboozle their way through miscellaneous situations. Their lives are swamps. They will not say **NO!** to things that are evil. They will not discipline themselves to do that which is good.

As we train up our children with the principles of God's Word, we discipline them while there is hope and do not despair because of their crying, screaming, and emotional outbursts.¹⁰⁵ Let the river flow! See to it that the banks are sufficiently high to let a mighty river flow and bring healing to those around. By so doing, we will not hurt our children. To the contrary, we will help them fortify themselves and learn to resist the devil and draw near to God.

The entrance of God's Word brings light.¹⁰⁶ Let's pray that the Holy Spirit will illumine our way and help us to foresee pitfalls in raising our children and grandchildren before it's too late. Pass it on. Help others. There is a hunger in the land—it's a hunger to hear the Word of the Lord.¹⁰⁷ Let's feed those who are hungry with God's Word. May it be heard. May it be obeyed. Keep the river flowing so that ignorance will not swamp another generation and erode their confidence.

Eradicating Error

What about those who have botched parenting and caved in to secular techniques for child-rearing out of ignorance? Is it too late? They need to confess their confusion to the Lord, choose His way today, tell their children what truth they have discovered, and ask their forgiveness if they're old enough to understand, then begin this very moment to parent God's way. If their children are grown, they should share with them what God has taught them and ask their forgiveness. This will help them eradicate their ignorance as they raise the next generation.

In spite of all our noble efforts to pray for our children and to train them up according to God's principles, some seem to go astray when they're older. We have to commit them to the Lord. When we have done all we know to do, we just continue to stand fast and hold on tight to God's promises.

Watching and waiting

We have a tendency to adhere to the old adage, "The grass is greener on the other side." This shows our ignorance. If we keep a close watch we'll see they have to mow their grass, too! We think, "If I were living anywhere else except where I am, I could easily make my one talent into two." Oh yes? In other words, we blame the circumstances. Why would living somewhere else make it easier? Some say, "If I had some other market in which to do business", or "if I were living in yesterday or tomorrow instead of today, I could do something great, but since I am living here where I am there is no chance." This ignorance keeps us away from the garden delights. If the birds knew the scarecrow was a fake, they wouldn't be afraid. The belief that different circumstances would somehow create immediate success is a fake. We cannot permit that scarecrow of ignorance to keep us from doing what God desires us to do. We keep our eye

on God's vision for us, not on the circumstances that try to prevent us from accomplishing it. When we watch the winds we will never plant a garden; and when we look to the clouds we will never reap.¹⁰⁸

We sometimes sit waiting, expecting such and such to happen as if to give us perfect conditions to act on what we know we should be doing. It's rare that perfect circumstances show up. Some say they will serve the Lord as soon as they clean up their life. Are they waiting for a fire to fall from heaven and consume the habit? It's not likely to happen—figuratively or spiritually. First, they need to come to the Lord and change the soil of their heart. Then, the Lord, by His mercy, will help them make it through the trials to perfect the cleanup.

Some are waiting until a better day to begin a new project. Some are waiting until they make more money to begin tithing (giving ten percent of ones income to the Lord's work). Some are waiting for their children to grow up to get involved in church work. Waiting. Waiting. Waiting. The only problem is, "until" never comes, because there's always a new set of circumstances that demand a waiting period. At the end of their lives, they'll still be waiting. Ignorance is keeping them from their dreams. Their lack of knowledge is destroying them.¹⁰⁹ If only they could get a vision and work toward it.

Ignorant Rage

Dear Abby ran an article several years ago about a boy who graduated from high school and expected his father to give him a car for graduation as was the custom in his circle of friends. In fact, he and his dad had already picked out the car. On graduation night, his father handed him a gift-wrapped box which the boy assumed contained the keys to the new car. However, when he opened the box, he found a Bible. He was so angry that he threw the Bible down and ran out of the house never to return. When his father died, the boy—now a man—came home for the funeral. Later when going through his dad's possessions, he came across the Bible he had been given for graduation. He opened it and began to turn the pages when a paper fell out. It was a check, dated the day of graduation and written out for the exact amount of the car they had selected together. He missed the desire of his heart and a life-long relationship with his dad because of his ignorance. He wouldn't even open the Bible thus he was ignorant that his heart's desire was inside. More importantly he was ignorant of a value he should have learned: the fact that *life does not consist in the abundance of our possessions.*¹¹⁰

Many of us have missed tremendous spiritual, emotional, and financial blessings because of our ignorance. Some ignorance is simply lack of knowledge. Other ignorance is the result of arrogance or bitterness which blinds us to truth. Sometimes it is that we choose not to be informed. If we are unwilling to accept the challenge of pulling down the scarecrow of ignorance, our lack of confidence will blame our failures and discouragement on our background, our looks, and anything or anyone else that comes to mind.

Wise counsel dispels ignorance

Before we were married, my husband gave me a beautiful watch as a gift. His mother had purchased it for him in Germany. It was special. After several years, it began to lose time. One day, he suggested we take the watch to a jewelry store to have it repaired and see about getting a different, more modern, flexible band. Fortunately, a man in our congregation owned a jewelry store with a watch repair shop so we could trust him. When we asked about replacing the band, he disappeared for a few minutes and came back to tell us that the band on the watch was worth several hundred dollars and asked if we were sure we wanted to replace it with a cheap Speidel? We looked at each other in shock. My watch was pure gold and we didn't know it. How thankful we were for that honest jeweler. Our ignorance could have cost us money and an heirloom.

When I was in sixth grade, the game of marbles was extremely popular and having your own special bag of marbles to put out in the circle was a status symbol. It was the custom to play for "keeps", but I wasn't permitted to do that because it sounded to my parents like gambling. Perhaps that's why I developed the skill—so I could at least keep my own marbles! This game had made such inroads with young adolescents that a country preacher made it the topic of his radio sermon one day. The gentleman could not read, but relied on others to read to him. He evidently believed the Bible said, "Marble not, I say unto you!" and took that text as his sermon denouncing the game of marbles as a forerunner to gambling. He might have been sincere, but he was sincerely ignorant. I'm sure he had many callers who shed light on his error. Even if his points were valid, his ignorance overshadowed any good they might have accomplished.

About spiritual gifts, the Apostle Paul says, *I do not want you to be ignorant.*¹¹¹ How can we avoid this ignorance? Easily. By reading the explanation and description he writes. It is our responsibility as believers to become familiar with God's Word. Since we are His children, we need to know what our inheritance is and what His expectations are for us. It's all there. People who say, "I don't believe the Bible," are ignorant. They rarely know what it says. We need to ask them, "Exactly what is it in the Bible that you don't believe?" For the most part, they can't answer that question. They've chosen not to believe something they really know nothing about.

Jesus said He would send the Holy Spirit Who would teach us all we need to know.¹¹² That teaching may come through His Spirit in others. It may come through our own personal study of the Word. Paul wasn't talking to seminary graduates when he said, *Study to show yourself approved, a workman that needs not be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.*¹¹³ We do not learn by osmosis; therefore we study. We cannot afford to be ignorant about the Word of God for it gives us direction for every aspect of life. Those who can't read, or feel they don't have time, can listen to the Bible on a wide selection of cassette tapes, CD's, videos, and DVD's. No generation can afford to use ignorance as an excuse for breaking the law of the land nor the law of God.

It is our duty to exercise our senses to discern good and evil,¹¹⁴ and test the spirits to see whether they are of God.¹¹⁵ We should not be willing to remain ignorant in these matters. Many people simply accept situations and circumstances for what they appear to be, rather than getting to the

bottom of them to see what they are. Like the birds, they are content to allow the scarecrow to keep them from getting to the garden. In so doing, they are cheated out of the precious rewards awaiting them.

Poison in the pot

Elisha came to the prophets' school at Gilgal during a time of famine. He told his servant, Gehazi, to make a pot of stew for everyone. One of the students went out and gathered some mushrooms for the stew. Some of these wild gourds were very poisonous and flourished during extreme droughts. He didn't know the difference between the poisonous ones and the nutritious ones and mixed them together. Unfortunately, the one who prepared the stew didn't have this discernment either, for he allowed him to shred them into the pot. When they began eating the stew, one of the students cried out to Elisha: *Oh man of God, there is death in the pot!* It smelled wonderful. It looked appetizing, but it was poisonous. Elisha asked for some cornmeal and threw it into the kettle then told them to serve it again. The stew was no longer poison.¹¹⁶

They didn't leave the table. They didn't fire the cook. They didn't pour out the stew. After all, there was famine in the land and food was scarce. They were hungry and eager to eat. How grateful they were to their teacher for ordering the cornmeal. He took immediate action. He healed the stew, and the men ate it by faith. Soon more food arrived—seemingly an award for their faith: A man came from the community and brought Elisha twenty loaves of bread and some fresh grain. Elisha told Gehazi to give it to the students, but the servant protested that it wasn't enough for the one hundred men present. Elisha insisted saying *thus says the Lord: They shall eat and have some left over.*

Elisha, the prophet, didn't become anxious and concerned. He just called for the meal—the flour of which bread is made. Jesus is our Bread of Life. Whenever we apply Him, the Word of God to a deathly situation. He will always bring Life. When poisonous gourds appear in our life, or when someone brings their poisonous circumstances to us for help, we should apply the Word of God to them. If that Word is mixed with faith and received, it will cure the poison. Let's not sit around and bemoan the situation, but throw in the sacred meal.

Identify the poison

Often we engage in conversation with someone and share a memorable experience, only to have that person respond with, "I can top that one!" It goes something like this: Tell me about your children, and I will tell you about mine. Of course, mine are smarter, better looking, more creative, and more resourceful than yours. Tell me about your revelation from God, and I will tell you about mine. Mine is deeper and more spiritual than yours. On and on it goes, having adopted the world's slogan, "Whatever you have done, I have done it better."

Some people have an uncanny ability to tell untimely stories. When I had checked into the maternity ward of the hospital for the birth of my first child, I was facing a caesarian section which had been scheduled for some time. On hearing this, one of the other expectant moms began to tell me horror stories of C-sections gone wrong. It took lots of determination for me to

“cast down imaginations” and not allow those tales to take root in my mind. I had informed myself therefore she could not fuel my ignorance. The birth of my child came and went without complications.

This is not to say that we should refrain from sharing good reports and incidents in our lives where God blessed us and brought us through to victory. If a person is reaching out for help and understanding, then we are to comfort with the comfort with which we have been comforted.¹¹⁷ Sharing experiences will often lift individuals and inspire them not to quit. All too often, however, what appears to be friendly conversation, is really subtle competition, and results in poisoning both individuals.

Many people choose to ignore the fact that there may be steps to their victories. They hear the call from God and want to walk it in instantly. They expect others to see the call and grant them immediate authority to carry it out. They are ignorant of the sacrifices necessary to walk in that calling.

When my son was eight years old, he told me he knew how to drive the car. Did I take him at his word and let him drive? Of course not! I knew he had not the training, nor were his legs long enough, nor his reflexes quick enough, to drive not to mention his young age. I loved my son and wanted his life spared from danger that would come to him if I yielded to his demands. He wanted to ignore the steps in learning to drive. Our relationship with God is similar. He wants to give us the desires of our hearts, but if He responds too soon to what we think are our desires, we will hang ourselves because of our ignorance.

It is surely a poisonous gourd when we permit an insult to control our emotions and our actions. Someone close to us says or does something that doesn't set too well with us. How do we respond? We want to get even, but have to take God at His Word when He says, *Vengeance is mine; I will repay*.¹¹⁸ An insult cannot hurt us unless we allow it to invade our mind and spirit. The Psalmist says, *If I regard an offense in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer*.¹¹⁹ It will plug up our ears and cause us to be deaf to the Spirit of God.

By exercising our senses to discern the difference between good and evil, the holy and the profane, we eliminate the poisonous gourds immediately. Just as one rotten apple spoils the bushel and a dirty rag will soil the clean dress, every wrong thought or motive poisons our reactions and responses. We need to watch so we will not be deceived by poison in any form: not thoughts, not looks, not words, not affliction, not persecution, not expectations. Let's cure it all with Jesus and His Word and watch the blessings come. That is exactly what happened¹²⁰ when Elisha's discernment counteracted ignorance and saved the lives of his students.

Let's not be content to say “I know nothing about it” while the Perizzite scarecrow of ignorance prevents us from doing what we are appointed and gifted to do. *For my Angel will go before you and bring you in to the Perizzites...and you shall utterly overthrow them and completely break down their sacred pillars*.¹²¹

LIFE APPLICATION

What scarecrow of ignorance is stifling my spiritual growth and keeping me swamped when I could be growing in confidence?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, forgive me for allowing ignorance to reside in my life. This day I choose to take steps that will release me to walk in the freedom that You have given me through Your death and resurrection. In Jesus' Name, I pray.

CHAPTER 6 GIRGASHITE SCARECROWS: LIMITATIONS

I can't help it...

*By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will without fail drive out the...Girgashites...from before you... but you shall utterly overthrow them and break down their images.*¹²²

Gergashite is translated to mean dwelling on a clayey soil.¹²³ Excessively clayey soils are exceedingly difficult to cultivate. Their stiffness presents resistance to implements, impedes the growth of the plants, and prevents free circulation of air around the roots. They are cold and sticky in wet weather, while in dry weather they bake hard and crack. Hence, the Gergashites represent those characteristics in our life that are resistant to change the things over which we feel we have no control.

We have so many excuses to offer for quitting, none of which are valid. People claim lack of finances, a dysfunctional home, disabilities, mental deficiency—"I'm just not smart enough", they say—and a host of other copouts which really result from features inherited or imposed by their environment. They find it difficult to get over limitations that exist because of their heritage, appearance, handicaps, illnesses, tragedies, self-perceptions, expectations of culture, or lack of education among other disadvantages. In each situation, no matter what the intensity or frivolity, we all have to make the choice to challenge that scarecrow and refuse to let it dominate our life to the point of hindering us from reaching the peak of what is, not just good, but best for our lives.

The Loretta Claiborne Story

For thirty years, Loretta Claiborne, a gifted runner from Special Olympics Pennsylvania, repeatedly proved herself a winner both on and off the track. Claiborne was born into a large, poor, single-parent family in York, Pennsylvania. Partially blind and unable to walk or talk until the age of four, Loretta faced ridicule and humiliation because of these disabilities and her mental retardation while growing up. Frustrated and angry as a child and young teen, Loretta was always getting into fights. Her temper got her thrown out of high school and out of a job. Nevertheless, the unrelenting love of her mother, Rita, helped give Loretta the wisdom not to blame anyone else for her problems. A kind and attentive teacher first encouraged her love of running, but it was not until a feisty social worker, Janet McFarland, brought Loretta and Special Olympics together that her great athletic gifts were revealed. The discovery of her own running ability and Special Olympics changed her life. Her mother and social worker helped her fight the scarecrow with which she was born.

Claiborne has competed in more than twenty-five marathons, finishing among the twenty-five fastest women runners in the Pittsburgh Marathon, twice finishing among the top one hundred women in the Boston Marathon, and most recently winning a gold medal in the 1999 Special Olympics World Summer Games half-marathon (13.5 miles). She also excels in other sports,

including figure skating and bowling. Outside of Special Olympics, Claiborne holds a fourth-degree black belt in martial arts; speaks four languages, including sign language; and holds an honorary doctorate degree from Quinnipiac College in Hamden, Connecticut—the first person with mental retardation known to receive such an honor. Her amazing story was told in a made-for-television movie, and the video is now available for purchase or rental.¹²⁴

There are many people of fame who have risen above their disabilities and impacted the world. However, there are multitudes of nameless people who stop short of reaping fruit from their lives because of the fake scarecrow of disabilities.

In 1918, my maternal grandparents were married at the very young age of fifteen and nineteen. By the age of twenty-one and twenty-four they were the parents of three children. My mother, their first child, was healthy and vibrant. Their son died of pneumonia at age two. Their daughter, Elizabeth Pauline, was infected with polio at age two. A few years later my grandparents had two more daughters. In the meantime, Aunt Polly, as we affectionately called her, did not recover from the polio. It affected her mind permanently. Although she continued to grow physically, her motor skills were severely impaired and her mental skills were somewhat comparable to a three-year old. She learned to dry dishes and dust furniture, but her pastimes were watching TV and using her crayons in some favorite coloring books. My grandmother was basically homebound for much of the last forty-seven years of her life—taking care of Aunt Polly—but I never heard her complain. After they married, my aunts would take Aunt Polly home with them for a few days to give my grandmother a break—one which they thought she needed, not one she requested. The grandchildren and great grandchildren grew up with Aunt Polly. She was always a part of the family and we loved her. We often sat quietly with her, let her hold our toys, and helped her color. Aunt Polly was always loved, never rejected. When she was almost seventy-three years old, she drew her last earthly breath and received a brand new body and life everlasting in the presence of Jesus Christ. Our experience with Aunt Polly developed in us an understanding for persons with disabilities but more importantly, it softened our hearts.

Gold Under Fire

One of my former students stopped by to talk to me one day and in the middle of the conversation he said, "Mrs. Karl, I see the glory in your eyes." What he was thinking and what I thought were two different things. My mind immediately went to Moses. When his face was shining with the Presence of God, the people were afraid. The glory had changed Moses. It didn't happen in a praise filled room but on a hot, dry, lonely mountaintop. It didn't happen in two hours and fifteen minutes. It took forty days and nights. Just as being in the sun will give a sunburn, being in the Presence of God had burned the glory on Moses' face. The glory that people see in our face comes from inside, because that is where God is now—in our heart. It glows like the fire that it is! Some will see it and be convicted of their sins—maybe they will even be afraid, just like the people of Israel were when they looked upon Moses' face. Others will see it and rejoice that our light bears witness with their light for it all comes from the same source: Jesus, the SonShine.

As we continue to stay in the Presence of the Lord and look at ourselves in His Word, which is our spiritual mirror, we are constantly seeing things in our lives that need to be changed. Sometimes the wind has blown our hair. When we see the disarray in the mirror, we comb it. Sometimes the storms of life have blown our emotions out of place. When we see this in the Word of God, we can put them back into place. Each experience sharpens our sensitivity to the solution for our circumstances and builds our confidence that "this, too, shall pass." We learn to check the mirror more often to see what needs to be corrected. Some of the imperfections we were born with; others were acquired.

The Old Testament translation into Greek is known as the Septuagint. It was given this name because there were seventy scholars commissioned to accomplish the task for the benefit of the people who did not know Hebrew. There were twenty-five Hebrew words that were translated with the Greek word *DOXI* which is now translated to English as *glory*. One of those twenty-five words was *consuming fire*. As the writer of Hebrews tells us, the Israelites knew God as a consuming fire.¹²⁵ It stands to reason then that the various circumstances we encounter in life are there to test our faith. When our fiery trials are over, God's glory comes forth into our lives and changed us.¹²⁶ No trial comes into our life that does not change us. The question is, Does it change me into His likeness? That's our goal: To be like Jesus! Think of it this way: From fiery trial to fiery trial, I'm being changed into His very own image. Now, we can shout glory! He has given us the shield of faith—the ability to see beyond our present circumstances—to put out the fiery darts of the enemy.¹²⁷

Gold under fire

The enemy's fiery darts accuse. God's consuming fire overcomes. Our character is molded by acting on the convictions we hold. The emotions that are dominant in our hearts are controlled by the convictions we hold. If we look into the Word for guidance and counsel, fiery trials of life simply shape and mold us. The word *problem* means to throw forward. Problems are opportunities for God to mold us and make us like Him.

We have sung this song as a prayer many times, and truly meant it, but I wonder if we realize how often God has answered our prayer? *Spirit of the living God, fall fresh on me. Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me. Spirit of the living God, fall fresh, on me.*¹²⁸ A lady once came to me for prayer at the end of a Bible study saying she needed help because she felt like her husband was using her. He was an unbeliever. After asking a few questions and determining that he was not abusing her verbally or physically, I realized she was talking about his expecting an intimate relationship at times she wasn't ready to respond. I asked if she preferred that her husband use someone else. Of course, this put the situation in perspective for her and she thanked God for answering her prayer. A few years later, word came to me that she had been killed in a car accident. When I spoke to her husband to offer my sympathy, he responded with glowing compliments about how wonderful his wife was and how good a Christian she was—in fact, he had given his heart to the Lord because of her witness.

Pure gold, when put in the fire just softens and melts and becomes pliable in the potter's hands. He can mold it into whatever shape he desires while in the fire. When it comes out, it retains its shape. Put it back in the fire and change it again, and again. The fire does not destroy the gold, it just melts it and changes its shape.

The power to which is committed the perfecting of our character lies in looking upon Jesus and being changed to be like Him. Every time we make it through another difficult situation trusting God, we get to the other side and rejoice at how He brought us through. Our anchor goes deeper and deeper into God's Word. A repeat of that particular trial will not be as difficult next time, but there will always be something else! This school of **higher** learning does not end until we receive our certification of graduation—the crown of life.

We all have certain characteristics in our family traits that seemed to be passed on from generation to generation. It's time to break that curse! Look into the Word of God. Begin to see that trait being changed. We have to do our part and the Holy Spirit will help! We are co-workers.

Peter says we have to resist the devil steadfastly knowing that our brothers and sisters are experiencing the same things we are. He prayed for them and for us: *But the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.*¹²⁹ That's what happens to gold under fire.

From my life's collection of memories

Sometimes we are tempted to falter and lose confidence as we face the scarecrows out of our past. Observe how this happening repeated itself through the generations. My grandmother's firstborn child was a baby girl, my mother. Soon she had a boy. When Denver Lee was two years old he died from complications of pneumonia.

My mother's firstborn child was also a baby girl, me (Yvonne). Her second child was a boy. When Charles Ray was two days old he died from complications of the Rh factor.

I was the third generation and my firstborn child was a baby girl, my daughter Caroline. My second child was a boy. The trial was here. I was being tried by fire.

Imagine the fear that was grabbing my mother. While I was pregnant, three doctors told me of their suspicions that I had a fast-growing tumor rather than a live fetus. While they were planning to surgically eliminate the tumor, God was doing something in me. Finally, one day at five months, the doctor said, "Whoa! No heartbeat, but it sounds like we have a placenta swish here. Let's wait a few days and see what develops." Four months later my beautiful son was born.

However, the fiery trial wasn't over yet. The pediatrician came to my hospital room to tell me my son had an incurable blood disease. After an extended stay in the hospital, the doctor released him to come home on the condition that I bring him in regularly for blood monitoring. Since that

day, the doctor has not been able to find any trace of that blood disease. At age six, Robert made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ, and by God's grace kept that commitment. He participated in various campus Christian groups and on the music team at church. At age eighteen, he graduated from university with a bachelor's degree in Chemistry. At age twenty-three he graduated from medical school. He is now a family practice physician and married to a beautiful Christian wife. The curse is broken. To God be the glory.

Fiery Trials

Some of the battles are in the mind: our thoughts, our feelings, our emotions. Some are in the spirit: the enemy waging war against us. Some are in the natural: abuse, poverty, sickness and disease. However, whenever something gets in our way of being everything God wants us to be, we learn to recognize it as being a fiery trial that is about to change us for the better—whether it be a feeling, a thought, an event or a person. When the enemy starts firing upon us, we remember God who is the consuming fire! Satan's counterfeit cannot destroy what God is perfecting. It came forth through faith by the power of God. Let's see our fiery trials for what the Word says they are: tests of your faith to make us more like Jesus. God desires to perfect the things that concern us.¹³⁰ He will take everything the enemy throws at us and turn it character building if we are determined to follow Jesus.

Remember Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? Their experience caused the coining of the phrase "fiery trial." The King demanded they obey his law. They refused because it was contradictory to God's law. Did that scare the King? No. It just made him more determined to test their faith. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual then commanded the servants to throw the men in clothes and all. The three young Hebrew men had confessed that their God was able to deliver them, but that even if He didn't all was well with their soul. It boggled the King's mind to see that the men's clothing did not burn as they walked around in the fiery furnace in the company of a fourth man. When he finally ordered them to be removed from the furnace, there was not the slightest smell of fire on their hair, their body, or their clothing.¹³¹ From this incident we get the phrase "fiery trials."

The story is told of Cecile de Mille who was filming the movie "King of Kings" on Christmas Eve. The cast happened to be at the Golgotha Scene and the mob was really into doing their part in the movie, yelling "Crucify Him, Crucify Him." De Mille stopped the filming and called upon the actors to pause for a few moments of silence in honor of Him whose life they were filming. The actors stared at him in disbelief, but slowly the loud, angry rehearsal died down, and there was silence. After a few moments, someone very softly began singing, "Silent Night, Holy Night." When deMille opened his eyes and looked up, everyone was kneeling before the cross.

Pastor Lindquist was relating this event to an audience one day, when afterwards one of the actresses came to him and said: "Pastor, I was the first one to kneel that day. You see, I was playing the part of Mary Magdalene, and I began to feel how she must have felt—clean by the spoken Word of her Lord who was being crucified. I suddenly felt that with the power of Christ, I can overcome everything!"¹³²

Overcome everything?

It can be true for us, too. *I can do ALL things through Christ who strengthens me.*¹³³ Many people quote the verse, but when it comes time to apply it in their lives they forget it, or can't quite believe that it is true for them. We are the ones who will do all things; but we will do them through Christ who strengthens us. What are some of the things we can do? What are *all things*?

Through Christ who strengthens us, we can manage our lifestyle. We can manage our laundry. We can manage our cleaning. We can manage our time. We can manage our desk. We can manage our finances. We can find ways to let our disabilities work for us. We know what to do, now we just call on the Name of Jesus and get busy. Some say, "It's not that simple," but God's word says we can do it, so we must believe it, even when we don't feel Him or see Him. We overcome discouragement in all these areas by believing the Scripture and acting on it.

Through Christ who strengthens us, we can control our lifestyle. Please notice that we have to do the controlling. Christ does the strengthening. We can control our habits knowing He strengthens us. We can control our language knowing He strengthens us. We can control our friendships knowing He strengthens us. We can even control our temper knowing He strengthens us.

Temper tantrums are not always reflected in fist fights, but often in clenched verbal phrases. I heard a story about a pastor who found a dead mule outside the church on the sidewalk. (He said he had found a few inside the church before, but this was the first one he had found outside.) He called the health department and reported the death. The young man on the other end of the line said: "You are a minister? Isn't it your duty to take care of the dead?" The pastor quickly retorted, "Yes, but we usually try to notify the relatives first!"

Interesting, isn't it, that nearly everyone laughs when they hear this story? Obviously, that pastor didn't control his temper and most likely will never win the young man on the other line to his church. In fact, "self control" is a fruit of the Spirit. If we allow the Holy Spirit to reside in us, He leads us, guides us, and teaches us all things—it is through His power and presence in our lives that we are able to exhibit self-control.

Through Christ who strengthens us, we can manage and control our temptations. The biggest temptation that most Americans face today is their sensitivity to the success of others. It is so difficult to let others get ahead and give them a word of recognition. People have a tendency to run-down successful people. They point out their faults, criticize their methods, and disagree with their results. Usually these are the same people who aren't doing anything themselves. Why not? They are not willing to pay the price with discipline, control, management, and work—through Jesus Christ by His Word. Whatever happened to esteeming others more highly than ourselves?¹³⁴

Through Christ who strengthens us, we can control our terror and our fears. We are not to *fear the terror by night nor the arrow that flies by day.*¹³⁵ We are not to *be afraid of sudden fear.*¹³⁶

Let us not be discouraged. We can fill in the blank for “all things” with whatever is trying to discourage us from being all God wants us to be. Through the strength of Christ who lives in us, we can quit smoking. We can learn to cook. We can cope with our job. We can love our children. We can live in harmony with others to the extent they permit it. We can take care of our bodies. We can control our eating. We can manage our finances—however small. We can love our mother-in-law. We can learn to enjoy cleaning house and be grateful to have a house to clean. We can forgive those who abuse and mistreat us.

Remember: We can! We have the ability through Christ. We are the doers. Jesus Christ has already finished His work. While on the cross, He said, “It is finished.” When He rose again, He also lifted us up to sit with Him in heavenly places and put all things under our feet.¹³⁷ We cannot avoid trials, temptations, and difficult situations, but we can overcome them or live above them. We cannot steer clear of failure, but we can try, and try again with the help of our Lord, until we succeed. This knowledge alone helps us not to succumb to the scarecrow of limitations.

Please send someone else!

“I’m not the person for a job like that!” This is a statement we’ve all made at one time or another. We’re not alone. We’re in the company of Moses, a man loved by God. When God called him to lead Israel out of Egyptian bondage, Moses was keeping the flocks of sheep for his father-in-law, Jethro. That was his occupation. In spite of all the divine assurance received that all courage and power would be his as he faced Pharaoh with the demand to let Israel go, Moses still felt inadequate and depressed at the very thought of being the person in charge. He offered excuses in an attempt to evade the task assigned to him. He pled with the Lord; however, God doesn’t listen to man’s flimsy excuses. Instead He meets him at every point.

Moses’ Excuse #1

I’m not fit for this job! I don’t have the qualifications. I haven’t taken the right courses or studied at the right university (although he grew up in the King’s palace!).

God’s Response

I decide who’s qualified for what job I assign. I’ll be there to help you.

Moses’ Excuse #2

I don’t have anything to say! I stand in front of my people and nearly faint for lack of a message.

God’s Response

It’s my message you’ll deliver. You have my Name and my covenant.

Moses’ Excuse #3

I don’t have any authority. They’ll never listen to me! I have no esteem in their eyes. They don’t see me as a leader.

God’s Response

My power will be your authority. They won’t be able to ignore it.

Moses’ Excuse #4

Besides all this, I really just don't want to go.

God's Response

Go! And take this rod with you because you are going to do signs with it. By the way, when you get there you will know that I've brought you.¹³⁸

Now that requires faith! How many of us are willing to take such faith steps without seeing the way clear? Moses had to wait until he reached his destination to be assured that God had brought him. We prefer to walk by sight rather than by faith. When Moses pled that he was unfit for the mission, God's reply was, "How can you be unfit, since I will be with you? In all that you lack, in all that you feel inadequate, I will be your strength."¹³⁹ However, Moses found it difficult to believe that divine strength could be enough to compensate for his weaknesses. We've all been in that situation—believing the lie that our God is too small to accomplish such a big task.

When the narrative ends, Moses is still reluctant to go forth in God's promised power. He protests that he is not gifted with facility of speech. He has difficulty expressing words. "Slow of speech" is said by some to suggest a stammerer. It was thus that God appointed Aaron, Moses' more eloquent brother, to become his spokesman. Together they went forward to their mission with many supernatural signs following them and have become giant pillars in the Kingdom of God and road signs for us today. In fact, the Lord calls Moses the meekest man who ever lived.¹⁴⁰ Isn't this the way with God? He either fills in our weakness with strength, or sends someone with the strength we lack to fill in the gap.

It has been said that the story of Moses occupies one seventh of the whole Bible, or an amount two thirds the size of the entire New Testament. Moses lived for 120 years, forty years in Egypt, forty years in exile, and forty years as leader of Israel. Quite a record for a man focusing on his limitations and suffering from depression for lack of confidence in himself and his God to accomplish this divinely-assigned, history-making mission.

God's estimation of Moses is seen in the fact that through no other man in history were there so many and such astounding manifestations of supernatural power. What remarkable miracles he performed and what miraculous help was his! He did what God commanded and *held onto the rod*.¹⁴¹ That supernatural rod of God was to be the instrument in leading the children of Israel across the Red Sea on dry land. It would perform many miraculous feats to show the power of God and the anointing upon Moses and Aaron.

Never mind the excuses. God doesn't listen to them anyway. Whom He calls, He equips. When we read the story of Moses in the New Testament, He is championed as a hero of faith.¹⁴² Who would have thought it? Let's go ahead, get a move on, and hold tightly to the rod of God. Let's replace our nightmares with dreams, our depression with determination, and our discouragements with mighty exploits.¹⁴³ Just as God gave Moses a vision, we allow God's vision to be birthed in us, shake off depression, and go forth in His name.

Birth of a vision

What is a vision? It is seeing beyond what presently is. It is not allowing our limitations to determine our destiny. It is faith birthing reality. It is new beginnings. Scripture tells us that without a vision people will die.¹⁴⁴ Why? Because they do not see far enough ahead to instill good habits, demand discipline, and expect the best for themselves and for others—for a job, for friends, for finances, for their marriage, for their children, even for the church or nation.

Today many people live in the fast lane: breakfast at the drive-thru, lunch at the Deli, supper delivered to the house. They want instant potatoes, instant hot chocolate, microwave popcorn, and throwaway china. They want turbo engines, speedy elevators, and catalog shopping by phone. They use plastic money to buy now and pay later; before it's paid for, they want something new.

It's no wonder the vision is absent in the lives of so many people. To catch the vision God has for us and others, we have to make time to spend in His Word and in His Presence. There is no instant spiritual meal, no spiritual acquisition that can be charged, and no immediate panacea for the "fellowship of His sufferings."¹⁴⁵ We draw away from the world, the pressures, the circumstances, and our fast pace for a few minutes—or a few hours when possible—each day and listen to Him. Too often we go to the Lord in prayer with a self-centered want list, completely forgetting that God has His own want list and desires that we also listen to Him. He wants the best for us and would like to tell us what that is.

The prophet Habakkuk needed counsel from the Lord and vowed to watch and wait until it came.¹⁴⁶ Wait! One with such determination will certainly catch the vision. We have to wait (stop and be quiet) to hear what the Lord says. We ask the Lord to give us a vision for ourselves as well as those who appear hopelessly trapped in the clutches of sin, despair, or mediocrity. Then, instead of seeing the present situation, we thank God for His Word and with our spiritual eyes see the changed situation in which God is glorified. The fragrance of confidence comes as we trust God and work together with Him. *Cast not away your confidence...for you have need of patience after you have done the will of God so you will receive the promise.*¹⁴⁷ There are crowns awaiting those who are willing to defy the scarecrow of limitations.

Let's not be content to say "I know nothing about it" while the Perizzite scarecrow of ignorance prevents us from doing what we are appointed and gifted to do. *For my Angel will go before you and bring you in to the Girgashites...and you shall utterly overthrow them and completely break down their sacred pillars.*¹⁴⁸

LIFE APPLICATION

What inherited or acquired personal characteristics do I permit to keep me bitter, lazy, and unproductive?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I thank You that with Your help I will surmount the limitations I experience in my life releasing the resentment I have had toward You and others because of them. I can see that in my victory You will receive the glory. In Jesus' Name, I pray.

CHAPTER 7 AMORITE SCARECROWS: MOUNTAINS

I can't get over it...

*By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will without fail drive out the Amorites from before you... but you shall utterly overthrow them and break down their images.*¹⁴⁹

Since the Amorites were considered mountain people¹⁵⁰ and Israel was to defeat them, we can compare them to the mountains in our life that need to be conquered—the situations that seem too big to overcome. We often say, “I just can’t get over it!” Comparing our impossible circumstances with mountains is a comprehensible metaphor. We don’t feel we have the physical strength or emotional stamina to rout them. They make us feel so small. We succumb to this image concocted in our mind and readily disclose we never were mountain climbers—in fact, we can’t even get up a flight of steps without being worn out. Thus we approach the mountains in our life in the same way—with physical and spiritual energy depleted.

Remember Deborah? What if she had said, “Lord, I’m just a woman. I’ll sit here and counsel these people; but why do I have to ride with Barak into battle? Isn’t that asking too much? Isn’t war for men only?” Of course, no such words came from Deborah’s lips. No scarecrow-mountain would prevent her from doing whatever necessary to win the victory. When faced with the magnanimous task of leading the troops into battle, she said, *I will go!*¹⁵¹ Because of her obedience to God, Israel won the battle. Deborah didn’t look to the bigness of the task but to the greatness of her God who would go before her and bring the victory.

Remember David? What if he had said, “Lord, I’m just a teenager. Look at all these brave men dressed in their armor. If they can’t defeat the giant Goliath, why should I even try?” Of course, no such words came from David’s lips. No scarecrow-mountain giant would intimidate him. He said to Goliath: *You come to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield, but I come to you in the name of the Lord...*¹⁵² David didn’t fear the giant or his dagger because he had confidence in his God. Likewise, when we put our trust completely in God Almighty, we shake off intimidations from sharp tongues and mental images and implement a plan of attack.

Real mountains

My first trip to Lookout Mountain in Tennessee is vividly etched in my mind. My mother was incurably excited about reaching that mountain. With my father at the steering wheel, we approached the little road that would take us to the top.¹⁵³ Since I had grown up in the hills of West Virginia, driving around curves up and down hills as we traveled was not new to me. However this was different. On that day, the mountain rose above the clouds. In fact, it seemed so high to my little eleven-year old eyes and mind that I feared we might be traveling to heaven that day. “Can we stop now?” I begged. “No! We aren’t there yet!” my mother replied with joy and anticipation I could not comprehend. Why were we putting our lives in danger just to get to the top of a mountain? It was her dream. She had heard about it and nothing would satisfy her

except getting to the top. What drives one person upward is often exactly the same thing that paralyzes another with fear. Once at the summit, I was awestruck by the breath-taking view, all the while holding tightly to my mother's hand and dreading the trip back down the mountain. However, once we were safely back on level ground I treasured the memory of that beautiful scene and better understood my mother's ecstasy as she drank it in.

This scarecrow popped up again and again in my life. The first trip I made to Mexico with my parents was a frightening adventure for me. My mother obviously had a love for adventure and decided to take a little-traveled road through the mountains. She heard about it from a physician friend who had been there and highly recommended it. My father was driving and I cried with fear that the brakes would fail on those unpaved mountain passes that had only one lane and no guardrails. I had so looked forward to this family trip but, because of my fear, could not enjoy the beautiful mountain scenery. To make matters worse, I was not a child. I was twenty-four years old and at one time thought maybe God was calling me to be a missionary in Mexico. Would this mountain experience discourage me from taking other such trips in the future?

Later, like the Psalmist, *I cried unto the Lord and He delivered me from my fears*. Since then I've been back to Mexico with my husband and thoroughly delighted in the land and the people. I've traveled in North America, Europe and Africa and encountered some frightful situations, but refused to be discouraged. In the summer of 1999, Ruth, my ministry friend, met me at the Cape Town, South Africa airport. We were within a couple of miles of her residence when a car ran a stop sign and totaled her station wagon. She had whiplash and a nasty knot on her forehead. I had a broken wrist and five broken ribs. We did not go to the hospital since there was virtually no medical staff in the emergency room and people had been known to lie there for days without attention. Locals who stopped to check out the accident drove us to her home. Ruth called a Christian physician friend of hers who came to the house. There was nothing he could do for the ribs, but I was able to purchase a metal wrist brace to protect my wrist. We went on with our schedule as if nothing had happened. I felt fine—just had to do everything with one hand, (and experience pain every time I got up and down or turned over in bed at night). Three weeks later when I arrived back home to Michigan, x-rays confirmed the broken bones, but by God's grace they were healing just fine,

Some have said to me, "Doesn't that accident discourage you from traveling?" My answer is, No! When the Lord calls me to go to another country to minister, I do not allow the scarecrow of discouragement to lead me; rather I commit myself into the hands of the Lord who is able to keep me and accomplish His purpose through my life. After all, "Whether I live or die, I am the Lord's I know!"¹⁵⁴ When we realize we have the gift, talent, ability and call of God to do something, we don't allow that scarecrow of discouragement to keep us from inheriting our promises. We go in and possess the land in Jesus' Name!

In the year 2000 I had the opportunity to visit the Alps on the border of Germany and Austria. I traveled to the top of one mountain via a narrow road in the only transportation allowed, an authorized tour bus. Since there was no room for two vehicles to pass, all traffic was controlled

by radio. Each bus had to wait until the other one had arrived at the peak before the next one could begin the trip. Once we arrived at a parking place, we walked through a 400 foot long tunnel to an elevator which took us to the top of the mountain. There we saw the famous Kehlsteinhaus sitting all alone overlooking Salzburg and Bavaria. A short hike on foot took us higher yet to the foot of a cross perched on a rock atop the mountain. The view was worth all the emotional ups and downs and the perceived dangers we experienced on the way. A number of people in our entourage opted not to make the trip. “I just can’t do it,” they said of the mountain looming above them, but those of us who chose to go will always marvel at the beauty of God’s creation seen from the heights—heaven and earth, clouds and sea, mountains and valleys, all giving praise to their Creator. Even though the scarecrow attempted to invade my consciousness, I denied it entrance.

Mountains in the Bible

Many great spiritual experiences took place when God’s people had climbed real mountains. After the flood, Noah’s ark came to rest on Mount Ararat.¹⁵⁵ Moses received the Ten Commandments from the Law of God on Mount Sinai.¹⁵⁶ Moses saw Canaan, the Promised Land, from the top of Pisgah on Mount Nebo.¹⁵⁷ Abraham’s testing took place when he went to sacrifice his only son Isaac on Mount Moriah.¹⁵⁸ David danced and worshipped the Lord before the ark on Mt. Zion.¹⁵⁹ Elijah’s God defeated the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel.¹⁶⁰

Jesus was tempted on a mountain—not just any mountain, but an *exceedingly high mountain*.¹⁶¹ Jesus preached His famous “Sermon on the Mount” from a mountain.¹⁶² He often prayed on a mountain.¹⁶³ He was transfigured (changed in appearance) on a *high mountain* now referred to as the Mount of Transfiguration.¹⁶⁴ He agonized in prayer on the Mount of Olives.¹⁶⁵ He was crucified on Mount Calvary also called Golgotha.¹⁶⁶ He ascended into Heaven in the presence of His disciples from a mountain facing Bethany called Mount Olivet.¹⁶⁷

As for the terrain, mountains are used in Scripture for hunting, warfare, protection, refuge, and idolatrous worship. They were used as boundaries, as gathering places, and to cast a vision. Symbolically, mountains are used in Scripture for God’s protection when He said He will come down to fight for Mount Zion.¹⁶⁸ They are used to express great joy when the Lord commands them to break into singing.¹⁶⁹ But Jesus also used mountains to illustrate the difficulties one experiences in life,¹⁷⁰ and numerous other references can be found showing us how mountains are so much a part of our lives. We need to learn how to allow those mountains to help us climb out of the valleys and pits of life and stay on higher ground.

Lord, lift me up and let me stand!

What to do about those negative situations and events with mountainous proportions that are scarecrows in our lives? Jesus said, *Speak to the mountain*. He doesn’t expect us to let the mountain stop us from anything He has planned. *Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, Be removed and be cast into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will come to pass, he will have whatever he says.*¹⁷¹ Some people tire out just looking at the mountain. Quit looking! Go ahead, tackle it! We are the

earthmover. As someone has said, Climb it, tunnel through it, dynamite it out, or go around it, but we cannot let it stop us. We dare not permit the mountain scarecrow, the bigness of the task, to cheat us out of our highest possible success. We must be faithful to do what God's Word says.

One morning at the end of our church school chapel service, we invited all students who felt God was calling them to the ministry of music to come forward and we would anoint them and pray over them that God would birth and develop in them the gift of music. Nearly all the students responded to that invitation and many wanted to play an instrument. Now we had a mountain to climb because we didn't have a music teacher or any instruments. Some of us staff members went to garage sales that summer and found twenty violins—most for thirty-five dollars or less. When we had them appraised for insurance purposes some were valued at \$1200 to \$2500. We also found trombones, trumpets, flutes, piccolos, saxophones, clarinets, and drums. What were we to do? Three of us had limited musical training on piano and guitar. We went to a music store and read "How to..." books and watched videos on "How to play" each instrument, took the beginner's book, read to the students what the book said, followed the illustrations, prayed, and played.

Since we had a small but understanding and loving church, we formed a band and with a little basic training put those kids on stage with the church musicians and told them to play what they heard (in other words play "by ear"). An acquaintance once came to visit our service and afterwards she told me, "Those kids sounded terrible!" I replied, "Oh really?" I think they're wonderful! She heard with natural ears, but my ears were anointed to hear "future things" not "present things." Soon that little band of students played for other churches and for other Christian schools. Eventually, the Lord sent us a piano teacher, a voice teacher, and an orchestra teacher. We overcame the mountain that looked impossible to climb.

Trained musicians/teachers have nightmares about unqualified people teaching music. They forget that the Creator of Music can still teach today. God gave a mandate. He equipped. His strength was made perfect in weakness. *With God all things are possible.* We forget the first word in this Scripture is "With." That means we have to do something to develop the gifts and ideas He gives us. They don't just happen.

After a short time, several parents began to see the potential in their children and enrolled them in private lessons after school hours. I well remember taking my son to a private studio for beginning trumpet lessons. He had been playing with the school band for about a year. For his audition he closed his eyes and played the chorus, "He is Lord." The instructor, who only took beginners, said, "I can't teach him anything he doesn't already know. He knows the notes. He has beautiful tone." He continued to play at school and eventually studied for a few months with the director of the local symphony orchestra who was also a trumpeter. For the next two years he auditioned for Michigan All-State Youth Symphony at Interlochen and was one of four students in the state to win admission both years. To God be the glory. He scaled the mountain!

Not all mountain climbing involves solo physical activity. I reached Lookout Mountain with my family riding in a car driven by my dad. I reached Kehlsteinhaus in the Alps accompanied by a number of other people—all of us entrusting our safe arrival to the bus driver. Those were real mountains and real people transporting me to the top. God is also real and is waiting and ready for us to choose to conquer the mountains in our life, whatever they may be, by entrusting ourselves to Him. As we do our part, he lifts us up to higher ground.

In 1898, Oatman Johnson, Jr. expressed this concept of climbing mountains and reaching higher ground in the lyrics to his hymn entitled *Higher Ground*.¹⁷² “My heart has no desire to stay where doubts arise and fears dismay. Though some may dwell where those abound, my prayer, my aim, is higher ground...I want to live above the world though Satan’s darts at me are hurled; for faith has caught the joyful sound, the song of saints on higher ground...I want to scale the utmost height and catch a gleam of glory bright; but still I’ll pray till heaven I’ve found, “Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.”

The Lily of the valleys

In spite of our intense desire to scale the mountain, most of us spend long periods of time in emotional valleys. We sometimes feel like a lovely lily that has been picked and pressed between the pages of a book. This isn't surprising. Paul said, *we're pressed on every side....*¹⁷³

Most Bible commentaries interpret the Hebrew word for Lily in the Song of Solomon verse, *I am the lily of the valleys*,¹⁷⁴ as referring to the Bride, although a couple of reputable Bible commentators believe it refers to the Bridegroom. It doesn't really matter since we (the Bride of Christ) are to be like Him (the Bridegroom, Jesus)! He *comes to feed among the Lilies*;¹⁷⁵ that's us! If we're His children then like begets like; thus, our Lord is **THE** lily, and we are all His lilies.

What is the symbolism of the Lily? *Lily* comes from the Hebrew word that means pure white. The pure and holy God gave His pure and holy Son that **we** might be pure and holy. When we come to Jesus in humble repentance, ask His forgiveness and invite Him to take up residence in our heart, He washes us, cleanses us, and makes us pure white—just as if we had never sinned. We are virgin clean.

The verse speaks of the *Lily of the valleys*. The Hebrew word picture for valleys here is *EMEQ* which means a deep, difficult place. The Amplified Bible picks up this picture in its translation: *I am a humble lily that grows in deep, difficult places*.

Most of us often find ourselves in deep, difficult places at one time or another, but we are not alone. *Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision*.¹⁷⁶ We soon learn that it is in deep, difficult places of life that we experience growth. We have heard the saying: “Nothing grows on the mountaintop, but the view is breathtaking.” How true. We all need to climb the mountain now and then, get out of breath and take in the view; it’s exhilarating. We sometimes think we would prefer to stay on top, but after a while we would get hungry and thirsty, sunburned or frozen. We

would wish for water to take a bath, clear water to quench our thirst, and something of substance to eat. So back to the valley we go!

Are there lilies in the valleys? Yes, of course, that's where the lovely, fragrant lilies grow—in the valleys. In the deep, difficult places of life, between the mountains, the Lily stands out the most and sends forth its fragrant perfume. The harder the breezes blow, the more far reaching the fragrance. Our Lord teaches us lessons from the simple things of life. Let's look at the lives of some people whose name could be *Lily* because of their fragrance in valley experiences that eventually led them to a high place in life.

Lily Rahab

Rahab was a single gal with a shady past—a town prostitute. One day the message of God's deliverance came to her in the person of two spies sent out by the Israelites. She believed their message. What she **had been** was not of as much of consequence as **what she became**. She hid the Lord's servants in her attic during the day, then let them down over the wall out of the city after nightfall when the gates were closed. Now she was in a deep, difficult place. What if she got caught? What would she do? She kept her confession: *I know that the Lord has given you the land*. When the city of Jericho was conquered, Joshua declared that everything in the city was to be destroyed except Rahab, the harlot and her family because she had protected them during the pre-war survey of the city.¹⁷⁷ She waited during this deep, difficult time—the valley of her life—and was delivered.

We do not tire of waiting for our deliverance to come, but hold onto our confession even if we're in enemy territory and feel like we're being crushed. We are not be afraid. Remember Rahab. She was later wed to Salmon, one of the Israelite spies, and became the mother of Boaz, who married Ruth whose son Obed bore Jesse the father of King David. She is honored by being mentioned in our Lord's genealogy. What a heritage! If our Lord Jesus Christ is willing to claim a former prostitute in His genealogy, no one should ever feel like a hopeless case.

Lily Ruth

Maybe you are a widow lady whose husband has died and left you with very little or nothing. but in your deep, difficult place you are doing whatever is necessary to make it. Ruth was such a person. Her mother-in-law had witnessed to her about the Lord when she was still in Moab—the ungodly place of her birth and childhood. She left her family, her home, her gods, and moved to a new country, and pledged her allegiance to the one and only Almighty God. This new life wasn't easy, but she went into the fields to glean—which means she picked up fragments that were leftovers from what other people had plenty of. She was faithful during this deep, difficult place in her life and always thought of caring for her mother-in-law. The fragrance of her unselfish life reached the eyes of Boaz the owner of the fields. He asked for her hand in marriage. Their son was Obed, the grandfather of King David, and her name shows up in the genealogy of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

God may not deliver every widow by giving her a wealthy husband, but those who are faithful, pure, and holy during their difficult experience, will surely receive their reward. Nearly one hundred times in the Old Testament, the Lord speaks about his defense of the widows and the punishment that will be inflicted upon those who mistreat them. He calls Himself *a defender of the widows*.¹⁷⁸

Lily Abigail

Maybe someone we know is married to a fool! Abigail was. Her husband was Nabal which means fool. After the King and his soldiers had protected their animals and property from vandalism, David asked them for food for himself and his soldiers. The foolish husband said, “NO!” Abigail realized what the consequences would be for saying no to the King. She immediately rallied her servants, put on her apron, and went to work in the kitchen, prepared a big meal, and took it out to King David and his men. It was a deep, difficult place for her in this valley between her husband and the King. She had to make a choice; she chose to please the King rather than the Fool. When Nabal heard what his wife had done, he had a stroke and died. Soon afterward, the King took Abigail for his wife—lifting her out of her valley experience.

If an unbelieving husband is saying “No” to King Jesus, don't advise the wife to go along with him. Tell her to get busy and feed the King with her life, her worship, and her love. Abigail did nothing wrong to her husband; she just made the choice to obey the King.¹⁷⁹

Lily Eunice

The New Testament mom, Eunice, was the mother of Timothy. Paul said *she was faithful to teach Timothy the scriptures from the time he was a child*.¹⁸⁰ We know nothing about Timothy's father except that he was a Greek.¹⁸¹ Was Eunice a single mom? Was she ever married to Timothy's father? Were they divorced? Was he dead? The scriptures are silent on this point. Whatever her marital status, you can be sure she had her valleys—her difficult places—being a Christian mom with the responsibility of raising her son in the ways of the Lord. Ah, but how the fragrance of her lily life does flow through the life of her son, Timothy—a man of God.

Believe the message from the Lord. Accept it. Pray. Wait it out. Even though we are pressed during this valley experience, we choose to allow the fragrance of our life be blown into the lives of others.

Lily Deborah

Deborah was called to the ministry appointed as Judge in Israel—over both the men and the women. Her husband Lapidoth obviously recognized her calling. His name means torch bearer and he was likely at home tending house so his wife could do what God called her to do. Deborah's name means bee, as in bumble bee. Symbolically, she was out pollinating all the lilies so they would continue to grow in the valley! The man Barak recognized the call of God on Deborah's life. She responded with no apology and went forth into man's territory leading the way to salvation for her people. History records the fragrant rewards of her mountain moving leadership.

Saphirra was not a lily

It is important to know that just being in a difficult place does not make you a Lily. Saphirra and her husband were caught up in the excitement of the new church at Jerusalem. Three thousand were saved on Pentecost and another two thousand on Solomon's porch. Theirs was quite a church with no trained elders, deacons, altar workers, ushers, or greeters—just thousands of people who were hungry for more information about the newly ascended Savior. Saphirra and her husband sold some property and brought some of the money to the apostle Peter, the Pastor. The Holy Spirit gave him discernment that both Saphirra and her husband were lying about the amount of money they made from the sale. Saphirra should have been like Abigail and refused to go along with the plot. In her difficult place, she smelled like a skunk—not like a lily—and lost her life.

The choice is ours! God gives strength to His lilies who choose to allow His fragrance to come forth through their righteousness living.

Other lilies

Space doesn't permit me to recount the lives of all the fragrant lilies—both men and women—in the Bible who often found themselves in difficult places—the valley experiences—where the Lord came to feed. No matter how unique we think we are and how much we think we're the only ones going through a difficult place, there's someone out there who's been there, is there, or will soon be there.

We have to make a decision to let the King of kings and Lord of lords be King and Lord in our life. We have to humble ourselves and realize that in our valleys of life decisions are being made that will determine whether we will stink or smell of sweet perfume. The choice is ours.

The Lord has opened up—like the protective leaves on the lily of the valley—to shield us and protect us. If our roots are in Him, we will blossom and grow. We will be beautiful to behold amidst the thorns of our life. There in the valley—in the difficult places of our life—we will stand out pure and white. Yes, the time is coming when that white lily in the valley will shine forth brighter than all of its surroundings. The smell will be the fruit of the Spirit growing on us for all to pick, and the gifts of the Spirit operating through us to help others through their valleys--their deep, difficult places. Our fruit will be picked, smelled, and displayed—maybe even pressed on every hand. Remember, the more its squeezed, the greater the fragrance that comes forth. Thank God for the mountains that create our valleys. We refuse to allow them to intimidate us and steal our confidence.

I know what it's like to be in the valleys, in deep, difficult places. I also know what it's like to have roots so deep that when the winds blow hard against my house it does not fall down or break up. I know that the “Lily of the Valleys” experience is real, for it has been during my most difficult places that I have grown the most and spread the fragrance in my life.

When the Spirit is at work in us, out of our belly *will flow rivers of living water*.¹⁸² Let Him work in the difficult places! Don't limit Him to the mountaintop. Don't limit Him to times when we feel His presence. Don't limit Him to church services. Don't limit Him! He is the Lily of the valleys—not just one valley, but all of them in our life! His fragrance comes forth in difficult places.

During one of our driving trips, my husband and I were traveling the back roads through the hills of West Virginia where we could not safely travel more than 35mph. After a couple of hours on the winding roads, my husband turned the wheel over to me, crawled into the back seat, and lay down to sleep. The very scenery that brought joy to my heart, gave him claustrophobia. As I drove up and down and around those mountains rejoicing at the awesome scenery created by my Heavenly Father, I realized that I had entrusted my life to Him and was at rest just as my husband entrusted his life to me and was resting in the back seat. Thank God for the mountains and the valleys.

Let us not permit that Amorite scarecrow that towers above us like a mountain to steal our confidence and keep us from doing what we are appointed to do. *For my Angel will go before you and bring you in to the Amorites...and you shall utterly overthrow them and completely break down their sacred pillars*.¹⁸³

LIFE APPLICATION

What scarecrow seemingly the size of a mountain is keeping me from getting over certain situations and circumstances in my life?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I have been raised up and made to sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus.¹⁸⁴ Therefore all things are under my feet.¹⁸⁵ I am the head and not the tail. I am on top only and not beneath. My enemies shall be cut down before my eyes and shall flee from me.¹⁸⁶ With Your help no scarecrow of mountainous proportions that is formed against me shall prosper, and I shall utterly break down its influence in my life. By Your grace and mercy I shall not be hindered in reaching the heights You have in store for me. In Jesus' Name, I pray.

CHAPTER 8

JEBUSITE SCARECROWS: INFERIORITY

If I could...if I had...if I were...

*By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will without fail drive out the... Jebusites... from before you... but you shall utterly overthrow them and break down their images.*¹⁸⁷

Inferiority is easily represented by the Jebusites. The Hebrew root for the word means to trample, to loath, to tread down, under foot, to be polluted.¹⁸⁸ This tribe is designed to give us low self-esteem, to tell us that we are not as talented, gifted, spiritual, or intellectual as someone else. What a common scarecrow this is! Many of us have been frightened into utter uselessness by the thoughts of our own insignificance. We have contracted “if-itis”:

- ...if I could sing as well as...
- ...if I could play as well as...
- ...if I could preach as well as...
- ...if I were as beautiful as...
- ...if I were as effective a communicator as...
- ...if I had as much faith as...
- ...if I had a voice like...
- ...if I had education like...
- ...if I knew the Bible like...

This is one of the scarecrows that caused the ten spies to keep Israel out of the Promised Land—and to this day, inferiority and depression are partners in keeping us from believing in ourselves and achieving the goals laid out before us. Twelve men were sent from Israel into the land of Canaan to spy out the land—to see what pitfalls, barriers, and challenges they might face when they entered the land to possess it according to God’s command. When the representatives returned, they gave a glowing report of the prosperity in the land, but they had conflicting reactions to the pending battle. Two of them said, “We are well able to take the land,” but ten of the twelve men were scared. They said, “We were as grasshoppers in our own sight.”¹⁸⁹ They felt inadequate, ill-prepared, inferior, and incapable of subduing the inhabitants. They did not take into account that God had faith in them, believed they could do it, and told them to go and He would be with them. They cowered in the face of the opposing strength they perceived to be present in the land even though God had already promised the land to them.

Obviously we are not to be conceited, stuck-up, and prideful. Some people fail from overestimating themselves, but far more fail from thinking too little of their own abilities. Every one of us is gifted in some way or another. When we all do our part individually, battles are won. As Christians we have been made the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus.¹⁹⁰ He has won the victory for us and cut off the depression which holds us captive. Now it is our responsibility to utterly destroy it before it eats away at our mind and destroy our happiness and our creativity. It prevents us from acting in a godly way toward others. Our mind begins to play tricks on us and

we become paranoid or even schizophrenic, and a *doubleminded man is unstable in all his ways*.¹⁹¹

My inadequacies are all too familiar. How can I forget my school days when I had to give speeches before the class. My voice would tremble and my knees would knock together so hard I was sure others could hear them. In one college public speaking class I was assigned to do an interpretative reading of the poem, “Little Boy Blue,” by poet Eugene Field. Those who know the background understand that it is really a sad poem about the death of his little son. Certainly it is not at all humorous. However, when I stood to read, I was overcome by an uncontrollable seizure of laughter. The class laughed because I laughed, and it didn’t take long for the professor to realize I would not be able to complete the reading. He seemed to have an understanding of nervous spells and asked me to sit down and try it later. Still today, when I stand in front of a group of people to speak, I have to cast down imaginations and all those ideas and intimidations that exalt themselves against the call of God on my life to teach the Word.¹⁹² I’m keenly aware of my total dependence upon the Holy Spirit. Without Him, I would be just another case of nervous laughter. Nevertheless, He has called me and I must speak—that’s my part. We are co-workers; I do my part, and He does His. Before I know it, my confidence shows up and the scarecrow of inferiority is defeated.

Keeping the balance

Even the casual observer soon discerns those who criticize others are usually envious of the one they criticize. They feel the other person is better at a task than they, or more successful, or more popular, or better liked. The result is criticism. Why? It is an effort to bring that person down to the same level—if only in their mind. Inferiority often masks itself in criticism resulting from depression and throws us off balance.

How do we keep the balance in our lives, banish inferiority, and check ourselves against God’s Word? When Daniel interpreted the handwriting on the wall for King Belshazzar, one of the words was *Tekel* which translated is: *You have been weighed in the balances and found wanting*.¹⁹³ Something was missing! God doesn’t take it lightly when there is a false balance—or lack of any balance—in our lives. In fact, the scriptures say that is an abomination to Him. He is delighted to find a true, honest, and fair balance.¹⁹⁴

A balance is for weighing. It has a center beam that stands freely. On one side is the perfect stone which dangles; on the other side is the empty pan for weighing items. Many merchants have used false stones to counter balance the purchased goods thus lining their pockets with illegal profits. The spiritual application for us today is just as appropriate as then.

Faith and Love

Without faith it is impossible to please God, but faith works by love.¹⁹⁵ It doesn’t do us any good to be “faith” people unless we are also “love” people. Jesus said others will know we are His disciples by the love we have for one another—not by our faith. Nevertheless, *the just shall live by faith*.¹⁹⁶ The bond between faith and love is a true balance. Omit either one and our

relationships with one another and with our Savior will be inferior; we will be found lacking something.

Faith and Works

There are also people who say they have faith, but don't reflect it with their deeds and actions.¹⁹⁷ Faith without works is dead. The works mentioned here have nothing to do with following the rules of our church or attending all of its services. They are more like the "Public Works" we have in our cities: the electric—let the light of Jesus shine; the gas—let the love of Jesus warm others; the water—let the Holy Spirit flow.

Several years ago, a woman with small children at home came to tell me the Lord had called her to a traveling ministry. She knew because He spoke to her as she stood over the sink washing dishes. True or false? Obviously false. God does not call a mother away from her first ministry—that to her family. Her deeds and actions in cooperation with her faith would produce godly integrity in her children and a peaceful home environment.¹⁹⁸ Perhaps as she ministered faithfully to her children, God would prepare her for a different type of ministry when they were grown. This woman was envious of other women and felt inferior in her call as mother. Too many women have allowed themselves to be labeled "inferior" because they were "stay at home moms." The call of parenting is much higher than that of traveling minister.

"Works" are not often public ministry—but quiet, behind-the-scenes, unacknowledged labor. Sometimes "works" are keeping our mouth shut when we would like to retaliate. Just as faith is not a laborious task, neither are the "works" that count in the kingdom of God. Both flow from our relationship to Jesus Christ.

Prosperity and Persecution

We know God has promised prosperity to those who obey His commandments; however, Jesus also said that if He was persecuted, so we, His followers, would be persecuted. Paul experienced the truth of this balance in life, and expressed it in these famous words: *I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.*¹⁹⁹ Therein lies the balance.

Paul's learning to live in a state of contentment whether hungry or full, whether a "have" or a "have-not," did not happen overnight. Obviously, he had been through many and varied experiences. Perhaps he had gone to the Lord in prayer when he had nothing to eat for days, no clean clothes and no shelter for the night and asked, "Why Lord?" During his many struggles, he finally came to an understanding that no situation had come to stay, but each one would pass. Regardless how difficult the challenges of life, how much he had to give up or do without, God would take care of him. As a result, he also learned to be thankful and enjoy prosperity when it came to him.

Paul uses the word *content* which the Amplified Bible defines as *satisfied to the point where I am not disturbed or disquieted*. God helps us not to dwell on things of this earth, not to set our affections on them, not to make them our goals in life, but to put our minds, our hearts, and our efforts on things that are eternal. From Paul we learn that when we are down and out we continue to rejoice in the Lord knowing that He will provide for us in due season. In the meantime, we are learning to trust Him more and more without grumbling and complaining. After all, Jesus said, *Life does not consist in the abundance of our possessions*.²⁰⁰ Let's not be envious of others or allow the scarecrow of inferiority to create a false sense of lack in our lives.

Husband and Wife

God was pleased with His creation of Adam and formation of Eve. What a beautiful balance! He did not form Eve out of a bone from Adam's foot to be walked on. He did not form her from Adam's back to walk behind him. He did not form her from Adam's head to be dominated by him nor to dominate him. Any of these would have resulted in an imbalance. Instead, God took a rib from Adam's side and made Eve to stand side-by-side with him. In fact, the balance was so perfect that God commanded them to become one. Husband and wife fit like hand in glove. The wife completes her husband even as Adam was incomplete until God made Eve for him.

Gifts and Fruit

According to Scripture, the gifts of the Spirit are available to the children of God, and we should desire earnestly to have them and to use them. Nevertheless, Jesus said His followers are known by their fruit, not by their gifts.²⁰¹ The gifts operating without the fruit is a false balance. If we omit either one, we are found lacking.

And the list goes on!

We sensitize ourselves to be alert to the just balance in God's Word. He is a God of order. He weighs everyone on the same scale: His Word. Whenever people say they don't have to obey something in the Word of God, our discernment should immediately tell us that they are out of balance. We accept all of the Scriptures—not just the ones we like or agree with. We are willing to lay aside the false weights and be in balance with the Precious Stone—the measure of all things—Jesus Christ.

When God calls us to be weighed on His scales, will He find us balanced or lacking something? As we allow the Holy Spirit to expand the concept of balance in our lives, it transforms our attitudes, our relationships, and our doctrines, and causes us to sing with gusto: "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so." It eradicates inferiority for we are loved and complete in Jesus.

Life is like the white of an egg

The story of Job²⁰² has been passed down through the centuries. Even folks who don't read the Bible know about Job. He was called blameless and upright, one who feared God and abstained from and shunned evil. He had ten children: seven sons and three daughters, and was extremely prosperous—the richest man in the East. At a meeting in heaven, the Lord was bragging on job,

saying: There is none like him on the earth! Satan, who had been going to and fro seeking whom he could devour, also came to listen in on the meeting. When he heard the comments about Job, he immediately began to ridicule him: “Does Job fear God for nothing? Isn’t it because God has blessed him and caused him to prosper abundantly?” God assured satan that Job was righteous and no matter what happened to him, he would still serve the Lord. Satan walked away from that meeting with a mission: to maim and destroy Job.

Job was a righteous man and prayed fervently for his children who liked to party. On this particular day, Job either wasn't invited or didn't want to be a part of the reveling. While his children were making merry at the older brother's house, a messenger came to Job to tell him that the Sabeans had stolen his oxen and donkeys and killed the servants. Another messenger came to say that lightning had struck and burned up all Job's sheep and the shepherds with them. While he was still speaking there came another with the news that the Chaldeans had stolen Job's camels and killed their keepers. In the blink of an eye, Job had lost his prosperity.

The last messenger was not yet finished speaking when another messenger came to tell Job that a tornado had leveled his eldest son's house and all of his children were dead. Job was distraught to say the least. He did what everyone in those days did when they were grieving: he tore off his robe, shaved his head, and fell down on the ground. Although he didn't understand what was happening, Job worshipped the Lord!²⁰³ He said he didn't have any possessions when he was born and he couldn't take anything with him when he died, so he might just as well praise the Lord. Job did not sin by becoming bitter and blaming God.

Satan didn't like that response at all! He smote Job with ugly, painful, oozing sores from top of his head to the soles of his feet, They hurt so badly that Job sat on an ash heap to try to get some relief. He took pieces of broken pottery and scratched the infection out of the sores. Job's wife had reached her breaking point and finally spoke her mind to Job telling him he had done everything right and now look at him. She challenged him to forget this God of his and go ahead and die. She couldn't imagine that any miracle would be big enough to take care of this situation.

Soon the word of Job's tragic circumstances reached his good friends, and they decided to come to console him. But when they saw Job, they were speechless. They sat for a whole week unable to talk. When they finally did say something, it was the same thing you and I usually say: "Why? There must be some reason."

Job's name means hated and persecuted. By whom? By satan! He's the accuser of all the brethren. Sure Job is discouraged and depressed. Who wouldn't be? Material possessions are gone. Family is gone. Wife and friends have turned against him. Then he says, “My life is like the white of an egg! Is there any flavor in the egg white?”²⁰⁴ Did you ever try to eat just the white of an egg? When boiled, it's flabby and rubbery. You start chewing it and if you don't swallow it, you'll still be chewing it hours later. You can take raw egg white and beat it full of air, but if you don't add sugar to it, it's not edible; and if you want it to retain any shape you have to

add a pinch of cream of tartar. When life is tasteless, hard to swallow, and bitter, we need some yellow nourishment—some SonShine in our life just as Job did.

Job had the strength to make it through this depressing time in his life because he made a commitment: *Though He slay me, yet will I serve Him.*²⁰⁵ Yes, we know it was satan who was inflicting the tragedies on job, but Job didn't know that. As far as He knew, God must be testing Him. We know the plans that God has for us are for good and not for evil,²⁰⁶ yet, when problems come, all too often we waste precious time asking, Why? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednigo faced the fiery furnace because they refused to bow down and worship the king. They could only worship God Almighty, and they said: *We know our God is able to deliver us, but even if He doesn't we won't bow down.*²⁰⁷ They were committed to God because He is God—not because of temporal blessings, powerful positions, wealth, or happiness. They believed there was something better waiting for them beyond this life. Job put it this way: *I know that my Redeemer lives and in the end He will come back. And after my skin, even this body, has been destroyed, then from my flesh, or without it I shall see God, Whom I, even I, shall see for myself. And my eyes shall behold Him, and not as a stranger.*²⁰⁸ I know that no matter what it looks like, my Redeemer lives! I know that no matter what my circumstances may be, my Redeemer lives! I know. I know. I know. I know.

Paul says it this way: *I know in Whom I have believed and that He is able to keep that which I've committed unto Him...*²⁰⁹ If we know He is able to keep, then we will commit it to Him. *Cast ALL your cares on Him for He cares for you!*²¹⁰ When there's no way we can do it, it's time to know Whom we believe can.

The reason our life is like the white of an egg, tasteless and blah, and we are unable to swallow what's happening, may be simply that we need to mess up our plans in order to accomplish His purpose. *Many plans are in a man's mind, but it is the Lord's purpose for him that will stand.*²¹¹ Satan knew human nature when he accused Job before God that day. As long as everything goes their way, most people will sing and praise the Lord, but let things go wrong and hardship come, they hang their harps on the willow tree and recite: Nobody knows the trouble I've seen. Not Job. He knew that God was able. That gave him tremendous confidence and helped him overcome inferiority which had dogged his imagination.

God is able!

He is able to save to the uttermost.²¹² He is able to keep us from stumbling.²¹³ He is able to build me up and give me an inheritance.²¹⁴ He is able to make us stand; to hold us up.²¹⁵ He is able to help them that are tempted.²¹⁶ He is able to make all grace abound toward us.²¹⁷ He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all we ask.²¹⁸ He is able to perform what He has promised.²¹⁹ He is able to scramble my egg and give it some flavor! The white of the egg is only the outside—our body and external circumstances. It will decay and return to dust anyway. What we do with the yellow—the inside—lasts eternally. That's where the nourishment is. Let this be the moment that we determine in our heart to serve Him and know He is able to bring us through—but even if He doesn't, let it be said of us that we died in faith believing...²²⁰ so He can present us faultless

before the Throne.²²¹ I know He is able! Just having this knowledge will help us overcome the scarecrow of inferiority and cure our depression.

It should come as no surprise to us that other great men of God suffered from times of inferiority and depression. We've already considered Job's story. Moses, also, cried out to God asking why he had to bear the burden of the Israelites. He expressed his inferiority, his inability to deal with the people and was so depressed about the overwhelming task that he prayed for God to kill him.²²² After Elijah experienced a miraculous meeting at Mt. Carmel, an angry Queen Jezebel came after him threatening to kill him. Elijah ran away and found a place to hide. He, too, prayed for God to take his life.²²³ Jonah was so upset when God forgave the Ninevites—even though they repented—that he begged God to let him die.²²⁴ Jeremiah lamented the day he was born and asked the Lord: Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable which refuses to be healed?²²⁵

What causes inferiority and depression?

What caused these men of God to be depressed and experience inferiority to the task? They felt God had forsaken them. They felt He put burdens on them too heavy for them to bear. They felt He didn't reward the great work they had done for Him. They focused on their human limitations and weaknesses rather than on their unlimited God and His strength.

Inferiority and depression go hand in hand. Some of the same things that caused these responses in the great men of God, also bombard us: what others expect of us, our circumstances, lack of help and encouragement among others. It is also a fact that depression may result from certain physical afflictions. When healing is complete, depression is gone. However, there are also certain attitudes or habits we hold that may cause us to end up in depression. A number of people who have been born again are trying to live a Christian life without forgiving themselves and/or others. When God forgives, He forgets and remembers our sin against us no more. We do the same thing—forgive. Many people experience forgiveness, but then measure themselves and their lives against other Christians—resulting in a feeling of inferiority.

It is difficult to shake ourselves out of depression when we experience consequences in our life that are the result of our wrong actions and attitudes. It is equally difficult to beat depression when we are being harassed at home, at work, or simply in our mind. However, we can relax. Our trials will not consume us. We have to change our habits, our thought patterns, and our goals, and seek continuously to be filled with the Holy Spirit. In the Book of Acts, the apostles prayed, the place was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost again and again.

To overcome inferiority, we begin by making a commitment to do things God's way, pray, and get together with other believers regularly. We eliminate harmful habits which become pitfalls, do what is right, cultivate an attitude of thanksgiving, maintain a submissive spirit, and give ourselves to God to serve others. We don't listen to negative reports because it will cause us to be discouraged and lose heart. We rise above negative thinking by looking at the possibilities. We allow the Holy Spirit to speak to us and direct our life through the Word of God.

Psychologists, psychiatrists, and counselors cannot treat guilt. Guilt is a function of the spirit and can only be dealt with by the God who put man's spirit within him. It can only be washed away by the shed blood of Jesus Christ. We believe that He died for us—that the blood He shed on Calvary was to cleanse us of guilt. We come to Jesus and accept His free gift of salvation. What can wash away my sin (guilt)? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. No longer do we dwell on the past things for which we are presently forgiven. We lift up Jesus in our thoughts and actions and in return get lifted up-out of depression and learn that we are no longer inferior to anyone!²²⁶ Our dark heart becomes full of light and joy comes gushing forth.

A merry heart

*A merry heart does good like medicine; but a broken spirit dries the bones.*²²⁷ *A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance, but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.*²²⁸

We live in a time of brokenness. Broken homes. Broken families. Broken minds. Broken dreams. Broken churches. Broken promises. Broken friendships. Broken morals. Broken ethics. Broken nations. Why so much brokenness? According to the above scripture, it is because of the sorrow of the heart. Why is the heart sorrowful? Because we dwell on the brokenness rather than on the remedy, or because we carry unconfessed guilt. This leaves us depressed and feeling inferior in our relationships.

Rx for healing

The only prescription for the healing of a broken spirit is the joy of Jesus. When we ask Him for forgiveness and cleansing of our guilt, *He is faithful and just to cleanse us and forgive us.*²²⁹ With that, we have assurance that our heart is clean and pure, and that He who judges our thoughts and motives finds us blameless. When we are doing what is right and trusting Jesus to give us strength to endure the brokenness here and to spend eternal life with Him, it just doesn't matter what others say. Depression is lifted. Joy unspeakable comes to our heart. Our countenance shines radiating that joy. Healing begins to take place in our mind and emotions. Restoration comes to our soul. Inferiority is banished.

The Lord told Moses to gather the people together around the well, sing to it, and He would give them water. They began to sing, *Spring up, O well!*²³⁰ Immediately the well was unclogged and water was available. Most of us sing after the fact when we should learn to sing to produce the desired effect of healing. We, too, come at His call, go in His direction, and follow His command. On another occasion, the Israelites, following Isaac's command, worked to dig in the wells and remove the debris that hindered the flow of water.²³¹ They did as they were told and the water gushed out. Maybe we have to both sing and dig, but whatever it takes, we can remove the mental and spiritual scarecrows that keep us in bondage. Just as the water poured forth for the Israelites, the joy will pour forth for us. Our life will be a conductor of the River of Life that flows from the throne of God—right out of us and into the lives of others.

Even if we have to live in a fragmented situation, we are whole because our joy doesn't depend on our circumstances but on Jesus who lives in us by His Spirit. It isn't possible to live life without disappointments and broken relationships, without failures and broken dreams, but it is possible to have a merry heart and a healthy spirit in the midst of them. When we permit our spirit to remain broken—and it is a choice we make—it impairs our health. It causes us to dehydrate. It drains the bone marrow. We go to the doctor for a prescription, but the medicines he gives cannot produce a merry heart. That only comes with a right relationship with Jesus. The *merry heart that does good like a medicine* must be applied routinely every day.

When friends and loved ones mistreat us, betray us, break their promises to us, leave and forsake us—we have a choice of whether to allow the sorrow of the situation to depress us, dry us up, or to determine in our heart that Jesus will be the center of our joy. Difficult? Absolutely. I don't know of anyone who really enjoys taking medicine. We have to remember to take it at the right time. We usually have to take it with something to wash it down. When we thirst for righteousness, we let the water of the Word be that which applies the merry heart to our spirit, mind, and body.

During an earthquake, an elderly lady was serene and unafraid. Someone asked her afterwards, “Were you not afraid?” “No,” she replied, “I rejoiced to know that I have a God that can shake the world!”

It is said that joy is something that is multiplied when it is divided. It takes sixty-four facial muscles to make a frown, but only thirteen to make a smile. Why work overtime?

A Hindu once asked a native Christian of India, “What medicine do you put on your face to make it shine so?” “I don't put anything on it,” said the Christian. “Yes, you do. All you Christians do. I've seen shining faces wherever I have met Christians!” Then the Christian said, “I will tell you what medicine makes our faces shine—it is the joy in our hearts because Jesus dwells there.”²³²

The Happy Man as written by John Bunyan

“The Happy Man was born in the city of Regeneration, in the parish of Repentance unto Life. He was educated in the School of Obedience, he works at the trade of Diligence and does many jobs of self-denial. He owns a large estate in the country of Christian Contentment and wears the plain garment of humility. He breakfasts every morning on spiritual prayer and sups every evening on the same. He also has “meat to eat that the world knows not of.”

He has Gospel submission in his conduct, due order in his affection, sound peace in his conscience, sanctifying love in his soul, real divinity in his breast, true humility in his heart, the Redeemer's yoke on his neck, the world under his feet, and a crown of glory over his head. In order to obtain this, he prays fervently, believes firmly, waits patiently, works abundantly, redeems his time, guards his sense, loves Christ, and longs for glory.²³³

This, my friends, is the way to defeat the Jebusite scarecrow which causes depression and inferiority and tries to steal our confidence and keep us from knowing who we are in Christ Jesus. *For my Angel will go before you and bring you in to the..Jebusites...and you shall utterly overthrow them and completely break down their sacred pillars.*"²³⁴

LIFE APPLICATION

What are the sources of my feelings of inferiority that disallow me the confidence I need to pursue changes in my life?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, You know me so well that you know how many hairs are on my head.²³⁵ More than that, You love me so much that You died for me. Being aware of so much love causes me to recognize my value and determine soar above my inferiorities to bring glory to You through my life. In Jesus' Name, I pray.

CHAPTER 9

Smiling at the Scarecrows

I did it!

After studying the scarecrows symbolized by the tribes, it is important to note that all of them were Canaanites. They were the descendents of Noah through his son Ham and his grandson Canaan.²³⁶ This explains the overlapping of the characteristics discussed in the foregoing chapters along with many more. Intimidation, discouragement, fear, deception, ignorance, various limitations, and inferiority may all be present in our lives for they feed on each other. However when we face those scarecrows head on, attack them with the Word of God, and keep the faith which helps us defy them, the Lord rejoices over us and promises to bless us with food and water and keep us healthy.²³⁷

Mind Your Own Business!

If we don't pay attention to these scarecrows and do something about them, they will continue to erode our confidence and leave us in shambles. We need to mind our own business and not expect God or someone else to do it for us. Jesus had a heart-to-heart talk with Peter. He gave him instructions: *Feed my sheep!*²³⁸ He gave him a prophecy that as a young man he made his own decisions and did what he wanted, but as an older person he would be dependent on someone else.²³⁹ Peter was apparently somewhat agitated at these words and turned his face away from him. He saw John a short distance away and asked Jesus: "What about him?" Jesus gave Peter a rebuke which in essence said: "Peter, mind your own business!" In other words, everyone is different. God has a different call for each one of us. He has placed unique gifts, talents and abilities within each of us. It is incumbent on each of us to develop ours and make them a contribution to the church and to the world. It reminds me of a message I found crumpled on the floor at one of my schools:

The best BUSINESS

In the line of BUSINESS

Is to tend to the BUSINESS of your own

So if you have no BUSINESS

Then make it your BUSINESS

To leave other people's BUSINESS alone!

When Peter turned away, his focus was no longer on Jesus but on John. He was distracted. He began to ask questions that were none of his business. Very often, people and circumstances in our life distract us, deceive us, and then destroy us. These distractions are varying degrees of scarecrows.

Be alert to distractions

How great are our tendencies to be distracted by the words of others, their actions, their great ministries or their complaints about ours. It is common for us to think that we are required to sacrifice more than someone else. When we mature, we learn that every distraction, even momentarily, causes us to lose our focus on Jesus and His command to us individually. Distractions weaken our faith and resolve, and they prevent us from being devoted

wholeheartedly to Jesus and His kingdom. Scripture warns us repeatedly not to be led astray by false doctrine and philosophies. There is so much in the church today that "seems" right, "sounds" good, and satisfies our desires, but its satisfaction is only temporary. Any glance away from Jesus, no matter how good it seems, will lead to deception and falling away from the Truth. We make a conscience effort to keep our eyes on Jesus! He's the author of our faith—the one who created it and gave it to us. He's the finisher of our faith—the one who will bring us safely across the finish line of life. He's the perfecter of our faith—the one who causes our faith to grow, mature, and be sufficient in times of stress and trial. The songwriter so aptly put it: "When all around my soul gives way, He then is all my hope and stay!"²⁴⁰

Be alert to deceptions

Jesus warned us that in the last days false prophets would should up and do great signs and wonders for the purpose of deceiving, if possible, even the elect.²⁴¹ No one is immune to this deception. First we become distracted by pseudo-spiritual words and actions, and then are deceived by prophesies, signs, and wonders. Remember Jesus says, signs follow those who believe; He did not say believers are to follow signs!²⁴² He says His disciples will be known by their love and their fruit—not by their gifts.

Let's not be distracted, then deceived by those who would intimidate us with their phony prophecies, dreams and visions. Obviously, there cannot be the counterfeit unless there is the real, and there is real genuinely true prophecy; but there are far too many self-proclaimed prophets sitting in-wait to deceive. They manipulate, intimidate, regulate, and orchestrate by their own prophetic words. Once we are in their clutches, we move at their command—often as if hypnotized. We seek guidance from them. We desire a word from the Lord and go to them. We are deceived! This is the real co-dependency that should be abolished!

Be alert to devourers

People will tear us apart. We speak the truth to them, in love, and they rip up our heart. They knife us in the back. We think they are our dearest friends. We think they have our best interest at heart. We think they want to do all they can to help us. Then we say or do something that upsets them and they turn on us! Jesus said this would happen. He said people would take advantage of us and persecute us. The purpose of an attack is to sift us like wheat so we'll be separated within ourselves and have no direction. This is how the enemy can rob, kill, and destroy our influence in the kingdom of God, and cause us to faint in our mind; it wears us out! But *if you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small.*²⁴³ We are able to withstand the fiery darts of the enemy and not be devoured because we know our God! Because we keep our eyes on Jesus! Because we mind our own business!

Jesus said, *Occupy till I come...* and that means for me to do business—His business!²⁴⁴ He gave each one of us an assignment to do. We dare not turn and look at someone else, nor pick up their offenses, nor look for someone else to blame for our own plight, nor be concerned that they aren't doing their job, nor even be concerned what their job should be (unless that's our business)! It's our business to make sure our account is settled in heaven and that there's nothing

between our soul and our Savior! It's our business to be concerned with ourselves and our own purity. We can't take others to heaven with us unless they are marked with the blood of Jesus. We can prophesy all you want to in the name of the Lord, healing the sick, casting out devils, but unless you have done what He told us to do, and minded our own business, He'll say, *depart from me I never knew you.*

Let's mind our own business, keep our heart pure and tender, and remember, Jesus gives us a heart of flesh in exchange for your heart of stone. Both hearts are breakable, but the heart Jesus gives will heal. The other one stays in pieces. We determine not to be distracted by life's scarecrows, not to be deceived by comparing ourselves to others, and not to be devoured by lack of confidence. *For the Lord will be our confidence, and will keep our foot from being caught*²⁴⁵ Ah, how different the world looks when our scarecrows are replaced with confidence.

Once upon a time there were scarecrows in my cerebellum, and I was intimidated. Some called Canaanites came to discourage me and taught me to say "I can't." Soon they were joined by the Hittites who paralyzed me with fear and I heard myself saying, "I'm so afraid." While cowering behind others, some Hivites came to deceive me and I could no longer tell the difference between good and bad, right and wrong, clean and unclean. By now, the Perizzites had shown up and I did what they said because I didn't know any better. All these scarecrows seemed to be cheering on the Girgashites as they focused on my limitations and I knew I could no longer help it. As my depression was getting deeper, the Amorites came and pointed out all the mountains I would have to climb to get free; I kept saying, "I can't get over it!" Bombarded by all these scarecrows, I was crying out for help when along came the Jebusites telling me I wasn't gifted enough, or talented enough to get out of my mess. I screamed at them: "If I could...if I just had...if I were only..." In utter despair, a prayer came across my lips. I cried out to God and He spoke clearly to me: *Do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.*²⁴⁶ Those words alone gave me the strength to climb out of the pit dug for me by the ites. I saw that the scarecrows were fake. I put my feet on their necks as I heard Joshua say: "Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Be strong and courageous. This is what the LORD will do to all the enemies you are going to fight." Then he killed them.²⁴⁷ The scarecrows were cleansed from my mind I realized I will not be fighting alone; the Lord is with me.

What are we afraid of? Why aren't we investing what we have—though it may be small. Are we afraid to talk to someone about Jesus for fear of ridicule? That's only a scarecrow. Once we do it, it multiplies. Are we afraid to stop smoking for fear of painful withdrawal? That's only a scarecrow. Once we do it, our body will eventually begin to appreciate living without the poisonous substances. Are we afraid to volunteer to teach that Sunday school class even though we feel we can do it with God's help? Do we think everyone else does a better job than we? Why? It's time to assess the scarecrow and determine its origin and its purpose in our life.

What keeps us from doing something with our gifts, talents, and abilities? Why don't we take classes, get some training, read, practice, and utterly break down the images of the scarecrows whose appearance paralyzes us? Don't give in to them. Refuse to let them find any room in our

thoughts. By doing so we will break down their images; we will not let them determine our actions.

We would like for the Lord to drive out all the scarecrows from our lives in one day, but God knows that if we overcame all of our enemies at once, we would become like a desolate land—a deserted, uninhabited land. If we overcame all at once, we would sit back and relax, praising God that it's over, glorying in past victories, but we wouldn't be ready for the next battle. This moment of being off our guard is a precise opportunity for the enemy to come and overpower us. Therefore, the tribes and scarecrows are cut off little by little and we keep our faith operating and the joy flowing and do not become weary in doing what is right.²⁴⁸

Let's watch for those scarecrows. Remember something wonderful is nearby. Don't be timid. Don't let them scare us away from the treat God has in store for us. We can either be stopped by the scarecrows or remember the promise of God that *No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is from Me, says the Lord.*²⁴⁹

LIFE APPLICATION

What situations, people, or events are able to steal my joy and cause me to lose confidence in myself and in God's power to help me overcome?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I thank you for exposing my scarecrows for what they are: fake and without power to destroy me. Your grace is sufficient for me, and Your strength is made perfect in my weakness.²⁵⁰ I praise You and thank You for restoring joy and confidence to my life. In Jesus' Name, I pray.

ENDNOTES

¹ Matthew 25:24-25

² I John 5:4

³ Isaiah 54:17, NIV

⁴ Joshua 3:10

⁵ 2 Corinthians 10:5

⁶ Copied from Yvonne's Ghana Journal, Fall 2002.

⁷ *Ordinary Person*, Words and Music by Ruth Ariston Hicks, 1985. UBP

⁸ Numbers 13:13

⁹ 2 Corinthians 12:9

¹⁰ Exodus 3:8-11; 23:23-24

¹¹ Joshua 3:10, NIV

¹² Clovis G. Chappell, *More Sermons on Biblical Characters*, adapted from "Scarecrows—the Man of one talent," p. 101. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids. 1978. The idea, though not the context, came from this sermon.

¹³ Exodus 23:23; Joshua 3:10

¹⁴ Genesis 12:5; 50:11; Numbers 33:51; Joshua 7:9

¹⁵ See Numbers 13:29; 14:25; Joshua 11:3.

¹⁶ Strong's, Hebrew Dictionary, #3669, #3667, #3665

¹⁷ Knight's *Treasury of Illustrations*, Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, p.108.

¹⁸ Kennedy, James, *Turn it to Gold*, Servant Publications, 1991, p. 123ff.

¹⁹ Read 1 Samuel 25

²⁰ <http://edison.rutgers.edu/>

²¹ Hebrews 4:16

²² Psalm 55:6,8

²³ Isaiah 14:2

²⁴ Read this story in 1 Kings, chapters 18 and 19.

²⁵ 1 John 15:3

²⁶ Hebrews 13:21; 2 Corinthians 9:8

²⁷ Galatians 6:9

²⁸ Revelation 3:11

²⁹ 2 Timothy 4:8

- ³⁰ 2 Corinthians 5:21
- ³¹ John 15:3, Ephesians 5:26
- ³² Psalm 24:3-4
- ³³ Proverbs 14:24
- ³⁴ Proverbs 6:6-7
- ³⁵ Matthew 25:29
- ³⁶ Proverbs 22:7; Matthew 18:28-30
- ³⁷ Proverbs 11:15; 6:1; 22:26 – *Contact the author for a more detailed study on finances--the Crown of Riches.*
- ³⁸ Psalm 65:11
- ³⁹ Matthew 28:20
- ⁴⁰ 2 Corinthians 10:3-5
- ⁴¹ Matthew 5:16
- ⁴² Psalm 1:1
- ⁴³ 1 Thessalonians 2:19
- ⁴⁴ 2 Corinthians 10:3-5
- ⁴⁵ Isaiah 35:10
- ⁴⁶ James 1:12
- ⁴⁷ John 10:10
- ⁴⁸ Job 19:9
- ⁴⁹ Revelation 4:11
- ⁵⁰ Exodus 23:23-24, NIV
- ⁵¹ Galatians 2:20
- ⁵² Revelation 12:10
- ⁵³ Revelation 12:11
- ⁵⁴ 2 Samuel 2:22; Psalm 18:2,46; 62:2,6,7; 89:26
- ⁵⁵ 1 John 5:24
- ⁵⁶ Hebrews 10:35
- ⁵⁷ Exodus 23:23; Joshua 3:10
- ⁵⁸ Strong's, Hebrew Dictionary, #2850, #2845, and #2865
- ⁵⁹ Matthew 25:24-25
- ⁶⁰ Jeremiah 1:8

⁶¹ 1 John 4:18, Amp.

⁶² Judges 5

⁶³ 1 Peter 5:8

⁶⁴ Psalm 119:11

⁶⁵ Ephesians 6:1

⁶⁶ Psalm 27:1).

⁶⁷ “Be an Overcomer” lyrics by Charles W. Naylor; Music by Andrew L. Byers, 1907, public domain.

⁶⁸ Ephesians 6:16

⁶⁹ Psalm 91:5

⁷⁰ Romans 13

⁷¹ 2 Timothy 1:7

⁷² Exodus 23:23-24, Amp

⁷³ Exodus 23:23; Joshua 3:10

⁷⁴ <http://71.1911encyclopedia.org/H/HI/HIVITES.htm>

⁷⁵ 1 John 4:1

⁷⁶ Hebrews 5:14

⁷⁷ 1 Samuel 15:13-15

⁷⁸ Proverbs 24:28

⁷⁹ Hebrews 4:14

⁸⁰ Matthew 10:16

⁸¹ “*Where There’s a Will There’s an A*,” commentators Hugh Downs and Marie Osmond as shown on Fox2, Detroit, 2003.

⁸² Proverbs 29:15

⁸³ Psalm 119:11

⁸⁴ Proverbs 19:15

⁸⁵ Matthew 24:11

⁸⁶ Romans 16:18

⁸⁷ Ecclesiastes 3:1-11

⁸⁸ Matthew 7:8, TLB

⁸⁹ Acts 17:28

⁹⁰ 1 Corinthians 3:18, TLB

⁹¹ Exodus 23:23-24, Amp

- ⁹² 2 Timothy 3:6
- ⁹³ 1 John 4:1
- ⁹⁴ 1 Corinthians 12:10
- ⁹⁵ Exodus 23:23; Joshua 3:10
- ⁹⁶ Strong's Hebrew Dictionary, #6522, #6519
- ⁹⁷ Romans 1:30
- ⁹⁸ Matthew 7:24
- ⁹⁹ Proverbs 13:24
- ¹⁰⁰ Hebrews 12: 11
- ¹⁰¹ Proverbs 22:6
- ¹⁰² 2 Corinthians 1:17-20
- ¹⁰³ Proverbs 19:18
- ¹⁰⁴ Proverbs 14: 12
- ¹⁰⁵ Proverbs 19: 18
- ¹⁰⁶ Psalm 119: 130
- ¹⁰⁷ Amos 8: 1
- ¹⁰⁸ Ecclesiastes 11:4
- ¹⁰⁹ Hosea 4:6
- ¹¹⁰ Luke 12:15
- ¹¹¹ 1 Corinthians 12:1
- ¹¹² John 14:26
- ¹¹³ 2 Timothy 2:15 KJV
- ¹¹⁴ Hebrews 5:14
- ¹¹⁵ 1 John 4:1
- ¹¹⁶ 2 Kings 4:38-41
- ¹¹⁷ 2 Corinthians 1:4
- ¹¹⁸ Romans 12:19
- ¹¹⁹ Psalm 66:18
- ¹²⁰ 2 Kings 4:42-44
- ¹²¹ Exodus 23:23-24
- ¹²² Exodus 23:23; Joshua 3:10

¹²³ Strong's Hebrew Dictionary, #1622

¹²⁴ All the information herein about Loretta was obtained from <http://www.specialolympics.org/news/loretta.html>, August 2002.

¹²⁵ Hebrews 12:29

¹²⁶ 2 Corinthians 3:18

¹²⁷ Ephesians 6: 16

¹²⁸ "Spirit of the Living God," Words and Music by D. Iverson, 1935. Public domain.

¹²⁹ I Peter 5:9-10

¹³⁰ Psalm 138:8

¹³¹ Daniel 3:13-27

¹³² I heard Pastor Lindquist give this sermon at Garden Grove Community Church in Orange County, California in 1978.

¹³³ Philippians 4:11

¹³⁴ Philippians 2:3

¹³⁵ Psalm 91

¹³⁶ Proverbs 3:24

¹³⁷ Ephesians 1 and 2

¹³⁸ All references are from Exodus 3 and 4.

¹³⁹ 2 Corinthians 12:9

¹⁴⁰ Numbers 12:2-4

¹⁴¹ Exodus 14:17

¹⁴² Hebrews 11:24-29

¹⁴³ Daniel 11:27-29

¹⁴⁴ Proverbs 29:18

¹⁴⁵ Philippians 3:10

¹⁴⁶ Habakkuk 2:1

¹⁴⁷ Hebrews 10:35-36

¹⁴⁸ Exodus 23:23-24

¹⁴⁹ Exodus 23:23; Joshua 3:10

¹⁵⁰ *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, Hebrew Dictionary, #567

¹⁵¹ Judges 4:9

¹⁵² 1 Samuel 17:45

¹⁵³ At that time one could still drive to the top. Now tourists are required to take park buses.

¹⁵⁴ Romans 14:8

¹⁵⁵ Genesis 8:4

¹⁵⁶ Exodus 19:2

¹⁵⁷ Deuteronomy 34:1

¹⁵⁸ Genesis 22:1-9

¹⁵⁹ 2 Samuel 5:7

¹⁶⁰ 2 Kings 18:19-42

¹⁶¹ Matthew 4:8

¹⁶² Matthew 5

¹⁶³ Matthew 14:23

¹⁶⁴ Matthew 17:2

¹⁶⁵ Matthew 26:30-31

¹⁶⁶ Luke 23:33

¹⁶⁷ Luke 24:50; Acts 1:12

¹⁶⁸ Isaiah 31:4c - *so shall the LORD of hosts come down to fight for mount Zion, and for the hill thereof.*

¹⁶⁹ Isaiah 44:23 - *Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done [it]: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.*

¹⁷⁰ Matthew 21:21 - *Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this [which is done] to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done.*

¹⁷¹ Mark 11:23

¹⁷² "Higher Ground," lyrics by Johnson Oatman, Jr., music by Charles Gabriel. Public Domain. 1898

¹⁷³ 2 Corinthians 1:8

¹⁷⁴ Song of Solomon 2:1

¹⁷⁵ Song of Solomon 6:3

¹⁷⁶ Joel 3:14

¹⁷⁷ Joshua 6:17

¹⁷⁸ Psalm 68:5

¹⁷⁹ 1 Samuel 1:25

¹⁸⁰ 2 Timothy 1: 5, 3:15

¹⁸¹ Acts 16: 1

- ¹⁸² John 7:38
- ¹⁸³ Exodus 23:23-24
- ¹⁸⁴ Ephesians 2:6
- ¹⁸⁵ Ephesians 1:22
- ¹⁸⁶ Deuteronomy 28:13
- ¹⁸⁷ Exodus 23:23; Joshua 3:10
- ¹⁸⁸ Strong's #2983 from #947
- ¹⁸⁹ Numbers 13:33
- ¹⁹⁰ 2 Corinthians 5:21
- ¹⁹¹ James 1:8, NAS
- ¹⁹² 2 Corinthians 10:5
- ¹⁹³ Daniel 5:27
- ¹⁹⁴ Proverbs 11:1; 16:11; 20:23
- ¹⁹⁵ Hebrews 11:6; Galatians 5:6
- ¹⁹⁶ John 13:35; 1 John 3:14; 4:20; Romans 1:17
- ¹⁹⁷ James 2:14-17
- ¹⁹⁸ Titus 2:5
- ¹⁹⁹ Philippians 4:11-13
- ²⁰⁰ Luke 12:15
- ²⁰¹ Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:31; Matthew 7:20
- ²⁰² Read the life of Job in the Old Testament book entitled, "Job"
- ²⁰³ Job 1:22
- ²⁰⁴ Job 6:6
- ²⁰⁵ Job 13:15
- ²⁰⁶ Jeremiah 29: 11
- ²⁰⁷ Daniel 3:17
- ²⁰⁸ Job 19:25-26
- ²⁰⁹ 2 Timothy. 1:12
- ²¹⁰ Psalm 55:22; 1 Peter 5:7
- ²¹¹ Proverbs 19:21, Amp.
- ²¹² Hebrews 7:25

²¹³ Jude 24

²¹⁴ Acts 20:32

²¹⁵ Romans 14:4

²¹⁶ Hebrews 2: 18

²¹⁷ 2 Corinthians 9:8

²¹⁸ Ephesians 3:20

²¹⁹ Romans 4: 21

²²⁰ Hebrews 11:39-40

²²¹ Jude 24

²²² Numbers 11: 10-15

²²³ I Kings 19:4,10

²²⁴ Jonah 4:3

²²⁵ Jeremiah 15: 10, 17-18,20-21

²²⁶ For more information on getting free from depression, contact the author and request a copy of the study on “Freedom from Depression” – The Alabaster Box, Volume 10, Number 10.

²²⁷ Proverbs 17:22

²²⁸ Proverbs 15:13

²²⁹ 1 John 1:9

²³⁰ Numbers 21:17

²³¹ Genesis 26:15-18

²³² W.B. Knight’s *Treasury of Illustrations*, Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1963, p.190.

²³³ W.B. Knight’s *Treasury of Illustrations*, p.190.

²³⁴ Exodus 23:23-24

²³⁵ Matthew 10:30

²³⁶ Read all of Genesis 10

²³⁷ Exodus 23:23-33

²³⁸ John 21:17

²³⁹ John 21:20-22

²⁴⁰ From the hymn, “The Solid Rock,” by Mote and Bradbury, public domain.

²⁴¹ Matthew 24.24-25

²⁴² Mark 16:17

²⁴³ Proverbs 24:10

²⁴⁴ Luke 19:13

²⁴⁵ Proverbs 3:26

²⁴⁶ Hebrews 10:35

²⁴⁷ Joshua 10:23-25

²⁴⁸ Galatians 6:9

²⁴⁹ Isaiah 54:17

²⁵⁰ 2 Corinthians 12:9

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SCARECROWS IN MY CEREBELLUM

The Fragrance of Provision

We lose our talents, abilities and even our brains by not developing and using them. The moment we seek to pursue our dreams, our call, or our gifts from God, and want to do something more, to go a step higher, or to push on toward excellence, there is an obstacle in the way. We cannot deny the existence of psychological or physical scarecrows any more than the Israelites could deny the existence of the tribes they had to conquer. To realize the joy of serving Jesus and accomplish what He wants us to, we must first face and defeat those terrifying scarecrows. Ah, what confidence comes with victory!

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About the Author

Yvonne, a pastor's widow, is mother, retired educator, and frequent guest speaker in churches and conferences. For nearly two decades she has served as editor of *The Alabaster Box*, a monthly inspirational publication.

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