

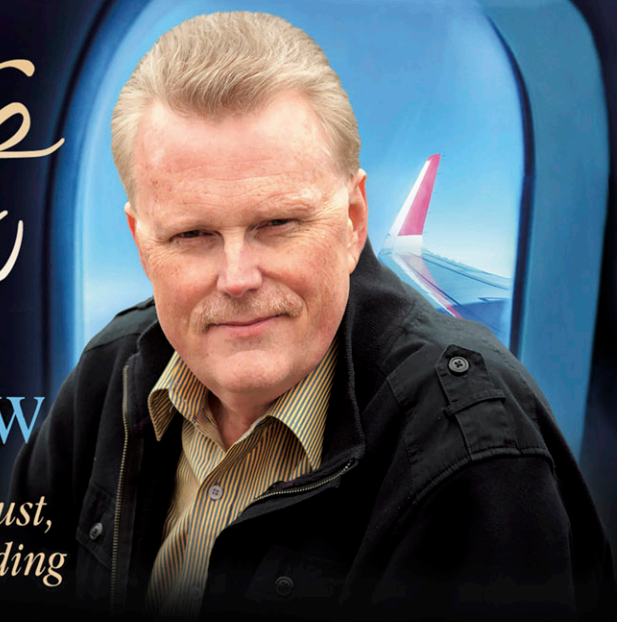
# TIM HILL

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## *Life* in the **Exit Row**

*Turbulence, Trust,  
and a Safe Landing*



• A 52 WEEK DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL •

*Foreword by Dr. Paul Conn*

*Life*  
in the  
Exit Row



*Life*  
in the  
Exit Row

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*Turbulence, Trust,  
and a Safe Landing*

TIM HILL



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## DEDICATION

The most novice of travelers quickly learns that no one individual can get a plane off the ground alone. It requires the accumulated ingenuity, skill, and commitment of a dedicated team for taxi and take off. Everyone from ticket agents, the ground crew, mechanics, air traffic controllers, flight attendants, and many others make the flight process work. If there's any glory, the pilot usually gets it, but the credit for a safe landing must be shared with all who made it happen from the very start. So it is with anyone who has experienced and enjoyed the flight that is called ministry and leadership.

Never can I stand and speak before an audience anywhere and of any size, without the overwhelming sense of gratitude for the dozens of collaborators who have made this journey with me. Everyone from loyal assistant pastors, student leaders, missions leaders, music ministers, media producers, a vast host of secretaries and administrative assistants, and so many others who have helped to copilot and navigate many flights of meaningful experience. If someone accepted Jesus as Lord, those who have labored with me shared in that harvest. If someone was blessed by a sermon or song, those who arranged my travel, typed a manuscript, or engineered a recording, have a part in the blessing. Over the years, I have been blessed by the skills and talents of loyal, dedicated, and committed Christians who sought no limelight and worked long hours to make ministry effective.

The individuals are too numerous to mention. You know who you are, and I thank you.



## CONTENTS

FOREWORD	9
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	11
INTRODUCTION	13
LIFE IN THE EXIT ROW	15
THE FAITH OF A FREQUENT FLYER	19
TAKE YOUR VITAMINS!	22
REFILL THE JAR FOR THE NEXT WEARY TRAVELER	25
GOING TOO FAR ON TOO LITTLE	28
GONE WITH THE WIND	31
YET WILL I TRUST THE LORD!	35
THE “GREAT GO-MISSION”	38
IT’S CALLED A “MULLIGAN”	41
I’M LOOKING FORWARD TO LOOKING BACK	44
WORN OUT, BUT STILL GOING	47
I’M NOT IN A VALLEY, JUST CHANGING MOUNTAINS	50
I ALREADY LIKE IT	53
A PLACE CALLED YONDER	56
CORRECTING YOUR COURSE	59
REFLECTIONS IN THE ICU	62
IT’S ALREADY THERE	65
PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES FOR POWERFUL LIVING	68
NO PANIC IN HEAVEN—ONLY PLANS	71
FAMINE OR FUTURE	74
FAMOUS OR FAITHFUL?	77
HE MUST BE IN THE HOUSE	80
LIVING THROUGH THE MIDNIGHT	83



CURSE GOD AND DIE OR BLESS GOD AND LIVE	87
THERE IS “LIFE AFTER THE FLOOD”!	90
IN THE MIDST OF IT ALL	92
WHAT’S OVER YOUR HEAD IS UNDER HIS FEET	95
JESUS LOVES ME!	98
THE FOUNDATIONS OF LIFE	102
LIVING IN A SECOND-CHOICE WORLD	105
THE RESIGNATION INCLINATION	108
SANDPAPER FRIENDS	112
IT’S STILL MY DESIRE	115
I LOST THE COAT, BUT I KEPT MY CHARACTER	118
THE CHOICE TO REJOICE	121
IT WILL RAIN AGAIN	124
CONSISTENT AT BEING INCONSISTENT	127
NO REGRETS	130
HE’S STILL IN THE FIRE	133
I CAN REST WHEN THE WIND BLOWS	136
HE’S ON THE THRONE	139
WHEN LIFE IS AT ITS WORST, GOD IS AT HIS BEST	142
ONE MORE ROUND	145
NO THORNS IN THE CROWN	148
THE MIRACLE AT THE HOUSE OF MERCY	152
SERMONS THAT GET IN THE WAY OF THE MESSAGE	155
THANKSGIVING TRAVEL	158
WHEN IT HURTS TO HEAL	161
THINGS TOO BROKEN TO MEND	164
THE PRESENCE OF AN ABSENCE	167
TEMPTATION ISN’T SIN, BUT . . .	170
TURBULENCE, TRUST, AND A SAFE LANDING	174

## FOREWORD

*“This is really good stuff!”*

That’s the thought that kept coming to my mind as I read the manuscript of this new book by Tim Hill. One chapter after another, I had that same reaction—these short pieces are inspirational, entertaining, practical, and full of insight. But knowing I would write a foreword to the book, I searched for a more refined and elevated way to describe how enjoyable the writings were; but still, page after page, I found myself almost saying out loud, “Wow, this is really good stuff!”

It’s the kind of book that people like me—and I hope like you—will pick up, begin reading, and not want to stop until all the pages are turned. It has a down-to-earth, conversational tone that is remarkably free of pretense and the ministerial embellishment that burdens so many devotional books of its type. Tim Hill writes in a natural, fluid way that entertains while it informs and inspires us. *Life in the Exit Row* is impressive for all those reasons; it delivers insight in 52 wonderful small packages.

Tim Hill’s books sound much like Tim Hill. As logical as that sounds, it’s not always the case. Have you ever read a book by someone you knew, or have heard preach or teach, and you find yourself hearing a totally unfamiliar “voice” in the text? People who are best known for their public speaking, especially preachers and musicians, often lose their natural personalities when they begin to write. Their books can sometimes sound as if they come from the same bland process as all those other books on the shelf, with the style and voice of that particular individual minister somehow homogenized out of the final product.

This is not the case with Tim Hill. Somehow, even though he is a master of the microphone, whose natural habitat is the stage and the pulpit, he also has a natural talent for “putting pen to paper.” He is clearly as comfortable with the printed page as with the spoken word, and the



result is a readable, personal style that captures the qualities that have made him such a popular preacher and speaker all around the world.

I first met Tim Hill twenty-five years ago, back in the day when camp meetings featured one evening evangelist and one Bible teacher all week long. Tim was the “night man,” the evangelist, and I was the “morning man,” the teacher, at the Western North Carolina Camp Meeting in the early 1990s. So, I had a chance to be with him all week and hear him preach every night. He was a pastor at that time, not yet the experienced denominational leader he has now become; but already, he had the ability to command the crowd whenever he preached, and even at that young age, it was clear he had extraordinary gifts of communication, which would make him a natural leader in the church.

The early promise of that talented young minister has been fulfilled many times over. Along with the rest of the church, I have watched as Tim Hill has risen to a role of international leadership, and what has most impressed me is that he has never lost his “common touch” along the way. His effectiveness in ministry has always been grounded in his exceptional ability to communicate with people of all types, in ways that get our attention, stay in our memory, and motivate us to action. He is a person of remarkable insight into how life is seen through the lens of other people, so we all feel that he is talking to us, whenever he talks, and that he understands life from our perspective.

This book is, in that sense, classic Tim Hill. It’s easy to read and easy to understand, and it’s hard to put down, once you’ve started. He is one of those individuals who has been called a “road warrior”—a person whose work requires him to spend much of his time on the road, in airplanes, and hotel rooms. It is from this experience that he writes these delightful short reflections which will resonate with readers everywhere, whether they are “frequent flyers” or not.

Tim Hill has a special talent, a gift for talking about God in a way that unwraps and communicates profound truth in a package everyone can enjoy and understand. That gift shines through in this book; it’s a book you will want to read, then probably pass on to someone else. Rarely has anyone taught us so much “from the exit row.” It’s really good stuff!

Paul Conn, President  
Lee University

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Any published work is the culmination of numerous forces and influences brought together to produce the finished product.

I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Dee Raff, executive project coordinator; Dr. Bill George, Janet Price, Toika Sherlin, and Melinda Maness, who assisted in editing and proofing the manuscript; Dr. Tom George, who assisted in the final editing of the book, designed its pages, and coordinated its production;

Nellie Keasling, who copyedited the manuscript; and  
Lonzo T. Kirkland, who designed the cover.

And, I must not fail to acknowledge the inward influence of the Holy Spirit, who daily inspires me to live in the higher altitudes of faith and expectancy.



## INTRODUCTION

When one spends as much time on airplanes as I do, you learn to make good friends with time. You don't waste it, and you certainly don't abuse it. Inflight entertainment isn't very entertaining, and a good path of turbulence robs you of sleep; so you learn to befriend time, and allow time to befriend you. In other words, make the best of it.

It was great when "Wi-Fi" came to the "high skies." Of course the other side of that is, the office work follows me most everywhere I go. The better part is that at 33,000 feet I've crafted sermons, articles, and songs. I've been inspired with project ideas that helped to raise mission funds that turned into water wells, Bibles, and children's schools.

The book you hold is different from any other I've written. It is filled with devotional articles, a few sermons, and journaled thoughts of reflection, all written aboard a flight to distant places. Some chapters were written with a smile, while a few were comprised while fighting back tears. Regardless of style, and regardless of the demeanor and mood of my personal feelings as I wrote, I trust that you discover your own inspiration while I found myself at 35,000 feet closer to heaven. I like to think of it as hope from higher altitudes.

Enjoy!



# LIFE IN THE EXIT ROW

*Every test that you have experienced is the kind that normally comes to people. But God keeps his promise, and he will not allow you to be tested beyond your power to remain firm; at the time you are put to the test, he will give you the strength to endure it, and so provide you with a way out (1 Corinthians 10:13 GNT).*

Once again, I find myself in Row 8 on a CRJ 200 Jet from Chattanooga to Atlanta. It's my favorite seat on this particular plane, and the one I always request. It's next to the aisle on the left and has a few more inches of available leg room, more than any other row on here. I'm near one of three doors on this plane that is marked in big, red, capitalized letters that spell EXIT. My travel agent always knows to request it.

Don't misunderstand. It's certainly nothing to be compared to a first-class cabin seat that reclines to an almost horizontal position. However, this model doesn't have a first-class cabin, so the exit row assignment is a real prize among the passengers who are sardined in their seats, sitting shoulder-to-shoulder throughout the plane. And tonight I have it.

I also have the responsibility that comes with it. Sitting here reminds me that convenience comes with commitment. The flight attendant just came by and rehearsed the words printed on the safety card in the seat pocket in front of me, and wants to know if I am able and willing to assist others to escape through the exit door in the unlikely event of an emergency.

There are several things about that entire line of questioning that give me pause for consideration.





First question: Am I aware that I am in the exit row?

Next question: Am I able to help others escape?

Last question: Am I willing to help others escape?

How I answer those questions qualifies or disqualifies me to sit in the exit row.

Those questions not only apply to my seating assignment on a plane, but they apply as well to my ministry and my role as a husband, dad, and neighbor.

It occurs to me that I've spent my entire adult life in the exit row helping people escape or remedy various problems and emergencies.

I'm not sure how able I am. Someone else will have to judge that.

But am I willing? Most definitely.

How can I not be?

When I consider my own rescue from several unsuccessful takeoffs and even a few crash landings, I simply have to be willing to help others. If I know where the road ends or where the bridge is out, and I don't help somebody avoid it, then I've forsaken all that is humanly right and biblically expected.

Paul captured this same thought perfectly when in Scripture he wrote, "If a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:1-2).

The exit row takes on many forms and can be found in various places other than airplanes. I occupied the exit row while standing in several hospital hallways over the years trying to help families make sense of a life ending too soon. I've worked the exit row every time one of my girls suffered from a broken heart on the way to finding Mr. Right. I also manned the door for my wife when my girls finally found him.

Every time I've sung, "In the Midst of It All," somebody was crawling past me to escape through a door of hope those lyrics helped to open. Same thing happens when I sing "He's Still in the Fire," but the tempo just made them move faster.



I'm still traveling today, because somebody in my life was willing to occupy the exit row. I promise you, they didn't do it for the extra leg room, but they did it to lend a helping hand.

So remember, pastor, the next time you step into the pulpit, you're seated in the exit row—so preach like it.

Gospel singer, while bookings are important to a career, your performance in the exit row means life or death to someone listening to your song.

Dad and Mom, don't discount that meal at the dinner table and the chit-chat that goes along with it. Don't fret over giving up an hour at the office to attend Anna's recital or Blake's ballgame. You're simply doing your job in the exit row.

So, climb aboard, settle in, and buckle up. But this time, be sure to listen for the captain's announcements. He knows the flight plan, so what He says is important.

Pay attention to the flight attendant's directions. You'll have to really tune in, because He usually speaks in a "still, small voice."

Finally, read the safety instructions in the seat pocket in front of you. It's 66 books long and has the words "Holy Bible" on the front cover. You can't miss it. Then, sit back and enjoy the flight.

Never forget, the exit row comes with responsibility, and someone depends on your being willing and able to do your part.

You never know whom you may assist out that door some day. So, I hope you like the extra leg room, but be ready; because I may be sitting near you, and with the first bump, I may be heading your way. ➔

## WEEKLY FLIGHT PATTERN

(DAILY BIBLE READING)

<input type="checkbox"/> Day 1	Genesis	1–3
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 2	Genesis	4–6
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 3	Genesis	7–9
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 4	Genesis	10–12
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 5	Genesis	13–15
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 6	Genesis	16–18
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 7	Genesis	19–21



# FLIGHT LOG

## (TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL)

[illegible]

# THE FAITH OF A FREQUENT FLYER

*If I were to ascend to heaven, you would be there. If I were to fly away on the wings of the dawn, and settle down on the other side of the sea, even there your hand would guide me, your right hand would grab hold of me*  
(Psalm 139:8-9 NET).

I'm stunned. I've never had a flight attendant congratulate me before. In mid-flight somewhere over the Atlantic Ocean, I made it. "Diamond Medallion" status. Not in a lifetime. Not in a decade. Nope. Not me. I did it in less than a year. (This is where you say, "Congratulations.")

Well, maybe or maybe not. It just basically means I've spent too many days and nights away from home. On the positive side, I've learned some great life lessons, met some amazing people, and had some incredible experiences.

Here are a few of the lessons:

**Travel light.** I quit checking bags long ago. Besides, the fees are ridiculous, and you never have to worry about your bag arriving in Los Angeles with you waiting at the luggage carousel at Dallas/Fort Worth. I've learned that most of the things I used to carry just added to the weight of the load and served no great purpose on the journey. I often grin when I see those in front of me trying to navigate through the check-in process with four bags, two carry-ons, and three rooms of furniture (not really). Traveling light means freedom and less stress. I encourage you to abide by Hebrews 12:1: "... we must get rid of every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and run with endurance the race set out for us" (NET).



***Be flexible.*** There are occasions when flights don't leave on time, trains close the doors just as you're stepping on, and the taxi driver doesn't understand English. Becoming uptight on the wrong subway doesn't help; doesn't on the right one either, for that matter. Point is, just take it easy. You'll get a chance to correct your course soon enough, if you're flexible. I like what Paul said in Phillipians 4:11b: "I have learned to be content in any circumstance" (NET).

***Update your passport.*** When you travel as I do, you run out of passport pages quickly. When that happens, you simply have to have more pages added or even get a new one. Whatever you do, don't let it expire. You aren't going anywhere outside the country without it. You may have bought a first-class ticket, new luggage, and downloaded plenty of new "apps" on your phone to keep you occupied while in route. Doesn't matter. It starts and stops with the passport.

Custom agents want to see it on departure, as well as arrival. Your full name must be inscribed in this accepted and updated government-honored document, or you just won't get in. (Get the point?) Jesus said, "... rejoice because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20).

***Don't mistake the airport for home.*** Remember, it's a journey. It's temporary and comes to an end. No matter how much time you spend there and how many know you by name, it's all about transition. Enjoy the trip, but keep your heart at home. I know every shortcut through most major airports. I can quote you the locations of every Delta Crown Room in every airport from Atlanta to Los Angeles. I know how to pick what will be the shortest line in security. (It's not rocket science.) I'm more familiar with the process than I'd really like to be.

Point is, I know my way around. I'm a member of most every hotel and airline loyalty club, but my favorite destination is home. Who needs more souvenirs? My heart is at home. No sight I have seen compares to the house on top of Stonewood Mountain.

These lessons help me navigate through life even more than through airports. I don't mean to imply that I have it all down and there are no bumps in the road or turbulence in the skies. Even at this moment as I am writing, I'm being knocked all over the sky somewhere near



You will, too. It will smooth out just in time, the plane will unload, and your feet will walk steadily upon solid ground once again.

So, just in case I'm not nearby when you reach the next level of your "journey" experience, I'll say it now—Congratulations!

I hope you are enjoying the trip. ✈

## WEEKLY FLIGHT PATTERN

(DAILY BIBLE READING)

<input type="checkbox"/> Day 8	Genesis	22–24
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 9	Genesis	25–27
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 10	Genesis	28–30
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 11	Genesis	31–33
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 12	Genesis	34–36
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 13	Genesis	37–39
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 14	Genesis	40–42

# FLIGHT LOG

(TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL)

[illegible]

# TAKE YOUR VITAMINS!

*A joyful heart is good medicine (Proverbs 17:22 NASB).*

The following was my travel itinerary recently.

Hold on.

**Days 1-2:** Fly to Newark, New Jersey. Preach four services.

**Day 3:** Leave Newark at 11:30 p.m. Sunday and fly to Chicago. Land at 1:00 a.m. Central Time.

**Day 4:** Rent a car and drive 330 miles in five and one-half hours to Marion, Illinois. Arrive at 6:15 a.m. and sleep one and one-half hours.

**Day 4:** Appear on Tri-State Christian Television (TCT) for four hours of preaching and raising funds for Christian television.

**Days 4-5:** Get in the rental car that came out of a matchbox, and drive 330 miles to Cincinnati to speak at the funeral of a dear friend.

**Day 5.** Check into a hotel to rest, only to discover snow is coming and will likely cancel a “must-go” flight to Trinidad the next day.

**Day 5:** Decide to drive 350 miles south and arrive home at 1:00 a.m.

**Day 6:** Awake to find the airline didn’t follow through with flight changes made the night before. With two cell phones working at once, new arrangements are made to fly to Trinidad with an overnight stay at Hotel “Grunge” in Miami.

**Days 6-7:** Arrive in Trinidad to preach two nights.



**Day 8:** Arise at 3:30 a.m. Saturday to fly from Trinidad to Knoxville Youth Winterfest to challenge teenagers with needs in Africa.

All the vitamins in the world won't get you through a week like this one. However, a good dose of Vitamin AGv3 proved helpful.

You know what that is, don't you? AGv3 stands for "Amazing Grace," verse 3. That's the verse that says,

"Through many dangers, toils and snares,  
I have already come;  
'Tis grace that brought me safe thus far,  
And grace will lead me home."

Most of us have heard about the testimony of John Newton, the writer of "Amazing Grace." He lived a profligate life. Although his mother had taught him about God, she died when he was a child, and his faith never developed. He took a ship with his father, a sea captain, and ultimately assumed command of his own vessel, plying the slave trade.

On one significant voyage—he records the date, May 10, 1748—his ship was overtaken by such a violent, terrific storm that he despaired for his life. In his panic, he cried out, "Lord, have mercy upon us." Later, in his cabin, he reflected upon his desperate prayer, and determined that God had used the storm to get his attention. For the rest of his life, he celebrated May 10 as his spiritual birthdate.

Newton later studied for the ministry and became a pastor, becoming friends with the great evangelist George Whitefield and with John Wesley. In his pastorate, he influenced William Wilberforce, who as prime minister of Great Britain did much to abolish slavery.

"Grace will lead me home" is the testimony of all of us who travel miles and weather storms.

As a songwriter, I hate it when a verse is intentionally left out of a song. I've always said, I'd hate to be the third verse of a four-verse song, because I'd be left out most of the time. Often we miss the "life application" verse when we start randomly deleting lyrics from the old hymns of the church.





It beats any "One-a-Day" I ever had!

(DAILY BIBLE READING)

<input type="checkbox"/> Day 15	Genesis	43-45
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 16	Genesis	46-48
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 17	Genesis	49-50
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 18	Exodus	1-3
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 19	Exodus	4-6
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 20	Exodus	7-9
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 21	Exodus	10-12

## (TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL)

[illegible]

# REFILL THE JAR FOR THE NEXT WEARY TRAVELER

*When they walk through the Valley of Weeping, it will become a place of refreshing springs. The autumn rains will clothe it with blessings*  
(Psalm 84:6 NLT).

**E**ver heard the story of Desert Pete? He was legendary among those in the Old West. The story goes like this: Many years ago, a weary traveler hiked for miles across the sands of a desert with the hot sun beating down on his back. His water supply was gone, and he knew that if he didn't find water soon to quench his thirst, he would surely die.

In the distance, he saw a small deserted shelter. This brought hope that he'd find the water he so desperately needed. Summoning his remaining strength, he made his way to the shelter. When he finally arrived, he found no one, but he did find an old water pump. At once he grabbed the handle and began to frantically pump. But, pump as he might, he was not able to pump even a drop of water.

Then, he noticed a tin baking powder can tied to the pump. Inside the can was a note. He removed the note and began to read ...

Dear Stranger,

This pump is all right as of June 1932. I put a new sucker washer in it, and it should last for quite a few years. But the washer dries out and the pump has to be primed. Under the white rock, I buried



a jar of water out of the sun and corked up. There's just enough water in the jar to prime the pump. But, if you take a drink first, there won't be enough. You need to pour about one-fourth of the jar into the pump and let her sit a minute to soak the leather washer. Then, pour the rest in medium fast and pump like crazy. You will get water. Have faith. I have never known this pump to run dry.

When you get all watered up, fill the jar back up, cork it, bury it, and leave everything just the way you found it for the next stranger who passes this way.

PETE

What would you do?

If thirst brought you to desperation, the temptation would almost be overwhelming to drink the contents of the jar and let the next man “fend” for himself. Where would you be, though, if the one before you had done that?

What if in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus had not said “nevertheless” after He prayed, “Let this cup pass from me”?

We each have a responsibility to assist the next traveler, but it requires blind faith to take the very thing that you know could quench your own thirst and pour it out. Yet, that is what we singers and preachers do every time we get up to minister.

That's what a missionary does when it would be much easier to stay home and take care of his own needs rather than go to a foreign country.

That's what a father does every time he gives up the recliner to play “catch” with his boy in the backyard.

We have to “prime the pump” so the well can keep producing. The water is always there, but God has entrusted you and me with its delivery. ➔



# GOING TOO FAR ON TOO LITTLE

*He makes me to lie down in green pastures . . . He restores my soul  
(Psalm 23:2-3).*

**H**ave you ever tried to go too far on too little? We all have. I've run out of gas too many times, not because I didn't have any money in my pocket to buy some, nor was it the lack of gas stations along the road. It was always something within me that thought I could make it to the next stop, the next town, the next . . . whatever.

Mark it off as a "man thing." I put it right up there with not asking for directions.

The gauge says empty, but my stubbornness is full. The red light is on, but so is my determination to make it just one more mile. Yes, there have been times when I caught a break and coasted downhill right into a neighborhood service station. There have also been times when the car sputtered, the systems failed, and I was stranded by the side of the road, totally embarrassed. Again, I tried to go too far on too little.

Too many attempt that in life. We bypass the refueling opportunities, thinking the last stop was good enough for our journey. Problem is, a lot can happen between stops.

To avoid being stranded, I've learned that I have to heed the warnings signs along the way.



Here are a few:

**Know your limits.** The car manufacturer has estimated the distance the automobile will go on a full tank of gas. You must know your limits, as well. At some point, you have to “fill up.”

**Read the gauges.** That red light means something and you better not ignore it. How about your signals? How’s your temper been lately? Have you become easily agitated? You may have noticed things that don’t normally get under your skin have recently become irritating to you. That’s a sign you’re trying to go too far on too little.

**Keep up with your own maintenance.** Don’t wait until you are forced to do it. Maintain a regular schedule of worship and prayer. Read God’s Word and stay in good spiritual, as well as, physical condition. You’ll go farther and last longer.

There are more miles to make, and you will travel every one of them after you’ve been refreshed in the Lord.

The time taken to minister to yourself will be made up in the progress you enjoy along the journey.

And remember, the trip is worth your time. ➔

## WEEKLY FLIGHT PATTERN

(DAILY BIBLE READING)

<input type="checkbox"/> Day 29	Exodus	34–36
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 30	Exodus	37–40
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 31	Leviticus	1–3
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 32	Leviticus	4–6
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 33	Leviticus	7–9
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 34	Leviticus	10–12
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 35	Leviticus	13–15



## FLIGHT LOG

(TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL)

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# GONE WITH THE WIND

*There came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind (Acts 2:2).*

What a description of a most powerful occurrence. The Church was born in a day when the Holy Spirit came, empowering Christ's followers to become witnesses throughout the world. Luke, the writer of the Book of Acts, could find no greater description than to liken the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to a strong, continuing wind with gusts of incredible, spiritual force.

The wind brought the affirmation of God's presence, the anointing of God's power, and the appointment of God's purpose. The wind brought life with love, wonder with wisdom, signs with significance, and renewal with reason.

That's only some of what it brought. Have you ever considered what went away as the wind was blowing in the Upper Room?

Gathered in the room that day were 120 people who fully and completely loved their Lord. Yet, they were surrounded by the baggage and leftovers of confused, competitive, and contradictory living. The room was full of "stuff" that had to be dealt with, removed, and expunged from their lives, if the message and purpose of Jesus was to have half a chance of getting off the ground.





Here are just a few things the wind blew away that day.

**Division**—Among the Lord's own disciples, there was a constant pulling in different and competing directions. On one occasion, the seating arrangements became an issue as James and John vied for proximity near Jesus. At one point, their mother had something to say about it.

**Cowardice**—Following the Lord's crucifixion, at least some of the disciples "ran for cover" and sought hiding in inconspicuous places. Can't blame them really. The logical mind would urge anyone to take flight under threatening circumstances. How could such fear be overcome by the faith and boldness necessary to take the stand they would eventually be called upon to take for the gospel?

**Denial**—Who wants that on their resume? No one I know. Yet, Peter had to own it. Against his strongest hopes not to, he had denied knowing Jesus—not once, but three times. How can you be a leader with that blemish marking your record? It weighed heavily upon Peter every time he went to speak. Who would listen to him now?

**Doubt**—Ask Thomas about doubt. He's so identified with doubt, his name has become synonymous with it. Thomas followed Jesus, but became so impaired by his circumstances that it became easier to give in to doubt than to resist it.

**Aimlessness**—After the Crucifixion and just prior to the Resurrection, some of the disciples scurried around to reclaim past occupations in an effort to hold to some significant place in life.

Peter and others attempted to return to fishing, only to discover that a higher calling was on them now, and life would never be the same. What could they do?

**Failure**—Add it all up, and the dismal outcome was failure among each of them. No one in the Upper Room had bragging rights. Nobody could claim honorary status, especially not "sainthood." Their lives were spoiled by failure:



- They failed at faith.
- They failed at discipleship.
- They failed at prayer.
- They failed at loyalty.

Like a pile of dry leaves on an autumn day, all their shortcomings and weaknesses were strewn about and obliterated by the powerful gust and heavy breezes of the Holy Spirit.

Once the Spirit came, the spoiler left.

Peter preached with boldness.

Thomas rebounded with faith.

James and John walked in unity.

The rest embarked upon their known world, and began to fulfill the commands of Jesus in launching the Great Commission.

What a difference the wind made.

What's in your life right now that could be transformed by the breezes of the Spirit?

The baggage you carry today could easily be gone with the wind tomorrow. ➔

## WEEKLY FLIGHT PATTERN

(DAILY BIBLE READING)

<input type="checkbox"/> Day 36	Leviticus	16–18
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 37	Leviticus	19–21
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 38	Leviticus	22–24
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 39	Leviticus	25–27
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 40	Numbers	1–3
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 41	Numbers	4–6
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 42	Numbers	7–9



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# YET WILL I TRUST THE LORD!

*Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding (Proverbs 3:5 KJV).*

**T**he title of this devotional is the same as one of the first songs I had published. I don't know of anyone who ever recorded it. Can't blame them. It's not well-crafted, but it does have a lot of spirit. I do appreciate my denomination including it in the annual songbook for the "Y'all come on up" choirs we used to have. (Everyone was invited to come forward and form a choir—sometimes called a "whosoever-will choir.")

I wrote it when I was 18. What do most kids even know about faith at that age? I should probably do a rewrite on it now that I'm past 50. I think it would "sing" differently today.

Since I was 18, I've met Pastor Solomon. I met him at his wife's funeral, and I couldn't help but notice 10 graves lined beside hers. All 10 of them had been decorated that day with fresh flowers. I discovered that the Solomons had parented 11 children, and all but one had died in an accidental or tragic way. In his late 70s, this elderly pastor would now say farewell to his wife of more than 50 years.

Assisted by his only remaining daughter, he stepped out of the limousine provided by the funeral home. After gaining his posture, he surveyed the graves for what seemed like an hour. Then I heard it. At first, he spoke in a quite tone, but then he repeated it with volume. "Though [God] slay me, yet will I trust



Him” (Job 13:15). After that, he continued as pastor of a church until just prior to his own homegoing. How I wish I had known him before attempting to write about trust.

My “trust” song would have been better, if I had already been acquainted with David and Betty. I was their pastor when David lost his life. A man who took pride in always providing for his wife and aging parents was brought to the depths of despair. I never knew how depression could cripple a man until I watched his scenario unfold—lost job; lost hope; lost life. The funeral was over, and family and friends had returned to home and routine. Betty returned to her minimum-wage job at the fabric store. Only a few weeks had passed when she stopped me as I entered the sanctuary one Sunday. Placing an envelope in my hand she said: “Put this in the plate today, Pastor.”

“What is it, Betty?” I asked. Her response stunned me. I asked again.

Her answer was the same: “It is my praise offering!”

I couldn’t believe it. She had been through the depths and back in the previous 30 days and came out with a “praise offering” as a souvenir. Astonished, I walked into the sanctuary and looked into the faces of some whom I knew would quit over a flat tire. I lifted her praise offering and commenced to use her story to build faith in others.

Oh, yes, I really need to rewrite that song. I’ve helped raise three girls since then. I’ve stayed in the homes of faithful missionaries, stood by hundreds of hospital beds, and spoken at a lot of funerals. Yep. It would be a much better song now. I’ve had my own chronic illness to endure since then. Oh, don’t worry. It’s not threatening, just aggravating. Mostly a vision and fatigue issue, but it has taught me that nobody is immune to trouble and sickness, regardless of what others may say. Somewhere on this journey, trust kicked in, and I’ve learned that God does not stop being who He is when I am weak and seeing double; or when an old preacher counts the graves of his family, and when husbands jump off the edge of depression. Grace is still sufficient, mercy is endless, and hope endures.

My song? Well, my intention was good and my theology was right; it just lacked one key ingredient—experience. ➔



# THE “GREAT GO-MISSION”

*And Jesus came and spake unto them saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Matthew 28:18-19 KJV).*

**I**t was cute the first time I heard somebody say it years ago: “My get-up-and-go has got up and went.” It’s not cute anymore. There’s actually more reality about that statement than there used to be. The older I get, the more I realize that energy is a precious jewel. Motivation is never a problem, but the zeal to follow through needs a little help at times.

I like to think I can still run races, play football, and hike up a mountain; I’m just not so sure that at 56 I still want to.

That’s just life, but let me get serious for a moment.

Where has the “go” gone as it relates to our personal involvement in soulwinning and telling others about Jesus?

I’m sure you know what the Great Commission is, don’t you?

You can read it in Matthew 28:19-20 where Jesus himself said: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (KJV).

Jesus meant what He said, and He said what He meant. Everything we do must be tied to fulfilling His desire for us to spread the gospel throughout the world.



When I pastored a church, everything we did had to pass the Great Commission test:

Sunday services

Revivals

Concerts

Baptisms

Vacation Bible Schools

Yes! Amen, Preacher!

Let me continue ...

Choir rehearsals

Ladies meetings

Men's fellowship suppers

Youth afterglows

Ballgames

Business meetings

Budget preparations

Well, I lost a few with the last list I'm sure, but it's all about the Great Commission. Everything the church does has to travel down that road because, after all, the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives, as well as our churches, is not for our "enjoyment," but for our "employment."

Just recently, I heard someone say this: "Until the Great Commission becomes the "Great Go-Mission," then we have committed the "Great Omission."

Now that rings a bell in my heart.

Put your salvation experience in motion today, and whether you sing it, say it, or if by your life's example, you model it, spread the gospel of Jesus.

After all, it's not an accident that the first two letters of the word "gospel" are "GO." ➔





(DAILY BIBLE READING)

☐ Day 57	Deuteronomy	16–18
☐ Day 58	Deuteronomy	19–21
☐ Day 59	Deuteronomy	22–24
☐ Day 60	Deuteronomy	25–27
☐ Day 61	Deuteronomy	28–30
☐ Day 62	Deuteronomy	31–34
☐ Day 63	Joshua	1–3

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# IT'S CALLED A “MULLIGAN”

*For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief (Proverbs 24:16 KJV).*

There was a time when I went golfing two times each week. I would vent my frustrations on a bucket of golf balls at the driving range before playing the game. Depending on what circumstance or name my imagination put on the ball, I could often hit it at least 200 yards. (I'm smiling as I write this.)

I held my best staff meetings on the putting green and even preached a sermon once called “God and Golf.” (I know I'm disappointing a whole lot of people right now. Sorry.)

I learned early about the “mulligan.” It's a golfer's salvation.

Sometimes you're allowed one or two per game.

I'm not sure how the name for it derived, but here's how it works:

- You hit the ball. It goes left or right, in the water, or in the sand. Bottom line, you didn't like it.
- You reach into your pocket and drop another ball to the ground and swing again as if you'd never hit the bad one at all.

Isn't that great?

I always claimed “pocket limit.” As many golf balls as I could put in my pockets is how many “mulligans” I had access to, whether I used them or not.



Professional golfers obviously know that real golf isn't played that way.

Life isn't either. You get only one shot and then comes eternity.

No "do overs."

No rewinds.

No "mulligans."

You have to play the ball where it lies. Seldom do any of us hit straight shots down the fairway. It slices right or hooks left. Often we find ourselves in the sand traps or lost in the woods. Suddenly, the game isn't fun anymore. It becomes more of a chore than a joy.

When that happens, God doesn't leave us in our frustrations. He doesn't give up on us, but He helps us with something so much better than a "mulligan."

It's something called "grace."

Grace approaches the ball right where it lies, takes careful aim and with perfect form, swings and follows through with mercy. Before you know it, you're out of the woods and back on the fairway.

An old song amplifies what, to some, is a haunting truth ...

"Only one life, so soon it will pass,

and only what's done for Christ will last."

No, there are no mulligans to life, but I promise you there are many moments of grace in life to help you have a winning game. ➔

## WEEKLY FLIGHT PATTERN

(DAILY BIBLE READING)

<input type="checkbox"/> Day 64	Joshua	4-6
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 65	Joshua	7-9
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 66	Joshua	10-12
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 67	Joshua	13-15
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 68	Joshua	16-18
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 69	Joshua	19-21
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 70	Joshua	22-24

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# I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO LOOKING BACK

*Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising its shame*  
(Hebrews 12:2).

**H**ow many times have you said, “I can’t wait to get this over!”? Only once a day? Well, you’re probably doing better than most. I know for myself, there are a great many things that I’m really happy to have behind me, and some that I would like to help find their place in history as soon as possible. On the other hand, I must not hurry through life’s happenings so fast that I miss the significance of the journey and the challenges along the way.

Even Jesus wanted to put His suffering behind Him, when He prayed, “Let this cup pass from Me” (Matthew 26:39). Yet, the very next words He spoke were, “Father . . . not My will, but Yours be done” (Luke 22:42). Jesus is always our ultimate example for handling life. Even when it came to bearing the cross, Paul said that Jesus endured it, even while despising its shame, because of the joy that awaited Him at the Resurrection (see Hebrews 12:2).

We all have things we’re anxious to place in the category of the historic, and occasionally, it doesn’t hurt to remind yourself of where you have been. However, you must not spend too much time doing that. There is a reason the rearview mirror in your car is as small as it is. The focus of a good driver is always on what lies ahead, not on



what lies behind. Maybe you are like a crawfish, always backing into your future with a constant gaze upon where you have been, rather than where you're going.

However, one thing we glean from looking back is the constant awareness of God's great grace and how we would have never made it through life without it. Songwriter Helen Baylor paraphrased the psalmist David when she penned the words, "If it had not been for the Lord on my side, where would I be?"

Think about that phrase a minute. "If it had not been . . ." That's almost too scary to consider. Take God's grace out of life's equation for a second and look at how different things could have been. What would your daily life look like without the God factor? What ingredient would you be missing right now had He not entered into the picture? How about peace? Maybe joy or a restful night's sleep?

What would life be like without His promises?

My sleep is more restful, because of the promise found in Psalm 91:11, "He shall give His angels charge over you."

My business affairs are more secure, because of the promise found in Deuteronomy 12:7, "I will cause whatever you touch to prosper" (see NIV and also Joshua 1:7).

What would life be without His peace?

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee" (Isaiah 26:3 KJV).

What would life be without His power?

"God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love and a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7).

What would life be without His presence?

"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20 KJV).

What a blessing it's been to never have lived one day without being blessed. Some day soon, while standing in His presence and looking my life over, I will be so glad He looked over my life. ➔



(DAILY BIBLE READING)

- |                                 |        |       |
|---------------------------------|--------|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 71 | Judges | 1–3   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 72 | Judges | 4–6   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 73 | Judges | 7–9   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 74 | Judges | 10–12 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 75 | Judges | 13–15 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 76 | Judges | 16–18 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 77 | Judges | 19–21 |

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# WORN OUT, BUT STILL GOING

*And Gideon came to the Jordan and passed over, he and the three hundred men who were with him, faint, yet pursuing (Judges 8:4 RSV).*

What a thrilling sight it must have been to behold 32,000 men standing ready to support you in the fight against your enemy. Too soon, however, that number dwindled to 10,000 and then to only 300, all because of God's process of elimination.

But, with that 300 and a promise from God, the enemy was pursued. Gideon and this small army would break lanterns, blow trumpets, and bellow out their battle cry, putting the Midianite army on the run. Gideon's army chased the enemy until ultimate victory was achieved.

Victory didn't come without a great price. An interesting phrase in this text gives a clue about their personal struggles, as well as their stubborn determination: They were "faint, yet pursuing."

They had grown weary in well-doing. Don't we all?

Burnout and fatigue in ministry are common today. The statistics of those leaving the ministry are staggering. There is a battle for the mind that leads to the depletion of one's spirit and even to the weakness of one's body. Ultimately, the church and the kingdom of heaven suffer from the loss of good soldiers.





Are you worn out? Have you thought about giving up the fight? If so, here are some things to remember that will help you keep going for the Lord.

***Don't lose your head.*** The Bible declares in Isaiah 26:3: "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You."

Then in Philippians 2:5, Paul wrote: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

A confused and fatigued mind makes bad decisions.

Here's what you must do:

- Rest in His provision.
- Renew yourself in His peace.
- Rejoice in His presence.

***Don't lose your heart.*** Jesus said in John 14:1: "Let not your heart be troubled."

David said: "When my heart is overwhelmed; lead me to the rock that is higher than I" (Psalm 61:2).

The greatest advice I've ever found is in Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not to your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."

Too many singers and ministers of the gospel have, at times, lost their heart for the ministry, the multitudes, and most tragically of all, the Master.

***Don't lose your hope.*** I like what David wrote in Psalm 146:5: "Happy is he ... whose hope is in the Lord his God."

Then he urges us in Psalm 42:5: "Hope in God."

A fascinating story is found in Acts 27. It's the account of Paul on a doomed ship. It holds many thought-provoking ideas while describing the dilemma of slaves and sailors trying to survive the terrible storm. One phrase stands out above them all. "All hope [was lost] that we would be saved" (v. 20). Hope is the last thing to die in a man, but it can die. Yet, Paul never lost his hope. He was in the



minority, but his hope was contagious and brought victory to the other men on the ship.

God wants to use you to bring hope to others. Here's how:

- Often, you will need to encourage yourself in the Lord.
- Daily, you should anticipate His favor.
- Always, you must trust His promises.

Continue on and fight the good fight of faith, because very soon, it will be worth it all. ➔

## WEEKLY FLIGHT PATTERN

(DAILY BIBLE READING)

<input type="checkbox"/> Day 78	Ruth	1-4
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 79	1 Samuel	1-3
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 80	1 Samuel	4-6
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 81	1 Samuel	7-9
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 82	1 Samuel	10-12
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 83	1 Samuel	13-15
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 84	1 Samuel	16-18

## FLIGHT LOG

(TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL)

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# I'M NOT IN A VALLEY, JUST CHANGING MOUNTAINS

*Yea, though I walk through the valley . . . I will fear no evil (Psalm 23:4)*

Call it positive thinking, denying reality, or living in a dream world, I choose to call it “adjusted perception.” After all, as someone said, “It’s all in how you see it, right?” Not really. How I see it helps or hurts, of course. But, what really matters is “how God sees it.”

Valley experiences are really transitional opportunities to grow and allow my faith to develop. Mountain peaks of success are always preferable to the low places of struggle and even discouragement. But, as preferable as it may be, nobody has a permanent address there.

The high and exhilarating points are strategically placed in our lives to keep us motivated and looking ahead. The “valley” experiences can be just as strategic, and even necessary. They are roadways of learning and balance that help us focus on the joys and security of having a right relationship with Jesus.

Years ago, I heard someone say that a valley is merely a passageway between two mountains. That’s a good way to view it. If that’s true, then it’s good to remember a few things:

**1. Your valley experience is temporary.** David acknowledged that even the valley of the shadow of death was temporary when he said, “Yea, though I walk *through* the valley . . . I will fear no evil” (Psalm 23:4).



**2. As you go through the valley, allow the valley to get through you.** Come out of it holding only to the lessons and values learned and achieved. Leave behind any accumulated bitterness and hurt.

**3. Enjoy the unique scenery.** There will be flowers of patience and streams of grace that you won't find anywhere else. Only a valley climate will produce certain kinds of growth you won't even find on a mountain.

**4. Leave behind a well for someone else to drink from.** I treasure the refreshment I've received from others who have traveled through the difficult places before me. I've gleaned knowledge from their books, wept while listening to their songs, and learned from their mistakes. I'm thankful they were willing to help me avoid my own self-inflicted wounds, because they let me see theirs. I hope to do the same for others.

**5. Prepare and rest your spirit for another climb upward.** David said, "He makes me to lie down in green pastures" (Psalm 23:2). Sometimes, God has to do that, you know. We typically won't do it for ourselves. There's nothing wrong or sinful about resting. God himself allowed for a day of rest for us and took advantage of it Himself. This competitive and driven society of ours leaves little room for just sitting still in quietness, but it is necessary for the coming journey to the peaks.

**6. Learn the language.** The valley has a vocabulary all its own, and the sooner you learn it, you will communicate better and live with less stress. Words like wait, trust, endure, persevere, praise, and patience are like "passports" to the far-flung borders of faith and promise.

**7. Follow the leader.** You are not by yourself. You have always had a "valley companion," and He is the best navigator you'll ever know. He knows where the "greenest" green pastures are, and you can be assured that He knows the path to the still waters. Trust Him and stay in step with Him.

Jesus is as ready for you to get up the mountain as you are, but He will use the valley as the best training ground you've ever had, and the day you stand on the top of Mount Victory, your new "point of view" will put the valley in the right perspective. ➔



(DAILY BIBLE READING)

<input type="checkbox"/> Day 85	1 Samuel	18–21
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 86	1 Samuel	22–24
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 87	1 Samuel	25–27
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 88	1 Samuel	28–31
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 89	2 Samuel	1–3
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 90	2 Samuel	4–6
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 91	2 Samuel	7–9

## (TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL)

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# I ALREADY LIKE IT

*And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (Revelation 21:1-2 KJV).*

Long before I ever visited Hawaii the first time, I just knew I would like it. I had seen pictures of the beautiful sun-kissed beaches, the lush rain forests, the flowers, the palm trees and, of course, the manicured golf courses. I had read about the mild climate, as well as the breezes coming off the Pacific Ocean's blue waters. I loved the place, and I had never seen it. My admiration for what I had not seen was surpassed only by the thrill I experienced when I finally touched the shores of this tropical paradise for myself.

Mere reputation is reason enough to want to go to some places. It's even more that way when I think about heaven. I've never been, of course, but those who have seen it have told me enough that I just know it's my kind of place.

Oh, I've never actually met anybody who's been there and come back with any pictures or brochures, but I did read what the apostle Paul said. Then, there was John who wrote the Book of Revelation. Both of these fellows got to see enough to give us a firsthand view. Listen to what Paul said about his trip:

Whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter (2 Corinthians 12:2-4).



Paul was overwhelmed with all he saw and felt; however, he couldn't safely articulate his complete experience. Sometimes what a man doesn't say speaks louder than what he does. I know this much: Because Paul had already seen heaven, he had absolutely no hesitancy about going when his time came.

John, however, on the Isle of Patmos, held nothing back of his description of heaven in Revelation 21. He called it the Holy City and described streets made of gold and walls of jasper. He wrote about multijeweled foundations that heaven is built upon. He wrote about the brilliant and eternal day in heaven and yet there is no sun or moon. So, where does this great light come from? Where else? It's Jesus himself who lights the place. After all, He said, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). He most certainly can light up heaven, as well.

I can get excited about a place like that.

But, here's the best part. Nobody dies, gets sick, or even has any pain. No place I've ever been can make that claim. No, that's not really the best part. This is: God himself shall wipe away all tears, and Jesus will be in our midst forever.

One day Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you, and I'll come again to take you there" (see John 14:2-3). Jesus prepared the place for you. Now the question is, are you prepared for the place?

Will you like it?

Well, if you like a place where hospitals and funeral homes aren't needed, you will.

If you like a place where children don't cry for a lack of food, you will.

If you like a place where you never have to say goodbye, you will.

If you like a place where ... well, you get the picture.

You know, it's a little funny. Why is it I'm homesick for somewhere I've never been? ➔



(DAILY BIBLE READING)

<input type="checkbox"/> Day 92	2 Samuel	10-12
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 93	2 Samuel	13-15
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 94	2 Samuel	16-18
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 95	2 Samuel	19-21
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 96	2 Samuel	22-24
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 97	1 Kings	1-3
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 98	1 Kings	4-6

## (TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL)

[illegible]



# A PLACE CALLED YONDER

*The lad and I will go yonder and worship (Genesis 22:5).*

**A**braham's reaction to God's command to sacrifice Isaac upon the altar was, "Yes." A firm yes? I don't know; you'll have to ask Abraham some day. His actions indicate obedience, but human nature dictates that struggle, questions, and maybe even doubt could have played "tug-o-war" with Abraham's faith. It usually does with mine when I attempt to "lay it all on the altar," as they say.

Whichever way you calculate the equation, the sum total equals unreserved surrender.

The first time the word *worship* is used in scripture is in this story. Trust in worship is the real theme of this entire narration.

Does our worship carry the value of total trust and abandonment to God's provision?

Abraham's experience teaches us three very strong lessons about worship.

**1. *Enter into worship carrying only the things conducive to the experience.***

Abraham took the wood, the fire, and a knife. Anything else was considered excess baggage.

Your Enemy would love to hinder your true experience of worship. C.S. Lewis wrote, "The moment you wake up each morning, all your wishes and hopes for the day rush at you like wild animals. And the first job each morning consists in



shoving it all back, in listening to that other voice, taking that other point of view, letting that other larger, stronger, quieter life come flowing in."

How much excess baggage did you take to church last Sunday—worry, anger, ego, hurt, or hard feelings?

**2. *Make time to worship.*** Abraham took three days to travel to the foothills of Mount Moriah, and from there he was finally able to view the worship destination. He was still some distance away. How hurried are you when you get into God's presence?

**3. *Finally, Abraham separated himself from those who just tagged along for the ride.*** Two young men accompanied him and Isaac to make sure the donkey carrying all the provisions made the trip. Some people are great "donkey-maintainers," but they aren't focused on worship. Are you willing to separate yourself from the crowd in order to reach the higher places to which God has called you? Do you come to His presence for the express purpose of acknowledging His presence and worshiping only Him?

Neil Marten, a member of the British Parliament, was once giving a group of his constituents a guided tour of the Houses of Parliament. During the course of the visit, the group happened to meet Lord Hailsham, then lord chancellor, wearing all the official and colorful regalia of his office, complete with medals and sashes. Hailsham recognized Marten among the group and cried, "Neil!" Not daring to question or disobey the "command," the entire band of visitors promptly fell to their knees!

We laugh at such a comical misunderstanding. However, we come into the manifest presence of God only to worship Him in Spirit and in truth, and any other deviation is unworthy of worship.

There is a place in worship that Abraham called, "Yonder."

It's farther than we typically go.

It's higher than we usually climb.

It costs more than we normally are willing to pay.

The rewards, however, are incredibly fulfilling, for there we find the promises and provisions of God himself. ➔



(DAILY BIBLE READING)

- |                                  |         |       |
|----------------------------------|---------|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 99  | 1 Kings | 7–9   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 100 | 1 Kings | 10–12 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 101 | 1 Kings | 13–15 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 102 | 1 Kings | 16–18 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 103 | 1 Kings | 19–22 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 104 | 2 Kings | 1–3   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 105 | 2 Kings | 4– 6  |

## (TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL)

[illegible]

# CORRECTING YOUR COURSE

*And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God (Romans 12:2 KJV).*

I've been on airplanes when the pilot had to perform it. I've sailed on cruise ships when the captain thought it necessary. I've ridden on trains when the engineer had to decide to switch tracks.

It's called "navigating a course correction."

Sometimes, we catch ourselves going the wrong way. At first, it's not even detectable or noticeable. It comes in the form of a casual drift that, over time, can take you into the swift currents and dangerous depths of life's sea.

More than once, I've exited the interstate to refuel my car, and then return to the road to eventually discover I was traveling back where I had just come from. In my preoccupied state of mind, I failed to realize I was going in the opposite direction. Soon, I was looking for another ramp in order to correct my course.

The word, "repentance" means much more than being sorry or apologetic. It literally means "to turn around." When Scripture instructs us to repent, it is saying we must exit the wrong road, turn around, and start traveling on the right road—and in the right direction.

In 1757, at age 22, English poet Robert Robinson penned the familiar words that became the hymn, "Come Thou Fount."

Come, Thou Fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing Thy grace;  
Streams of mercy, never ceasing, call for songs of loudest praise.



One Sunday morning years later, Robinson—having abandoned church attendance—was walking down a London street, when he hailed an approaching horse-drawn cab. Seeing a young woman dressed in her church-going finery, he started to step away, but she invited him to ride with her.

After they exchanged introductions, she explained that she was just reading a poem by a man of the same name, and showed him the words. He admitted he had written it, then pointing to a later verse that used the phrase, “prone to wander,” confessed that those words described his life. He had been, indeed, prone to wander, and had turned away from God.

“But look at the words that follow,” she exclaimed, then read to him:

Here’s my heart, O take and seal it, seal it for Thy courts above.

Under deep conviction by the words he had written as a young man, there in the cab he gave his heart back to God and lived for Him the rest of his days.

The Bible declares, “There is a way that seems right to a man; but its end is the way of death” (Proverbs 16:25).

On another occasion, Jesus said, “Narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matthew 7:14).

Don’t travel too far going the wrong way. What you need is a good GPS to help correct your course in life. GPS? Absolutely!

It stands for “Go Pray Some.” Pray and repent, and allow the Lord to correct your course today. ➔

## WEEKLY FLIGHT PATTERN

(DAILY BIBLE READING)

<input type="checkbox"/> Day 106	2 Kings	7–9
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 107	2 Kings	10–12
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 108	2 Kings	13–15
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 109	2 Kings	16–18
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 110	2 Kings	19–21
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 111	2 Kings	22–25
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 112	1 Chronicles	1–3

This image shows a full page of blank handwriting practice paper. It features multiple sets of horizontal lines spaced evenly down the page. Each set typically consists of three lines: a solid top line, a dashed middle line, and a solid bottom line, providing a guide for letter height and placement. The paper is otherwise completely blank, with no text or markings.

# REFLECTIONS IN THE ICU

*Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee (Exodus 20:12 KJV).*

It's 12:40 a.m. at the Harris Hospital in Fort Worth. It's exactly one week before Christmas, and I'm sitting through the night shift in ICU watching my father endure the pokes, punctures, and pricks from an attentive medical staff. He's in a deep sleep, breathing with the help of a ventilator. Today marks the 21st day this 82-year-old man has fought for life—this time.

Over in a corner of the room is his 82-year-old bride of 66 years who refuses to leave and go home. She stands for most of the day at his bedside reading what only his eyes can communicate to her. Every evening, near midnight, she reclines in a green chair that has become her bed these past three weeks. For the moment, she's sound asleep.

It's just us three here tonight. I wish we weren't here at all, but oddly enough I'm taking in this moment and am in no real hurry to catch the plane that leaves at 5:45 a.m. My siblings have been wonderful to each take their turn doing this, but tonight is my chance to give them a well-deserved break.

Dad, Mom, and me. It was just us for a long time. I came along years after my brother and sisters. Just the three of us on trips, at meals, riding to church, going fishing, you name it; now, tonight, in ICU fighting for life.



This man helped me discover my life's work. This woman sat up and prayed till I was ready to give in to it. He helped me get a loan for my first recording project and paid the balance off for me that year for a graduation present. She drove me to my first preaching appointment, because I was too young to drive myself. He taught me how to outline a sermon, and she taught me to keep them short enough to keep people interested. He taught me how to handle money, while she taught me to appreciate everything I had. He taught me preaching technique, and they both taught me about prayer.

There were a lot of things they never did though.

They never told me I couldn't do what was in my heart to achieve for God; nor did they ever discourage me from stretching myself in faith and preparedness to reach the nations in ministry.

They never missed the "big" moments that mean the world to a young kid trying to find his way—the school events, the first car, the first revival, graduation, the wedding, and on and on.

So, here we are after all these years—Dad, Mom, and me. Just the three of us again. We've been told twice now that he won't make it, but who truly knows that but God himself? I do know this has been a tough one. Maybe not the "big" one yet, but I'm afraid we can see it from here.

Well, my niece is here signaling that it's time for me to catch the flight home. I'll lean over his bed one more time and touch his arm. His numbers are okay on the monitors. His eyes are closed, and he's fast asleep. He won't know I'm leaving. I'm not sure that he really knew I was even here. That's okay. I knew.

As for Mom, I'll let her sleep, too. I'll call back later like I used to and let her know I arrived home safely. For now, she needs the rest.

Stepping out into the hallway alone reminds me of my first day of school. That's the first thing the three of us couldn't do together. They walked me to the door; I met the teacher, found my seat, and looked up to find Dad and Mom had slipped out.

I didn't like it that day, but I got used to it.

I doubt I'll ever get used to this. ➔





(DAILY BIBLE READING)

<input type="checkbox"/> Day 113	1 Chronicles	4–6
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 114	1 Chronicles	7–9
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 115	1 Chronicles	10–12
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 116	1 Chronicles	13–15
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 117	1 Chronicles	16–18
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 118	1 Chronicles	19–21
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 119	1 Chronicles	22–24

## (TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL)

[illegible]

# IT'S ALREADY THERE

*For Joseph was in Egypt already (Exodus 1:5 KJV).*

**I**t's a parenthetical phrase. As a matter of fact, in my NKJV it's encased in parentheses and it looks like this—(Joseph was in Egypt already).

To the casual reader, it's just a fragment of information at the end of a list, naming 11 of the 12 sons of Jacob. They had gone into Egypt to find relief from famine and overall hard times. The name of Joseph is the twelfth name and normally would be numbered with the others, but in this text, his name stands alone. Joseph's name is attached to a crucial piece of information—"Joseph was in Egypt already."

Think about it.

Joseph was the man God would use to bring economic stability to the famine-stricken land of Egypt. His wisdom and foresight would help a nation survive a terrible ordeal. God had strategically ordered Joseph's steps to be where he was most needed to help millions of people. Among the people he would help would be his own father and brothers. They needed help, too.

Jacob and his other sons had no food and no way to obtain it, so they journeyed to Egypt looking for a solution. They had no idea Joseph had been elevated to the prominent role of prime minister, but once in Egypt, they discovered Joseph was already working his plan, and they would benefit.



In other words, they needed an answer to their problem and the solution was found in Joseph's wisdom and knowledge—and, he was already there!

They needed help, and their help was already there.

They needed provision, and their provision was already there.

Everything they needed was personified through their own son and brother.

Before the problem manifested itself, the solution was already in place.

So it is with you in this new year. Everything you are going to need is already awaiting you. Through Jesus—your Savior and Sustainer—your peace and provision, along with your joy and fulfillment, are already provided. Day by day and week by week, you will find your need is already supplied.

Always remember what Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:3: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (KJV).

It's already there. ➔

## WEEKLY FLIGHT PATTERN

### (DAILY BIBLE READING)

<input type="checkbox"/> Day 120	1 Chronicles	25–27
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 121	1 Chronicles	28–29
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 122	2 Chronicles	1–3
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 123	2 Chronicles	4–6
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 124	2 Chronicles	7–9
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 125	2 Chronicles	10–12
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 126	2 Chronicles	13–15

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES FOR POWERFUL LIVING

*This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind ... I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:13-14 KJV).*

**W**ithout great elaboration, this familiar verse from Paul's pen establishes three strong principles of dynamic, yet practical, living.

**First, there is the “*principle of concentration.*”**

“This one thing I do.”

Not two things or five or 20, but one. How often do your priorities become shifted and jostled around in a day's time? We all have “too many irons in the fire,” and we lose concentration for maintaining focus on what's most important.

Our most important priority in life must always be our relationship with the Lord Jesus. Everything else pales in comparison to Him.

Jesus said, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33 KJV).

**Then, there is the “*principle of cancellation.*”**

“Forgetting those things which are behind.”

There are some things in life we just have to mark “cancelled” in big letters and put behind us—past hurts and grudges, and



disappointments and failures. You must never allow anything to interrupt and stand between you and your relationship with the Savior.

**Finally, there is the “*principle of continuation*.”**

“I press toward the mark.”

Don’t quit. Keep pressing on.

My father once said to me, “You can be impressive by how you start, but you’ll be remembered by how you finish.”

I choose to live by the principle of continuation. I heard a song some time ago that says, “Quitting never crossed my mind.”

I like the song. I just wish I could say that I’ve lived up to it. I’ve thought about quitting a thousand times, but every time I do, the principle of continuation kicks in, and I remember Jesus walking the road to Calvary. There was no quitting in Him that day.

The Bible says, “Endure hardness as a good soldier” (2 Timothy 2:3 KJV).

Jesus said, “He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved” (Matthew 24:13 KJV).

You can make it, and you can live a fulfilled life enriched by the promises of God. ➔

## WEEKLY FLIGHT PATTERN

(DAILY BIBLE READING)

<input type="checkbox"/> Day 127	2 Chronicles	16–18
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 128	2 Chronicles	19–21
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 129	2 Chronicles	22–24
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 130	2 Chronicles	25–27
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 131	2 Chronicles	28–30
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 132	2 Chronicles	31–33
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 133	2 Chronicles	34–36



## FLIGHT LOG

(TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL)

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# NO PANIC IN HEAVEN —ONLY PLANS

*For He himself knew what He would do (John 6:6).*

**M**uch of the time, it seems Washington, D.C., is confused and Wall Street is in convulsions. Consistency and calm seldom walk hand in hand, and we often find ourselves anxious to buy in to anything resembling a good plan. That's just the way it is in this old worldly system.

Being citizens of another country, however, affords us the blessings and benefits of a different paradigm. We walk by faith. We see the invisible. We hope in the eternal and trust the infallible. Our sufficiency is in the all-sufficient Savior. Jesus is never without a plan, and He has never asked, "What was that?"

Let's read the Bible a minute:

- "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding ... and He shall direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6).
- "A man's heart plans his way; but the Lord directs his steps" (Proverbs 16:9 NASB).
- "I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, "My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please" (Isaiah 46:10 NIV).
- "I know the thoughts that I think toward you ... to give you a future and a hope (Jeremiah 29:11).





Our Father is never without a plan.

While standing in front of 5,000 hungry men, Jesus asked Philip this question: “Where shall we buy bread that these may eat?” (John 6:5). Why did Jesus ask Philip? We can’t be sure, but perhaps He saw in Philip a disciple more mature, more advanced in faith. The Twelve had distinct personalities. Peter was the loud and forceful one. The Zebedee brothers—James and John—were such loose cannons they had earned the nickname, “Sons of Thunder.” Thomas was evidently a man of small faith. But perhaps Philip, the one who upon several occasions had brought people to Jesus, was seen by Him as the one who was more likely to be able to answer the question. But it was a question Philip couldn’t answer.

There were no villages and no supermarkets in the neighborhood. Even if there had been, the Twelve had very little money. The Master’s question was obviously designed to confront Philip with a predicament that had no human solution.

That situation has happened to me, and I suppose it might have happened to you. Perhaps right now you are in that kind of quandary: You are faced with a predicament for which you can’t come up with an answer. Philip responded to Jesus’ question—“Two hundred denarii would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little” (see v. 7).

At the moment, Jesus had his mind on performing ministry to these people, of meeting their need. But Philip, from the human perspective, was thinking only of money. As he viewed the resources available, Philip gave up in despair; he could think of no way this hopeless situation could be met.

The Master had asked His question, hoping to get a response of faith from His disciple. Instead of faith, Philip gave Jesus more facts—”Too many people, too little money, and too late in the day.”

That’s it. Too much, too little, too late.

Didn’t matter. Jesus had a plan. He already knew that a little boy with a small lunch was available. Philip knew that, too, for he was the one who had brought the boy to Jesus in the first place. But Philip was looking only through human eyes. However, Jesus was not stumped or perplexed. He knew what He would do. He had a plan in mind.



Count on it. ✈

(DAILY BIBLE READING)

<input type="checkbox"/> Day 134	Ezra	1-3
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 135	Ezra	4-6
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 136	Ezra	7-10
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 137	Nehemiah	1-3
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 138	Nehemiah	4-6
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 139	Nehemiah	7-9
<input type="checkbox"/> Day140	Nehemiah	10-13

## (TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL)

[illegible]

# FAMINE OR FUTURE

*Elisha said, "Listen! God's word! The famine's over. This time tomorrow food will be plentiful" (2 Kings 7:1 MSG).*

**A**gainst the backdrop of food shortage and human suffering that had forced the citizens of Samaria into deprivation, degradation, and ultimate humiliation, Elisha stood and thundered: "By this time tomorrow, the famine in Samaria will be over" (see 2 Kings 7:1).

Refusing to be paralyzed by the present, Elisha powerfully spoke a word that moved hurting people into their future. In an instant, this prophet of God transitioned the citizens of Samaria from their predicament into their possibility and from their dilemma into their deliverance.

The enemy had besieged the city of Samaria, causing it to be separated from its harvest. Employing a strategy of containment, the Syrian army had stopped commercial trade, which had forced the people to deplete their storehouses until famine had become reality. After weeks without food, their dignity was gone and their sanity was in shambles. Rational thinking was as foreign as bread upon their table. The diet to which they reverted spoke of their dilemma. Choosing to eat the unthinkable, they found themselves helpless and hopeless.

But suddenly a preacher proclaims, "This all changes tomorrow."

Sounds great, but how does it happen? Elisha didn't know that part yet, but God did.

God used four leprous men outside the city gate who decided that "status quo" didn't work anymore. (By the way, "status quo" translated in the Hill lexicon stands for "the mess we're in.") They asked, "Why



are we sitting here until we die?” (7:3). With that declaration, they took three steps that moved them into their future.

**First**—*they got up.*

Sounds simple, but have you done it yet? How long have you just been sitting in the midst of your troubles? Your posture says a lot about the level of your hope. Just get up.

**Second**—*they moved toward the aroma of the bread.*

The scent of victory and provision is in the air. I choose to go in that direction. How about you? I have no time for negativity and dismay. Like these four men, I choose to move into my future.

**Third**—*they shared their discovery.*

The lepers came upon the camp of the Syrians and found they had fled and left behind their gold and silver. More important, they left behind the bread and grain. Immediately, they began to enjoy a great meal. Then turning to one another, they acknowledged, “We must go share this good news with the starving city of Samaria” (see 7:9). Hearing the good news, the people ran out of their community of death and found life among the spoils of their enemy.

What a great story! What are the lessons?

- You cannot allow the current climate of circumstances to create a paralysis or leave you with survivalist thinking.
- You cannot move into your future until your future moves into you.
- God is in your tomorrow.

Let’s get up and go!

## WEEKLY FLIGHT PATTERN

(DAILY BIBLE READING)

<input type="checkbox"/> Day 141	Esther	1–3
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 142	Esther	4–6
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 143	Esther	7–10
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 144	Job	1–3
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 145	Job	4–6
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 146	Job	7–9
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 147	Job	10–12



## FLIGHT LOG

(TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL)

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# FAMOUS OR FAITHFUL?

*Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful*  
(1 Corinthians 4:2 KJV).

I read something recently that I can't dismiss lightly. Here it is: "You don't have to be famous to be effective, just faithful." Can a person be both famous and faithful? Why, certainly. Just look around. There are too many examples of that for me to even begin to list here.

But what about the rest of us?

Fame has eluded and evaded most. Many people are still hoping for their 15 minutes of fame, while some who have experienced that and even more, now wish it had never come to them at all. Sometimes, fame comes with an extremely high cost.

Truth is, when you stand before Jesus, don't expect Him to say, "Well done my good and 'famous' servant." Bottom line: He is looking for faithfulness in each of us.

Faithfulness is a quality that God expects and requires in each of us. The scripture reads in Revelation 2:10: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (KJV).

Unfaithfulness is like a broken tooth. My mind goes back almost 25 years to a man in a church I pastored in Virginia. His name was Sam. To my remembrance, Sam never served on the Elders Board or taught Sunday school, or held any office in the church. His job was to distribute the weekly church bulletin. I rarely see a church bulletin anymore. The emergence of cutting-edge visual media has placed the "bulletin" in the museums of antiquity. Sam would be heartbroken.



He would say, “Where’s the handshake?” He would ask, “Where’s the smile on that PowerPoint list of announcements?”

Sam arrived at church early and was at the door to welcome the first person to come through. With the giving of each bulletin came the “heart factor.” The grin, the pat on the back, the humor. It all added up to making someone feel at home in the house of God. Boy, I missed him when he passed away. He solved a lot of problems for me and never knew it. People problems ultimately get to the pastor’s desk unless they are first disarmed by a warm greeting or a friendly “Good Morning.”

On second thought, maybe he did know it. Maybe he knew there was more to that church bulletin than the information on the inside or the simple routine of merely passing it out. He understood something that a lot of people miss. He understood that his service was not as much to the people as much as it was to the Lord, who deserved his very best.

At Sam’s funeral, I held up the last church bulletin he had given to me. Oddly enough, the front of it displayed a picture someone had taken while visiting Yellowstone National Park. A beautiful scene of the famous geyser, “Old Faithful,” brought a nice touch to our bulletin that Sunday. But the truth was, “Old Faithful” had been bringing a nice touch to our bulletin for a long time.

“Be faithful until death, and [He] will give you the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10). ➔

## WEEKLY FLIGHT PATTERN

(DAILY BIBLE READING)

<input type="checkbox"/> Day 148	Job	13–15
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 149	Job	16–18
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 150	Job	19–21
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 151	Job	22–24
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 152	Job	25–27
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 153	Job	28–30
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 154	Job	31–33

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



# HE MUST BE IN THE HOUSE

*And again He entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house (Mark 2:1 KJV).*

As a child, I always found it easy to detect when the circus had come to town. All one had to do was walk down the street where the parade had marched and notice the confetti, balloons, and leftover sticks from the candied apples. Earlier, the music of the high school band had wafted its way through the air announcing that something special was going on in town. The signs of the circus were everywhere.

The signs of “presence” are telling, aren’t they? When I come home and find my yard strewn with toys, I know my grandchildren have come over. When I walk in the door and the fragrance of sweet perfume greets my senses, I know my bride is not far away.

Imagine walking the streets of Judea and seeing crutches, cots, and bandages lying carelessly on the ground with no one to claim them. Imagine that along the way you come upon several interrupted funeral processions, and dancing mothers are embracing resurrected children who only a day before had died in their arms.

What explains all this commotion and excitement? It’s simple: Jesus has just walked through town. Look down the road a bit. “What in the world is going on at that house over there?” People are teeming everywhere and no one else can get through the door. Even the windows are crowded with people looking inside. To beat it all, four men are climbing to the rooftop with a friend on a stretcher. I wonder what they are up to?



I know what it is. Jesus must be in the house. That explains everything—the crowd, the miracles, the laughter. How can one man make such a difference? Simple: He is Lord, and He is here.

What makes your house different from some others on your street? What explains the peace of a night at home with the kids? What's the reason for the solitude in the middle of a chaotic world just outside your front door?

Surely, you know by now. It's the presence of Jesus.

It's written in the Bible, "In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11). Don't forget, it was Jesus who said, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3:20).

The Scriptures record that when it was made known, Jesus was in the house; the crowd came and filled every space. Has He been in your house lately? When He comes, get ready. Nothing will ever be the same again because:

***His presence brings the right perspective.***

Remember that things look different through His eyes. Jesus can see the end from the beginning. "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure'" (Isaiah 46:10).

***His presence brings the right plan.***

I'm glad my future is in His hands. I find comfort in the words from Scripture found in Jeremiah 29:11: "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope."

***His presence brings the right purpose.***

When Jesus is near, I suddenly understand what is meant in Romans 8:28 where Paul said, "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose."

The welcome mat is always out, and the porch light is always on for Him. ➔



(DAILY BIBLE READING)

☐ Day 155	Job	34–36
☐ Day 156	Job	37–39
☐ Day 157	Job	40–42
☐ Day 158	Psalms	1–9
☐ Day 159	Psalms	10–17
☐ Day 160	Psalms	18–22
☐ Day 161	Psalms	23–31

## (TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL)

[illegible]

# LIVING THROUGH THE MIDNIGHT

*And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them (Acts 16:25 KJV).*

**D**id you ever consider all the Bible has to say about things that happened at midnight? Most of these midnight mentions are connected to some kind of difficulty.

- According to Exodus 11:4, death came to the firstborn in Egypt about midnight.
- Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane near midnight.
- Paul and Silas were imprisoned, beaten, and shackled near the midnight hour.
- Jesus told the parable of the wise and foolish virgins waiting for the bridegroom to come at midnight, when suddenly the foolish ones realized they were out of oil for their lamps.

What about you? How's midnight working out in your life right now?

It always seems that, if something is going to happen and even go wrong, it will take place around midnight. Some say it is the darkest time of night, and some from the more carnal side of life have referred to it as the “witching hour,” indicating some unproven attachment and attraction to the mystical. Often, the darkness of midnight seems to have been a favorite playground for the Enemy of our souls. After all, the Bible states that “men loved darkness . . . because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19). Indeed, midnight has at times provided a canopy to cover the wrongful deeds of men.



For the Christian, there should be no fear of midnight, because it is not the “witching hour,” but rather it can be the “switching hour.” Midnight is that one second every 24 hours when one day gives way to another—an infinitesimal bridge of time that connects today with tomorrow. It is one thing you have in common with the president of the United States and the queen of England. It’s the one thing I have in common with you: midnight. We’re in good company.

Jesus had a midnight every night for over 33 years. Methuselah had a midnight every night for 969 years. Paul and Silas had a major midnight experience, and here’s how they dealt with it. Maybe you can learn from their example.

***They lived in the moment.*** They seemed to embrace the reality of the situation. Ignoring midnight will not help you get through it. Sleeping through it isn’t always an option when chaos breaks loose at 11:59 p.m. Sometimes you just have to admit: “This is where I am in life right now.” Your comfort comes in knowing that you are not in your moment alone, but Jesus is with you also. He said it Himself, “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

***They didn’t nurse their hurts.*** Elvis sang a song once called, “I’m So Hurt.” You may know the lyrics, because it has become the anthem of your life. How long can you nurse the wounds of your life and keep reliving the pain inflicted upon you by someone’s thoughtless words or actions? Paul and Silas had been beaten within an inch of their lives and may have come closer than anyone to having the right to complain, but they didn’t. They moved quickly to the next step.

***They put on their praise.*** The Bible records that “Along about midnight, they sang praises unto God” (see Acts 16:25). Always remember: you have the “choice to rejoice.” It’s entirely up to you. You can pout or praise, sigh or sing, moan or magnify. Paul knew what it meant to “Give thanks unto God in everything” (see 1 Thessalonians 5:18). He never said, Give thanks *for* everything, but *in* everything. Put on your best praise. That’s what Isaiah counseled, “Put on the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness” (see 61:3).

***They connected with others in the same time zone.*** They were in prison, but they were far from being isolated. They allowed their



influence to help guide the lives of the other prisoners. When God intervened and broke their chains and opened the doors, none of the prisoners escaped, but remained submissive to the authorities. This was a direct result of the connection and influence of these two “partners in praise.” Someone is always watching you during your tough times, because they are also having it hard, and they need to connect with someone displaying a firm confidence in God. Why not offer your hope to someone in need today?

***They used the moment for good and God.*** They took advantage of their difficult opportunity to share the love of Jesus with the keeper of the prison. As a result, he and his entire family came to salvation through Christ. Is there some good that you can do for God while you’re in the middle of your midnight? Is there somebody in the hospital room next to yours who could use one of those flower arrangements sent to you today? How about giving that family with two boys a turn with those season tickets you have? You know the ones. Their mom died last year and their dad’s trying to make life as normal as he can for them. Midnight has lasted a long time for them. Who knows? It might help bring you out of yours. Remember, the quickest way out of your problem comes by helping someone else out of theirs.

We’ve all been through midnight, and we have learned that life goes on and doesn’t stop. It eventually passed by and the morning came just as David said it would in Psalm 30:5: “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.” ➔

## WEEKLY FLIGHT PATTERN

(DAILY BIBLE READING)

<input type="checkbox"/> Day 162	Psalms	32–37
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 163	Psalms	38–44
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 164	Psalms	45–51
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 165	Psalms	52–59
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 166	Psalms	60–67
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 167	Psalms	68–71
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 168	Psalms	72–77



# FLIGHT LOG

## (TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL)

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# CURSE GOD AND DIE OR BLESS GOD AND LIVE

*Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither:  
the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the  
Lord (Job 1:21 KJV).*

**T**he old saying, “If that’s a friend, who needs enemies?” applies well to the three men who came to “comfort” Job in his time of trouble. After seven days of sitting with him in stone silence, they began to chide him with accusations and speculations that reinforced his devastation. If that wasn’t bad enough, Job’s own wife instructed him to “curse God and die” (2:9).

Do I have criticism for Job’s wife? Not really.

Not when I consider her state of being. She lost the same children that Job lost, not to mention the same house, wealth, and status. Who thinks rationally after such immediate trauma?

Job was left with few options. How does one recover from such crises? This was more than a setback. This was a “never-come-back” and a “never-recover” situation. Yet the Bible says, “In all this, Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly” (1:22 KJV). It further states, “The Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning” (42:12).

How does one go from such decimation to great admiration? Because when given a choice to curse God and die, Job decided to bless God and live. Job said, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!” (1:21).





You can make the CHOICE to REJOICE.

Anyone can quit and anyone can bemoan life's trials from now on. But the choice to establish an environment of blessing rests with you and me. I create atmosphere with what I say. It's the atmosphere I breathe and function in. That being the case, I will:

Praise and not pout.

Sing and not sigh.

Magnify and not moan.

Worship and not worry.

Give and not gripe.

Smile and not scowl.

I will bless God and live.

I will join with David and sing, "Bless the Lord, oh my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name" (Psalm 103:1).

I will agree with Paul and say, "In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

What will you do today?

The choice is yours . . .

Bless God and live! ➔

## WEEKLY FLIGHT PATTERN

(DAILY BIBLE READING)

<input type="checkbox"/> Day 169	Psalms	78–81
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 170	Psalms	82–89
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 171	Psalms	90–97
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 172	Psalms	98–104
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 173	Psalms	105–110
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 174	Psalms	111–118
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 175	Psalms	119

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# THERE IS “LIFE AFTER THE FLOOD”!

*For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us (Romans 8:18 KJV).*

**I**t's not meant to be taken lightly, and it's certainly not an “Oh, by the way” sentence or thought. The Bible states in Genesis 9:28: “Noah lived three hundred and fifty years after the flood” (NASB). Look at it again and consider all that is inherent in that statement. “Noah lived!”

The flood didn't drown everything.

Noah stepped on dry land, saw nature restored, and admired a beautiful rainbow.

He laughed and cried.

He worked and rested.

He planted and reaped.

He saw his family to safety and watched his grandchildren grow.

He lived.

Noah was a busy man of action. Note all the verbs connected to his life.

In Genesis 6:8, he “*found* grace.”

In Genesis 7:5, Noah “*did*” all he was told.

In Genesis 7:7, he “*went* into the ark.”

In Genesis 8:6, Noah “*opened* the window of the ark.”

In Genesis 8:18, he “*went forth*” out of the ark.



And you will live. ➤

[illegible]

# IN THE MIDST OF IT ALL

*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble*  
(Psalm 46:1 KJV).

I admit it. I have a hard time with the book and the story of Job. Why? Because at first glance, it seems it takes God 38 chapters to show up. Thirty-eight chapters of satanic attack, false accusations, physical deterioration, and marital stress, and Job wants to know, “Where is God?”

Have you ever felt that way? How many of life’s chapters did you go through wondering where God was? Was He in the waiting rooms, the employment offices, and maybe even the funeral homes? Where was He?

Job seemed to have lost most everything he held dear. His children were all killed suddenly. His livestock were stolen or destroyed. Three friends sat for seven days and stared at this grief-stricken man. Then to top it off, Job’s wife said, “Drop this integrity thing you have with God. Curse Him, die, and get it over with.”

“Hey, Lord, this sure would be a good time to come charging in on a white horse and save the day.”

Yep. At first glance, there seems to be no sign of God. (Better watch that first glance. Don’t believe it yet.)

Like Job, it may take you a few chapters to realize it, but you will eventually see that God is never absent from your side, nor is He blind to your need. Some of the greatest affirmations of faith found in the entire Bible finally come from the lips of Job. Listen to his words:

“Though [God] slay me, yet will I trust Him” (Job 13:15).



“The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!” (Job 1:21).

“For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself” (Job 19:25-27).

In the midst of all that he went through, Job came to this conclusion: “God exists and He remains near, even when my circumstances seem to contradict it.”

What brought him to such a conclusion?

### **He Looked.**

In Job 38, God basically said, “Be reminded of who I am by taking a new look at all I’ve done . . . Where were you when I made the heavens and laid out the earth? Where were you when I told the waters of the ocean that they could only go so far up the beach” (vv. 1-8).

A good look at what God has done is always a strength to my faith. A fresh look at His creation is all I need to join in with Jeremiah and declare, “Ah, Lord God, thou hast made the heavens and the earth by thy great power. Nothing is too difficult for thee” (see Jeremiah 32:17 KJV).

### **He Listened.**

In Job 42:5, Job declared, “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see You.” Never forget: a listening ear leads to a vision of God’s faithfulness. Can you hear God when He speaks, or is your mind cluttered by the many voices that compete for your attention?

Jesus said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear” (Matthew 11:15). Listen to the wisdom of His Word. Listen to the warnings of His Word, and don’t forget to listen for the wonder (majesty) of His Word. David said, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psalm 119:11 KJV).

### **He Leaned.**

Job finally placed his weight of trust on the Lord. Have you learned to do that? Maybe you’re like the man who took his first plane ride. Upon landing, his family asked how he liked the experience. He said, “Oh, it was all right, I suppose; but you know, I never did put all my weight on that thing the whole time it was in the air.”



You can know this for sure, when you lean on Him, He won't sway or be shaken. He consistently stands firm in order to support you through all your struggles.

You can trust His heart for you. He's there. Always. ✈

☐ Day 183	Proverbs	10–12
☐ Day 184	Proverbs	13–15
☐ Day 185	Proverbs	16–18
☐ Day 186	Proverbs	19–21
☐ Day 187	Proverbs	22–24
☐ Day 188	Proverbs	25–27
☐ Day 189	Proverbs	28–31

# FLIGHT LOG

(TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL)

[illegible]

# WHAT'S OVER YOUR HEAD IS UNDER HIS FEET

*And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church (Ephesians 1:22 KJV).*

Being lost is awful, but being lost in a storm is much worse. The disciples must have been bound by hopelessness in the middle of the Sea of Galilee. They knew Jesus had said, “Go to the other side and I’ll meet you there,” but that now seemed so long ago and far away. If that wasn’t bad enough, now it would appear there’s a ghost walking across the water. Suddenly a familiar voice pierces the darkness: “It is I; be not afraid.”

Peter said, “Lord, if that’s you, then call me out to walk with you” (see Matthew 14:28). The next thing he knows, Jesus calls and Peter steps out of the boat and walks on the water.

It’s amazing what fear can do to a nice walk on the water. Peter loses his focus and then his footing. Now, he fights frantically to keep from drowning. Thankfully, he fell in the presence of Jesus, who lifted him up and returned him to the boat.

Once back in the boat, Jesus informed the disciples there had been no need to be afraid; for what they had fought all night, He had already conquered. He was the master of what they had feared, and everything that had been over their heads was under His feet.

What a comfort. What a proclamation of faith.

How can we stand in that promise today?

Allow me to return to my “day job” and sermonize a minute . . . complete with alliteration!





### 1. *Trust in His Word.*

Jesus said, “Come,” and Peter stepped out on the Word of God. You might say that Peter stepped out on the ...

- Conquering Word
- Overcoming Word
- Mastering Word
- Exceeding Word

### 2. *Trust in His Walk.*

Jesus walked through their darkness. At the same time, He walked through their despair. If that wasn't enough, He walked through their doubt, as well.

### 3. *Trust in His Work.*

Scripture states there was a great cry—“Peace.”

There followed a great command—“Be still.”

Finally, there was a great calm—the sea became as glass again.

I love the following phrase from Matthew 14:34. It sums it all up: “And when they had crossed over . . .” Never forget God knows the end from the beginning, and He meant it when He said: “I’ll meet you on the other side.”

They did cross the lake; and so will you, because everything that is over your head is indeed under His feet.

“And He put all things under His feet” (Ephesians 1:22). ➔

## WEEKLY FLIGHT PATTERN

(DAILY BIBLE READING)

<input type="checkbox"/> Day 190	Ecclesiastes	1–3
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 191	Ecclesiastes	4–6
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 192	Ecclesiastes	7–9
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 193	Ecclesiastes	10–12
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 194	Song of Solomon	1–3
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 195	Song of Solomon	4–6
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 196	Song of Solomon	7–8

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# JESUS LOVES ME!

*Greater love has no one than this . . . (John 15:13).*

**I**t's just that simple! The older I become, the more I appreciate the simple things in life. As a matter of fact, my desire for simplicity is quite profound. I don't crave complexity.

Too often, the mission and message of the church has been allowed to become bogged down in the quagmire of difficult theology, methodology, and practice.

Somewhere, hidden underneath the church's politics and programs, are the smoldering embers of purpose that must be reignited to become the flaming passion that drives us to tell the world about Jesus Christ again. It's a passion that propels the simplicity of the message contained in the first song my children ever sang, "Jesus loves me! This I know, for the Bible tells me so."

Another old Sunday school song elaborates on this same theme: "Everybody ought to know who Jesus is." I fully agree. Everybody also needs to know what He came to do and accomplish with His victorious life and ultimate death on the cross.

We've all met people we will never forget and some we likely wish we could. There are some whom I was glad to see walk into my life, and others whom I was glad to see walk away. That's just the way life is, but I join with the multitudes who declare that "Jesus is the best thing that ever happened to me."



I'm glad I know Him, because:

### **1. *He Came to Redeem Me.***

Mankind was in bondage and slavery to Satan, but the good news, according to Psalm 102:19-20 is, “[God] looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from heaven the Lord viewed the earth, to hear the groaning of the prisoner, to release those appointed to death.”

Man's need for a Redeemer was desperate, and someone had to have the right price to purchase our freedom. It was a cost that only God could provide through His Son.

Thankfully, Jesus paid the ultimate price for our sin debt. First Peter 1:18-19 states it perfectly: “For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And [the ransom He paid] was not mere gold or silver, which lose their value. It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God” (NLT).

Paul wrote about this price in Ephesians 1:7, where he said, “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.”

### **2. *He Came to Represent Me.***

Jesus is our great Advocate, continually representing us before the Father.

This is confirmed in Hebrews 7:25: “Therefore He is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.”

Then, 1 Timothy 2:5 reaffirms that “There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.”

Someone in legal trouble will seek out the best lawyer money can buy in order to have the best representation possible before the judge who will pass the final sentence. However, man's sin problem is far more complicated than anything earthly courts of law have ever seen. But we have an Advocate with the Father.

There is none more qualified than Jesus, because:

- He represents us with His blood.



- He represents us with His name.
- He represents us with His purity.

I take comfort in knowing that the Father sees us through His Son. Jesus himself confirmed it in John 14:6: “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

### **3. *Jesus Will Come to Receive Me.***

In John 14:1-3, Jesus said, “I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (KJV).

Three times in Revelation 22 Jesus declared, “Behold, I come quickly.” Jesus is indeed coming again to receive unto Himself those who have believed on Him.

Two angels appeared to the disciples, according to Acts 1, declaring that Jesus would return just as they had seen Him go away into heaven. We have the same wonderful promise of the Savior’s return.

That’s why everybody ought to know Him.

That’s why everybody needs to know Him.

That’s why you and I must keep singing and telling the greatest of all truths—Jesus lives and Jesus loves. ➔

## WEEKLY FLIGHT PATTERN

(DAILY BIBLE READING)

<input type="checkbox"/> Day 197	Isaiah	1–3
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 198	Isaiah	4–6
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 199	Isaiah	7–9
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 200	Isaiah	10–12
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 201	Isaiah	13–15
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 202	Isaiah	16–18
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 203	Isaiah	19–21

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# THE FOUNDATIONS OF LIFE

*If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do? (Psalm 11:3 KJV).*

In 1989, as I watched the World Series from the comfort of my home, I noticed unusual movement on the screen. An earthquake measuring 6.9 on the Richter scale was shaking San Francisco. Fifty-two people were tragically killed as overpasses and bridges crumbled. The damage was enormous.

In February 2010, an earthquake of 7.0 on the Richter scale left Haiti in the ruins of devastation. Nearly 300,000 precious people were killed. From the president's palace to the most humble of homes, very little was spared. There was only a fraction of a point of difference on the Richter scale, yet so many more died and the destruction seemed massive in comparison. One place was damaged, while the other was totally devastated.

What made the difference?

The difference between damage and devastation is found in one word—foundation.

Because of economy, regulations, engineering—you name it—the standards in one location over the other, as it related to foundations, made all the difference in life and death. Knowing the proximity of fault lines helped the engineers determine the time and money that went into the foundation of a structure that was to be built.

It seems that fault lines abound everywhere beneath the surface of life:

- Emotional fault lines.
- Relational fault lines.
- Financial fault lines.

They sprawl everywhere beneath the surface of all we hold dear.



David encountered all of these and more while fleeing for his life on one occasion. He contemplated his circumstances, surmised his place in life, and asked this question in Psalm 11:3: “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (KJV).

As a carpenter, Jesus knew about foundations. He related a meaningful parable about two home builders. One built on a firm foundation, while the other built only on the sand. The storm came, and only the house with the foundation under it stood firm.

There are two powerful principles contained in this parable.

First of all, storms do come. It’s never a matter of “if,” but “when.” But, the greatest lesson is that the rock is stronger than the storm.

Let the winds blow and the rains fall.

When all is said and done, you will discover the foundation you’re built upon will “weather” the storm.

Isaiah 28:16 says: “Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation” (KJV).

What are you built upon today? I hope you can sing with confidence the words of the old hymn:

My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness;  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,  
But wholly lean on Jesus’ name.  
On Christ, the solid rock, I stand;  
All other ground is sinking sand.

—Edward Mote

## WEEKLY FLIGHT PATTERN

(DAILY BIBLE READING)

<input type="checkbox"/> Day 204	Isaiah	22–24
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 205	Isaiah	25–27
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 206	Isaiah	28–30
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 207	Isaiah	31–33
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 208	Isaiah	34–36
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 209	Isaiah	37–39
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 210	Isaiah	40–42





# FLIGHT LOG

## (TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL)

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# LIVING IN A SECOND-CHOICE WORLD

*Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done (Luke 22:42 KJV).*

**N**o one can “tailor make” his life, can he? Most of the time, we are left to react or respond to the various circumstances that come our way. Too often I had to make what I have come to call “midterm adjustments” and realign myself to an unanticipated season.

We’ve all made those quick exits off the interstate of life to do a “recalculate” on the GPS and do our best to get a new bearing again. By the way, GPS in this case stands for “Go Pray Some.”

My mother used to preface many statements with the phrase, “If I had my ‘druthers.” I’m still not completely sure what that word means after all these years. I think it’s another generation’s way of saying, “I had rather things go this way or that.”

Point is, we don’t always get our “druthers.” The sun doesn’t always shine on picnic and parade day. White Christmases seldom happen, and sometimes the light you see at the end of the tunnel is an oncoming train.

Many are living a life filled with adjusted dreams and choices. If you had your way, it wouldn’t be “this” way. You’re not alone. Actually you’re in good company.



Job lived in a second-choice world. He lost everything—family, wealth, and health.

Joseph lived in a second-choice world, too. He went from being his father's favorite son to being a slave in prison.

Moses lived in a second-choice world, as well. From bulrushes to Pharaoh's palace, and then to lonely deserts.

Does it look this way for you?

That promising marriage ended in divorce. That early retirement you took for traveling has now given way to the early onset of some sickness you never anticipated would happen. Your 401k became a 201f (failed), and now you have to work longer than you wished.

You get the point.

So, if you find yourself in a second-choice world, remember these things:

- 1. God is as powerful in the “second” as He is in the “first.”**
- 2. Whatever or whoever caused you to get into your “second-choice” world doesn’t have the final say.**
- 3. Don’t run from it. Run through it, embrace it, and give it your best.**

Like Job, Joseph, and Moses, you will find that your second-choice world will become an arena in which the reality of God's ultimate purpose and will is demonstrated and fulfilled. ➔

## WEEKLY FLIGHT PATTERN

### (DAILY BIBLE READING)

<input type="checkbox"/> Day 211	Isaiah	43–45
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 212	Isaiah	46–48
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 213	Isaiah	49–51
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 214	Isaiah	52–54
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 215	Isaiah	55–57
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 216	Isaiah	58–60
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 217	Isaiah	61–63

[illegible]

# THE RESIGNATION INCLINATION

*But whoever holds out to the end will be saved (Matthew 24:13 GNT).*

Some time ago I heard some quartet friends of mine sing a song titled, “Quitting Never Crossed My Mind.” It’s up-tempo, has great lyrics, and makes you want to go and whip the devil. It’s really a good song. I’d sing it myself if I could do so with conviction, but I can’t. I know there are multitudes who can and do. I just don’t and won’t, because I have . . . thought about quitting, I mean.

Oh, yes! You have to put me right up there with Peter, who, after the crucifixion of Jesus, returned to the fishing business. Jeremiah considered starting a hotel. Moses literally broke the tablets of stone that contained the Ten Commandments. Abraham gave up one day and moved to Egypt to avoid a famine, then lied and told Pharaoh that Sarah was his sister. Yeah, I’m in good company.

But, thinking about quitting and actually quitting are two different things. Peter returned. Jeremiah rebounded. Moses repented, and Abraham reconsidered. So did I—every time the thought crossed my mind.

Life’s challenges can test a man to the extent that occasionally the attraction for flight is stronger than the desire to fight. That’s why Jesus said, “He who endures to the end shall be saved” (Matthew 24:13). Jesus made this statement, fully aware that the resignation inclination occasionally comes around.

How do you deal with the resignation inclination when it comes to you? May I suggest you employ the REST principle?



Usually, the Enemy takes advantage of our fatigue of spirit, as well as the body. While we are worn down, the temptation to give up can wash over us. But, I have employed a great strategy that helps me on those occasions.

REST!

**R**—Stands for “*retreat*.” Retreating is not quitting. It’s backing off for a while to gain strength and perspective.

**E**—Stands for “*encourage*.” Sometimes our courage needs a boost. David knew this, and Scripture tells us he “encouraged” himself in the Lord (see 1 Samuel 30:6).

**S**—Represents the word “*strengthen*.” You’ve probably been “running on fumes” for too long, and you likely don’t even realize how tired in spirit you are. Go back to the spiritual gym and work out. Listen to the trainer and do some exercise. I’m referring to going to church and involving yourself in worship.

Consider the following.

Can you enjoy going to church if you’re not on stage singing or in the pulpit preaching? There are times when you need to just sit and soak. Someone else may have a word for you this time. Another singer may have heard from God this week and her song may be a godsend to your soul.

**T**—Stands for “*Try Again*.” Once you’ve replenished yourself with the Word of God, and even allowed your body to catch up with itself, get up and get back in the race. Try again!

Sing again.

Preach again.

Pray again.

Face it again.

Years ago, when I began my ministry, my dad sat me down and talked to me about the work of the Lord. I’ll never forget one thing he said: “Son, one of the greatest tests of your character will be revealed in the thing that it takes to make you quit.” After nearly 40 years, I’ve never forgotten that.



One day after watching a crowd walk out on one of his sermons, Jesus asked His disciples, “Will you also go away?” To that question, Peter replied, “Lord, where else could we go? You have the words of eternal life” (see John 6:66-68).

Yes. That’s the same guy who went back to the fishing business later. But Jesus found him there and said, “Come on back and let’s try again.”

He did try again, and became the leading voice of the New Testament church.

It’s no sin to think about quitting. Most of us have entertained resigning our responsibilities many times, only to discover the endurance is worth the end result.

I leave you with the borrowed words of this anonymous poem from years ago:

When things go wrong, as they sometimes will,  
 When the road you’re trudging seems all uphill,  
 When the funds are low and the debts are high,  
 When you want to smile, but you have to sigh,  
 When care is pressing you down a bit—  
 Rest if you must, but don’t you quit! ➔

## WEEKLY FLIGHT PATTERN

(DAILY BIBLE READING)

<input type="checkbox"/> Day 218	Isaiah	64–66
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 219	Jeremiah	1–3
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 220	Jeremiah	4–6
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 221	Jeremiah	7–9
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 222	Jeremiah	10–12
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 223	Jeremiah	13–15
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 224	Jeremiah	16–18

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



# SANDPAPER FRIENDS

*Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend  
(Proverbs 27:17 KJV).*

*Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful  
(Proverbs 27:6).*

Not long ago I heard a new description regarding people who have a tendency to “rub me the wrong way.” They’re known as “sandpaper friends.” My journey of life has seen at least a few of these come and go.

I once pastored a man who could irritate me by the way he said, “Good morning.”

I remember another church assignment I was given where a man showed up to help me move in; he never picked up the first box from the moving van. He did, however, “unload” on the new young pastor every pent-up criticism of the church he had accumulated over the previous 20 years.

On still another occasion, I recall a man sitting in the congregation with white tissue obnoxiously hanging out both ears. He obviously wanted to make the point that he thought the sound system was too loud.

I’m not sure any of these ever qualified as my personal friends. I have had some real friends who could just as easily irritate me, yet do it in a way that worked out for my good rather than for my harm. Among them:

Professors who knew how to challenge my thinking.

Counselors who knew how to ask the hard questions.

Leaders who knew how to hold me accountable.

Pastors who knew how to keep my integrity in check.



A wife who knows how to speak to me honestly.

Daughters who know how to say, “Dad, that’s just dumb,” and get away with it.

Book editors who know how to be constructively critical.

Publishers who have eyes for excellence.

Recording producers who know how to say, “I think you’ve got a better one in you.”

Accountants who know how to keep me in budget.

Managers who know how to balance my mercy gift with good sense.

Trainers who know how to make me walk one more mile and resist one more éclair.

As a result, my life is organized, days seem to go better, and I’m able to sleep at night. Sometimes, I’d rather have a toothache than to see the sandpaper friends coming, but I know a little sanding makes for a smoother surface.

Gotta’ go now. A dear friend wants to talk about my cholesterol.

“Afternoon, Doc.” ➔

## WEEKLY FLIGHT PATTERN

(DAILY BIBLE READING)

<input type="checkbox"/> Day 225	Jeremiah	19–21
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 226	Jeremiah	22–24
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 227	Jeremiah	25–27
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 228	Jeremiah	28–30
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 229	Jeremiah	31–33
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 230	Jeremiah	34–36
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 231	Jeremiah	37–39



## FLIGHT LOG

(TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL)

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# IT'S STILL MY DESIRE

*That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made comformable unto his death (Philippians 3:10 KJV).*

I heard it while flying over Nova Scotia, returning from Scotland. I had it on my iPad and had forgotten it. I recorded it 35 years ago: “It’s My Desire,” written by Jim Pearce. What a great song. I just wish I had done it justice that night in the little studio in Calvin Will’s backyard just outside Arlington, Texas. I’m really surprised Calvin even allowed the album to be identified by his *Sword and Shield* label.

I had just turned 18 and had been preaching for two years—and I mean “PREACHING.” I had no clue back then about vocal techniques, diction, phrasing, and certainly knew nothing about voice preservation. In those days, my upbringing seemed to promote the idea that a good sermon was judged by how hoarse the evangelist was when he finished. (I’m smiling as I write this.) I went into that little studio on a Monday night after closing one of those red-hot revivals the night before. Boy, does it ever come through. Ten grueling songs forever pressed on a vinyl LP testify of my naiveté and “green-ness.” Remove me from the picture, though, and the rest of the album isn’t half bad. My friends Otis and Reta Hume provided the background vocals. Tom Smith, who had played for Bob Wills and the Inspirationals, engineered the session and played piano and bass guitar. Other studio musicians laid good instrumentation tracks. My goal that night was to finish the recording within the six-hour time allotment that came with the custom recording package I bought from Calvin. Tom was patient and kept trying to get a “better one” out of me, but soon determined a “better one” didn’t exist in this young and eager preacher boy. And to think, I sold those things for



\$5 each! Not long ago, someone brought one to me in a conference and said, “Bet you don’t remember this!” How could I forget?

No, it’s not a great album, but so much is captured on that record—my youth!

The first two songs I ever wrote.

The raspy voice of an eager evangelist.

My novice anxiety to do something significant and make a mark in the world.

The fledgling signs of creativity.

But there’s more ... much more.

I hear it on every cut ... desire.

When I get beyond all that’s wrong with the recording and just listen to what’s right about it, I hear the desire of a heart that wanted to know Jesus better. I hear the passion of youth that too often can give way to the challenges that come with maturity and responsibility. I hear the excitement of reaching people for Christ and the hope that comes with believing all things are possible through God. I hear an abandoning to do God’s will and an embracing of God’s purpose.

Interestingly enough, all those more meaningful things heard on that old album are still with me today. Oh, I got over trying to make my mark a long time ago. It’s deeper than that now. I really want to live out the words of that classic Jim Pearce lyric:

It’s my desire to help someone today,  
Someone who may have failed to see the way;  
I, too, was once so lost, but I found my way to God,  
It’s my desire to live for Him.

And, oh, what a chorus he wrote. Look at these words . . .

If you could see where Jesus brought me from,  
To where I am today;  
Then you would know the reason why I love Him so,  
Now, you can take the world’s wealth and riches,  
I don’t need earth’s fame;  
It’s my desire to live for Him. <sup>1</sup>

Thanks, Jim. Great song. Hope you have never heard my rendition of it, but I meant every word. I meant it then. I still mean it now. ➔

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# I LOST THE COAT, BUT I KEPT MY CHARACTER

A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold (Proverbs 22:1 KJV).

**Q**uestion: How much is a good coat worth? Short Answer: Not nearly as much as a good testimony. Joseph had both, and he knew the value of each. One could be replaced with enough money, but the other was irreplaceable at any price. One was made with a needle and thread over a few days, but the other was made with good choices, patient responses, and wise decisions over years of day-by-day living.

The story of Joseph beats anything currently airing on television or sitting on a bookshelf. It's full of drama, intrigue, and mystery. It appears to lack comedy throughout most of the narrative, except for what snickering Satan must have been doing. Be assured, however, without gloating or exercising any pride, Joseph got the last laugh.

He had already lived a difficult life.

He was hated by his brothers.

He was stripped of his coat of many colors.

He was thrown into a pit and forsaken.

He was sold into slavery.

He was slandered.

He was thought of least by those he had helped most.



When it couldn't get any worse, a woman tried to seduce him, told a lie about him, and laughed when her husband had him thrown into prison.

Scripture records that one day, as Joseph walked near Potiphar's wife, she reached out and grasped his shoulder. In that instant, Joseph was immediately placed in a battle between right and wrong, but he never struggled with his decision. Almost instinctively, he simply ran away. Others would have taken a longer time to decide.

There's a good reason the apostle Paul said, "Flee . . . youthful lusts" (2 Timothy 2:22).

Now, read these next lines carefully.

Some people, when confronted with temptation, ask themselves these two questions.

Question number one: "What's right?"

Question number two: "Now, what am I going to do?"

Joseph didn't have to ask. He had a heart for God, and nothing was worth offending Him and losing his testimony with others.

A lifetime of integrity prepares you for a moment of temptation. A shoddy life of compromise leaves you vulnerable and open for the Enemy's sinister plan to bring you down.

Joseph's decision was made long before Potiphar's wife ever touched his shoulder. From his youth, he had made good decisions, one following the other, and with each one, his character had become rock solid.

While none of us are above temptation, some of us are more prepared than others, and it comes down to one word—faithfulness.

Catch this image:

Potiphar's wife stands in the hallway grasping an empty coat. That's all she had to show for her wicked attempt to destroy a good man's name. Although for a while, she used it as trumped-up evidence. Joseph's good character eventually vindicated his reputation.

What's your choice today?

Remember, you can always get another coat. ➔





(DAILY BIBLE READING)

- |                                  |         |       |
|----------------------------------|---------|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 239 | Ezekiel | 4-6   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 240 | Ezekiel | 7-9   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 241 | Ezekiel | 10-12 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 242 | Ezekiel | 13-15 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 243 | Ezekiel | 16-18 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 244 | Ezekiel | 19-21 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 245 | Ezekiel | 22-24 |

## (TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL)

[illegible]

# THE CHOICE TO REJOICE

*Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice (Philippians 4:4 KJV).*

I've always enjoyed the Thanksgiving holiday. More important, I like giving thanks, not just on one day in November, but the other 364 days of the year, as well. It's a choice with me.

I choose to align myself with the will of God as revealed in 1 Thessalonians 5:18: "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (KJV).

I choose to join with all nature in jubilant praise to the God of creation as prompted in Psalm 96:12: "Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them; let all the trees of the forest sing for joy" (NIV).

I choose to add my voice with those of the angelic host who cry out, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come" as written in Revelation 4:8.

I choose to rejoice according to this alphabetical listing:

- A I choose to **adjust** my attitude, ascend to a higher altitude, and acclimate to a better atmosphere.
- B I will not sing the **blues**, settle for boredom, or sign up to be belligerent.
- C I do not give in to **complaining**, participate in criticizing, or make room for chronic consternation.
- D I give no place to **doubting**, have no time for debating, and even less time for dissatisfaction.



**E** I refuse to be **envious**, I strive to be energetic, and welcome the opportunity to be encouraging.

**F** I purpose to be **focused**, pray to be faithful, and plan to have fun.

**G** I will not participate in **grumbling**, griping, or groaning.

**H** I am hilariously **happy**, honestly hopeful, and headed for heaven.

**I** I am **identified** with Jesus, inspired by His Word, and ignited by the Holy Spirit.

**J** My life will be **joyful** and jubilant.

**K** I will be **kind**.

**L** I will be **loving**.

**M** I will extend **mercy**.

**N** I refuse **negligence**.

**O** I always prefer **optimism**.

**P** I will practice **praise**.

**Q** I am on a **quest** to please the King.

**R** I want a **repentant** heart.

**S** I want a singing **soul**.

**T** I desire a triumphant **testimony**.

**U** I choose to be **understanding** of others.

**V** I will always **value** my fellow man.

**W** I purpose to be a **worshiper**, not a worrier.

**X** I will “**X**” negativity (really had to stretch to get that one).

**Y** I will **yield** to God’s plan, priorities, and purposes for my family.

**Z** And . . . I plan to enjoy the **zenith** of God’s overcoming power and presence in all I do.

I’ve made my choice.

How about you? ➔



(DAILY BIBLE READING)

- |                                  |         |       |
|----------------------------------|---------|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 246 | Ezekiel | 25–27 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 247 | Ezekiel | 28–30 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 248 | Ezekiel | 31–33 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 249 | Ezekiel | 34–36 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 250 | Ezekiel | 37–39 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 251 | Ezekiel | 40–42 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 252 | Ezekiel | 43–45 |

## (TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL)

[illegible]

# IT WILL RAIN AGAIN

*Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit (Leviticus 26:4 KJV).*

**W**e've all been there. Everything we touched seemed to be marked with success. The blessings were flowing and creativity was so abundant that new songs couldn't be written fast enough and great sermon ideas leaped out of every verse of Scripture you read in your devotional time. The kids were doing great in school, the job seemed to be working out fine, and you thought the "Mayberry" life would never go away.

Then it happened. Tomorrow came on suddenly, and with it came the drought of inspiration, insight, and ideas. Motivation couldn't be found, and depression was lurking around every corner. Midnight-hour prayer sessions, complete with pacing the floor, wringing your hands, and muffling your cries in a pillow became a nightly routine.

What happened?

Well, my friend, you just entered the city limits of "can't take it anymore," located right in the heart of the state of "I give up." The truth is, everybody's journey brings them there. If by chance yours hasn't yet, allow me to give you some helpful tips on how to navigate through it when you arrive; because it is indeed on the map, and you will eventually find it.

- 1. Sit down for a while and wait upon the Lord.***
- 2. Listen for the "still small voice" of reason and direction.***
- 3. Look for the hand of God, even in the smallest and most insignificant things.***
- 4. Work on your patience factor.***



5. *Remember, God allowed you to come to this place for a greater purpose connected to your future.*
6. *Grasp tightly to God's promise that He knows exactly where you are.*
7. *Keep your bags packed, because you're not going to be there forever.*

It was during one of these desert times in my life and early ministry that the Spirit of the Lord spoke the following words to me:

The seed you planted deep has yet to grow.  
You've wondered when you'll reap the things you sow,  
And how long has it been since rain last touched your ground?  
You've searched the skies, but then the rain just can't be found.

But it will rain again, the fruit will fill the vine.  
The stalk will bend with wheat, the grapes break forth with wine.  
So go into your field, your work is not in vain.  
God promised harvest, and I know it will rain.

That song, written almost 30 years ago, has sustained me more than once since then. Allow it to be branded into your soul today. It is the promise of the Lord to His faithful children. It will rain again. ➔

## WEEKLY FLIGHT PATTERN

(DAILY BIBLE READING)

<input type="checkbox"/> Day 253	Ezekiel	46-48
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 254	Daniel	1-3
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 255	Daniel	4-6
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 256	Daniel	7-9
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 257	Daniel	10-12
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 258	Hosea	1-3
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 259	Hosea	4-6



# FLIGHT LOG

## (TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL)

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# CONSISTENT AT BEING INCONSISTENT

*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord* (1 Corinthians 15:58 KJV).

A young man walked into my office one day and said, “Pastor, I need to confess something to you.” Well, I sat up, paid attention, and braced myself for the worst. I didn’t know what he was about to tell me, but as a pastor, I had learned not to be surprised by much.

With all the seriousness he could muster, he announced, “I have finally determined what my problem is.” He went on, “I am just really consistent at being inconsistent.”

I was more stunned than amused. He had not only “nailed” his problem, but also the same problem of a few others in the church as well. I didn’t tell him, but after he left, I wondered if he had even indicted me. I spent some time asking myself, *Am I really as faithful as I should be?*

I suppose most of us have “ups and downs.” But, how many people experience the “ins” and “outs” of Christian living? There is a huge difference between the two. Any child of God can have a difficult or a “down” day. However, faithfulness means that we stay “in” the race ... “in” the boat ... “in” the fight. God never gave us a “get out for a day” pass. We’re “in” this for the duration.

When I think of a pristine pattern of consistency, no better





example comes to mind than that of Daniel. Scripture says, “But when Daniel learned that the law had been signed, he went home and knelt down as usual in his upstairs room, with its windows open toward Jerusalem. He prayed three times a day, just as he had always done, giving thanks to his God” (Daniel 6:10 NLT). Do you see it? He knelt down as usual. He prayed just as he had always done. He was altogether consistent.

A man’s life is always more powerful than his speech. If a man’s *words* may be thought of as pennies, his life *deeds* count as dollars. If there is a disconnect between life and speech, onlookers always choose a man’s practice over his preaching. One of the most meaningful eulogies I can remember reading was spoken by the great reformer, Martin Luther, when a pastor friend died. Luther said simply, “What he preached, he lived.”

God is looking for consistent saints today who value relationship and fellowship with Him, regardless of the challenges life brings. It’s not what we do once in a while that shapes our lives; it’s what we do consistently. Billy Graham pointed out the absolute necessity of being steady and constant: “Consistency, constancy, and undeviating diligence to maintain Christian character are a must if the older generation is to command respect, or even a hearing, from the young.”

Are you a consistent intercessor?

Are you a regular worshiper?

How about a faithful giver to the cause of missions?

Scripture teaches us that we are to be faithful unto death (see Revelation 2:10).

Faithful to the faith, our family, and friends.

I was at a cemetery one day, conducting a graveside service. As I walked away, I noticed someone had etched a most insightful statement on a headstone. The inscription read, “I always knew that I could depend on Him.”

May that be said of me some day—by my family and friends, but most of all by Jesus himself. ➔

[illegible]

# NO REGRETS

*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith*  
(2 Timothy 4:7 KJV).

Everybody ought to live in such a manner that they can have a convincing declaration of departure. Every time I travel from the country and return through customs, I have to exit through one of two gates. One gate is marked, “Things to declare.” The other is marked, “Nothing to declare.” One day, when I exit this life, I hope to go through the gate with something to declare. That’s what Paul did as he was getting ready to meet Jesus. Obviously, he couldn’t take any natural goods from this life, but he left declaring, “I’ve fought a good fight, finished the course, and kept the faith” (see 2 Timothy 4:7). Any regrets he may have had, had long before been covered by the blood of the Lamb, and he was more than qualified to say, “I am now ready to go” (see 2 Timothy 4:6).

How liberating it must have been to be at such a place of confidence and completion that Paul could just throw up his hands and say, “That’s it, all done, assignment finished. Now let’s go home!”

A life fulfilled should be every Christian’s goal. Is that even possible? According to David it is. The secret is found in Psalm 23.

***“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.”*** This is a promise of supplied provision. My daily bread comes from the “Bread of Life” Himself—Jesus Christ. He has promised to provide for all my needs. “My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). To be blessed “according to” someone’s riches is dramatically different from being blessed “out of” their riches. God meets our need in light of His abundant resources. And, oh, what resources He has. He’s not into token giving or token blessings. He is an abundant source of supply.



***“He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul.”*** This is a promise of serene peace. There is a constant and consistent calm available to all who serve the Lord, even when a raging storm is brewing and trouble is breaking out like a prairie fire all around you. Paul said it best, “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed” (2 Corinthians 4:8-9 KJV). The promise of peace does not mean immunity from trouble, but rather a quiet confidence while it is going on.

***“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.”*** This is the promise of surrounding protection. David had his enemies and, though it isn’t a pleasant thought, we are not on everybody’s “favorites list” either; but, if we keep our hearts right, God has promised to fight our battles while we are having dinner. Seriously, David was affirming the overriding protection of God in spite of the proximity of his foes.

***“He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.”*** This is the promise of settled purity. You don’t have to live in sin, because following in the footsteps of Jesus leads to a born-again soul and sanctified mind. He has laid His name on the line to ensure your safe journey down a righteous path. I’ve got a feeling you’ll get there safely.

***“You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over.”*** This is the promise of His sustained presence. The oil used in the anointing process had a long-lasting fragrance about it. It did not soon diminish or evaporate. God’s presence is ever with you, and His abiding joy is there, too, because the Bible states that in His presence, there is fullness of joy (see Psalm 16:11).

***“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”*** This is the promise of a secured paradise. My dad used to say, “I’m followed daily by two angels. One is named Goodness, and the other is named Mercy.” I think Dad was right, and they are helping us every day. God is using them to help guide me to paradise, and once I get there, I don’t ever have to leave. It’s an eternal home, not a temporary vacation. Best of all, Jesus himself will be there to welcome me. When I arrive, I’m going to look for the line for those with something to declare and, if I find one, I will declare with Paul, “I have no regrets,” because standing in the presence of the King will make it all worthwhile. ➔



☐ Day 267	Obadiah	1
☐ Day 268	Jonah	1–4
☐ Day 269	Micah	1–3
☐ Day 270	Micah	4–7
☐ Day 271	Nahum	1–3
☐ Day 272	Habakkuk	1–3
☐ Day 273	Zephaniah	1–3

# FLIGHT LOG

## (TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL)

[illegible]

# HE'S STILL IN THE FIRE

*When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee*  
(Isaiah 43:2 KJV).

**W**hat do you do when the values and commitments you've stood for lead to a fiery trial? Your refusal to compromise only seems to be rewarded with the daunting reality that a great price seems to always go along with doing right. The three Hebrew children found this to be the case when they firmly declined the chance to bow before an idol in obedience to King Nebuchadnezzar's command.

When given the ultimatum, "Bow or Burn," Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego displayed three important traits that you and I can also embrace.

***They were convinced and wouldn't compromise.*** Already knowing the outcome, they determined there was no point in compromising with the king. One compromises only when there is the possibility of a different result. They knew God was in charge and had already secured their future. Such confidence allowed them to declare, "Our God will deliver us." Whether He chooses to deliver from the fire or through it, is always His call to make. The point is, deliverance is coming, so what is the point of giving in to pressure now?

***They remained positive during their predicament.*** Paul said in Philippians 4:8: "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure,



whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.” Difficult circumstances lend themselves to “stinking thinking.” What a challenge it is to not give in to negative thoughts and speech. Proverbs 18:21 says that the power of death and life is in our speech. These young men remained positive by professing and confessing God’s great ability to deliver them. They didn’t request time to think about or even pray about their answer. They positively remained strong in their faith.

***Finally, they worshiped during the worst of times.*** How do I know they worshiped? Because God showed up! The psalmist declared that God dwells in the praises of His people (see Psalm 22:3). Can you do the same? It’s your choice you know. Praise or pout. Worship or worry. Sing or sigh. We have the choice to rejoice.

The king looked into the furnace and saw four men instead of three, and they were all walking around unharmed. He declared that the fourth man looked like the Son of God. He immediately called for their release, and counted as only three came out of the flames.

I just wonder: *Where did that fourth man go?* Surely you know, don’t you? Why, He’s still there in the fire, and He’s there waiting to help you get out just as He did the Hebrew children. Don’t be afraid to face life’s troubles and even those red hot fiery furnaces of circumstances, because the good news is, He’s still in the fire. ➔

## WEEKLY FLIGHT PATTERN

### (DAILY BIBLE READING)

<input type="checkbox"/> Day 274	Haggai	1–2
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 275	Zechariah	1–3
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 276	Zechariah	4–6
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 277	Zechariah	7–9
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 278	Zechariah	10–12
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 279	Zechariah	13–14
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 280	Malachi	1–4

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



# I CAN REST WHEN THE WIND BLOWS

*And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still.  
And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm (Mark 4:39 KJV).*

**T**he ranch owner thought it was odd that this prospective hired hand answered his question the way he did. “Why should I hire you?” he had asked.

The man looking for a job answered, “Because I can sleep when the wind blows.”

The ranch owner wasn’t sure why, but he liked that answer and hired him on the spot. His curiosity was satisfied late one night when a sudden storm began to rip through his spread. As usual, the rancher jumped out of bed and ran to check on everything. To his surprise, the horses and cattle were secure in the stalls. The barn was locked tight and the equipment was in its proper place. This had never happened before, because a storm had always disrupted everything. Then it came to him ... “Where is my new help?” He was not running around checking on anything. Soon enough, he found him sound asleep in the bunkhouse. Somewhat irritated that he was not up worrying about things, the rancher shook him awake and said, “How can you sleep in such a storm?”

The answer was more than assuring.

The hired hand replied, “Being able to sleep when the wind blows means that I have done a good job securing all that is in my charge before I turn in. I leave nothing undone. I care for this place as if it were my very own. The doors are locked tight and the windows are shut firm. The cattle and horses are secure. There’s nothing to worry



about when I've done what I was hired to do." The rancher never worried anymore.

Have you ever read the Bible in Mark 4 and wondered how Jesus could sleep in the bottom of a ship on the stormy Sea of Galilee? It was because He did a good job of being the master of every situation. Why worry, when saying, "Peace be still," is all you have to do to calm everything down? The disciples were afraid, but they should have taken comfort that the One in charge was resting through it all. Their attitude should have been, "If He's not bothered by it, then neither are we. Let's just ride it out."

How about you? Can you rest during your storms of life? Jesus is the master, you know. Go ahead, take a stress break. He is Lord of all. Resign from being master of your world, and let Jesus do His job.

Here's what you'll discover:

***He's the master over disaster.*** That's the whole point of Mark 4 and 5. Here you can read about the disaster the disciples found themselves in as the waves of the sea fought them through the night. Yet, while they were in a panic wondering what to do, Jesus fluffed up his pillow and caught 40 winks. It wasn't that He didn't care; He was just simply in control. He finally stood and demanded calm, and it was over.

***He's the master over devils.*** Jesus had no sooner landed on shore than He was met by a man possessed with demons, crying out in agony. Jesus immediately cast them out and left the man in his right mind.

***He's the master over disease.*** What a busy day in the life of Christ. He calmed a storm and set a man free; and then, a woman who had been sick for 12 years reached out and touched Him, and she was healed.

***He's the master over death.*** Jesus had no sooner healed this woman until He arrived at the home of Jairus and raised up a 12-year-old dead girl who was the delight of her father's heart. Nothing is impossible for Jesus. What a wonderful Lord He is to give us rest in the midst of our storms.

Have you been having trouble getting to sleep? Who needs a glass of warm milk when a good dose of Jesus works every time?

My goodness, I'm a little sleepy.

Pardon me, but it's bedtime, and as my dad used to say, "If you're sitting up with me, I'm feeling better." ➔



<input type="checkbox"/> Day 281	Matthew	1–3
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 282	Matthew	4–6
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 283	Matthew	7–9
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 284	Matthew	10–12
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 285	Matthew	13–15
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 286	Matthew	16–18
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 287	Matthew	19–21

# FLIGHT LOG

## (TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL)

[illegible]

# HE'S ON THE THRONE

*God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness*  
(Psalm 47:8 KJV).

**H**ave you ever asked yourself, “Who is running this show, anyway?” Sure you have—when nothing makes sense and reason and logic collide with your faith; when you’re between a closed and an open door, and experiencing crisis in the corridor, you want to know!

In those times, it’s nice to know—no, on second thought, you have to know—that someone with your best interest in mind is in control.

The sovereignty, the “throne-ship,” of Jehovah God secures my faith. It helps me understand my past, enjoy my present, and anticipate my future.

Understanding that God is securely on His throne has to do with more than just conjuring up biblical images of rainbows, billowing clouds, and singing angels belting out the “Hallelujah” chorus. John’s description in Revelation 4 is awesome reading. I mean, who can take away from the majesty of the following scene:

At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne. Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal (Revelation 4:2-6 NIV).



That's great, and it's real. But, let me explain where I am today. I'm sitting in a hotel in the Dominican Republic. I had to come through here to go into Haiti yesterday. In the eight hours I spent in Port-au-Prince, I saw the inferno of human suffering that follows an earthquake of over 7 on the Richter scale. I watched 6,000 people scramble to stand in a line for food and water at one of the stops I made. I met with pastors whose church buildings are now in rubble, and they tell me their people will never again sit "inside" anything made of concrete and stone. I talked with a pastor's wife whose husband died under the weight of a collapsed wall. From the president's palace to the shantytown village, no one was unaffected. To date, 212,000 are estimated dead. I expect there will be thousands more. One pastor kept saying to me, "But, God is good. God is good."

Do I believe in God's sovereignty and throne-ship any less, because of what I've just seen? Not at all. Actually, His "God-ness" helps me grasp His "goodness" in these types of situations.

Maybe you've recently felt the tremors of life moving beneath your feet. Maybe your foundation didn't hold up, and all that is left of your existence is the rising dust of a collapsed dream. If so, remember this about God and His place on His throne: His vantage point is greater. From where He sits, more can be seen about your present problems and how they relate to your future than you can ever comprehend.

Years ago, while driving to an airport, it occurred to me how limited my horizontal vision was. At best, I could see only a few hundred feet ahead. Once I boarded the plane and ascended to 30,000 feet, I could see for miles as I peered through the small window beside my seat. Everything I saw existed while I was still riding in the car an hour before. I just couldn't see it from there. Often, I can't see the end of a trial, but it's there. There were days I couldn't see the excellent development of my children, but it was there. My challenge, as well as yours, is to somehow climb to the heights of faith and hope that allows for a better view of things.

Scripture tells us His wisdom is infinite. There is no end to it. Who can comprehend His understanding? Job's questions were quelled after he considered the wisdom of God. Listen to his words in Job 12:13: "To God belong wisdom and power; counsel and understanding are his" (NIV).



His methods are meticulous. No one said you had to understand them, just trust them. Gideon didn't understand God's methods and neither did Joshua, but at the end of the day, neither one of them really cared about God's method. They were happy with the outcome, though.

Now that's assurance. ✈

## WEEKLY FLIGHT PATTERN

(DAILY BIBLE READING)

☐ Day 288	Matthew	22–24
☐ Day 289	Matthew	25–28
☐ Day 290	Mark	1–3
☐ Day 291	Mark	4–6
☐ Day 292	Mark	7–9
☐ Day 293	Mark	10–12
☐ Day 294	Mark	13–16

# FLIGHT LOG

(TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL)

[illegible]

# WHEN LIFE IS AT ITS WORST, GOD IS AT HIS BEST

*Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness (Isaiah 41:10 KJV).*

I had never seen a grown man cry like he did. I didn't fault him for it. He had a right to cry. The love of his life was dying and their only child, a 35-year-old daughter, had been diagnosed recently with the same sickness that was claiming his precious wife. In a matter of a few weeks, he would be alone, and he knew it.

As we stood on his front porch out of hearing distance of his wife and daughter, he broke. What do you say to a man at a time like that? I whispered a prayer and instantly said to him, "Jim, I promise you, when life is at its worst, God is at His best."

He seemed to be comforted by those words. I left and got alone with my thoughts. *That really sounded good, pastoral, and well thought out*, I said to myself. Then it hit me—do I really believe that? That year alone, I had officiated more than 30 funerals. I had stood in the middle of a street and held close a young husband and wife, as we watched their home burn to the ground, and there was nothing anyone could do. I had been called upon to counsel with strong men who had lost their jobs, parents who were coping with teens addicted to drugs, and others who were even questioning their faith in God.

Who is this God who has it all under control and knows my need? Does He really have a clue about my life?



A clue? I believe so. Just consider this the next time you wonder what He knows about you.

***He is the God who cares.*** “Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7). Have you ever considered the investment it takes for someone to care about you? They give you their heart, their thoughts, their prayers, and even their resources to help bring you to a stable place in life. Jesus has done no less by allowing us to become part of His heart. He really does care.

***He is the God who listens.*** “He is not deaf, so that he cannot hear.” We read in the Bible where David said, “I cried unto the Lord and he heard me and delivered me out of a horrible pit” (see Psalm 40:1-2). There is a frequency that our heavenly Father is always tuned into; it is station P-R-A-Y-E-R. Try it soon; you’ll see.

***He is the God who understands.*** According to Hebrews 4, He became like us so He could feel our needs. With His omniscient mind, He already knew the fact of our infirmities, but He chose to become acquainted with the feeling of our infirmities, as well. With great integrity, God can say “I know how you feel,” and really mean it.

***He is the God who enters.*** Jesus left for Himself the prerogative to intervene in the affairs of my life at any time. What tremendous peace there is in knowing that, at any moment, a divine intrusion can turn the tables on the Enemy of my soul. Just think about the woman who was about to be stoned to death, but when Jesus entered the picture, her accusers walked away. Think about the thief hanging on a cross near Jesus. He was about to die as a miserable lost soul, but Jesus entered the scene and took him to paradise. Maybe you haven’t counted the times He entered into your life, but I can promise you that He has, and He will again. When? About the time when life can’t get any worse, He will enter, and all doubts about Him will exit; and you will know that God really does have a CLUE:

He Cares,

He Listens,

He Understands, and—always on time—

He Enters. ➔





## WEEKLY FLIGHT PATTERN

(DAILY BIBLE READING)

- |                                  |      |       |
|----------------------------------|------|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 295 | Luke | 1-3   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 296 | Luke | 4-6   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 297 | Luke | 7-9   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 298 | Luke | 10-12 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 299 | Luke | 13-15 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 300 | Luke | 16-18 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 301 | Luke | 19-21 |

# FLIGHT LOG

(TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL)

[illegible]

# ONE MORE ROUND

*Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses*  
(1 Timothy 6:12 KJV).

**I**n the early 1900s, the world heavyweight champion boxer, Gentleman Jim Corbett, was quite the attraction. Sportswriters and news commentators were incessantly on his heels for an interview. Not always easy to pin down for a conversation, he was snagged one day by a reporter looking for a great insight into the mind of the great athlete. “What does it take to be the world heavyweight champion?” the reporter asked. Everyone waited on Gentleman Jim’s response.

“It takes ...” Jim paused.

“It takes being willing to fight one more round.”

“Nothing profound or even difficult about that,” you say.

Oh, really? Not unless you’ve been knocked senseless and the world is spinning around you. Going one more round isn’t hard unless your arms feel like they weigh a ton and your vision is blurred from the last barrage of punches you’ve endured. What’s so hard about that?

You’ve been there; you know exactly what it’s like. There’s a price to pay when the words, “I quit,” are not allowed in your vocabulary. When everything around you has sapped your strength, and even those closest to you don’t understand your tenacity, you keep fighting, because you know the win is worth the pain.

Paul understood. That’s why he said, “When you’ve done all you know to do to stand, keep standing” (Ephesians 6:13-14, paraphrased).

Don’t give up and don’t give in to the temptation to yield to your weak and tired feelings.



Is it possible? Absolutely! Here's how any champion keeps going:

**Trust your trainer.** No one really appreciates process and preparation until it is needed. I always liked that scene in *Karate Kid* where Mr. Miagi had Daniel wax his car in continual circular motions for hours on end. Then, he had him paint a fence in those vertical smooth strokes, up and down, up and down. Daniel didn't appreciate it at all until he got into a karate competition, and all those moves he had learned in training came to be important in the fight. A true disciple will trust the wisdom of his Lord. Whatever He's using to teach you now will be important later.

**Pace yourself.** Fight with the end in mind, then take the careful steps that get you there. Yours may be a 15-round fight. Use every one of them if necessary. Don't feel like you have to knock out your adversary in the first round. It is not a sin to rest between rounds, so do it.

**Be consistent.** I know little about boxing, but I've watched enough on television to know that while a knockout punch gets the publicity, in reality, it is that steady and consistent left-hand jab that wears down the opponent. Consistency in prayer, reading your Bible, and attending worship at church are the best ways to ensure yourself the ultimate victory. I'll never forget what a young man said to me one day while counseling him. He said, "Pastor, my problem has been that I've always been consistent at being inconsistent." Don't let that describe your life.

**Keep your courage.** Don't lose heart in the middle of your struggle, because God is your strength and He is an ever-present help in the time of trouble (see Psalm 46:1). If God is for you, who can be against you? (see Romans 8:31). "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). David said, "When my enemies rose up against me, they stumbled and fell" (see Psalm 27:2). I just got a new dose of courage writing down those scriptures. That's the effect of His Word. Read it and be encouraged.

**Listen for the cheers of your fans.** Paul said we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses (see Hebrews 12:1). You can't imagine all the people who are in the stands cheering you on. Loved ones



are there. Prophets of the Bible are there, too. Most important, your greatest fan of all, Jesus, is there. He'll even get in the ring with you, if you'll ask Him. There are more for you and cheering you on than any who are against you.

Why, they're polishing your victory crown now. You can't lose. ➔

## WEEKLY FLIGHT PATTERN

(DAILY BIBLE READING)

- |                                  |      |       |
|----------------------------------|------|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 302 | Luke | 22-24 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 303 | John | 1-3   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 304 | John | 4-6   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 305 | John | 5-7   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 306 | John | 10-12 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 307 | John | 13-15 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 308 | John | 16-18 |

# FLIGHT LOG

(TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL)

[illegible]

# NO THORNS IN THE CROWN

*The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne (Revelation 4:10 KJV).*

What a mockery it was to weave together a crown made of thorns, thistles, and briars, and place it upon the head of Jesus while He was tortured and crucified. As wicked men placed this “halo from hell” on his brow, they cried, “Hail to the King” in relentless ridicule and scorn.

Having already suffered the lashes of a lethal whip and the bruises of calloused fists, Jesus was almost beyond recognition with His swollen eyes and lacerated cheekbones. An uncaring soldier had thrown the Master’s own scarlet robe around His blood-soaked back while another placed a reed between His tender hands bound by filthy ropes. Just then some uncaring man with a warped sense of humor and a propensity for sadistic amusement said, “Let’s top it off with this!” as he thrust the thorn-made crown onto the brow of the Christ.

What a horrific sight it must have been. It’s beyond description. Isaiah tried when through prophetic vision he saw a “wounded lamb led to the slaughter” (53:7). He also spoke of Jesus being as a “root plucked out of dry ground” (53:2). Isaiah said He had no form nor beauty about Him and we hid our faces from Him (see 53:3).

Before Jesus experienced the wounds of the nails driven into His flesh, He felt the excruciating pain of the thorns. Tradition indicates it could have been a thorn known as the Arabian *naba*, a hard and lengthy nail-like thorn. It had no flexibility at all that allowed it to be



weakened when it met the surface of another object. It must surely have had a deep penetrating presence. How our Master must have grimaced in agony.

The thorns must have been repulsive things—almost a reject of nature. They were an ugly, embarrassing reminder of the curse God put on the ground when Adam and Eve sinned against Him in the Garden. It reminds me of a picture of sin itself—unrelenting, harsh and ugly; sinister, having no pleasant purpose and bringing pain to everything it touched.

A crown of thorns.

That's what kissed His brow that day on Calvary.

But that was then ...

What a difference Resurrection makes.

What a difference God's plan in eternity makes.

What a difference reading the end of the Book makes.

No, not this book—THE Book!

The crown of John's description was seen as golden and bedecked with rare jewels. This royal diadem in and of itself is a powerful message in eternity. Revelation 14:14 says: "Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle."

***Righteousness prevails over evil.*** It will happen. Don't let the little temporary wins of the Enemy set you back. Battles may be lost occasionally, but the war is already won. You may say the fight is "fixed." The Bible says so (Isaiah 51:8). Even David asked, "Why do the heathen rage and the wicked prosper?" (see Psalm 2:1). I suppose to the natural eye it would seem that sometimes life just isn't fair. Who said it ever would be? It doesn't matter; we still win!

***Honor overpowers shame and disgrace.*** Christ emptied Himself totally in order to bring us the abundance of living. Paul said in Philippians 2:8, "He humbled himself and became obedient unto the death, even the death of the cross" (KJV). Think of it. The great majestic Prince of Heaven was suspended between earth and heaven.



Man was at his worst as he humiliated our Savior at Golgotha. But, Paul went on to say that because of Christ's great obedience, God has now highly exalted Him and given Him a name above every name. Every knee bows to Him and every tongue confesses Jesus is Lord! God also has a way of bringing honor out of your own crisis. The devil will soon have to acknowledge that you are a greater champion than even he thought you were.

***Victory ultimately rises out of struggle.*** Resurrection follows crucifixion. A renewal is on its way. I'm often amazed as I see a blade of grass or even a flower that has managed to sprout through the pavement. I ponder it when I see it. Likewise, God has given you the inward strength by His Holy Spirit to persevere and push.

Never let quitting become an option for you. This time of struggle may not pass as quickly as you would hope, but if it doesn't, you will find that even in the midst of it, you can "break through" to magnificent victory. The crown is worth the conflict, struggle, and pain. One has your name on it. It's being polished even now, and when you get it, recognize that it is only part of your reward for being true and faithful. The greatest reward will come when you are permitted to take it off your own head and lay it at Jesus' feet. ➔

## WEEKLY FLIGHT PATTERN

(DAILY BIBLE READING)

<input type="checkbox"/> Day 309	John	19–21
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 310	Acts	1–3
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 311	Acts	4–6
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 312	Acts	7–9
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 313	Acts	10–12
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 314	Acts	13–15
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 315	Acts	16–18

[illegible]



# THE MIRACLE AT THE HOUSE OF MERCY

*Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches (John 5:2 KJV).*

**B**ethesda. What a name. It means “House of Mercy” in the Bible. It’s a great name for a hospital and an even better name for a church. It has more than a nice ring to it.

In the Bible, Bethesda was a pool where sick people would be taken to await the “troubling of the waters.” Tradition had it that once a year, an angel came and stirred the water. Whoever stepped in, or fell in, first was healed.

The Pool of Bethesda was known more for its troubling than its title. Something seemed to happen there. Cots turned to confidence, pain turned to praise, and stress turned to serenity. However, the problem was that only one person each year could go home well. Everyone else just went home wet. Wet and sick. Wet and disappointed. Wet and waiting ... for another year to roll by, so they could try again. In light of this fact, it really was a pitiful pool. One man had tried for 38 years to get in on time, but someone always beat him to it.

Jesus came to the Pool of Bethesda one day and asked the gentleman a most poignant question: “Do you want to be made well?” (v. 6).

How could he not want his healing after all this time?

It is something to consider. It’s hard to believe, but some have made a comfort zone of their crises and have built around them a support system entirely dependent on their current set of circumstances. At



some point, we have to choose. Do I want this way of mere existence, or is it really my choice to embrace a new life of victory?

The man made the right choice, and at the Lord's command, "Take up your bed and walk" (v. 8), he entered into a new life of hope and fulfillment. His back had been on his bed for 38 years, but now his bed was on his back as he walked away from an annual journey to a pitiful pool, and began to drink from a fulfilling and fantastic fountain.

How about you today?

Real mercy is found in Jesus.

He invites you now.

Step on in. ➔

## WEEKLY FLIGHT PATTERN

(DAILY BIBLE READING)

<input type="checkbox"/> Day 316	Acts	19–21
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 317	Acts	22–24
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 318	Acts	25–28
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 319	Romans	1–3
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 320	Romans	4–6
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 321	Romans	7–9
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 322	Romans	10–12



# FLIGHT LOG

## (TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL)

[illegible]

# SERMONS THAT GET IN THE WAY OF THE MESSAGE

*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me*  
(John 12:32 KJV).

**E**ven with 14 pages of notes, all I needed was seven minutes to preach my first sermon. Now, after almost 38 years of preaching, I seldom use any notes, and I have no problem clocking in at 45 minutes most of the time.

That first sermon was a rough start for a 16-year-old, but it certainly has a permanent place in my memory. Nervously, I stumbled through some lame opening remarks that had no significance and then said, “Let’s stand for prayer.” I’d seen my father do that before he began his sermons, and I thought it was appropriate. Unfortunately, an old man in the crowd of 12 people thought I said, “I need some air.” He then proceeded to walk behind me, stepped upon a metal folding chair, and reached for a chain attached to a ceiling fan. When the blades began spinning around, the resulting breeze blew my precious 14 pages across the stage.

Two little grandmas jumped up and helped collect them. In a jumbled discombobulation, they slapped them back on the pulpit for me. What they said next was classic. “That ought to help, Sonny.”

It helped all right. It helped mark my memory for the rest of my life. The subject of the sermon?



It was called, “The Real Thing,” and it was about striving for authentic Christianity. And to think, I covered that subject in just seven minutes.

Years of experience helps one to hone a craft and develop a style. I hope I’m better at presentation and a little more in command of myself now.

Styles can be flexible, depending on where you are speaking; but one thing must remain constant—the message must be clear.

Many preachers could be good thespians and could make a living in theater. A good public speaker understands the importance of reading a room and holding people’s attention with voice inflections, gestures, and funny anecdotes. However, too many audiences walk away remembering the messenger rather than the message.

For me, I must remember that sermons should point people to Jesus. Otherwise, they become rambling speeches that can seem eternal in length, but have no eternal relevance to lost souls.

Jesus must not get lost in my gestures, and His grace must never be dwarfed by my efforts at proper hermeneutics and homiletics. My expository preaching shouldn’t be empty meanderings, and my theological exegesis must not leave people in a fog.

Jesus said Himself, “If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto Me.”

So here’s the bottom line: our sermons must never get in the way of the message.

Enough said. ➔

## WEEKLY FLIGHT PATTERN

(DAILY BIBLE READING)

☐ Day 323	Romans	13–16
☐ Day 324	1 Corinthians	1–3
☐ Day 325	1 Corinthians	4–6
☐ Day 326	1 Corinthians	7–9
☐ Day 327	1 Corinthians	10–12
☐ Day 328	1 Corinthians	13–16
☐ Day 329	2 Corinthians	1–3

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# THANKSGIVING TRAVEL

*Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication  
with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God”*  
(Philippians 4:6 KJV).

**M**ost of us have it in common. There is some place we call home, and it doesn't matter where we find ourselves; somehow, all roads lead there, if only in our thoughts and dreams.

I had just landed in Chattanooga, and sitting near me was a young soldier returning home for the Thanksgiving holiday. He was the only soldier on the little commuter flight and was warmly applauded by the rest of us. I'm sure he appreciated it, but his greatest pleasure came when nine of his relatives, led by his mother, welcomed him with homemade signs and banners. It's a long way from Iraq back to Chattanooga. The looks on their faces as he approached them brought a leap in my own heart, and I didn't even know them.

Whether geographically, spiritually, or emotionally, we all travel far from home at times. Distance has way too many drawbacks to make it appealing for long—too far away to embrace and too far to catch a glimpse of a familiar face. Who needs another souvenir anyway? I've purchased too many cheap trinkets that hold no long-term memory and certainly no long-term meaning. What I really love collecting are the memories of friendships and experiences that seem to never die. My fondest collection consists of the smiles and laughter of my children, the circling dance of my terrier, and the warm embrace of my faithful wife Paula when I return home.



Someday, I'll find another welcome. Familiar faces will greet me, and this time, I'll never leave again. No more security lines to go through or luggage to haul. A few who have gone before me will be waiting, and the cheering of friends will greet me.

A monument to Christopher Columbus stands in the Spanish city of Valladolid, where the great explorer died. An interesting detail of the imposing statue is a rampant lion seen destroying one word of the Latin inscription that had been part of Spain's national motto for centuries.

Before the intrepid explorer made his voyages, Spanish sailors thought they had reached the far reaches of earth; thus, their motto was "Non Plus Ultra," or "Nothing Else Beyond." The word being obliterated under the lion's paw is "Non," or "Nothing," making the motto read simply, "Plus Ultra," or "More Beyond." The valiant explorer had shown the world there was, indeed, "More Beyond."

It is a discovery all of us will make when we arrive home. I don't suppose there will be any handmade banners bearing my name or streamers or balloons; but I have read about a crown, and I expect to find my name written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Home is sounding better all the time, and it will be the greatest Thanksgiving Day of all. ➔

## WEEKLY FLIGHT PATTERN

(DAILY BIBLE READING)

<input type="checkbox"/> Day 50	Numbers	1-3
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 51	Numbers	4-6
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 52	Deuteronomy	1-3
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 53	Deuteronomy	4-6
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 54	Deuteronomy	7-9
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 55	Deuteronomy	10-12
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 56	Deuteronomy	13-15





# FLIGHT LOG

## (TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL)

[illegible]

# WHEN IT HURTS TO HEAL

*For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us*  
(Romans 8:18 KJV).

Ask anyone who has been through physical therapy and they will tell you the path to healing sometimes can bring tears to the eyes. The first walk down a hospital corridor following knee replacement surgery can be grueling. Pulling on weights in order to strengthen shoulder muscles following a corrective procedure may seem like torture to the patient, yet the therapist knows unless a limb is made to function, the muscles can atrophy and infection can become threatening to the overall health of the body. Often, it's necessary to endure pain in order to enjoy the eventual healing that leads to a more fulfilling life.

The old saying, "No pain, no gain," is more reason than rhyme. The desire and motivation to be at our personal best should always exceed the easier path of least resistance. Always know your heavenly Father is focused on your recovery and restoration for a productive life, and He's just as focused on His divine prescription which leads to that end.

I remember the occasions when my children were ill with a cold and their mother attempted to get them to take cough medicine. The faces they could make were comical to say the least. Paula would remind them the medicine had been transformed with grape or orange flavoring to make it easier for them to "take their medicine." She then followed the instructions typed on the label that read,



“Shake well before taking.” Without fail, the more pleasant flavoring would mix with the medicine and administering the syrup became an easier chore.

Mind you, God never promised an “easy” prescription, and He certainly won’t force it upon us. He does, however, give us an instruction that makes it all possible, and here it is:

“Shake it and take it.”

Here’s why:

“All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

Even Jesus “endured” the cross while “despising” its shame, because He knew His resurrection and our redemption lay just ahead.

So, set your eyes on the end result, because a greater glory awaits and will soon be revealed when healing manifests itself in your life. ➔

## WEEKLY FLIGHT PATTERN

### (DAILY BIBLE READING)

<input type="checkbox"/> Day 330	2 Corinthians	4–6
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 331	2 Corinthians	7–9
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 332	2 Corinthians	10–13
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 333	Galatians	1–3
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 334	Galatians	4–6
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 335	Ephesians	1–3
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 336	Ephesians	4–6

[illegible]

# THINGS TOO BROKEN TO MEND

*And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel (Jeremiah 18:4-6 KJV).*

I almost missed it. It was not the focal point of the picture, but rather a seemingly insignificant addition to the greater scene. I had stumbled upon a “starving artist” show and was captivated by an oil painting depicting a scene from the Old West. Being from Texas, it was a good opportunity to reflect upon my raising, so I took some time to study it. The artist had painted an old town scene complete with a one-room schoolhouse, the sheriff’s office, the town hotel, and saloon. Western novelist Louis L’amour would have been right at home.

At the end of the dirt road stood the blacksmith’s shop, along with the proprietor working in front with his hammer raised in the air. Over the door of the shop, the artist had painted a sign. Really, it was more than a sign. It was a message that touched my heart deeply: “I specialize in fixing things that are too broken to mend.” I didn’t buy the painting from the starving artist, because I was an almost-starving young pastor at the time. But, I did acquire the message, and I’ve never gotten over it.

I don’t know a thing about being a blacksmith, but I do know a little about the love our heavenly Father has for His children. I have taken many broken things to Him that I thought were beyond repair. I’ve found it amazing what He could do with broken dreams and shattered



hearts through the years. I don't know how He does it, nor can I always comprehend His willingness to invest His time on my demolished projects. I just know He never leaves anything undone. Our Lord is not merely in the repair business; He is in the "making it just like new" business. Brokenness is His specialty, and it doesn't matter if yours came at the hands of others or even if it was self-inflicted.

Brokenness has a way of hurting more, if it is a result of your own carelessness or bad decisions. That's when things have the appearance of being just "too far gone" or "broken beyond repair." Peter was a called disciple with a brilliant future as a leader of the New Testament church. It is a long fall from the pinnacles of promise to the brokenness of disappointment in oneself. He watched his Lord taken away to be tried and crucified, knowing he had denied Him three times, and lost all courage to try to defend Him. What could he offer anyone now with such a resume of failed attempts at discipleship and faithfulness?

What a mess! Straightening out Peter's life was like untangling fishing line, but the One who should have been the most offended was the One who would untangle it for him. By the time Jesus was finished fixing things, Peter had preached 3,000 souls into God's kingdom on the Day of Pentecost. He gave leadership to the early church and topped that by writing two books in the New Testament. I would say Jesus fixed things pretty well, wouldn't you?

How?

Jesus refused to give up on someone He believed in. God has a tenacious demeanor about Him, and He continually finds reasons to "keep hanging on." Why, the Bible says that He even "married Himself to the backslider" (see Jeremiah 3:14). Then, Jesus refused to mistake the moment for the man. Somehow, Jesus knew that Peter, the man, was greater than his temporary spiritual anemia. God has the wonderful ability to look at us through the eyes of potentiality and greatness.

Finally, Jesus refused to trade the future for the past. Never forget that your past has passed and God chooses to not remember the sins of those days, once they are covered by the blood of Jesus Christ. Don't forget, though, that before you can move into your future, your future has to move into you. You must embrace it for yourself.



Your problem, or even your many problems, is not too great for Him. ➔

(DAILY BIBLE READING)

- |                                  |                 |     |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|-----|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 337 | Philippians     | 1-4 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 338 | Colossians      | 1-4 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 339 | 1 Thessalonians | 1-3 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 340 | 1 Thessalonians | 4-5 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 341 | 2 Thessalonians | 1-3 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 342 | 1 Timothy       | 1-3 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 343 | 1 Timothy       | 4-6 |

## (TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL)

[illegible]

# THE PRESENCE OF AN ABSENCE

*Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me (Psalm 51:11).*

**S**aul was a strong man and a greatly admired leader. He fit the profile and commanded attention. You might say he had “stage presence.” It wasn’t always that way, though. In the early days, he struggled with inferiority, intimidation, as well as an advanced case of “bashfulness.”

King Saul had a humble beginning, but quickly rose to be the most recognized power in Israel. The secret of his early success was found in his humility and dependence upon the Lord. However, all his conquests—with the accompanying applause and esteem—played with his ego and wrecked his judgment. After a season of reaping many benefits of leaning on the Lord, he became more dependent on his own talents and natural abilities until, finally, the Lord left him alone to function in his own strength. Saul’s strength then actually became his weakness, and he found himself going through the motions without the abiding presence of God.

That thought terrifies me. But terrified as I am, I know a man can attempt and even believe he has succeeded in operating without the Lord’s help—for a while.

Has it ever happened to you?

Maybe you didn’t realize it at first, because it often requires others to recognize that the presence of an absence even exists in your life.





Here are the symptoms:

- Prayerless performances*
- Tearless eyes*
- Judgmental attitudes*
- Poor stewardship*
- Casual and careless demeanor toward sin*
- Critical spirit*
- Bitterness*
- Jealousy*

Saul was afflicted with all these symptoms and more. He thought wearing the crown equated to being king, but God had already chosen a humble young man by the name of David to take his place.

How sad it is to be so deceived.

Never forget that it takes more than a crown to be recognized as king. It takes more than a pulpit to be recognized as pastor, and more than a large following to be recognized as a success.

It takes His presence.

His presence brings approval, and His presence guarantees the ultimate victory.

Saul lost it.

David found it, and would even describe its fulfillment years later when he said in Psalm 16:11, “In Your presence is fullness of joy.”

My prayer for you is that you will never experience the “presence of the absence” of His divine and wonderful presence. ➔

## WEEKLY FLIGHT PATTERN

### (DAILY BIBLE READING)

<input type="checkbox"/> Day 344	2 Timothy	1–4
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 345	Titus	1–3
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 346	Philemon	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 347	Hebrews	1–3
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 348	Hebrews	4–6
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 349	Hebrews	7–9
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 350	Hebrews	10–13

[illegible]

# TEMPTATION ISN'T SIN, BUT ...

*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it (1 Corinthians 10:13 KJV).*

**A**re you like the man who said, “I can resist anything but temptation?” I hope not, but if you are, I have some good news for you. You can win over temptation by arming yourself with the knowledge of what it is and how to deal with it.

First of all, understand temptation is not sin. If it were, then Jesus sinned while in the wilderness. Scripture tells the story of the devil’s attack on our Savior shortly after His baptism by John in the Jordan. On three occasions, Jesus was tempted, and each time He triumphed over the devil by resisting him with the Word of God. By doing so, Jesus exemplified our ability to do the same.

The Book of James gives us the trail that temptation takes on its way to becoming sin.

“Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:14-15 KJV).

Temptation takes the H3 highway: Head—Heart—Hands.

The battleground of the mind is where temptation should be stopped. “Be ... transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2 KJV).



If temptation ever gets to your heart, it is much more difficult to conquer, but not impossible. You can still stop it, even in that advanced stage.

Psalms 51:10 says: “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me” (KJV).

When it reaches your hands and is finally acted upon, then you are left to deal with the fallout and consequences of sin.

How does one keep temptation in check?

**1. Recognize your tendencies.** You are a human being with human tendencies. No one knows you better than you know yourself. You know what your eyes are prone to, and you know where your thoughts travel. Face up to your propensities, and establish necessary disciplines. Do it before the temptations show up.

**2. Run away from sin opportunities.** Don’t ever think you can play with temptation. Quit trying to see how close you can walk to the fire without being burned. Be like Joseph when Potiphar’s wife tried to seduce him—he simply ran away, leaving his coat in her hands. Remember, it’s better to lose a good coat than good character.

**3. Resist with the Word.** That’s what Jesus did. He simply quoted Scripture to the devil by saying, “It is written . . . Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God” (Matthew 4:7 KJV). Do you have enough Word in you to fight back? If not, you’d better get it.

**4. Refocus with praise.** Temptation is more about Satan attacking God than attacking you. Here’s why. Temptation is Satan’s attempt to rob God of His praise coming from you. The greater thing you can do when tempted to sin is to stop what you’re doing and start praising God. It’ll work every time.

There is no way in this world you can tell a lie and praise God at the same time.

It is impossible to steal and praise God while stuffing your pockets with money that doesn’t belong to you.

You can’t praise and gossip at the same time. Sweet and bitter waters cannot flow from the same fountain.



**5. Repent quickly.** There's a reason God loved David, and kept blessing him even though he was among the most notable sinners in the Bible. Simply put, David was better at repenting than he was sinning.

If you sin, remember, you have an advocate with the Father. Run to Him. You can, and you will, receive forgiveness immediately. Never delay repenting, but remember that repentance is more than just saying, "God, I'm sorry." Repentance literally means to turn around and go the other way.

That's what you can do, and you can do it right now. Don't let temptation get the best of you. Make up your mind to get the best over temptation.

The best over temptation?

Absolutely!

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life" (James 1:12 KJV). ➔

## WEEKLY FLIGHT PATTERN

(DAILY BIBLE READING)

<input type="checkbox"/> Day 351	James	1-3
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 352	James	4-5
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 353	1 Peter	1-3
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 354	1 Peter	4-5
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 355	2 Peter	1-3
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 356	1 John	1-3
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 357	1 John	4-5

[illegible]

# TURBULENCE, TRUST, AND A SAFE LANDING

*But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint (Isaiah 40:31 KJV).*

**T**he story is told about an elderly man who had never traveled by plane before. His family purchased a ticket so he could fly to a reunion in a far away place. He reluctantly boarded the plane, sat down, and buckled his seatbelt.

The man held tightly to the armrest and nervously fidgeted in his seat, enduring the turbulence until the plane finally landed at his destination. As his family greeted him at the airport, they asked, “How was your flight, Pop?”

He replied, “Oh, it was okay, I guess, but I never did put my whole weight on that thing the entire time it was in the air!”

Well, that’s what he thought.

Have you ever learned to “put your weight down” on the faithfulness of God? Or are you like the man I heard about who fell off a cliff and grabbed a branch growing out of the mountain on his way down? He yelled for help and a voice quickly responded, saying, “Let go, take My hand, and I’ll pull you up.”

He yelled back, “Who are you?”

The voice replied, “This is God talking.”

The man thought a second and said, “Is anybody else up there?”

How trusting are you when there just isn’t much to hold on to?

How trusting are you when turbulent skies are knocking your plane around in the air?



Life can get bumpy. You've tightened your seatbelt, gripped tightly, and hoped for the best. But, there are still those times when you wonder, *Will I land safely at my destination?*

Yes, you will, and here's how I know.

***The promises of God declare it.*** In Hebrews 13:5, the Father promised us: "I will never leave you."

In Matthew 28:20, Jesus said, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

In John 14:26, we are promised that the Holy Spirit will abide with us, be our Teacher, as well as our Guide and Comforter.

***The performance of the Savior will deliver it.*** I can trust Him for the future, because of His faithfulness in the past.

It's a well-worn verse of Scripture, yet it remains new in my heart: "Jesus Christ . . . the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

Based on what He's brought me through already, I'm confident He will take me through the rest of the journey.

So, how can we not arrive safely at our destination?

Relax, enjoy the trip, and know that you can indeed put your weight on Him.

"Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7). ➔

## WEEKLY FLIGHT PATTERN

(DAILY BIBLE READING)

<input type="checkbox"/> Day 358	2 John, 3 John, Jude
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 359	Revelation 1–3
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 360	Revelation 4–6
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 361	Revelation 7–9
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 362	Revelation 10–12
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 363	Revelation 13–15
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 364	Revelation 16–18
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 365	Revelation 19–22





## FLIGHT LOG

(TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL)

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



# Life in the Exit Row

*Turbulence, Trust,  
and a Safe Landing*

This book is . . . classic Tim Hill. It's easy to read and easy to understand, and it's hard to put down, once you've started. He is one of those individuals who has been called "road warriors"—people whose work requires them to spend much of their time on the road, in airplanes and hotel rooms. It is from this experience that he writes these delightful short reflections which will resonate with readers everywhere, whether they are "frequent flyers" or not.

Tim Hill has a special talent, a gift for talking about God in a way that unwraps and communicates profound truth in a package everyone can enjoy and understand. That gift shines through in this book; it's a book you will want to read, then probably pass on to someone else. Rarely has anyone taught us so much "from the exit row." It's really good stuff!

—From the Foreword by Dr. Paul Conn

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr. Tim Hill has served in national and international Christian leadership for many years. He currently serves as general overseer of the Church of God—Cleveland, Tennessee. Previously he led Church of God World Missions as the general director. His travels have taken him to more than 100 nations of the world giving oversight to the large multifaceted and diverse ministry of more than seven million constituents. Previous ministry roles include assistant general overseer and secretary general of the Church of God; chairman of the Church of God International Executive Council; and administrative bishop of the Church of God in Southern Ohio and Oklahoma. Prior to entering administrative work, Dr. Hill served as

senior pastor of River Oak Church of God in Danville, Virginia, where he hosted daily television and radio programs. He is a graduate of Lee University, Cleveland, Tennessee, and received an Honorary Doctorate of Ministry from the Church of God Theological Seminary, Cleveland, Tennessee.

Dr. Hill has authored several books of sermons and has written 200 gospel songs. He is the author of the number one song, *He's Still in the Fire*, which was voted Song of the Year by *Gospel Voice Magazine*. He began recording at age 16 and has 18 recording projects to his credit, including many original songs.

Traveling extensively worldwide, Dr. Hill speaks in major denominational and interdenominational conventions and conferences. He is married to Paula and they have three daughters, Melinda, Brittany, and Tara. He is grandfather to Timothy Brayden, Hailey Taylor, Lucas Reed Maness, and Jaxon River and Jameson Hill Sharpe.

