

7 REASONS
to keep on
LIVING

T.M. ANTHONY

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All Scripture quotations in this volume are taken from the Living Bible unless otherwise indicated.

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PREFACE

I'm standing on the bridge rail watching the shallow waters ripple under the moonlight. It is 2:30 in the morning. I haven't had a decent night's sleep in weeks. My eyes are drawn to the jagged rocks protruding out of the water, inviting my head for a freefall. I'm 17 years old.

"Jump off head first," I tell myself, "and that will be the end of that."

My restless nights are caused by my inability to find a good reason to keep up this charade people call life. What is the point? I look at adults, who are supposed to be what I should want to be when I'm older—and can see nothing worth pursuing. It seems like a hollow dance. I can't make myself want to be a

part of it.

I'm not exactly sure what pulls me off the rail. Maybe it's the thought of my friends and classmates grieving for no more than two weeks. Maybe it's a desire to show them all that I can be something—the ultimate revenge. Maybe it's curiosity about what might come next.

FAST FORWARD TEN YEARS.

I'm standing in front of a thousand students at a high school in Iowa. I'm talking to them about life and death and the choices they are confronted with in between. I'm talking about the pain I went through and telling them that they don't have to choose permanent answers for temporary problems. I invite any students who want to talk further to meet me in the band room for a deeper discussion.

The meeting in the band room goes well. A couple dozen students show up and we have some good, gut-level give and take. Students leave with more hope than they came in with.

I'm walking quickly to my car through a building rain shower.

A girl and a guy approach me, "Mitch, can we talk for a minute?"

"Sure," I respond, reaching into my trunk for an umbrella. "What's on your mind?"

She begins to speak. Her eyes are pleading and desperate. "I made Tim come here with me, as a last favor. He doesn't want to be here. But I want you to talk to him."

I look at Tim. His eyes are cold and empty, like he's not really here.

"Tim, you're lucky to have a friend who cares this much. Tell me about your life."

"What life?" he replies. "I haven't left my room for five years except to come to school. When I get back home, I'll go back in and stay until I come back to school."

"What happened five years ago?" I ask.

"My dad killed himself," is his answer.

"And you're thinking of doing the same," I reply.

“More than thinking,” Tim says. “I’ve got it all rigged up.”

“Tell me about it,” I prompt.

“I have a rifle sitting on a chair facing my bed,” Tim describes. “It is balanced on the back of the chair. I have a string attached to the trigger. I have a bullet in the chamber. I sit on the edge of my bed and hold the string connected to the trigger. I’ve rehearsed it a number of times.”

“Tim,” I answer, “I’m not going to preach to you and tell you what to do with your life, or death, for that matter. But I would like to ask you a favor.”

“What’s that?” he asks politely.

“I’d like for you to read this book.” I reach into my pocket and pull out a copy of *7 Reasons to Keep On Living*.

“I just want your word that whatever you decide to do, you will wait to do it until you have read this short book.”

“I can do that,” Tim answers.

We shake hands and part ways.

I pray to God for his life and soul.

After my speech to parents, a few approach me with questions about personal situations. I notice a worried-looking woman in the back of the room waiting to talk with me. When everyone else is gone, she approaches me and says, "I'm Tim's mother. He talked to you this afternoon."

"I enjoyed meeting him today," I reply.

"He asked me to give you this." With a blank stare, she hands me a note that is folded up into a small square. And she waits.

"What is it?" I ask.

"Tim hasn't said a word to me since his father died," she answers sadly. "Five years—nothing. I'm so afraid for him. I have no idea what is going on inside his head. I so badly want to know what he said to you in that note."

"I don't see a problem," I answer, and begin to unfold the note. There's not a single word on the page.

But out of the crease falls a single, silver bullet.

FAST FORWARD FIVE YEARS.

Tim writes a letter to me telling me he is an assistant manager at a restaurant and has found life to be great, even if sometimes painful. And he thanks me for the soaked conversation in the parking lot and for the book.

Tim's life has turned—just as my life turned.

Just as I'm hoping your life will turn.

I'm not going to tell you what to do with your situation. I'm just going to ask you to wait until you have read this book.

REASON #1

sombody loves you



THE GREATEST MOTIVATION FOR LIVING IS THE ASSURANCE THAT SOMEBODY LOVES US. NOTHING BRINGS MORE ZEST, DESIRE, AND MOTIVATION TO LIFE THAN THE GIVING AND RECEIVING OF LIFE.

Many people lose hope for tomorrow when they feel that they've been alienated from love. Whether it's the loss of a lover or a loved one, this loss can crush the human soul quicker and more thoroughly than any other discouragement in life.

Before you give up, lose hope, and let your dreams go down the drain, take a quick inventory of the people in your life who can and do give you love.

Those are the people to turn to in times of trial and discouragement.

I remember years ago feeling a sense of urgency as the phone rang. Upon answering, I heard a woman say, "I can't go on another day. I'm going to kill myself."

I asked, "Why?"

She replied, "I'm all alone. I'm lonely. No one cares about me. I have no reason to continue living."

I asked her to take inventory of the people in her life who possibly loved her. She said, "There's no one."

I asked her if she had any children. "I have a son who lives a long way away, but he doesn't care about me," she answered.

I asked, "How do you know he doesn't care about you?"

*sometimes we can get so deeply buried
in distress, depression, and self-pity
that we refuse to believe
that anybody loves us.*

She quickly replied, "He never writes or calls. He doesn't care about me."

I told her, "I love my mother very deeply, but I often neglect to keep in touch as I should. That's a bad habit I've formed over the years. Maybe your son is like me. Maybe he deeply cares for you but is quite negligent in expressing his love. I'm sure if he knew your predicament, he would do anything he could to help you and affirm his love for you."

"Do you really think so?" she asked.

"Yes, I do. Why don't you call or visit him and share your heart with him?" I suggested.

"You know, I've been thinking for quite some time that I'd like to take a trip to see him," she responded.

This woman, like so many others, was buried so deeply in depression and pity that she refused to believe that anyone really cared for her. But when she took a more accurate and thorough inventory of her family and friends, she found that somebody did love her.

Take a look around you. Take a hopeful look—

—not a hopeless, pessimistic look. There are people who care. If you've been cut off from a vital source of love through death, divorce, breakup, or alienation, remember that most likely there are others who truly love you or would grow to love you if you shared your feelings with them.

If, after close examination, you can truthfully say, "There is absolutely no one who loves me," then I would like to tell you that there is somebody who loves you, and that somebody is God. This is not a cute cliché, but a life-changing reality to those who accept it.

"But how could such a big God even care about a worthless, insignificant person like me?"

This is a question that you (like millions of others) may have asked yourself many times. In this fast-paced society, it may seem like you have become nothing more than a statistic or an identification number. It is easy to slip into feeling like you are just another face in the crowd, and that you are nobody special.

Possibly because you feel this attitude coming from the world around you, you've suspected that God really doesn't care about you either. This isn't true. God does care for you—more intimately and tenderly than

you could ever imagine.

TATTOOED

In the Bible—the book that reveals God’s thoughts to and about His people—we find these words: “Yet they say, ‘My Lord deserted us; He has forgotten us’” (Isaiah 49:14). Have you ever thought that? Notice God’s reply in verse 15: “Never! Can a mother forget her little child and not have love for her own son? Yet even if that should be, I will not forget you. See, I have tattooed your name upon my palm...”

God is the original tattoo bearer—and your picture is tattooed on the palm of His hand.

God has never forgotten about you. He loves you more tenderly than a mother loves her little baby. God sees you as a little child, a helpless child calling out in distress for help, for love, for someone to care. God is your heavenly Father, and He wants to hold you, to heal and to help you. Imagine how God feels when He stretches His loving arms to us and then watches as we pull back in fear or in rebellion.

God loves you tenderly and affectionately. He loves you just as you are. He, who knows you the best, loves you the most. Now, that is love and acceptance.

God, who knows us inside and out, loves us more than any human being ever could. He totally accepts us and loves us as we are. He simply asks that we invite Him into our hearts—by putting Him first in our lives.

You may think, “With almost 7 billion people in this world, how could God possibly have time to think about me or care about my problems? Surely He is concerned with more important people.”

I used to wonder that myself until the day I read that scientists have estimated the particles within a molecular cell move many billions of times per second. That made me think: If a CREATED matter can move multiplied billions of times per second, then surely the mind of the CREATOR can move at least that fast. So, if God’s mind moves at a rate at least that fast (billions of times per second), then God can and does think of us all (6.6 billion of us) each second of every day. That means God is thinking of you at least 86,400 times a day!

God is thinking of you this very second. His thoughts toward you are caring, loving, gentle, and wishful. Yes, wishful that you would respond to His loving plea to look to Him and seek Him with your whole heart.

Some years ago, a famous minister wrote a little book called *Practicing the Presence of Christ*. In it he shares that by thinking on God's promises and by isolating ourselves with Him, God will become very real to us—as real as the people we see and talk to every day.

Jesus said that wherever anyone was gathered in His name, He was there, too. Why don't you begin to discover God's love right now? Get alone. Close your eyes. Stop all thoughts cluttering your mind, and wait for a stillness. Allow no raging thoughts. Then, when your mind is calm, whisper, "Jesus, make Yourself real to me. Reveal Your love to me. Thank you for loving me." Talk to Him as you would anyone else. He is real. He loves you.

We all enjoy talking to someone who loves us. We all enjoy listening to people talk when we know they really love us, because they say such nice things about us. Parents' hearts are always thrilled and proud to hear their little child say with enthusiasm, "Daddy" or "Mommy" because it is filled with such love and admiration.

Did you know that God has a lot of good things to say about you? He wrote a book to you, and in it He says many insightful and loving things that will

thrill you. Like a man trying to win a sweetheart, God tells us beautiful words to woo our hearts. And better yet, His commitment is true and forever.

HAVE YOU EVER READ THESE WORDS BEFORE?

“I have loved you, O my people, with an everlasting love; with loving-kindness I have drawn you to Me” (Jeremiah 31:3).

“Come to Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and you shall find rest unto your souls” (Matthew 11:28-29).

“He heals the brokenhearted and bandages their wounds” (Psalm 147:3, NLT).

Are you brokenhearted? Jesus wants to heal you. He loves you. He feels your hurt. He wants to help you, and He can!

Are you burdened under the weights of worry, pressure, sorrow, guilt, pain, anguish, and hurt? Jesus wants to free you from your oppressors. And He will...if you'll just trust Him and commit your life to His care.

One year for Christmas I gave a Bible to someone very close to me. After she opened it, she disappointedly asked, “Why a Bible? Why didn’t you get me something good to read, like a love story?”

My reply was, “You don’t know it yet, but I just gave you the greatest love story ever written.”

Yes, God loves everyone the same. He has no favorites. Many of us have grown up with distorted images of God, and that’s why we’ve never sought Him. We were taught that God was angry with us and that He would always punish us. That simply is not true. God’s judgment is reserved only for those who willfully and obstinately rebel against Him; not for those who sincerely want to follow Him and do what is right. And even the most rebellious of hearts can be and have been melted by God’s love.

“Look at the birds! They don’t worry about what to eat—they don’t need to sow or reap or store up food—for your heavenly Father feeds them. And you are far more valuable to Him than they are” (Matthew 6:26).

“Not one sparrow (What do they cost? Two for a penny?) can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it” (Matthew 10:29).

Think of it. Not even a little insignificant bird can fall to the ground without our heavenly Father being aware of it. Like Jesus said, "Are you not more valuable to Him than they?"

You may think, "God couldn't love me. I've been too rotten. I've done so much wrong."

If that were the case, then God couldn't love anyone because the Bible says, "All have sinned and come short of what God wants for us" (Romans 3:23).

The Apostle Paul goes on to say, "When we were utterly helpless with no way of escape, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners who had no use for him. Even if we were good, we really wouldn't expect anyone to die for us, though, of course, that might be barely possible. But God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners...And since, when we were His enemies, we were brought back to God by the death of His Son, what blessings He must have for us now that we are His friends, and He is living within us!" (Romans 5:6-8, 10).

Life is always worth living when we know that someone truly loves us. Today, you can know that God loves you. This is reason number one to keep on living.

God has made up his mind about you-
he loves you!
and you can't change that.



REASON #2

**you have no right
to take your own
life**



**“THE TIME CAME WHEN THE LORD GOD FORMED A
MAN’S BODY FROM THE DUST OF THE GROUND AND
BREATHED INTO IT THE BREATH OF LIFE. AND MAN
BECAME A LIVING PERSON” (GENESIS 2:7).**

God gave you the “breath of life.” He has given you the privilege of living. When God gave you your life, He did not give you the right to terminate it.

Some people think that by killing themselves they can end their existence. This simply is not true. God created men and women as eternal beings. Each

of us will live forever, whether in heaven or in hell. Our existence is forever. This is neither an unconscious eternal existence nor an incoherent state such as sleep. This is an eternal out-of-the-body existence that is more comprehensive and acutely aware than when we are here on earth.

Jesus talked of heaven, and He talked of hell. He actually talked more of hell than of heaven, wanting to awaken people to the ugly reality of that place and the impending danger, torture, and eternal helplessness for those who don't turn to Him for salvation.

When Jesus spoke of hell, He spoke of torturing flames that are never quenched and of the worm that never dies. When He spoke of hell, He spoke literally, not figuratively, of flames and tortures. He was speaking of an actual place.

Many people say that they don't believe in hell, and so they're not going to worry about it. There was a time in my younger years that I used to joke about hell and say things like, "Well, I might as well go there because that's where all my friends will be," or "I'll go down there and sell ice water and get rich." I used to think that was funny. But it isn't funny in view of the fact that there are no friends in hell and no drinks of ice water available to relieve the agony.

**when jesus spoke of hell,
he spoke literally, not figuratively,
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he was speaking of an actual place!**

Read carefully the following excerpt from the words of Jesus. It tells about an actual man in hell, and his reaction to being there:

“There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs, which fell from the rich man’s table: moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores.

And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried. And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and sees Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’

But Abraham said, ‘Son, remember that you in

your lifetime received good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.'

Then he said, 'I pray therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house. For I have five brothers; that he may testify to them, lest they also come into this place of torment.'

Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.'

And he said, 'Nay, father Abraham, but if one went to them from the dead, they will repent.'

And he said to him, 'If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead''' (Luke 16:19-31, KJV).

I want you to notice some things in the account that Jesus shared with us.

1The man in hell is in anguish, begging for relief—but there is no relief available for this constant torment.

2The man in hell wanted someone to be sent to his family to warn them about the horrible place of hell for fear that they should come there when they die. Even in hell, people will feel remorse and hope that loved ones will not be doomed to the same eternal fate.

3Abraham told him that if his family wouldn't listen to the Scriptures, then they wouldn't listen to someone who came back from the dead. God requires that we believe His words revealed in the Scriptures, the Holy Bible.

There are many who have passed through death's door and have come back, claiming to have seen hell. These individuals have confirmed the words of Jesus about hell—its flames, torments, hopelessness, and darkness. One such case is a man named Bill Wiese who wrote the book, *23 Minutes in Hell*. The vision that Bill saw and wrote about was the most horrifying account I have ever read. I have met this man and know that he is sincere. (*You can order his book and read it for yourself or visit his website at www.23minutesinhell.org.)*)

You may have been told that hell is not literal or real, but I guarantee it wasn't Jesus who told you this. If there was even a sliver of a chance of hell being real and eternal, what fool would take that chance? This is the question asked by the great French philosopher and mathematician, Pascal. It is interesting that Pascal is also the man who invented Roulette. Talk about the ultimate gamble...nothing sounds more risky than heading off to an eternal destination with no regard for the opinions of those who have been there or have seen it.

In response to those who still say they are not concerned about hell because they don't believe in it, I ask this, "What if you're wrong?"

Just because you don't believe in hell, does that mean it does not exist? Are you so big and powerful that God operates only around what you believe? Remember, no matter how intelligent the skeptics may be, they are members of the created--not the Creator. What does our limited perception have to do with the facts of creation?

I know there are people who don't believe that man has really landed on the moon. They think it's a big hoax, that the film footage of the moonwalk is a Hollywood masterpiece. No matter what you tell these

people, they still won't believe you. But, does that discredit the fact that man has walked on the moon? Absolutely not. Those who have been there know it's true, and those who have heard their accounts know it's true. No skeptic can erase what is known to be true. So it is with the reality of hell.

And so my question still stands, "What if Jesus is right, and you are wrong?"

Many object and say, "But how could a loving God send anyone to hell?"

First of all, let's get one thing straight: God doesn't send anyone to hell—people get there by their own choice. People choose to reject God and His way of salvation, even though God has warned them what will happen if they choose to go their own destructive way.

The Bible tells us that hell was created for the devil and his angels. People have ended up there for following the devil's way, rather than God's way. The sad thing about it is that the devil's way is so subtle that many are fooled into thinking that it's okay to live the way they do. Many people think that they are all right because they go to church—but going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than sitting in

a garage makes you a car.

God doesn't send anyone to hell. God created us as free moral agents—with a will of our own. We have the privilege of making our own decisions about our personal fate. Each one of us has the choice either to choose or to reject God.

Sadly, many people have used their free will to drive themselves into deeper and deeper despair by making the wrong decisions. Many people make the decision that will eternally damn their souls—the decision not to listen to God and to consider themselves as the supreme authority.

Still others ask, “How then could God allow anyone to go to hell, knowing what a horrible place it is?”

Again, we see that the main obstacle to our eternal welfare is us. Our tendency is to exercise our free will and go our own way. Like disobedient children, we have an unwillingness to follow God's directions and heed his warnings.

If a man is driving down a mountain road in Colorado and drives off the side, crashes, and dies, we don't say, “How could the state of Colorado allow that

to happen? How could they let that person drive off the side of that mountain?"

The way people use the word "allow" is tricky. Did the state of Colorado allow that man to drive off the road and die? Yes, but is that what the state wanted? Did Colorado commission that man to do it? No. The state did all it could to warn people of dangerous turns by placing warning signs in plain sight along the side of the road. Very visible and sufficient warning was given of the danger ahead. There is little the state can do about reckless and negligent drivers who either fail to notice or ignore the warning signs on the road. The state is not to blame—the driver is. The only way the state could be blamed and become liable is if no warning had been given.

This example illustrates the point that God is not to blame—people are. Many have failed to heed the warnings God has clearly given on the road of life. In fact, God has given us more than signs on the road—he has given us flashing red lights every day within our conscience. God is not to blame for our unwillingness to pay attention to His warnings and to follow His instructions. This perhaps can be summed up best by this verse from God's Word: "A man may ruin his chances by his own foolishness and then blame it on the Lord" (Proverbs 19:3).

We read earlier that God “breathed into man the breath of life, and he became a living person.” God has given to each of us the privilege of living, but not that of terminating our own lives. God’s intention for each of us is that life should be a joyful, fulfilling experience, not one of dejection and despair.

I remember seeing a sign in a maternity ward that said, “Babies are God’s opinion that the world should go on.” Think of the innocence of a newborn infant. Think of the overflowing joy the child brings to all those around. Infants and toddlers are the supreme example of the fact that life is meant to be a beautiful and rewarding experience.

Take a look at a bubbly, innocent child and pray, “Lord, make my life like that of this little child.” Hidden deep within every grown man and woman is a little boy or girl looking for love and meaning in a sometimes spiteful and degrading world.

Jesus said, “Unless you yourselves become as little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3).

PURE LIFE

I heard a story about a man who complained

to his friend about the rottenness of life in this world—the hatred, competition, wickedness, and hurt that drives out the joy of living.

His friend responded by asking, “Would you consider drinking out of the river nearby?”

He answered, “Absolutely not! The river is polluted.”

His friend explained, “Just as you won’t drink out of the polluted river, so also you are tired of tasting life that is polluted with the ugliness of sin, pain, and lack of meaning. But what you fail to remember is that the source of this river, high up in a mountain, is pure, unpolluted, and untouched by human hands. If you go to the source to drink, it is refreshing and satisfying. So it is with life itself. Life no longer seems worthwhile when you look at all the pollution that exists in the world. But when you go to the top and partake of the pure, unpolluted life that God gives, life begins to take on a new sparkle. Your soul within is refreshed and your zeal is renewed to keep on living and to drink more of that living water.”

In order to enjoy life, you must go to the source of life, which is God. He has given you life, and He offers you a new life.

This is reason number two for you to keep on living: Your Life is a gift from God, and He didn't give you the right to end it.

you didnt put breath in
and you have no right
to take breath out.



REASON #3

you can make it



**DO YOU FEEL ALL ALONE IN YOUR STRUGGLE?
DO YOU FEEL LIKE NO ONE COULD UNDERSTAND
WHAT YOU ARE FACING RIGHT NOW? IF THEY
KNEW WHAT YOU ARE GOING THROUGH, WHO
COULD POSSIBLY BLAME YOU FOR WANTING TO
GIVE UP ON LIVING?**

Because you feel this way, you need to know that although things are bad, you can make it. You feel so pressed in and surrounded and pressured by your problems, that you can't get an outside perspective of your problems and the available solutions. You feel so hemmed in that you think the only way out is to pull the big-time copout: Take your own life.

What I'm about to tell you may not be what you want to hear right now, but you need to know it. There are thousands, maybe millions, going through just what you are facing at this moment. Most of these individuals are facing their problems by seeking help and making a path out. They are determined to come out on top. They are winning, even though they do not yet feel like winners.

There are others, however, who are not coping—those who do not value their life enough and are taking what they think is the easy way out, which is suicide. They are losing, and we are all losing something when we lose those individuals.

The choice to win or lose is up to you. If others are making it, so can you. What are you facing? Death? Divorce? Broken relationships? Loneliness? A feeling of worthlessness? Lost your job? Just burned out on life?

Take a look at your problem. Do you really believe that you're the only one facing this sort of problem—that you're the only person in the whole world whose problem is so great that it can't be overcome? Self-pity is a powerful drug.

try to think about the future

I don't say this to belittle your situation but rather to open your eyes to see that if others can make it, so can you. Try to think about the future—six months, or a year or two down the road. You will feel differently then, even though you cannot see or feel it right now. This is not to say there won't be any pain along the way. But the fact still remains: You can make it. You have the inner strength to face and overcome this struggle—if you choose to make up your mind to be a survivor.

Please read these encouraging words from the Bible:

“But remember this—the wrong desires that come into your life aren't anything new and different. Many others have faced exactly the same problems before you. And no temptation (or problem) is irresistible. You can trust God to keep the temptation (or problem) from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it, for He has promised this and will do what He says. He will show you how to escape temptations' power so that you can bear up patiently against it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Because of your problems, you're possibly facing the greatest temptation of all—to give up. This

verse of Scripture gives us insight as to how God views your situation. In Chapter one you read how God cares for you and wants the best for you. He is not causing your problems. And in this verse, God says that He will not allow any situation to even come your way that He knows you cannot handle. He also says that when that great problem or temptation is crushing you, He will give you the power to overcome in the situation.

DISCOURAGEMENT EVENTUALLY BECOMES A CHOICE

It is your decision to sulk or to fight. You must decide either to wallow in your state or claw your way out. But you must run to Him for help. When you turn to God, He will give you remarkable inner strength to face and to bear up against all the troubles that confront you. God can supernaturally deliver you from the hurt, pain, depression, and other negative feelings you have, if you'll just ask for His power to face your troubles. You can experience a release that you never before thought possible.

God obviously has more confidence in you than you have in yourself. He plainly states, "Nothing will come your way that is so strong that you cannot stand up against it." He believes in you and your ability

to cope, fight, and win. Do you believe in Him as confidently as He believes in you?

“Come to me and I will give you rest...for I am gentle and humble and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:28-29 NIV).

Jesus is inviting you to come to Him and find rest for your soul. You are so tired and weary of the struggle. There is nothing you need more than inner rest. Jesus brings calmness and peace to your troubled heart and mind.

Yes, there are literally millions who have been through what you are facing today. They made it—and are making it—because they have made up their minds to come out on top and rely on God for strength and help.

From a psychological and spiritual perspective, not a single person in this entire world has any more going for them than you do. You have as much of a chance for happiness as the next person. The choice to be happy and fulfilled is not up to those around you, it is up to you!

If money were the key to happiness, then there would be no unhappy rich people or happy poor

people. It is not our standard of living that determines our happiness, it is our state of mind.

If we choose to think that our problems are past solving, that our life is without hope, that we cannot be changed, then we will go on living—or more accurately, existing—in that way.

Your problems are not past solving. Your life is not without hope. You can be changed. You've got to believe that. You've got to give yourself a chance. Your chances are as good as anyone else's.

Go to your local library or bookstore and read a few biographies of people who have become successful and accomplished something in their lives. Do you know what you'll find? Do you think you'll just find stories of people who never faced a trial in life; who floated through life on flowery beds of ease; who became somebody because trouble never got in their way? No, on the contrary, you'll find stories of people who more than once had to face the perplexing, and often crushing, storms of life. People, who against unrelenting adversity, refused to give in, to accept failure and defeat, but instead called on God and tapped into an indomitable and unwavering Spirit that cannot be conquered.

The best part of your story is just beginning to be written. It is this single-mindedness—the will to live and not die, to win and not lose, to conquer and not quiver—that causes men and women to come through the ravaging and painful attacks of life as stronger and better people.

TIME IS A HEALER

When we are in the midst of a deep inner struggle that is tearing us apart, often we do not desire to hear that “time is a healer.” We, like the man who ate too much hot sauce on his food, want relief—and we want it now.

There is no escaping the fact, however, that as time passes, it acts as a medicine. Our hurts and pains subside, our memories become more abstract; and slowly, but surely, we recover and get back on our emotional feet again. Surely we’ll have some battle scars, but we’ll become stronger people once we’ve fought through it.

There is no replacement for the passage of time. Try to find something other than your predicament to occupy your thoughts. Absorb yourself in your work or some hobby or activity. Go work out. Don’t spend endless hours telling your troubles over

and over to yourself and to others. Sure, it's healthy to communicate your troubles, but it is deadly to bury yourself in them.

Work hard at finding something positive and constructive to do with your time, and you'll eventually see the miracle of restoration and healing in your life. You can and will change for the better as you allow time to run its healing course. There is no substitute for patience; it will build your courage and enthusiasm for life. "Know this, that the trying of your faith produces patience. Let patience have its perfect course that you may be complete and entire, lacking nothing" (James 1:4-5).

If you don't exercise patience and trust that the feeling of hopelessness will subside, then you will surely fall prey to the archenemy of patience, which is anxiety. Anxiety will drive you to be a slave to alcohol, drugs, overeating, or some other vice to imprison your mind and body.

As time passes, today's calamities will seem less significant and the hopes for tomorrow will become much brighter and more believable.

AS YOU THINK, YOU ARE

I have a pet peeve when it comes to Murphy's Laws. While I'm amused by some of these cynical clichés about life, I don't think it's humorous to live according to statements like, "If anything could possibly go wrong, it will."

The reason I'm not amused is because I've seen how negative thinking can ambush our emotions, leaving us depressed and defeated. Negativism builds walls around us preventing us from experiencing all of life's goodness.

I believe in being an extreme optimist. My motto is, "If anything could possibly go right, it will." Yes, I'm an incurable optimist. Good things happen to those who believe they will.

Yes, you can make up your mind to go on and get the best out of life. You, too, can make it despite the troubles you may be facing right now and will face in the future.

Don't forget the words from 1 Corinthians 10 (that you read earlier in this chapter): "...You can trust God to keep the temptation (or problem) from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it, for He has promised this and will do what He says."

Jesus said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but God’s words will stand forever” (Mark 13:31). His words will stand forever as solid, irrevocable truth. **God says you can make it. So, you can make it.** You can agree with Him and come out on top or you can disagree with Him and continue on the downward spiral.

Start working toward conquering the problem. Possibly you know of someone who has been through the same thing; talk to that individual. He or she would be more than happy to help you through it.

If you don’t know anyone like that, find a minister or counselor and ask for support and help. If you seek help, you’ll find it. Pray and ask God to direct you. There are people who care. The book you are reading was written because I care. There are many others who care, who understand, and want to help.

Remember, you have good reasons to keep on living. You can say that reason number three is, “With help, I can make it!”

I seriously contemplated taking my own life. I brought my existence to the very edge. I am so relieved to have not crossed over—because not only am I loving my life today, I am having this conversation with you. 

REASON #4

you know where
your troubles are
coming from and
you can fight back



WHY IS IT THAT OUR INSURANCE POLICIES CALL
TORNADOES, HURRICANES, AND OTHER NATU-
RAL CALAMITIES “ACTS OF GOD?”

Why is it when someone is killed or injured in
an accident of some kind that those involved
raise their fists toward heaven and accusingly
ask, “Why did You do this to me?”

Is God the cause of all the suffering, death,

and tragedies in our world? Is God the instigator of all these horrible happenings? Or has God been misrepresented on the earth by members of the clergy who have a foggy view of God and are ignorant of His views?

Has an inaccurate picture of God been painted for us? Is God responsible for all the good and the bad in our lives, or is there another force working for evil around us? Is it possible that this force placed the blame on God in order to fool us into believing that no force of evil really exists? Are there other reasons and explanations for the troubles and problems that occur in life?

These questions lead us to one big question: "If God didn't cause all these bad things to happen, who is responsible?"

Jesus gives an answer to this perplexing question. "The thief's purpose is to steal, kill, and destroy. My purpose is to give life in all its fullness" (John 10:10).

This is a distinction we would be wise not to ignore.

The thief that Jesus is talking about is Satan. Yes, there really is an evil spiritual being named Satan.

Jesus talked about him. He is not a fictional character—he is as real as God is real.

We have before us a battle line. Jesus has clearly outlined two principles in this verse: the work of Satan and the work of God.

First, Jesus said it is the thief (Satan) that has come to steal, kill, and destroy. Jesus didn't say God caused it to happen or that God had anything to do with it. Anything that steals from you, kills you, or destroys you is caused by Satan and his forces of evil.

Whenever a house burns down, or a child is kidnapped or killed, or a marriage breaks down, or an untimely death occurs, God is not to blame! All that steals, kills, and destroys is the work of Satan. We are in constant danger because we are living in a hostile territory.

Jesus went on to say, "My purpose is to give life in all its fullness." That is a life filled with love, peace, joy, health, contentment, and fulfillment. That's the kind of life we all desire. Jesus said, "I've come to bring you this kind of abundant living." When you start following Jesus and living by His words, you become a partaker of "life in all its fullness."

It seems that whenever a person dies prematurely by sickness or some accident, someone always says, "Well, God in His wisdom decided to take him to heaven. God decided that his time was up." This is what most of us have been taught—that at anytime, God may decide to drop cancer on us or cause us to have an accident, etc. This is an unbiblical attitude and philosophy. God does not give cancer or cause accidents.

If we did half of what we accuse God of doing, we would be jailed for life or executed as a mass murderer. When people accuse God of being responsible for disease and death, they are calling Him a maimer and murderer.

is God a hypocrite?

Yet it is God Himself who put law and order on this earth and gave us the commandment, "Thou shall not kill." Why would God give us a commandment not to do something that he does himself? Is God a hypocrite? Absolutely not.

The fact that we learn good lessons out of bad situations only proves God's unique ability to bring growth and blessing out of hurt, loss, and adversity. He can help us find a star in every scar and a silver lin-

ing in every cloud. His word says time and again that He is the healer and not the afflicter.

God is not a child-abuser. He does not teach His children by bruising, injuring, and afflicting them. God is an all good and loving Father who wants nothing but the best for His children. "But whatever is good and perfect comes to us from God, the Creator of all light, and He shines forever without change or shadow" (James 1:17).

God's word tells us that only good comes from God and that He never changes. He is always good and wants to show His goodness and love to all people—sinner or believer.

The reason there is so much sickness and suffering is because of the curse brought upon the earth when the first man (Adam) turned away from God. This curse has ruled the earth for thousands of years. The Bible tells us, "Christ has redeemed (freed) us from the curse of the law" (Galatians 3:13). Through Christ we can live victoriously over the curse that plagues the earth.

From the beginning of time, people have tried to rationalize and philosophize why things are the way they are. Rather than take the Bible's viewpoint, many

have chosen to place the responsibility and blame for all happenings—good or bad—on God. This kind of thinking has been handed down from generation to generation, while Satan has subtly synchronized these thoughts with the idea that he (Satan) does not exist.

Our natural response when something amazing and wonderful happens is that there is a God. The bliss and joy we feel leads to recognition of its source. But what is our response when something horrific, heinous, and ugly beyond ugly happens? Instead of saying there is a devil, and pointing to the source of such pathos and destruction, how many of us are quick to demand, “How could God allow this?”

This may have been Satan’s greatest philosophical triumph—convincing the world that God is responsible for everything, and that he (Satan) doesn’t even exist. Jesus brought perfect clarity to this argument when He said, “I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly but the thief (Satan) has come to steal, kill and destroy” (John 10:10).

Satan alone is responsible for the ugliness. And guess what...he doesn’t care.

It’s not just the act that is ugly, it’s the fact that his whole intention is to ruin us because he hates that

we are the object of God's affections. And he will do whatever he can to slander God as well.

It is my hope that through this chapter, the camouflage of Satan will be removed, and he will be exposed for the naked evil, ill-will, and corruption he represents.

ACCEPTING RESPONSIBILITY

There are, of course, troubles that arise, and problems that are caused by our own actions. Again, God is not responsible for the foolish things we do, and Satan is not directly responsible either. We must stand and accept responsibility for the troubles we have brought upon ourselves. The Bible states it well in Proverbs 19:3: "A man may ruin his chances by his own foolishness and then blame it on the Lord!"

I want to show you three ways that people bring trouble upon themselves: ignorance, negligence, and disobedience.

#1 - IGNORANCE

A person approaches you selling a new investment. He tells you about all the money you can make. You begin to see dollar signs and get excited about

the prospect of instant wealth. You sign up and invest your money. You either never hear from the individual again or the investment flops. As a result, you lose all your money.

Now, you're angry. You're mad at God. "How could You let this happen to me?" you demand. Who's at fault? God? No, you are. You were ignorant. Ignorance caused you trouble. You should have been more careful with your money.

Have you ever heard of people dying in their bathtubs because they picked up an electric hairdryer while still in the water? They died of electric shock. They didn't know that water was a conductor of electricity. They died because of their ignorance.

There are certain irrevocable laws at work in our universe. These laws cannot be crossed without incurring substantial loss. For example, if you violate the law of gravity, you can die. In these cases, the blame lies not with God but with the individual, due to his or her ignorance.

#2 - NEGLIGENCE

A person is out driving in his car. He is in a hurry. Rather than fully stopping at an intersection

and looking both ways, he drives on through. His car is struck by an oncoming car. As a result, the person in the other vehicle is badly injured. The driver has no auto insurance. The other driver sues him.

Where does the blame lie? Is this God's fault? No. The blame lies with negligence or carelessness. The driver carelessly failed to stop or look. He also neglected to keep up his insurance. Now he has to pay a horrible price.

A staggering number of automobile accidents and deaths are alcohol-related. This is just plain carelessness. Because so many people fail to listen to advice, they have to learn the hard way. People know that driving and alcohol don't mix, but many still keep on drinking and driving.

#3 - DISOBEDIENCE

A man's wife leaves him. He's brokenhearted. She found him cheating on her. He never treated her well and degraded her. It all proved to be too much, and so she left. He's alone, crushed. "Why me? Why did this happen to me?"

The answer is easy—disobedience. To ensure success in marriage, child training, business, and every

other area, God has given us certain laws to follow. To willfully disregard and disobey these rules for successful living and to hope that all things will continue to go well is foolish and dangerous.

Disobedience is probably the number one reason for the troubles we face. We know what is right but we don't always do it—and the result is trouble. This is why we need Jesus. We need His life-changing power within so that we want to do what is right and obey His laws for success. This is how we can avoid much of the trouble—and end up finding fulfillment in our lives.

THE POWER OF TRUTH

Satan has robbed from you long enough. Isn't it time that you put your fist down and say, "I won't be defeated any longer. I have as much right to be happy and fulfilled as the next person. Satan has lied to me long enough."

When you invite Jesus into your life, He gives you the power of truth over the attacks of Satan. He gives you victory. Jesus tells you to use His name against the power of evil.

You can resist the lies of Satan in Jesus' name,

and he must go away. Learn to say with authority, “You spirit of _____, go in Jesus’ name and don’t bother me anymore.” Mean it when you say it. Whatever it is—death, suicide, hatred, fear, worry, alcohol, drugs, sexual perversion—specifically name it, and tell it to go. And then begin walking in the opposite direction. Replace the lies with the power of truth.

When you know who your enemy is, you can fight back. If you’ve thought all along that God was responsible for everything bad that has happened in your life, you haven’t been fighting back. After all, who is going to fight against God?

Imagine fighting in a war where your enemies and allies look and dress alike. You wouldn’t know who or when to fight. You can’t fight back if you don’t know your enemy.

When you specifically locate where your troubles are coming from, you can fight back at Satan, and fight back at the ignorance, negligence, and disobedience in your life. Then you can have the fulfilling life Jesus promises: “Life to the fullest.” This is the life God wants you to have. Don’t settle for anything less.

So you now have another reason to keep on living. Once you know where your troubles are com-

ing from, you can say that reason number four is, "I can fight back."



REASON #5

God has an
answer for all
your problems



MANY PEOPLE HAVE THE IDEA THAT LIFE IS SOME KIND OF VICIOUS GAME THAT GOD IS PLAYING WITH THE HUMAN RACE-- SOME SORT OF DIVINE PRACTICAL JOKE, AND THE LAUGH IS ON US.

People ask, "Why would God make us live in a world so full of pain, suffering, wickedness, and hatred? Why does He even give us life when He knows it is so full of problems?"

Why is life so full of problems? Why is the world the way it is? Why me? Why do I have so many problems? Are there answers for the troubles I'm having? These are just a few of the many questions people have been asking generation after generation. These are difficult questions, but God does have all the answers.

In order for you to better understand the problems associated with life, it's important for you to remember the first man, Adam, and how his actions brought a curse upon the human race. This curse exists to this day, and we can be freed from it only through a living relationship with God through his Son, Jesus Christ. Here's the account of man's creation found in Genesis 1:26-31:

"God said, 'Let Us make man—someone like Ourselves, to be master of all life upon the earth and in the skies and in the seas.' So God made man like his Maker. Like God did God make man; Man and maid did He make them. And God blessed them and told them, 'Multiply and fill the earth and subdue it; You are masters of the fish and birds and all the animals. And look! I have given you the seed-bearing plants throughout the earth, and all the fruit trees for your food. And I've given all the grass and

plants to the animals and birds for their food.' Then God looked over all that He had made, and it was excellent in every way."

When God created man, he was a master of the world around him—a world that was “excellent in every way.” There was no fear, no bondage, no sadness, no defeat, no sickness or pain—no trouble whatsoever. Clearly, times have changed. The human race is no longer a master, but a slave to the problems of life.

To show how clearly the world has changed since the creation of the first man, one only has to compare Adam’s ability to subdue and control nature with the modern person’s excessive fear of it.

Adam was given dominion over everything on the earth, in the sea, and in the air. Today we can hardly claim such mastery with our phobias of nature, including snakes and wolves on the earth, sharks and stingrays of the sea, and bats and hornets of the air. We are not even close to what one would call a master over nature.

How did humankind lose this ability? How did nature become so aggressively evil and corrupt? Where is the “excellence” that was upon the earth when God first created man?

We can readily see the things on earth that are far from excellent. We have wars, murders, hatred, kidnappings, child molestation, pornography, adultery, rape, prostitution, theft, lying, cheating, jealousy, bitterness, gossiping, slander...and the list goes on and on. God could hardly look at the human race today and say, "It is excellent in every way." He would be forced to say, "It is miserable in every way." How did it happen?

THE ANSWER

"The serpent was the craftiest of all the creatures the Lord God had made. So the serpent came to the woman. 'Really?' he asked, 'None of the fruit in the garden? God says you mustn't eat any of it?'

'Of course we may eat it,' the woman told him. 'It's only the fruit from the tree at the center of the garden that we are not to eat. God says we mustn't eat it or even touch it, or we will die.'

'That's a lie!' the serpent hissed. 'You'll not die! God knows very well that the instant you eat it you will become like Him, for your eyes will be opened—you will be able to distinguish good from evil!'

The woman was convinced. How lovely and

fresh looking it was! And it would make her so wise! So she ate some of the fruit and gave some to her husband, and he ate it, too" (Genesis 3:1-6).

To realize the significance of Adam's betrayal of God and the subsequent curse that fell on the human race, you must be aware of the following:

1 Before this happened, Adam was the master of the earth.

2 Adam knew God had forbidden them to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

3 It wasn't the eating of a forbidden fruit that was evil, but the conscious choice of Adam to believe a lie of Satan, rather than to believe God.

4 As long as Adam and Eve obeyed God, they were under God's authority and protection. But the moment they obeyed Satan, they came under Satan's authority. The mastery and dominion God's first creation held over the earth and nature fell into the sinister hands of Satan. The human race immediately became slaves of Satan—prone

to believing his deceptions, prone to being instruments for his every wish and desire.

5 The human race remains under the rule of Satan's domain and his corrupted desires until each person voluntarily decides to submit himself or herself to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and come back under the authority and protection of God.

In view of these facts, it is no wonder that the earth and sea are full of poisonous, wild, and ravaging creatures. It is no wonder that our history books reveal a perpetual description of hatred, bloodshed, and tyranny. It is no wonder that our world today is full of suffering and misery. It is no mystery that this earth (and everything in it) has come under the tyrannical rule of Satan.

WHY DO I HAVE SO MANY PROBLEMS?

The biggest problem we face today is our inward nature. It is in our inward nature to go our own way, to fail to trust God, or to rebel against His wishes. This nature has been passed on to every person since Adam. This nature is what God calls sin.

We call sin those wrong deeds that violate our

own consciences and the wishes of God. But when God refers to sin, He is referring first of all to the inward nature that inclines people to do such things. This is the first major reason there are so many problems. People are separated from God and don't know how to straighten out their lives.

This is why everyone carries within themselves an emptiness—a loneliness that only God can fill. Rich and poor, small and great, no matter what race or origin, all have this aching void within their souls that only God can fill.

We can spend a lifetime trying to fill that void with people, pleasure, wealth, alcohol, or anything else we can imagine. But this aching inward void can only be satisfied by inviting Jesus Christ into our hearts as Lord and Savior. When we make that conscious decision, our nature is changed from a nature of sin and separation from God to a nature like that which was within Adam when he was first created—a nature united with God.

Although we can't control all of our circumstances, we can control how we think about them and respond to them. To a larger degree, our lives are the way they are because we've made a lot of poor choices. We haven't turned to God; instead, we try to ignore

our problems or handle them our own way. As long as we turn away from God, our problems and troubles will continue to get the best of us.

The first step is admitting that we have turned away from God and need to reject our inward nature. After that admission, we can get back to our Creator's plan; we can live in relationship with Him and live according to His ways. Then our Heavenly Father can show us how to change the things we can and how to cope with the things we can't change. We may still have troubles, but knowing God and following His ways provides the best way to deal with them.

One of the major reasons we have trouble in this life is because of our own foolish actions. Proverbs 19:3 warns, "A man may ruin his chances by his own foolishness and then blame it on the Lord."

Another major reason for experiencing troubles in this life is because we don't know any better. We don't know the answers, and we don't know God and how He can help us. We just plain don't know. I don't know how many times I've heard hurting, troubled people say, "If I'd only known what I was doing."

"My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6).

God has the answer to all our problems. The saying that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure holds forever true. By staying close to God, by reading His Word, by following Him, and by avoiding reckless living, we can prevent ourselves from entering into many of life's problems.

As for the problems that we have no control over, God has the answer to those problems, too. By learning God's words (His solutions), we can win over all our troubles. Like it or not, as long as we're on this earth, we will have to deal with problems—but we don't have to let them get the best of us.

You may be asking, "Are there answers for the troubles I'm facing?" I'm glad to say that the answer is yes! The Bible has an answer and solution to every problem.

To all problems of spirit, mind, and body, Jesus is the answer. Just knowing Him, His love, and His reality will be the only answer that we will need. But pertaining to the particular and unique problems we face—health, future, financial well-being, happiness, and fulfillment—the Bible is filled with sound advice and practical solutions.

There is no predicament you can get your-

self into that God cannot help you out of. Although it would be impossible to cover every problem you could be facing, I will be discussing some of the most common problems along with God's solutions.

DEPRESSION

"Yes, the Lord hears the good man when he calls to Him for help, and saves him out of all his troubles. The Lord is close to those whose hearts are breaking; He rescues those who are humbly sorry for their sins. The good man does not escape all troubles—he has them too. But the Lord helps him in each and every one" (Psalm 34:17-19).

Jesus said that he came to "heal the broken-hearted" (Luke 4:18).

"I waited patiently for God to help me; then He listened and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out from the bog and the mire, and set my feet on a hard, firm path and steadied me as I walked along. He has given me a new song to sing, of praises to our God. Now many will hear of the glorious things He did for me, and stand in awe before the Lord, and put their trust in Him" (Psalm 40:1-3).

GUILT

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (I John 1:9, NAS).

“Come, let’s talk this over!’ says the Lord; ‘No matter how deep the stain of your sins, I can take it out and make you as clean as freshly fallen snow. Even if you are stained as red crimson, I can make you white as wool” (Isaiah 1:18).

“So overflowing is His kindness towards us that He took away all our sins through the blood of His Son, by Whom we are saved” (Ephesians 1:7).

INSECURITY

“What can we ever say to such wonderful things as these? If God is on our side, who can ever be against us? Since He did not spare even His own Son for us but gave Him up for us all, won’t He also surely give us everything else?” (Romans 8:31-32).

“I am holding you by your right hand—I, the Lord your God—and I say to you, ‘Don’t be afraid; I am here to help you” (Isaiah 41:13).

“That is why we can say without any doubt or fear, ‘The Lord is my Helper and I am not afraid of anything that mere man can do to me’” (Hebrews 13:6).

WORN OUT

“But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31).

“Come to me and I will give you rest—all of you who work so hard beneath a heavy yoke. Wear my yoke—for it fits perfectly—and let me teach you; for I am gentle and humble, and you shall find rest for your souls; for I give you only light burdens” (Matthew 11:28-30).

WORRY

“Let him have all your worries and cares, for he is always thinking about you and watching everything that concerns you” (1 Peter 5:7).

“He will keep in perfect peace all those who trust in Him, whose thoughts turn often to the Lord! Trust in the Lord God always, for in the Lord Jehovah is

your everlasting strength” (Isaiah 26:3-4).

“And why worry about your clothes? Look at the field lilies! They don’t worry about theirs. Yet King Solomon in all His glory was not clothed as beautifully as they. And if God cares so wonderfully for flowers that are here today and gone tomorrow, won’t He more surely care for you, O men of little faith? So don’t worry at all about having enough food and clothing. Why be like the heathen? For they take pride in all these things and are deeply concerned about them. But your heavenly Father already knows perfectly well that you need them, and He will give them to you if you give Him first place in your life and live as He wants you to. So don’t be anxious about tomorrow. God will take care of your tomorrow, too. Live one day at a time” (Matthew 6:28-34).

WORRIED ABOUT MONEY

“And it is He who will supply all your needs from His riches in glory, because of what Christ Jesus has done for us” (Philippians 4:19).

“He who loves money shall never have enough. The foolishness of thinking that wealth brings happiness!” (Ecclesiastes 5:10).

“Do you want to be truly rich? You already are if you are happy and good. After all, we didn’t bring any money with us when we came into the world, and we can’t carry away a single penny when we die. So we should be well satisfied without money if we have enough food and clothing. But people who long to be rich soon begin to do all kinds of wrong things to get money, things that hurt them and make them evil-minded and finally send them to hell itself. For the love of money is the first step toward all kinds of sin. Some people have even turned away from God because of their love for it, and as a result have pierced themselves with many sorrows” (I Timothy 6:6-10).

LONELINESS

“I will lie down in peace and sleep, for though I am alone, O Lord, You will keep me safe” (Psalm 4:8).

“For the mountains may depart and the hills disappear, but my kindness shall not leave you. My promise of peace for you will never be broken,’ says the Lord who has mercy upon you” (Isaiah 54:10).

“No, I will not abandon you or leave you as orphans in the storm—I will come to you” (John 14:18).

“...And then teach these new disciples to

obey all the commands I have given you; and be sure of this—that I am with you always, even to the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20).

LACKING DIRECTION

“In everything you do, put God first, and He will direct you and crown your efforts with success” (Proverbs 3:6).

“And if you leave God’s paths and go astray, you will hear a Voice (that voice is your conscience) behind you say, ‘No, this is the way; walk here” (Isaiah 30:21).

“He will teach the ways that are right and best to those who humbly turn to him. And when we obey him, every path He guides us on is fragrant with His lovingkindness and His truth” (Psalm 25:9-10).

BEGIN TODAY

Begin to read the Bible today—this is where you’ll find the answers you need. Also, try to find a good Bible-believing Church where you can find loving friendship and support. Ask God to guide you in this search for those who can encourage your faith.

I've given you only a sample of the answers available in the Bible. If you'll just search, you'll find the answers you need.

This is another great reason to keep on living—a reason that gives your heart great hope. You can say that reason number five is, "God has an answer for all my problems."



REASON #6

you can help others



IT IS WHEN YOU REACH OUT THAT YOU WILL BE PULLED OUT. WHAT BETTER WAY TO ESCAPE AND OVERCOME YOUR OWN PROBLEMS THAN BY HELPING OTHERS THROUGH THEIR PROBLEMS?

Could this be the key to overcoming depression? To crawl out of your dark shell—where all you can hear is the echoes and reverberations of your own sorrows—and into the lives of others who may need help and comfort as badly as you do?

Is it possible that in helping, you will be helped? That in loving, you will be loved? And that in

caring, you will be cared for?

There is no greater thrill or satisfaction in life than knowing you have helped another person—someone whose life would not have been so bright had it not been for your concern and kindness.

All personal gains and achievements wrought purely for one's own ego and selfish satisfaction stand degradingly inferior to one simple deed or word of kindness that is given unselfishly to a person in need of a touch of love. There is not an ounce of help in a bottle of self-pity. No matter how much of it a person drinks, it will never be enough.

Self-pity is a trap—the longer you dwell in it, the more entrapped you become. Shutting yourself up in your own little world and replaying the miseries in your mind is nothing more than delayed suicide. Self-pity sinks you deeper and deeper into your problem until your despair becomes overwhelming.

Don't sit and feel sorry for yourself. Get out into your community. Find someone else who is hurting. Offer what comfort you can give, and I guarantee that you will find comfort in return.

Search for a group in your area that deals with

your specific struggle. You can find different groups by going online or by checking with an area church. For an alcoholic, there is Alcoholics Anonymous. For the families of alcoholics, there is Al-Anon. For unwed mothers, there are groups and organizations that care and want to help. There are also organizations that offer help to battered wives, abused children, divorced people, those who are jobless, and addicts of all kinds.

In these groups, you can share as well as be comforted. You can give as well as receive. By looking past your own problems and reaching out to help others, you will gain a sense of nobility and self-worth. If there are no such groups available, why not start one? You'd be amazed at the response you could get with a little advertisement announcing the start of a comfort group for a specific problem. You will discover that such action will prove to be the road to recovery.

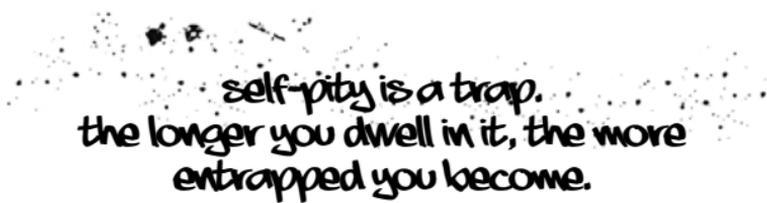
Even if you can't find someone to help who shares the identical struggle you face (which is unlikely—they are out there, it's just a matter of finding them), you can find someone who needs some kind of help. There are many elderly people who would love to find someone to talk to. Many who are suffering from disabilities and sicknesses would welcome some assistance. The world is full of lonely, hurting people

who would respond to love and friendship.

You will not receive until you give. This is one of God's universal laws applicable to every facet of life: "Give and it shall be given unto you..." (Luke 6:38). You don't get a crop of tomatoes or oranges until you plant the seeds. You have to give before you can receive. You have to plant before you can reap.

How can you expect someone to care for, help, and notice you until you first care for, help, and notice another hurting person? You're asking for something you won't consider giving yourself. But if you will reach out and give friendship, love, and concern to others, you will see it come back to you many times over.

The beautiful thing about planting a seed is that when the harvest comes, it will bring many seeds with it. One wisely planted apple seed will produce an apple tree that will produce hundreds of seed-bearing fruit season after season. The seeds eventually produced by that one seed would be incalculable. Right now you are at the place where you need to plant that first seed. Plant a seed of love and kindness today. Plant a seed of concern and help someone who needs it—there are many who do.



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entrapped you become.

When you begin helping someone else, you will begin finding answers for yourself. There is an indescribable inward healing that comes from giving.

There is no replacement for God's inner healing and the erasing power of time. Let God and time take their course. But don't sit idly by—busy yourself with concern for others. Make it your life goal to help others.

The manifestation of inward joy and satisfaction is more than enough reward for such efforts. I have read many stories of people who have faced the heaviest of sorrows and defeats, and made a conscious decision to busy themselves to help forget. They discovered the power of being actively involved in helping others.

It is important to focus on doing something rather than on trying not to feel depressed or sad. Your subconscious mind does not understand the words "don't" and "not." When you tell yourself, "I'm not going

to be depressed," it's like telling yourself, "I'm not going to think about eating candy," or "I'm going to make sure I don't yell at the kids." What happens? You find yourself constantly thinking about avoiding chocolates and yelling at the kids.

What you need is not a *don't* or a *not* but a *DO*. You need to do something. Think of a positive course of action to take, and follow that course. Think about helping someone or doing something constructive. As you focus on these actions, your self-esteem will rise to new heights. You'll begin to feel like you serve a real purpose in this life. Your life will begin to take on new meaning.

Withdraw today from your shell—your hiding place. Get out and look. There is a world of opportunity waiting for you.

Remember that you are valuable in this world. If for no other reason, you are valuable for what you have gone through or are going through now. You might ask, "How does that make me valuable?"

It makes you valuable because someday you are going to meet others who will need your strength and counsel as they go through what you've already been through. To those individuals, you will be the

most valuable, refreshing person in the world. There is no replacement for experience, and there is no greater use for it than to share with someone who needs help, someone who needs to know that you understand.

I'm glad to know I can help the brokenhearted, because I've been brokenhearted. I'm glad to know I can help those who are sick, because I've been there. I can help the person who feels like he has to drink to be able to cope, because I've been there. I can help the suicidal because I've been there. I can help the lonely, the troubled, the depressed, and the worried—and so can you!

Do something about it now. Get up and get out into the world and look for opportunities to help others. It will be the best thing you could ever do for your own life.

This is a great reason to keep on living. You can say that reason number six is, “I **can** help others.”



REASON #7

you can have
a new start



WHEN SOMEONE BECOMES A CHRISTIAN, HE OR SHE BECOMES A BRAND NEW PERSON INSIDE. HE OR SHE IS NOT THE SAME ANY MORE. A NEW LIFE HAS BEGUN!

"All these new things are from God who brought us back to Himself through what Christ Jesus did. And God has given us the privilege of urging everyone to come into His favor and be reconciled to Him. For God was in Christ, restoring the world to Himself, no longer counting men's sins against them but

blotting them out. This is the wonderful message He has given us to tell others. We are Christ's ambassadors. God is using us to speak to you: we beg you, as though Christ Himself were here pleading with you, receive the love He offers you—be reconciled to God. For God took the sinless Christ and poured into Him our sins. Then, in exchange, He poured God's goodness into us!" (2 Corinthians 5:17-21).

This Scripture portion is a summary of what happens spiritually when a person is saved. In this chapter, I will explain what takes place in your heart and what you can expect when you decide to follow Jesus.

I want to encourage you to make a decision to walk with our loving Lord. Whether you realize it or not, you are considering the most important decision of your life.

You may not immediately look, think, or feel like a new person, but feelings have nothing whatsoever to do with it. Jesus comes into our hearts and causes us to be "reborn." It is the ultimate do-over—a chance to start life now! Although I'm sure you'll feel something in your heart when you ask Jesus into your life, realize that you are reborn by faith not feelings.

You are reborn because you ask Jesus into your heart and make Him the Lord of your life (Romans 10:9-10). You no longer have to live by your ever-changing feelings, now you can live by faith.

Remember, you don't become a new person outwardly, but inwardly. You will never be the same again when Jesus comes to live inside of you. You will soon find that as you develop your relationship with Him, your old desires for selfishly getting your way and pursuing the things that never truly satisfied you anyway will dissolve. You will find yourself looking at people in a new light. You'll find that you have more love for people. This is all because you have been made new inside by Jesus Christ. You have been truly born again. This new birth takes place in your heart—on the inside. Jesus said, "Men can only reproduce human life, but the Holy Spirit gives new life from heaven" (John 3:6).

Not only do you become a new person when you are reborn, but you gain a new start in life. 2 Corinthians 5:17 reads, "When someone becomes a Christian, he becomes a brand new person inside. He is not the same anymore. A new life has begun." Your past is wiped away. Who you were and what you did is behind you. "For God took the sinless Christ and poured into Him our sins. Then, in exchange, He poured God's

goodness into us" (2 Corinthians 5:21). For us, this is truly a rags-to-riches story.

Let's face it, we've all sinned and come up short of what God wants for our lives. You may think you've committed some sins that God could never forgive, but you are mistaken. Jesus Christ took all the sin of mankind upon Himself and suffered the punishment for it on our behalf, because the final result of sin is eternity in hell.

Why did Jesus die and go to hell on your behalf? Very simply, He took your place so you wouldn't have to go to hell and suffer for eternity.

Hell was not created for human beings. Jesus said it was created for the devil and his angels. The reason people are going there is because they have scorned God's plan of salvation through Jesus and followed the ways of Satan or the ways of the world. Satan's ways can be so subtle that most people don't even know they are following him. He holds millions of people in bondage to materialism, intellectualism, and dead religions, as well as drugs, alcohol, pornography, and other forms of spiritual imprisonment.



**"men can only reproduce human life,
but the holy spirit gives
new life from heaven"
john 3:6**

Because people are deceived by all these things, they are blindly led by Satan to an eternal misery. No human mind can comprehend the horrors of that place where Jesus said, "The fire is never quenched and the worm never dies" (Mark 9:48). Hell is a place of constant fear, torture, desolation, and loneliness.

It is horrible beyond human comprehension—much worse than any horror movie you've ever seen. If people had any idea of what lies ahead, they would run to Jesus for safekeeping. Many laugh about hell, but it is no laughing matter. And should they die in that state of mind, their laughter will never be heard again.

This is the everlasting tragedy Jesus died to save each one of us from. He doesn't want you to go there. He went there and suffered for you. He has saved you from ever having to go there. He has forgiven you of all your sins, all the wrongs you've com-

mitted, inwardly and outwardly, toward heaven and toward those on earth.

This helps us to understand salvation when we understand what we are saved from. We are saved from our sins and our deserved eternal punishment in hell. We are saved from misery in this life and in the hereafter.

By Jesus dying and bearing our sinful nature, thereby erasing sin's power over the human race, He now can put His good, righteous, loving, faithful nature into us. This is what it means to become a Christian—to be like Christ, to have his nature in us.

Before we are reborn, we have Adam's fallen spiritual nature in us. This is the reason we do the things we do. This is why people lie, steal, worry, are depressed and moody, and have a negative outlook on life. They have Adam's fallen sinful nature and are acting it out.

It is not what people do that send them to hell; it is the nature of sin inside of them that ruins their lives. People sin because they have the nature of sin inside them. Turning over a new leaf can't change this. You need a new life—a new nature.

When you receive this new nature through Jesus Christ, this new nature will help you to not seek sin anymore. When you are tempted to follow your old nature, you will find that God's new nature inhabits you, directing you away from sin and toward goodness. You will be aware of the fact that your inward nature has changed.

You cannot earn this nature by doing religious deeds or by trying to be good. You can try to be good all you want and still have the nature of sin in your heart and die and go to hell. You have to have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. This starts with asking Him into your heart and making Him Lord of your life. This is where your new life begins.

You may be wondering, "What must I do to live a good Christian life?" The Bible tells us, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you" (Acts 2:38). Most people think the word repent means to say you're sorry for sinning. This is not true. Repent means to make a 180-degree turn in your life. In other words, to turn completely away from the wrong way of doing things and turn completely to the ways of God as found in the Bible. Repentance means to begin living your life to the best of your ability the way God wants you to live.

There are four basic areas that God wants you to work on at all times in your Christian life. If you follow these four components for growth, you will have joy in your heart and peace in your mind:

- 1. DEVELOP DEEP RELATIONSHIPS WITH PASSIONATE CHRISTIANS.** “Let us not neglect our church meetings, as some people do, but encourage and warn each other, especially now that the day of His coming back again is drawing near” (Hebrews 10:25). We all need encouragement and accountability from other Christians.
- 2. READ THE BIBLE.** “Work hard so God can say to you, ‘Well done.’ Be a good workman, one who does not need to be ashamed when God examines your work. Know what His Word says and means” (2 Timothy 2:15). It’s difficult to find God’s will if we don’t read His message to us.
- 3. PRAY.** “Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything; tell God your needs and don’t forget to thank Him for His answers” (Philippians 4:6). God understands your hurts and frustrations—talk to Him.

- 4. TELL OTHERS ABOUT YOUR FAITH.** “For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is God’s powerful method of bringing all who believe it to heaven” (Romans 1:16). Tell those you love of what God is beginning to do in your life.

These four areas are like the four wheels on a car. If one of the tires goes flat, you will stop going forward in maturing as a Christian. If two or more wheels go flat, you’re most likely in the ditch and wondering why you feel so rotten and why nothing seems to go right.

Before I was a Christian, I thought that if I became one I would never have any fun and would be bored all the time. That couldn’t have been further from the truth. The Christian life is the most satisfying, enriching, fulfilling, and exciting life anyone could ever ask for. Once you really find Jesus, you never want anything else. Everything the world offers seems shallow by comparison.

The result of following Jesus and obeying His Word will be a great blessing in every area of your life—spiritually, mentally, physically, socially, and even financially.

“Beloved, I wish above all things that you may prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospers” (3 John 2). God wants to prosper you in all aspects of your life. As you prosper on the inside, the outer life takes on new blessings as well. “For it gives your Father great happiness to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32).

Jesus compared the new life He gives to the wind. You don’t know where it comes from or where it goes, but you see its effects. Possibly by now you are beginning to see the impact He can have on your life. You don’t have to understand everything—just let Him work.

Remember, God is your Father, and He loves you and wants the best for you. He gave you the Bible to reveal all the blessings He has in store for you.

Reason number seven to keep on living is that you can have a new start. You can have a new life today!



may God bless you greatly
as you walk with him.

For over a quarter of a century, T.M. Anthony's *7 Reasons To Keep On Living* has been giving hope to those who have lost it and help to those who seek it.

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5. God Has An Answer For All Your Problems
6. You Can Help Others
7. You Can Have A New Start

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