
How To Stay Positive In a Negative World

Book Summary, Short Version

Introduction

Do you find yourself discouraged because what you're believing for hasn't come to pass yet? Are you standing on God's promises, but you hear people contradict those promises with negativity and doubt? Do you follow the news of the world and wonder if it's only going to get worse? There have been many times I've needed to stay positive when things didn't appear to be going our way.

Several years ago, we completed the first building on the campus of our Charis Bible College in Woodland Park, Colorado. It's what we now call The Barn. Some people just looked at all the negatives surrounding the project, but I just kept praising God! We went back and forth with the City to get building permits for some time after we purchased the property in 2009.

We finally moved in on January 6, 2014, and we haven't looked back since! Despite those challenges, I was able to rejoice because I didn't let myself get discouraged during that whole time. Now, I will admit, there was a time when I felt a righteous anger because we were facing some resistance, but I still didn't get discouraged. I just rebuked the devil, and we kept moving forward with our plans.

After that, we started making plans for our 3200 seat auditorium. A person who worked for us at the time said, "Well, they got The Barn done, but there's no way they'll get the Auditorium done!" That person just had a negative outlook. They let circumstances dictate how they saw things rather than the Word of God.

You see, when we started, we just didn't have the resources to buy the land in Woodland Park. But with God, nothing is impossible! At the time of this writing, we have buildings and property worth more than 135 million, debt free. Praise the Lord!

God has put the vision for even more buildings in my heart. All of these plans may sound daunting to some people, but I've learned to be encouraged and stay positive, even when my critics are being negative.

God is no respecter of persons. If the Lord can do it for me, I believe He can do it for you too. You've got to encourage yourself and stay positive in a negative world.

Keep Your Eyes on God

I was raised in a Christian home in Texas. I was born again when I was eight years old, and my dad was one of the deacons in our church. As a child, I was just taught to love God. I probably heard about bad things in the world, but they didn't affect me, so I never thought about them. A life influenced by the world just didn't even register with me.

Not long after I got really turned on to the Lord. On March 23, 1968, my mother took me on a trip to Burn, Switzerland, for a Baptist youth conference with Billy Graham. Along the way, we stopped in New York City. We were staying in a hotel in Times Square, and I had never seen anything like what was going on around me – my jaw just dropped! But I had hundreds of Gospel tracts (small booklets), and I was excited about handing them out and witnessing for the Lord.

At about 2 AM, I was walking down an alley in the city. When I saw a group of people, I went up to them, passed

out tracks and told them about the Lord. That may not have been smart, but because I was following God and not filling myself with the sewage of the world, I didn't even know enough to be afraid. I had zero fear. I shared the gospel with these people who were probably up to no good, and I basically just cleared out all the alleys in the wee hours of the morning.

You might be reading this and thinking, What's wrong with this guy? Well, I eventually found out what kind of situation I had put myself in. But at the time, I was just loving God and living to serve Him and share Him with anyone no matter where I went. In all the years since the Lord touched my life, I've stayed full of His love, and my relationship with Him is greater now than it's ever been.

Most Christians would never have the kind of experience I had in Times Square because they fill themselves with all the trash of this world. As a matter of fact, many of them pay money to have the sewage of the news, R-rated movies, pornography, and other things pumped into their brains.

If you were wondering why you are living in fear, things aren't going your way, or you just can't seem to stay positive, it's probably because you are saturating yourself with negativity!

Hope Deferred Makes the Heart Sick

“Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when the desire comes, it is a tree of life.” (Proverbs 13:12)

When things don't turn out the way you hope for, you may experience disappointment. Even when your hope is simply deferred, the Scripture says it makes your heart sick. The body of Christ is the hope for this world. We can't afford to get discouraged. If we are encouraged and shining forth the light of God, I can guarantee, the ungodly aren't going to do it for us. So, we've got to keep ourselves encouraged.

A few years ago, Christian conservatives in the United States were hoping for a positive outcome from a presidential election. Instead, we learned that millions of Americans voted for candidates who supported ungodly policies. When things didn't go the way Christians hoped, many of them got discouraged.

We discovered that our nation was in a moral crisis. People were letting emotional issues influence them rather than the Word of God. Christians are the salt and light of the earth, but they have not been influencing the world enough to affect important events like elections. It is our responsibility to share the Gospel and give people hope. But many Christians give into fear and discouragement if things don't turn out the way they think they should.

I haven't been depressed or discouraged for over 50 years. Now I've had a lot of depressing things happen, and I've had a lot of opportunities to be depressed. But I've learned how to stand against it.

The Lord really touched my life on March 23, 1968; and what happened to me then is more real to me now than it has ever been. Today, I am more encouraged, more full of faith, and have more vision for the future than I've ever had in my life.

What I'm saying is that this isn't just something that I'm just preaching in relation to what's going on in the news or anything like that. But for more than five decades, I have been able to maintain the intensity and joy of what's happened in my life. So, how do you keep your heart from getting sick?

Don't Let Your Heart Be Troubled

“And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.” (Matthew 24:6)

When it comes to being encouraged or discouraged, most people are up and down like a yo-yo. They have highs and lows, and they go into periods of just being depressed. But it doesn't have to be that way.

I have friends in Africa, and I've heard that there are groups like Boko Haram in Nigeria, who are murdering Christians right and left – taking young children and making them slaves. There are more Christians being martyred now for their faith than ever before in history. We are living in a violent world. There are bad things going on and, sad to say, many Americans are fiddling while the world is burning. They just sit there and watch television and are basically desensitized to everything.

The truth is that there are "wars and rumors of wars" going on all around us, but Jesus said not to let your heart be troubled in the midst of these things. This is completely contrary to what most people think.

Most people think that if you are living in a bad situation, you can't help but be troubled. Unfortunately, today's church has been heavily influenced by psychology. If you stand up and say that you can bless the Lord at all times (Psalms 34:1) and praise God regardless of what's going on in your life, you will have a lot of Christians criticize you.

They'll start saying you aren't compassionate, that your making someone feel bad, or that you're condemning a person because they are struggling. I'm not condemning anyone, and I'm saying that you don't have to be depressed and discouraged. You can still rejoice and praise God no matter what outside circumstances look like.

I hope you understand this because it is really important. You can have control over your heart. You can determine whether or not you get depressed and discouraged. You can choose to bless the Lord instead. In John 16:33, Jesus said,

“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)

This was the night before his crucifixion. Jesus knew he was going to be arrested and then crucified. And yet, he told the disciples, "don't let your heart be troubled" (John 14:1). He would be unjust to give someone that kind of a command if they couldn't do it.

Do What Is Right

“For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. (Matthew 24:7)

We are experiencing famines today on an unprecedented scale. Pestilences like the 2020 COVID pandemic dramatically affected the whole world. I've heard that even earthquakes are increasing at an exponential rate; there are more earthquakes happening today in different places than ever before. Jesus talked about how there are signs of the end times.

“All these are the beginning of sorrows. “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake.” (Matthew 24:8 – 9)

I remember as a kid reading these verses and thinking, well, that applies for nations that don't know the Lord – not for America. In America, you'll never be hated for the cause of the Lord. I'll tell you, things sure have changed.

It has become fashionable to criticize Christians. The Lord said you will be "hated of all nations" – and that includes the United States. If you are standing for godly things, you will be criticized, you will be persecuted. While Christians in America are not currently facing the threat of dying for their faith, in a sense, criticism and slamming

our more damaging forms of persecution. They are more subtle than open persecution and therefore more likely to weaken a person's resolve over time.

Right now, in America, no one is putting a gun to a Christian's head and saying, "You renounce your faith in the Lord or I'll kill you!" But if taking a stand for Jesus is going to cost something, maybe their job or acceptance among friends and family members, there are a lot of Christians who are not willing to pay that price. Sad to say, if many Christians were put on trial for their faith, there wouldn't be enough evidence to convict them. If you aren't being persecuted, it's only because you aren't living godly. (2 Timothy 3:12 - all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution).

The time has come for Christians to stand up for what's right. And if I can guarantee you will be persecuted, you will have people come out and call you a bigot, a homophobe, a hatemonger, or something else, just because you'd say things like, "the Bible says that marriage is between a man and a woman." But that doesn't matter – you have to be bold and not afraid so that "in the evil day.....having done all, you can stand" (Ephesians 6:13).

Don't Be Corrected

“And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly” (2 Peter 2:6)

I've had people challenge me and say, "the Bible doesn't even mention homosexuality. That words not even in the Bible!" The word homosexual wasn't even used until the 1800s, so I will admit that the word is not in the Bible – but what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:1 – 25) is a pretty good indication of what God thinks of homosexuality.

The apostle Peter said God used Sodom and Gomorrah as an example to those who would follow after. He went on to say:

And delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds) (2 Peter 2:7 – 8)

Lot was a righteous, godly man. He loved God but he was "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked... From day to day with their unlawful deeds." Peter said that you vex your soul when you behold iniquity. This goes right along with Jesus saying:

“And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.” (Matthew 24:12)

Not only will the evil things of the world get you into depression and discouragement, but they will also vex your soul.

There are still a lot of Christians who think, “Those things don't bother me. I can watch movies that have nudity, homosexuality, infidelity, lying, stealing, cursing or profanity in them. I'm strong enough to be able to handle it.” I've had a lot of people tell me things like that. But the apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:33:

“Be not deceived, evil communications corrupt good manners.”

If you are a Christian and you say watching ungodly things doesn't bother you, then you're deceived. It will corrupt you. Your love for God and his people will wax (grow) cold. You will become insensitive to the things of God, you'll be led by your feelings, and you won't stand on what the Bible says about these things.

Consider how candles were once made by hand. A person would take a wick and dip it in hot wax, pull it out and let

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it cool, then dip it in wax again to add another layer. After several times of doing this, the wax would build up until they had a candle. This is what happens to your heart when you are consistently exposed to iniquity. It waxes cold. It becomes hardened and insensitive through repeated exposure to ungodliness. This is a dangerous place to be as a believer!

Words Have Power

Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof. Proverbs 18:21

Words have life and death in them. When you listen to ungodliness, to lies, and to people who ridicule God and the Bible, you are exposing yourself to something deadly. Words are weapons. The Bible says, no weapon that is formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment will be condemned.

I'm not telling you to stick your head in the sand so you won't know what's going on in the world. But when you hear doubt, unbelief and negativity, you have to condemn it. You have to stand against it. You have to say, "No in the name of Jesus, this is not right!"

My wife Jamie will tell you that I'm fanatical about this. We'll be driving in the car and hear the news on the radio say, "it's flu season." And I'll respond, "Not for me, in the name of Jesus!" I'll talk back because words are weapons.

I believe I am redeemed from sickness and disease. And I don't believe I have to have those things. I've had sickness and disease in the past. But I am walking in divine health. I'm standing on the promises in God's word, specifically those in Psalm 91.

“Only with your eyes shall you look and see the reward of the wicked. Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place, no evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling” (Psalm 91:8 – 10)

Many pastors have come against me saying, "Andrew Womack doesn't believe he can get sick." Now, I'll admit, I'm capable of getting sick, just the same as anybody else. But I been appropriating God's healing provisions and walking in them. And it has been decades since I have had any sickness.

If you hear unbelief, counter it, and speak against it. As you do this, negativity will lose its impact.

You have to condemn and counter these things because every word you hear in music, news, movies, and other places brings either life or death.

This even applies to the words of your own mouth! If you don't resist and say, "no, in the name of Jesus," then those words are like seeds that immediately start producing death.

Get In The Word

“Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.” (1 Samuel 30:6)

I encourage myself and stay positive by reading and meditating on the Bible. The word of God has to become dominant in your life. If your love is waxing cold because of things that are happening around you, it's because you are more plugged in to the world than you are to the word of God.

You could study nearly every noteworthy person in the Bible and learn things from their lives. Every one of them experienced adversity – things that would have discouraged them and even destroyed them. Scripture shows us

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how to overcome these things.

“Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.” (1 Corinthians 10:11)

Everything in the Old Testament was recorded for our benefit, so that we might learn not to be discouraged and learn how to overcome certain things. If you are facing anything difficult or negative right now, I promise you that someone in the Bible has faced things as bad or worse than what you are going through. And the Scriptures show you how they overcame it. This is how you encourage yourself in the Lord and keep from becoming negative when everything around you seems to be going wrong.

We can look at what David went through because he was anointed to be king at 17 years old (2 Samuel 5:3–4) while Saul was still on the throne. For the next 13 years, it seemed like everything went wrong for David.

David had to flee for his life from his father-in-law, King Saul. Saul took David's wife, Michelle, and gave her to another man just to hurt David. Then Saul tried multiple times to kill David. All this time, David refused to kill Saul, even though he would have been justified in the eyes of the people for all the things the king had done to him.

There were 600 men who followed David, and while he and his army were with the Philistines, they left the town of Ziklag unprotected. That was where their families were staying. Seeing an opening, the Amalekites attacked Ziklag, burned the town, took all their possessions, all their wives, and all their children. It's a long story, but it looked like David and his men had lost everything. It would have been easy for David to get depressed and discouraged, and throw up his hands and say, "what's the use? Why keep fighting?"

Encourage Yourself in the Lord

“But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. (Jude 1:20-21)

For 13 years, David had been persecuted. He had to run for his life, people betrayed him, and he even had to act like he was crazy in front of the Philistines (1 Samuel 21:13). David had been through terrible things already, and the man who had been with him wanted to stone him.

David had done many good things for them, but because they had seen their city burned and their wives and children taken captive, they were going to kill him. This would have been a great opportunity to quit and just give up. David was in a very negative situation. But look at the last phrase in 1 Samuel 30:6: “David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.”

That's powerful. Most people don't know how to encourage themselves in the Lord. They depend upon others, such as a minister or other Christians. Now, people can play a role in that encouragement through fellowship. The Bible says we are supposed to encourage one another.

“Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but ¹exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. (Hebrews 3:12 – 13)

Relationships are an important part of the Christian life, but you shouldn't always depend on another person. You can't always run to someone else to have them pray for you. You need to learn how to encourage yourself in the Lord. I thank God that I have learned how to encourage myself in the Lord. This is what is missing in so many people's lives. They are dependent upon other people, but nobody can be there for you the way the Lord will be.

The Holy Spirit was specifically given to born-again believers to build them up. The Holy Spirit is called the Comforter (John 14:16–17). So, if you have the baptism of the Holy Spirit, I have compassion for you; but I don't have sympathy for you if you're discouraged or depressed.

You've got the greatest gift God ever gave us. You can build yourself up praying in tongues (Jude 20). It's just like flipping a switch and turning on the power of the Holy Spirit. If you're discouraged, it's because you aren't using what you've got. You've got to learn how to encourage yourself.

Seek God's Wisdom

“Then David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech’s son, “Please bring the ephod here to me.” And Abiathar brought the ephod to David. So David inquired of the Lord, saying, “Shall I pursue this troop? Shall I overtake them?” (1 Samuel 30: 7–8)

David encouraged himself in the Lord by seeking wisdom and direction from Him the ephod was a garment that the priest wore, and it was used to inquire of the Lord.

David asked, "should I pursue the Amalekites and overtake them?" And the Lord said, "Yes, you will overtake them and recover everything, so pursue them."

In this battle, they took back all their wives and children, along with all their possessions and all the spoil of the Amalekites. They actually ended up with more than they had before and, within a couple of days, David became the King of Israel. What he had been believing for 13 years came to pass in a matter of hours. This happened right after it seemed all was lost.

When you are fighting the negativity of all that is happening around you, how do you encourage yourself in the Lord? You turn to God's Word. When you reach a place where it seems like you can't stand it anymore and have reached your limit, stand on 1 Corinthians 10:13:

“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”

God won't let you go beyond your limit. When you reach a place where, like David, you've wept until you can't weep anymore (1 Samuel 30:4), that means that if you just keep standing, God is going to come through for you. David was right at the breaking point, and it was only a matter of hours until his vision and his dreams came to pass. It can be the same for you.

Renew Your Mind

The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul, the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. (Psalm 19:7)

I keep myself encouraged by turning to the Word of God. With all the negative things going on in the world right now, this is so important. But the average Christian does not spend much time in the Bible. They spend more time in the light of their television than they do in the light of God's Word.

If you spend more time listening to what the world says than what the Word of God says, you aren't going to be encouraged. You will be discouraged. Your love will grow cold (Matthew 24:12). Some people say, "Well, I don't have a lot of quantity time in God's Word, but I have quality time. That just won't work. You've got to spend more

time in the Word than you do in the world.

You can't just be plugged into television and the Internet. If you let the sewage of the world flow through your mind, some of it's going to stick on the inside of you and you'll get clogged up. You're deceived if you think media, news, and television are not going to affect you.

During the 2020 COVID pandemic, when the rest of the world was glued to the news and panicking, I spent five to 10 hours a day in the Word. I love the Word of God and get great things out of it.

“Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all day long.” (Psalm 119:97)

I love the Word of God more than I love movies, TV shows, sports, or anything else. It speaks to me. I can barely open the Bible without God just shouting at me. It changes my perception. I begin to see things through the light of what God's Word says rather than what the world says.

If you are going to encourage yourself in the Lord, as David did (1 Samuel 30:6), you have to seek direction from God's Word. It's the foundation of everything.

When you are born again, your spirit is made new and perfect (2 Corinthians 5:17). But your mind (which is part of your soul) needs to be renewed by the Word of God. (Romans 12:2). You do this by planting the seed of God's Word in your heart. The Word of God is perfect, and it will restore your soul to the condition that God wants it to be. If your soul is not where it's supposed to be, you need to spend more time in God's word.

Let Your Heart Rejoice

“The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart, the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.” (Psalm 19:8)

If you're in the Word of God, it will cause you to rejoice. It will give you joy and peace. If your hearts not rejoicing, you need to be in the Word of God.

One Saturday when I was in the Army at Fort Hamilton, New York, while everybody else went into New York City, I stayed in the barracks. I was the only person in there, and I spent my time studying the Word for eight hours. I just sat on my bunk and read the Bible. And after eight hours of being in the Word, I could have run through a troop or leapt over a wall (Psalm 18:29). The contrast between the joy that I experienced after being in the Word and the discouragement and the rejection I felt from others was like night and day.

If you're discouraged, it's because you aren't in the Word of God, you're not encouraging yourself in the Lord. And you're not building yourself up by praying in tongues. You're discouraged and depressed because your letting circumstances dominate you. You are looking at things in the natural. Put your eyes on the Word of God, and if you do that, it'll rejoice your heart.

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When you get into the Bible, it will also help you see things differently. It will enlighten your eyes. People who aren't in the Word of God are like people who are walking in the dark. You just can't see everything, and it's just a matter of time till you bump into something. But when you're in the Word of God, it enlightens your eyes. It enables you to see things, you'll magnify God and you will see him as bigger than what ever problem you're facing.

Keep Your Heart Clean

“The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever, the

judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.” (Psalm 19:9)

There aren't a lot of things in this world that are clean. There just seems to be impurity in everything. Even if you find a movie that you like, there's going to be some sort of junk in it.

I once heard a story about a pastor whose son wanted to go to the movies with his friends. The boy asked his dad if he could go. The pastor asked, "What's the movie rated?" So, the boy told him, and the pastor said, "No, that's not the kind of movie I want you to see." His son argued, "Well, everybody else is going! The deacons kids are going! There's just a tiny bit of nudity; there are just a few curse words in it. Overall, it's a good movie." But the pastor still said, "no."

Then, that pastor used some wisdom. He told his sons that, instead of going to watch the movie, he could invite some of his friends over to the house. When the kids were all playing in the backyard, the pastor brought some brownies out to them for a snack. They were hot out of the oven and probably looked delicious. But as this pastor gave the brownies to the kids, he said, "before you eat these, I just want you to know that there's a little bit of dog poop in them. There's not much. You won't taste it, it won't make you sick, and it shouldn't bother you at all, but I just want you to know there's a little bit of dog poop in there." Of course, none of those kids wanted to eat the brownies, but the pastor had made his point.

This is the way a lot of Christians are. They think, Well, there's only a little bit of nudity, hatred, and strife in it, but overall, it seems good. By contrast, the Word of God is pure and clean. It endures forever. "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether in" (Psalm 19: 9B). Again, there is very little in our world today that's true and righteous altogether. You need to stay in the Word of God if you want to keep your heart clean and stay encouraged.

Don't Believe a Negative Report

“There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.” (Numbers 13:33)

To me this is the most amazing example of negativism. Moses sent spies to evaluate the Promised Land. He didn't send them to find out if they could take the land. They were just supposed to report where the strongholds were.

Several years ago, I was in Washington, DC, with my friend David Barton of Wall Builders. He occasionally leads tours of the Capital and Statuary Hall and shares how many of our founders were clergymen who loved God. It's powerful! While we were there, members of Congress spoke to us, and they were all godly people. I learned they need together and pray every day.

After two days of seeing the Capital and hearing these congressional leaders come in and speak, I admitted to David that I had no idea things were so good in this nation. Everything I had been hearing in the news was about how terrible everything is. David responded by saying, "you've been listening to the '10 spies' network."

This is what happened to the Israelites, a group of about 3 million people. When Moses sent the 12 spies out, they came back and said:

“We came unto the land where you sent us, and surely it flows with milk and honey, and this is the fruit of it.” (Numbers 13:27)

They brought back one cluster of grapes on a pole in between two men because it was so large (Numbers 13:23). Those grapes must have been as big as apples! But then they said:

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“Nevertheless, the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large; moreover, we saw the descendants of Anak there.” (Numbers 13:28)

Ten spies discouraged the Israelites by saying:

“We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we.” There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.” (Numbers 13:31,33)

Only two spies, Joshua and Caleb, urged the Israelites to enter the land without fear because the Lord was with them (Numbers 13:30; 14:6–9). Unfortunately, the Israelites did not listen to Joshua and Caleb.

Everything the spies said was true. But you've got to take the truth and put it into the proper perspective. More than 40 years later, when Joshua sent two spies to Jericho they came to Rahab's house. She told them the people had heard how God parted the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21–29) and how the kings of the Amorites were destroyed (Numbers 21:21–23).

“And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.” (Joshua 2:11)

If the Israelites had known what the people in the Promised Land were actually feeling – if they would have believed Joshua and Caleb instead of the other ten spies – they could have just walked right in and taken the land. They would've had no problem. Instead, they were discouraged by a negative report, and everyone 20 years old and older died in the wilderness because of it (Numbers 14:29).

You Don't Need All the Details

“But thanks be to God, which who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor 15:57)

The Lord wants us to live by faith. He doesn't just show a person the end from the beginning. If people knew the end from the beginning and what they'd have to deal with to get there, many of them would be impatient and wouldn't take time to grow. They would try to make things come to pass on their own.

On the other hand, some people would be so overwhelmed with what God showed them that they would run the other direction. But the things of God come step by step.

Over the years I have recognized a pattern: every 12 years something miraculous happens in my life and ministry. On the morning of August 26, 2019 – at the end of one of these 12-year segments, I was praising and worshiping God for all the good things He had done.

I asked God, "What's going to happen in the next 12 years?" Immediately, I got the response. "You don't want to know!" Even though I did want to know, there was silence after that. God had given me an answer, and He wasn't going to argue with me about it.

That was right before the COVID pandemic of 2020, and all the lockdowns and mandates associated with it. The government declared that churches were nonessential and tried to stop people from worshiping together. We even received a cease and desist letter during one of our events here at Charis. I could have been arrested. The State of Colorado sued us, and we sued them.

Eventually, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of some churches in other states that fought back against lockdowns.

Because of that, Colorado backed down, and we came through it. Now, the Holy Spirit did show my staff some strategies that helped us continue ministering through that time, but I'm glad I didn't know exactly what was going to happen. I was walking by faith, and I trusted Him. I just knew we were going to win if we didn't quit.

God doesn't show you everything. He didn't show the Israelites that when they got to Jericho, the walls would fall down, and they would win automatically. He just promised them that they would possess the land – that it was already a done deal.

The Lord promises victory, but He doesn't give you all the details. You must walk by faith and trust Him. You have to be encouraged by His promises.

Personalize God's Promises

“For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.” (2 Cor 1:20)

All of us have general promises from the Lord, but many people haven't personalized the Word of God. You may read this scripture and think, Well, God promised this to Paul, not me. But for God's promises to work in your life, they must become personal to you.

This is why so many people are going through life without direction. You may be doing your own thing and asking God to bless it. You may be praying, "God, bless my business," or "God, bless my decision." But I don't ever ask God to bless what I'm doing. I don't do things that are of my own choosing. Instead, I seek the Lord and I wait until God tells me to do something.

If God tells you to do something, it's already blessed. To try and get God to bless your plan is wrong. You need to raise a white flag, surrender by becoming a living sacrifice, and then renew your mind to what God tells you to do (Romans 12:1–2). When you do that, you're automatically blessed. But that only begins when you begin personalizing the Word of God.

I had an experience with the Lord that helped me understand this. The Lord woke me up in the middle of the night not long after Jamie and I were married. The presence of God was so real I just sat there for hours, afraid to open my eyes. Finally, the Lord asked me, "What do you want?"

God told me He was giving me the same choice that he gave Solomon (1 Kings 3:5); I could pick anything I wanted from him. At that time, I was an introvert. I'd been trying to minister the Word for a couple of years by then, and it was just pitiful. I was afraid of people and froze every time I got up in front of a group.

After one of my meetings, someone came up to me and said, "You've got really good things to share. If you would love the people more than you loved yourself, you could be a blessing." What this man said felt like getting stabbed by a knife, but he was right. I was worried about what other people thought about me. Things needed to change.

In response to God's offer, I said, "I want the ability to speak your word without fear." So, the Lord touched me and put his words in my mouth, just like he promised the prophet Jeremiah.

“Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.” Then said I: “Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth.” But the Lord said to me: “Do not say, ‘I am a youth,’ For you shall go to all to whom I send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of their faces, for I am with you to deliver you,” says the Lord. Then the Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me: “Behold, I have put My words in your mouth.” (Jeremiah 1:4 – 9)

Those Scriptures became mine. God may have spoken them to Jeremiah, but through his word, the Lord also spoke that to me. I personalized God's Word, and it totally transformed my life. Now I speak to potentially billions of people every day through our Gospel Truth television program.

God has given promises to me and to you. You just need to believe them and make them your own.

Use Your Imagination

"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. (John 14:12)

Once you personalize God's promises and believe them, then you need to visualize them coming to pass. If you have trouble believing what the Lord says about you, you just need to change your perspective. You can change your life by changing what you see in your heart – your imagination.

Many people can quote the healing promises of God, e.g., "By whose stripes you were healed" (1 Peter 2:24); "Himself took our infirmities and bear our sicknesses" (Matthew 8:17); and "He sent his word, and healed them" (Psalm 107:20). But many of those same people still see themselves sick in their imaginations.

If you can't see yourself healed on the inside, you'll never see it on the outside. You must take the word of God, make it personal to you, and then visualize those promises in your own life.

I took John 14:12 and made that Scripture my own. Jesus spoke that to me. I personalized it and said, "Father, you told me that, and yet I haven't seen those things come to pass." So, I just focused on doing the works that Jesus did and didn't even worry about the greater works. Then, I started saying, "Father, I want to see the dead raised!"

I looked up every Scripture in the Bible where a person was raised from the dead, wrote them out on a piece of paper, and I started meditating on them. That allowed the Word to come alive on the inside of me. As I started meditating and thinking on the Scriptures, I saw Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead in my imagination (John 11:38–44). Then, I meditated on it until I saw myself raising Lazarus from the dead.

I got to the point where I would dream every night of raising 20 to 30 people from the dead. After a while, it just consumed me. Not long after seeing these things in my imagination, they moved from the spiritual into the natural. A man had a heart attack and died in one of my meetings, and we saw him raised from the dead.

That was awesome! But 10 to 15 years went by, and I thought, I haven't seen anybody raised from the dead lately. So, I went back and started meditating on the Scriptures and began dreaming about it and seeing it on the inside of me again. Soon after that, my son died and was dead for five hours. But Jamie and I believed God, and he came back from the dead. Praise the Lord!

What Picture Is Inside You?

As you consistently meditate on the word, you'll eventually reach a point that you won't know how to disbelieve God. You don't have to be plagued with doubt. Sad to say, most Christians don't understand this. They think that it's normal to constantly live with doubt, always wondering what God is going to do. You won't be able to stay positive during negative circumstances if you think that way.

Once, my Board of Directors sent me to the doctor for a stress test because of an insurance policy application. When I finished, the doctor looked over my results. Then he started grunting and writing on my chart. When he finally looked up at me, he said, "Here's the name of the doctor I know. He's a specialist. I want you to go over

there and get tested right away. We may admit you into the hospital for open–heart surgery before the day is over."

I was shocked! I didn't feel ill. I began thinking about the image of health and strength God's Word had on the inside of me, and I said to him, "That's a lie. I don't believe it. You look at that read out again and tell me that it says I have a heart problem."

The doctor just looked at me (probably because he wasn't used to people calling him a liar) and said, "Well, it doesn't really say you have a heart problem. It just says that there was an abnormality during testing. It may be nothing, but it could be something serious. We need to get you tested.

"That's not what you told me," I said, getting mad. "You told me I might have to have open–heart surgery before the day is over. You lied to me!" The doctor tore up the test results and said, "fine! You're on your own! Get out of here!"

Later, I had a nuclear stress test done, which was more accurate than a treadmill test; and I was told that I had the heart of a 17 year–old. I had been meditating on God's promises about healing so when the first doctor told me I needed open–heart surgery, I didn't believe him. And, praise God, I didn't need surgery. I kept a positive attitude because I focused on God's Word.

Don't Let Yourself Be Tempted

"Do not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap." (Galatians 6:7)

You can't be tempted with what you don't think about (Hebrews 11:15). The reason some of you are tempted to commit adultery is because you watch movies and TV shows that portray adultery. It affects you emotionally, and you end up drawn to it.

A person doesn't just wake up one day and commit adultery. Before a person sins, they conceive it in their imagination. When you watch things that show someone being unfaithful in marriage, it plants a seed in your heart. And what you put in your heart, good or bad, will bear fruit. If you sow God's Word into your heart, you'll see God's best begin to manifest in your life. If you sow the things of this world, it will bear sin.

If you are struggling with temptations, it's because you're thinking about negative reports or ungodly things in the world. You can't be tempted with something you don't think about. So, quit thinking about it, and you won't be tempted!

Draw on Your Relationship with God

"But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:8 – 9)

When I was serving in the Army in Vietnam, the U. S. Military would occasionally bring the troops out of the field and back to headquarters in a town on the South China Sea for what they called a "stand down." For three days, they would give troops all the alcohol they could drink. They also brought in women and put on a musical show that was sexually oriented. It turned out these women were prostitutes, so a person could have all the booze, drugs, and sex they wanted for three days, all funded by the US government.

(More details of the "stand down")... All that noise was like a magnet drawing me because I wanted to be accepted. I'll admit, I didn't enjoy being treated like the plague by the other soldiers. (If you like being persecuted, there's something wrong with you!) But God was speaking to me through Joseph's words, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Because I had spent all that time in the Bible, I was able to personalize God's Word, and He spoke to me through it.

Joseph resisted the temptation of Potipher's wife and, even though he suffered because of his choice, he stayed positive. Everything in his life seemed headed in a negative direction for 13 years, but one day he ended up going from the pit to the palace because he stood on God's promises, saw them come to pass in his imagination, and stayed positive.

Choose Your Mold

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

Satan will try to put you in a position to compromise. But if you have a relationship with God, His Word will keep you from becoming depressed, discouraged, and an easy target for the enemy's attacks. It is so important to stay positive, to personalize God's promises, and to see yourself receiving God's best.

Even though I felt drawn to be a part of what other people were doing in Vietnam and to be accepted by them, I loved God more than I loved people. I had learned not to rely on other people to encourage me. I relied upon my relationship with the Lord to help me stay positive in a negative situation.

This is just my personal opinion, but I think post-traumatic stress disorder isn't just from the torments of war. The typical soldier indulges in sinful behavior with prostitutes, drugs, and alcohol. They do things in war that they would never do back home, where they would be accountable to a spouse or a family, father or mother, sister or brother, or anyone else.

There guilt and shame are eating them up on the inside. So, when they come home, they may struggle with what they saw during battle, but I think that there is also guilt over other things that happened.

Remember, because I loved God and was focused on serving Him, I didn't even recognize prostitution when it was right in front of me, even when it was offered to me! I'm not saying these things to brag, but it was because I was encouraging myself in God. I had a positive outlook, even when I was surrounded by evil, ungodly, and negative things.

Having been drafted in the military during wartime meant the possibility of being killed in action. So, when we received our orders to be deployed to Vietnam, a bunch of the men started crying because they knew what that meant.

There was a chaplain there who shared something that really blessed me. He told us that the Army was like a fire, and it would melt you. But the chaplain said, "you get to choose what mold you are poured into." As it turned out, what could have been a very negative experience ended up being one of the best things that ever happened to me. By the time I got back from Vietnam, I had been spending up to 15 hours a day studying the Bible, and I was stronger than horseradish!

Conclusion

While people around me were letting their experience in Vietnam conform them to this world and get into ungodly

behaviors, I chose a different mold. I let the Word of God transform me. I chose to stay positive, and the Lord sent me on a course that led me to where we are today!

We've had opportunities over the years to be discouraged and depressed when we were struggling financially, and it seemed like people were staying away from our meetings by the thousands. But we didn't quit! Now, it's all we can do just to keep up with everything the Lord is doing!

Again, God is no respecter of persons. What the Lord did for me, I believe he can do for you. But you have a part to play. The will of God doesn't come to pass automatically. You have to plant the seed of God's Word (1 Peter 1:23) in your heart if you want to bear fruit (Galatians 5:22 – 23).

If you just passively let the things of this world affect your life, you'll let fear overtake you, and you will be discouraged. It's time for the body of Christ to take a stand against ungodliness. But it's going to take believers standing on the Word of God and personalizing his promises, and using their imaginations to see the Lords will come to pass and be a force for good!

I believe if we stay positive in a negative world, we will see things change! With God, all things are possible, and the best is yet to come!