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Issue 2

Stranger

Joshua 1:9

**Moms, are
you walled
in?**

**Is modesty
cultural?**

**Overcoming
the Bully**

Standing in the Way

**Are You Ready to
be Hated?**

**Walking
the Strait
and
Narrow**

**Peer Pressure
and the Bible**

Welcome to *Stronger*

It is our pleasure and honor to bring you *Stronger* a free monthly ladies' devotional magazine. This magazine for Christian women by Christian women is dedicated to bringing you closer to Christ and making you stronger in all areas of your daily walk. Inside you'll find dedicated columns, as well as featured articles by Christian women. It is our desire to feature articles by familiar Christian women authors, as well as by the Christian woman next door. We aim to encourage all women to do what they can for the cause of Christ and hope to inspire you through our efforts.

Thank you for reading *Stronger*. Each edition is available on PDF and is free to distribute and copy. Please feel free to print copies for your friends and family, as well as your home congregations.

--Susan Elliott, Editor

Get to Know the Editors:

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Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

Joshua 1:9



Moms, Are You Walled In?

Sarah Floyd

“Be strong and courageous!” God tells Joshua in Joshua 1:9. “Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord, your God is with you wherever you go.” In this verse, and most of the book of Joshua, God is preparing Joshua to face his enemies in the intensely-fortified city of Jericho. God is reminding him that He will always be with him as long as he is a valiant follower of his Father. Joshua does indeed take courage and continues on to conquer Jericho against incredible odds.

It may seem strange to begin an article about Christian parenting with a Scripture about going into battle, but, let’s face it, growing as Christian mothers can sometimes feel as difficult as conquering a walled kingdom! As mothers today, we encounter almost as many challenges and temptations as Joshua encountered hostile Canaanites. These “walls” can discourage us and threaten our own relationships with God, and they can also inhibit our success in parenting our children.

One obstacle that can impede our growth as Christian mothers is playing the comparison game. There’s nothing wrong with discussing our children’s progress or interests, our home décor projects, or our latest vacations, but if our interest in others’ lives morphs into a feeling of dissatisfaction or jealousy, we are harming ourselves and our families. Galatians 5:25-26 says, “If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.” When we find ourselves coveting another mom’s house or car or wishing our children could count to 200 like our friends’ kids do, we are committing the sin of envy. We are also connecting our worth and the worth of our children to financial status, education, or talent. God doesn’t do that – He loves us unconditionally – and we shouldn’t do it either.

Moms, Are You Walled in?

Cont...

Another barrier to our Christian motherhood can be possessing misplaced priorities. The mom life is filled with expectations from every side – from our families and friends, our brothers and sisters of our congregations, and our own plans or goals. As if those expectations weren't enough, many of us find even more mommy-shaming on the internet. Everyone seems to have an opinion about how we should raise our children, and about which aspects of their nutrition, education, or entertainment are most important. We're told to be sure that our children can excel academically in every subject, attend college but also learn a trade, have social skills and life skills and technological prowess, perform well in both sports and fine arts, and form close relationships with extended family members as well as travel. We're supposed to make meals fun and healthy and do complex crafts with our kids often while maintaining a spotless house...and if we're earning wages at the same time, we're even more successful as mothers. None of these activities are evil, but if these are our top priorities as Christian mothers, we are as barricaded as Jericho from our true mission, which is to raise our children in the truth of God's Word so they can live with Him in heaven someday. Two of the most well-known mothers in the Bible, Timothy's grandmother and mother, Lois and Eunice, were not renowned for their dedication to Timothy's chariot-racing abilities or camel-grooming techniques. They are still role models for us as mothers today because of their "sincere faith" (II Timothy 1:5) that they then instilled in Timothy. We can't allow our other priorities as mothers to usurp this utmost responsibility in the lives of our children, no matter what anyone in the world or even the church may expect of us.

An additional impediment to our growth as Christian moms can be anxiety. Worrying. Don't we all do it? Isn't it natural? While it *is* natural for us to be concerned about our children's health, safety, and spiritual training, we can become so consumed with fear that our peace and joy in our motherhood is diminished. Worrying is neither healthy nor helpful, and it is unnecessary. In Matthew 6:25-34, God tells us that He will take care of us and that we don't need to worry. Jesus also says in John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful." Parenting can be terrifying – it is the scariest thing I have ever done in my life so far, but we should take comfort in the knowledge that God promises to watch over us – and our children. And if we find ourselves physically unable to rest – if our anxiety is beyond our control – we must seek assistance so we can reclaim that peace in Him instead of staying trapped by fear.

Joshua wasn't a mother, but he was a human who was able to accomplish hard things through his trust and obedience in God. By remaining strong and courageous and growing in God's protection, Joshua dismantled barriers that were otherwise insurmountable. As Christian mothers, we can destroy any walls we face if we are steadfast in our faith in the Lord.



Walking the Strait and

Narrow Tiffany Secula

Carefully she placed one foot in front of the other, trying to maintain her balance as the boards beneath her swayed. She tried not to look at the jagged rocks below, knowing she must keep her focus. Slowly and carefully, she inched her way to safety. At the end of the rickety, wooden bridge, she leapt to solid ground and shouted, “Mommy, mommy, I made it!”

I love my daughter’s vivid imagination as she crossed the balance beam. In reality, it was merely a few inches off the ground in the safety of the playground, but to her, it was a treacherous adventure where one wrong step would mean certain doom.

Too often this childlike image of the jagged rocks under a failing bridge is the way we view our Christian walk. We are afraid that if we step off the strait and narrow path for even a moment, then we are doomed to fall to our death in the depths of hell. This is not the faith which our God and Father have called us to live. We have been called to live fearlessly. To know we have life in Him and trust in that life.

John wrote to Christians in 1 John 5:13, *“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”* God wants us to trust that though our walk isn’t perfect if we are walking the strait and narrow path that he laid out for us, then we are headed toward life!

We are all going to sin, to mess up and stumble. Baptism isn’t going to make us magically make all the right decisions, but it is a forgiveness of all the wrong ones and a placement on the path God wants us to walk.

When we choose that life, that way, of walking with God, we don’t have to be afraid. As long as we are trying, we don’t have to fear one bad step is going to send us plummeting to our doom.

John also wrote that *“if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”* (1 John 1:7) When we are walking the path that points us to God, the blood of His Son continually washes us, renews us, covers us so that we are constantly His! This is a promise that we can trust.

This verse assures us that as we move forward, as we try to follow God, as we inch our way to becoming more in His image, that we are covered when we slip when we make mistakes. Each of us is going to have days when we are not as strong as we want to be. We are going to have days where we make decisions and do things we know we should not do. As children of God who are learning every day to live like the Father and being transformed into the image of the Son, we have to remember that it won’t happen overnight.

Every day we put one foot in front of the other, and we walk a path set out by the Creator for us to follow. We must follow it not with fear, but with faith and trust. Knowing that *“God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”* 2 Timothy 1:7 Walk the path of life fearlessly!

Walking the Strait and Narrow

Tiffany Secula

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The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

--II Peter 3:9

Ask A Sister

Pull up a chair,
grab a cup of tea,
and let's talk...



Dear Sister:

I was reading a discussion the other day where one sister said swimming attire must be modest, but another one said it can be dictated by the culture around us. What are your thoughts?



I was reading a discussion the other day where one sister said swimming attire must be modest (i.e., not bikinis), but another one said it could be dictated by the culture around us. What are your thoughts?

Wow! What a great question, and one that is sure to get some discussion going. Let me first start by saying that there are some situations that culture might influence our decisions (Romans 14), and there are other situations that culture can never dictate. When in doubt, it is important to apply the principles God has set up in the Bible (Matthew 6:33), before making our decisions. Our decisions can never be made based on culture alone.

Our society tells us that we can dress in the way that a particular occasion demands.

Athletes

In sports, there are typical uniforms athletes wear, and they change by sport. In volleyball, players wear tiny lycra shorts with t-shirts. Basketball players wear sleeveless tops with knee shorts. Gymnasts wear leotards. Cheerleaders wear short skirts with bloomers, and either midriff or crop tops. Swimmers wear swimsuits. Professional male wrestlers often wear tiny speedos and perform topless. Culture has dictated; that this is how things should be. According to culture, we are our own decision makers, our own higher authority on things, so under that guideline, it makes sense.

Weddings

People who attend weddings are also dictated by cultural standards. In the United States a bride typically wears white, or some shade of white. The groomsmen wear black or at the very least some kind of matching outfit. The bridesmaids are typically adorned in matching dresses, that compliment the bride's colors or dress. Everyone in the wedding party wears something elegant.

Ask A Sister cont.

If you've ever watched *Say Yes to the Dress*, it doesn't take you long to realize that brides' dresses come in all shapes and styles. Some gowns are elaborately covered in sequins and lace, while other gowns look like they came off of the lingerie rack. The latter have structured boning and see-through lace that runs from the bride's waist or even just above her pubic bone, to her breasts, with lining only covering her actual breasts on the dress, and not always covering the entire breast. This style of dress is a growing trend in the U.S. Brides are walking down the aisle in front of friends and family bearing nearly everything they have. Our culture demands a bride can wear whatever she wants at her wedding, so why not lingerie styled dresses?

There are even sub-cultures (yes, even here in the United States) who believe that they should go "skyclad" to their wedding ceremonies. Each bride and groom attend the ceremony naked because the naked body represents the truth. What could be more truthful than being naked at a wedding ceremony? Culture, in this case, dictates nakedness.

Date Night

Culture tells us that date night attire should be sexy. After all, a single woman is trying to pick up a male to take home, right (Proverbs 5:3-5)? A married woman is trying to seduce her husband, and in the process, attract the eyes of every man in a place so they can be jealous of what her husband has and he doesn't. According to culture, club attire is tight-fitting clothes, the shorter, the better, and stiletto heels. However, this attire should only be worn to clubs, because walking down the streets in short thigh-length dresses, and stilettos might get you propositioned. This type of dress is also the classic attire for hookers. However, our society has dictated as long as you are at the club; this clothing is acceptable.

Instagram

Attire for selfies is all over the place. Women often subscribe to the less is more motto when it comes to the Internet. Everyone wants a bunch of followers, and the sexier the picture and the less clothes you have on, the more followers you'll attract. Who cares who's looking at the pictures or what they're doing with them. Models can pose for pictures in all sorts of clothes, or in no clothes at all. Society calls this beauty and art. I am beautiful, so as long as I stay within the confines of culture, my pictures can be sexy, scantily clad, or whatever I choose— as long as they don't break the Instagram community standards, right?

I think it's easy to see in the above examples of how our culture has dictated both our dress and behavior. Can we call it godly? No. Not in every case, but why is that? Why is it the person who is comfortable walking the beaches in a bikini is uncomfortable with the bride in lingerie? Why is the person wearing a one-piece suit swimsuit uncomfortable when her daughter is posting sexy pictures on Instagram? Why is it that we don't mind the cheerleader shaking her stuff and wearing very little clothing at the football game (where our sons and husbands are watching her), but are against the woman wearing the skin-tight dress and heels walking outside the gas station, or standing on the street corner? It is because we have allowed our thinking about modesty to be dictated by culture.



Ask A Sister . . . cont.

It is perfectly acceptable for a girl to go to the beach in a bikini or small swimsuit, but never on a date with her boyfriend. Why is that? Ask yourself, honestly. Why would you allow your daughter (no matter the age) sexualize herself in one place and not another? If we're going to be consistent, we wouldn't care if she wore a bikini to the beach or a date. We wouldn't care if she wore those tiny volleyball shorts to the game or the short sexy dress out with her friends. After all, according to culture there is nothing wrong with it.

Does this argument make sense to you? I hope it leaves you scratching your head a little bit. Culture does not dictate how much nakedness we can show. So many argue that it's a man's problem if he looks on a woman to lust when she is scantily clad (James 1:14,15). You're right; he can look away. But, why would you want to be a stumbling block to him when his soul is at stake (Romans 14:13)? Why would you want to lead a man or a woman – sorry sisters, you might be leading a woman astray as well with your dress – down a path of destruction (Matthew 5:28). Have we not realized that causing someone else to sin causes ourselves to sin? We don't need to be asking ourselves how much can I take off to swim. We need to ask ourselves, are our attire choices glorifying God (Matthew 5:16, I Peter 1:14-15)?

Honestly, if we're going to keep it real, the lust of the flesh is not just a man's problem (Hebrews 4:15, I Corinthians 10:13). How many times have we giggled and bit our lip when we saw a picture of Jason Momoa, Chris Hemsworth, or any other chiseled chested man with his shirt off? I've heard a man say that modesty (keeping oneself covered) doesn't affect women like it does men, so that's why a man can go without his shirt. REALLY? Come on, girls. I know you don't buy that. Maybe we don't have the sexual thoughts a man does as often, but (keeping it real) they are there. (And, I'll be honest. Jason Momoa and Chris Hemsworth are handsome men, but I don't need to be looking at them to lust.)

Now, the question was, does culture dictate our swimming clothes when we go to the beach. I would say absolutely not. I'm not going to argue the length of shorts or what swimsuit length is okay. That is something you're going to have to answer for yourself, understanding that what we wear can cause others to sin, and ourselves to sin. Next time you put something on and start to leave the house, really think about what you're wearing

Ask Yourself:

Would I want Jesus to return while I was wearing this in public? If the answer is no. You probably shouldn't wear it.

What is the motive behind my outfit? (Come on ladies, I know that sometimes we have one.) Is that motive holy? Or are we trying to draw attention to ourselves? Sometimes clothes that cover us from head to toe can be immodest if our motives are sinful; however, that doesn't imply that if our motives are pure, our clothes will be.

Are we advertising something we shouldn't be? Let me be clear it is NEVER okay for a woman to be attacked. It is NEVER okay to blame a woman for being attacked because of the things she's wearing. Now with that said, how many situations have we been in, or have known of where something bad has happened because of something we were wearing? In high school, I had several friends who wanted to dress in provocative clothes because "they had it, so they were going to flaunt it." Scantily clad clothes also brought in bigger tips for my waitress friends. Several of the same friends complained of men grabbing their backsides while they were at work, or being catcalled. What are you advertising by what you're wearing? What kind of attention is our clothing seeking? Is it godly?



Ask A Sister . . . cont.

Back to the Bikini: What's the difference in my two-piece swimsuit and my bra and panties? (The answer is nothing except fabric.) Now, I own a bikini. I wear it under my swim shorts and a t-shirt because it wears better when I'm swimming than my bra and panties. I do not, however, walk around the beach with a two piece on. In fact, I try to stay aware of even my swimshorts (I buy men's, not women's because they are longer). I always make sure they aren't clinging to me or riding up when I get out of the water. Why? Because I don't want to be showing off what God has reserved for my husband. I'm not advertising my breasts, backside, or anything else to everyone at the beach.

Also, Moms finding a modest swimsuit is hard, and you're probably not going to find one. Not really. Every swimsuit I've owned has always had something immodest about it. They're tight. They're too short. They are too whatever. So, maybe it's time to think outside the box.

Since I never had any luck finding a swimsuit that was truly modest, I figured if my husband could wear guy's swim shorts – he buys them at Wal-Mart, I could, too. I also figured if I could wear them, so could my girls, and believe it or not, I decided that my son could wear a shirt when he swam (just like his dad). If the girls and I could wear a top when we swim, why couldn't he? (By the way, I've never been kicked out of a water park or off of a water ride because I was wearing guys swim shorts and a t-shirt. Nope. Not once.)

I want to make it clear. We didn't emphasize dressing modestly in our house because we were body shaming each other. It isn't because we didn't want our children to love their bodies. It's really the opposite. I wanted my children to cherish the bodies God gave them, but also wanted them to learn to pay attention to what they were wearing. I wanted them to know that it's important to keep others from stumbling. I wanted them to grow up to lead godly lives, and I wanted them to learn to lead by example. What we wear is important. What we advertise when we are in public, no matter the occasion is important. My girls were in sports. They didn't wear booty shorts. It wasn't going to happen. Culture does not dictate what's modest or immodest in my house, and it never will.

WARNING!

I've heard it said; I understand that teenagers and women need to dress modestly in their swim attire, but who's going to lust after my two-year-old daughter, or six-year-old daughter when she's wearing a two-piece swimsuit at the beach or public pool? Do you really want me to answer that question?

Moms, daughters, sisters let's strive hard to keep each other exalted and not cause anyone to stumble. Let us not allow culture to tell us what is scriptural and what is unscriptural. Let's always strive to walk humbly and faithfully with God – no matter the occasion (Micah 6:8, I Peter 5:8).



Submit your questions via Facebook Messenger on the Stronger Facebook page!



Motherhood

Susan Elliott

Motherhood:
blissful, dream woven
marshmallow crème like state.

Yeah right!

Motherhood:
neurotic, chaos
like cat-tail reed swaying.

So right!

Motherhood:
spinach, broccoli
stuff it down your throat child.

Too right.

Motherhood:
surpasses it all
beautiful flower in rain.

It's right.



Standing in the Way

Renate Braddy

*Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season;
reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and
doctrine.*

--II Timothy 4:2

It seems to me that the action words in this scripture [II Timothy 4:2] should make everyone realize that the Christian life is never going to be one of ease. Preaching is not something that the hired Minister does alone; it is something that is the very act of “Christian-ing.” If you look at the last thing that Jesus said to His followers at the end of Mat. 28, it is clear that the Lord wants His people to go. If you aren’t, you are rejecting His will for your life.

I had a thought recently about church buildings. I know they are useful edifices when multiple congregations come together for events and when we come together in organized worship to God, but could it be that they are the largest obstacle to us, as disciples, doing the Master’s will? Think about it, how many buildings are filled with people that invite people to “come” occasionally and hear the word, yet do not know it enough to teach it. We feel we are doing a good thing by inviting them to the building, but the holy spirit clearly wanted us to go and seek others where they were.

In His wisdom, God knew that the edifices men create can cause problems. Think about the divisions that have been caused over the buildings we meet in regarding decorations and food? I have heard of splits caused by the color of the carpet, or the way someone puts flowers in the building and so many other things that I know grieve the heart of our Lord.

Really think about the wording of 2 Timothy 4:2. Being prepared to teach consistently and correcting, rebuking and encouraging Christians to remain faithful in this charge is a serious responsibility, and one each of us should meditate on. The last part of that verse says preparing disciples to bring the Gospel message to the world must be done with great patience and careful instruction. This implies it will take more than normal levels of patience and instruction to accomplish this, meaning the seriousness of this should be considered before a decision to re-live Christ’s death through baptism is made.

As a fellowship of believers, it is time to leave our pews and go. I work in the field of substance abuse as a counselor, and I promise you that there is hopelessness all around. This lost and dying world needs Christians who will take a stand for truth and deliver it with patience and godly love and compassion.

Those that are outside of Christ are afraid of the judgment that will meet them when they go to these edifices we have created, and many times, their fears are justified. Could it be that sometimes we feel so comfortable in attending worship in these buildings that we have forgotten that Christianity is all about going and teaching that Christ commanded of us? I think it is time for us to evaluate ourselves if we are more about the comfort than we are about the command.

To Momma

Naomi Rouse Morey

My heart remembers many things:
Of summer days and Texas winds
Sighing through lonely mesquite trees:
Of humid days without a breeze:
Of roosters crowing at the dawn
And dogs that bayed at a full moon:
Of cattle winding down the trail
At supper time: a milking pail
Of frothy milk, warm from the udder
Soon to be churned into butter.
So many memories I can recall,
But I think my favorite one of all
Is parents that loved us and each other.
How thankful I am for a Dad and Mother
Who made our house a happy home:
A place of cheer and joy and warmth.
Dear Momma, on this special day
There are so many things I could say,
But it seems sufficient, because it's true,
Simply to say, "I love you."





Potluck Favorites

Susan Elliott

Nightshade Free Texas Chili

A few years ago, I started having issues when I ate nightshade vegetables. At my worst anything, I ate with nightshades (those vegetables that have little hats on them -- jalapenos, tomatoes, eggplants, even potatoes) made me violently ill. So, I had to learn to be creative.

This recipe isn't your standard chili recipe, but it's great for people with allergies! My husband and I are both from Texas, and we take our chili seriously. He didn't even know it wasn't real chili until I told him!

Ingredients:

1 onion
3 lbs ground chuck
Salt
Pepper
Garlic
Onion powder
3 cans sliced beets (NOT PICKLED!)
Cumin (no cumin is NOT a nightshade)
2 envelopes of Goya Culantro and Achiote powder mix (It's on the Mexican food aisle.)

Cut up the onion. Place it in a large stock pot with the ground chuck and brown the meat over medium-high heat. Sprinkle the meat with salt, pepper, and garlic. (I use a lot of garlic.)

Now's the fun part. Unless you have a supersize blender you'll need to do one can at a time. Puree the beets until the beets are completely liquid. They will resemble tomato paste.

Pour the beet puree into a stockpot over the cooked meat. Using a beet can, add 3 cans of water. Stir.

Add 1/4 cup cumin. It sounds like a lot, but remember this chili has NO chili powder. Cumin gives it the flavor without the nightshades.

Add salt, pepper, 2 envelopes of Goya, garlic, and onion powder to taste. If the flavor isn't strong enough, add more cumin, to cut the cumin's intensity add more salt.

Overcoming the Bully

Jaime Boyd

Bullying. At some point in time, we have all been the victim of bullying. At some point in time, we have all been the bully. When it comes to overcoming bullying, what is the best way? Is there a way?

Bullying happens, mainly, because hurt people hurt people. Some people do not know they are hurt. Some don't know how to deal with their own hurt and their own stress. So sometimes, you just won't be able to get away from the bully, or bullies as it may be. You have to be the bigger person; easier said than done. You have to be strong enough not to let their hurt, hurt you, and fearless enough to be a friend to a foe.

In middle and high school, they always taught those chants. "Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me." "I'm rubber and your glue, your words bounce off me and stick to you!" While these were great little retorts, they didn't actually mean much. At the end of the day, the words still hurt, and everyone was still angry. What if we replaced the chants with something else?

One sentence that has always startled me is also the sentence that taught me, true unending love. In Luke 23:24, Jesus says, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

Jesus understood that these people were jealous, stirred up, angry, and confused. In the face of being crucified, He forgave, and He understood. What if instead of snapping back at our attackers, we tried to place ourselves in their shoes? What if we recognized, that there may be an outside source at play that causes them to react to us in this way?

When we react with understanding, we also need to try to react in love. Jesus not only forgave His attackers, but He loved them. We see throughout the gospels how Jesus heals, teaches, and corrects those he comes into contact with. He is patient and loving. When we put Him on in baptism, He is the one who should be reflected in us (Galatians 2:20). By loving others, and reflecting His love, we take one more bully out of the world. We can use moments like these to inspire and heal each other (Hebrews 10:24).

Overcoming the Bully

Cont...

However, this should also come with a warning.

Don't stay in toxic situations, or in situations that are harmful or situations that take away from your relationship with God. 1 Corinthians 15:33 says that we need to be watchful of the company we keep.

Bad friendships and relationships can wreck us emotionally, physically, and spiritually. When you reach out, remember to guard your heart and keep your intentions focused on God.

Do not lose yourself, or your soul, trying to bring someone else out of the darkness. Philippians 4:7, tells us of the peace of God. Use His peace to protect you and to guide you in the right direction.

Bullying is something that has affected everyone at some point or another. It hurts and destroys, but it can be overcome. When we approach others with understanding, forgiveness, and love, we can help to heal those around us, as well as show them the love of Christ. We remove a bully from the world, and we help to move it in a new direction. So as you go about your week, think to yourself, "how can I reach out to someone who hurt me?" You may find that you make a new friend or even a new brother or sister in Christ.

And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

—Luke 6:31



EASY TRAVEL JOURNAL

Materials

Contact Paper
Scrapbook paper
Tape Measure
Scissors
Awl
Yarn
Needle

Elastic Cord
White copy paper



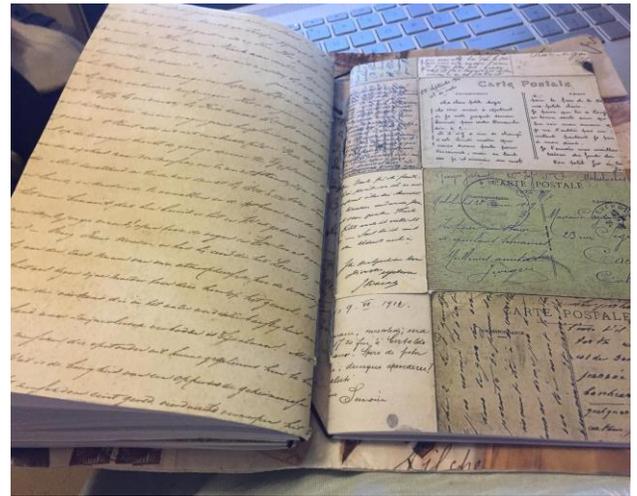
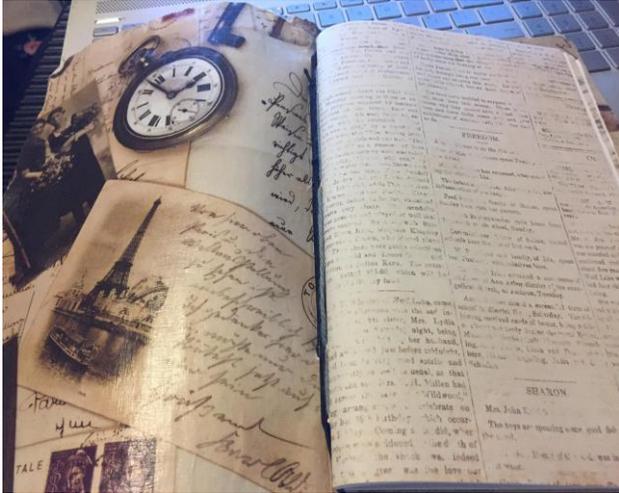
I recently became hooked on travel journals when I decided to make these simple journals for my Bible class. My obsession started with the contact paper journals and grew into a habit that led to faux leather prayer journals, diaries, a pocket journal, and a travel journal Bible cover. They are super easy to make, and I absolutely love mine. You can use them for Bible class to keep records of class work or create travel pages for each lesson for the kids to color and glue into the pages of their journals. The uses are endless. So have fun and experiment!

Journal

- Cut a piece of contact paper to measure 9 x 12 inches.
- Choose a coordinating piece of scrapbook paper and cut it to the size of the contact paper.
- Peel the contact paper backing from the contact paper, and carefully lay the scrapbook paper over the adhesive side of the contact paper. Press firmly. Make sure there are no wrinkles or air bubbles between the contact paper and the scrapbook paper.
- Fold the journal in half, and push five holes into the center of the journal backing with the awl. One hole should be in the direct center of the back middle. Add two more one-half inch from the outer edge of the middle toward the center on each end. Add two more holes between the outer holes and the center hole.
- Cut a length of cord that measures three times the length of the journal. I ran a piece of cord three times along the outer bottom edge of the journal and then cut that length.
- Fold the cord in half and insert the doubled cord through the center hole from the inside.
- Pull the cord so that it wraps around the closed journal, and tie a knot in the cord so it won't pull through the hole.
- Run one end of the cord through the holes on the top and the other end through the holes on the bottom. Tie the cord and trim any access cord. This cord is what you use to run the paper booklet through, so make sure to leave it loose enough to add the booklet.
- Round the corners of the journal.

EASY TRAVEL JOURNAL

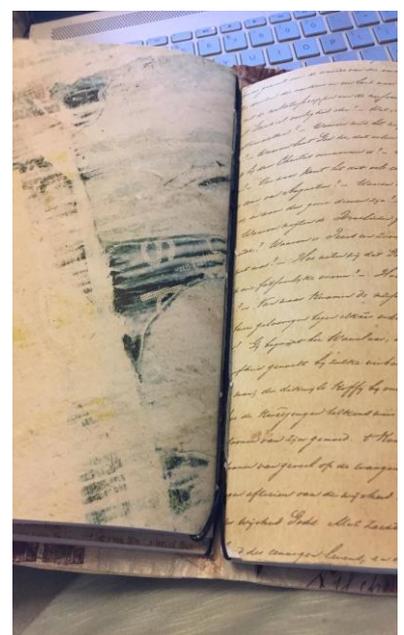
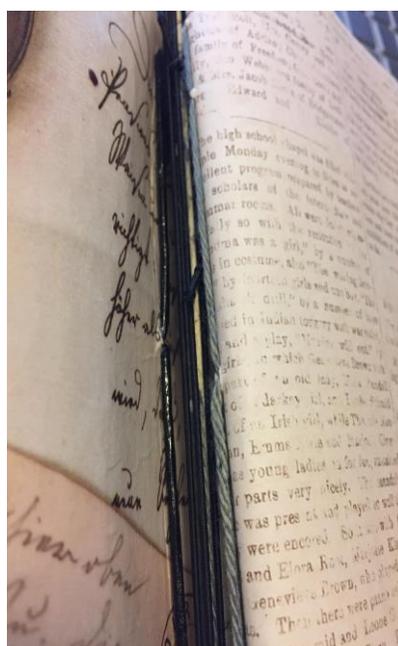
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Booklet

- Use one sheet of copy paper as a pattern.
- Place the pattern on top of a sheet of scrapbook paper to make the booklet cover. Cut it out.
- Stack 12 pieces of white copy paper on top of each other and the scrapbook paper, and fold in half.
- Push five holes into the center of the booklet backing. One hole should be in the direct center of the back middle. Add two more one-half inch from the outer edge of the middle toward the center on each end. Add two more holes between the outer holes and the center hole.
- Cut a length of yarn that measures three times the length of the journal. I ran the yarn three times along the outer bottom edge of the paper and then cut that length.
- Thread your needle.
- Insert the needle into the center hole and pull the yarn through from the inside. Leave a three-inch tail.
- Sew the bookbinding.
- Tie the remaining ends together and trim.
- Insert your journal booklet through the elastic cord on the journal cover. To do this open the booklet and insert the center page through the elastic cord. Then close the booklet.

You can add up to four journal booklets to each journal of this size. To attach another journal booklet, wrap a piece of elastic cord around the inserted booklet and tie off. Cut the excess cord, and run the second booklet through the elastic.



Peer Pressure and the Bible

Arianna Elliott

From young to old, we all face it. What is it you may ask? Well, it's a sneaky thing called "Peer Pressure." You've probably heard about it before, in your bible class or maybe even at school. But what is it exactly? According to Miriam Webster; it is defined as a "feeling that one must do the same things as other people of one's age and social group to be liked or respected by them." Peer Pressure is so strong that in a study done by Parent Further, they had found that ONLY 10% of the surveyed teenagers had said, "No" when they were faced with peer pressure. Only 10%!!

Whether you believe it or not, there will be multiple times in your life that you will face peer pressure. Many people fall for peer pressure. However, in these biblical accounts, I'll be sharing with you today, you will see two stories where the characters had the chance to fall into peer pressure. One fell into peer pressure while the other one did not. One turned their back on God, and one stayed with him.

The first account I will be talking about is of Job. Specifically, an instance between him and his wife. At the beginning of Job, we see that he was a great man. One that feared God and abstained from evil. Satan thought that if he took away all of the things Job was blessed with in his life, that Job would turn from God. So, God allowed Satan to test him. Satan put Job through so much.

First, Satan took his servants away, then his animals, Satan even had Job's children killed! But Job didn't stray from God. In all this he still worshipped him saying, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). When Satan tested him for a second time, he placed boils all over Job's body from head to foot.

Needless to say, he was in agony both mental and physical. He had just lost his children, his servants, his animals, and now he feels physical pain too. It hurt so badly that he would scrape the boils on his body with a potshard. Can you even imagine? He was in so much distress that it would have been so easy to just "curse God and die," as his wife told him to do. But he didn't. He stayed strong. He stayed faithful, and he even continued to worship God. We need to remember that whatever temptation we have, or whatever we are going through, God is there. We have to rely on Him no matter what is happening in our lives.

Peer Pressure and the Bible

Cont...

The second story happened all the way in the beginning. It's the story of Adam and Eve. If we look in Genesis 2:16,17, we see that God made all of the trees in the garden good to eat from. However, there was one that they couldn't. They could not eat from "The Tree of Good and Evil." Easy enough, right? They couldn't eat from one tree. Yet, in Genesis 3:1-6, we see that they broke that rule.

A serpent went to Eve one day and told her it was okay to eat of the tree, so Eve did so. She had the chance to tell him, no but didn't. Then Eve went to her husband and convinced him that it was good. So, they both ate the fruit. Either of them at any time could have said, "No. God said, not to. Therefore I will not." Instead, they succumbed to peer pressure.

Because they disobeyed God, they were punished. They had to leave the Garden and had separate jobs they had to do for the rest of their life. When you fall into peer pressure, there will be consequences. Whether it's your parents finding out, or a teacher catching you cheat on a test. Someone will always find out. And if not? God still knows.

In one story, we see a good example of standing up to peer pressure and the other of one succumbing to it. We need to keep a watchful eye on our surroundings (1 Peter 5:8). We need to make sure we say no to temptations. Sometimes it may be really tempting to say yes, but we should remember that even when Christ was tempted, He did what was right and said no.

We also need to set ourselves as an example unto the believers (1 Timothy 4:12). We need to shine our light before men (Matt. 5:16). We needn't succumb to peer pressure like Adam or Eve, but remember to praise God even in trial, for God is always watching and is always with us. Everyone faces peer pressure at least once in our lives. Will you be a part of that 10% that will say no? You decide.



Christian Author Spotlight



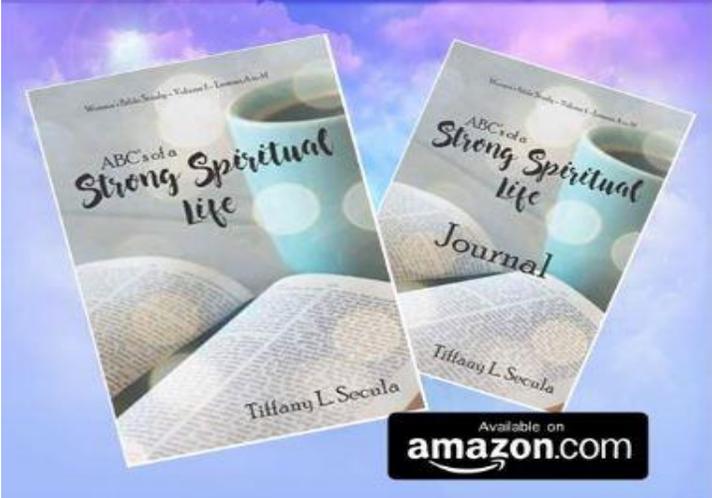
Tiffany Secula, Author

Sometimes finding Christian authors who write fiction, non-fiction, or Christian devotional books are hard to find. Stronger would like to introduce you each month to a new author, or a new book for you to enjoy. This month's author is Tiffany Secula.

Tiffany L. Secula is a Christian, Preacher's wife, and mom to three amazing kids! She is a homeschool teacher, ladies class and Sunday school teacher, speaker, and author. Tiffany is the co-coordinator of the Church of Christ Ladies Day Speakers directory website and its Facebook page. She holds a Bachelor of Religion in Christian Counseling and is currently attending the University of the Cumberlands working on a Masters in Clinical Mental Health Counseling.

She has taught ladies bible studies for over ten years and children's classes much longer. She has been blessed to speak for ladies days and retreats in Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Indiana. She cherishes the time she gets to spend getting to know her Christian sisters from other congregations.

Tiffany currently has three books on Amazon. A lady's study book, "The ABC's of a Strong Spiritual Life". Which also has a companion journal available. She also has a youth fiction novel, Found.



The ABC's of a Strong Spiritual Life can be used for an individual or group study. This book features 13 lessons and worksheets, as well as power verses to memorize, deeper study topics, and daily prayer and journal topics to reinforce each lesson. There is also an ABC's of a Stronger Spiritual Life Companion Journal available with this study.

<https://amzn.to/2Q7yO26>

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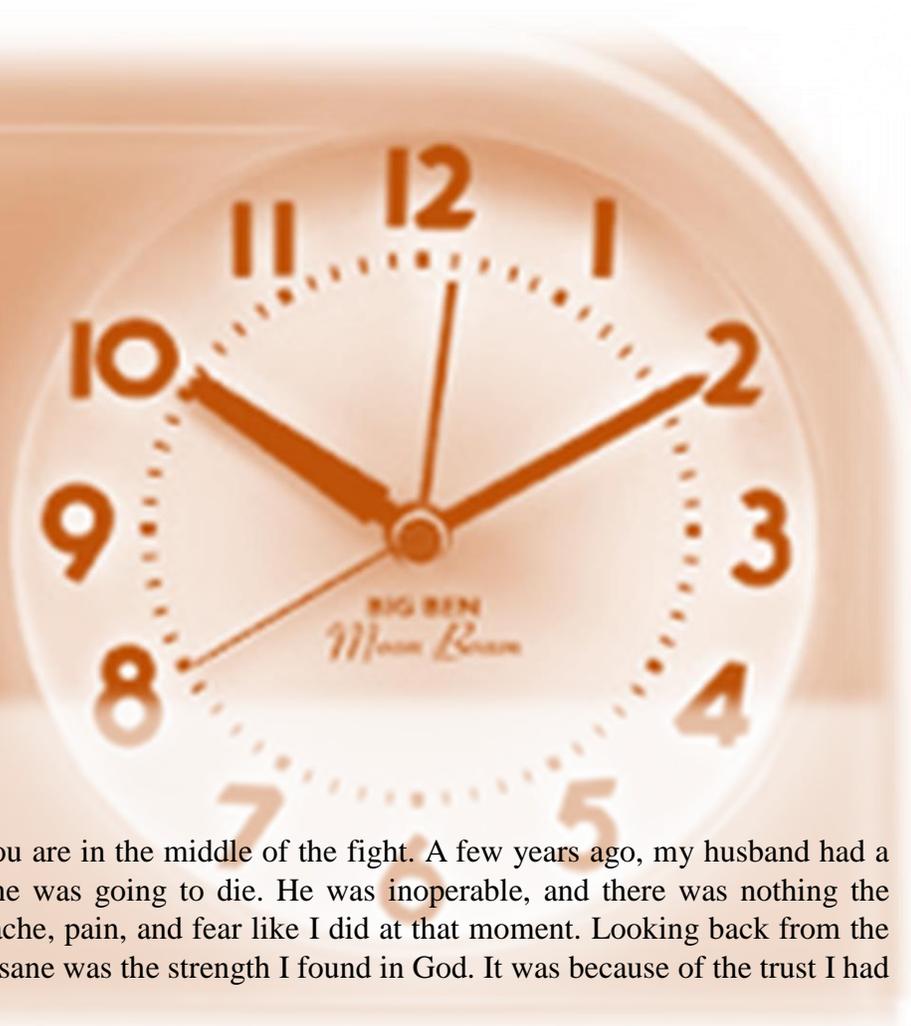
www.inchristianlove.com/tiffany

<https://churchofchristladyspeakers.wordpress.com/>



Five Minute Study Series

Stronger in Courage



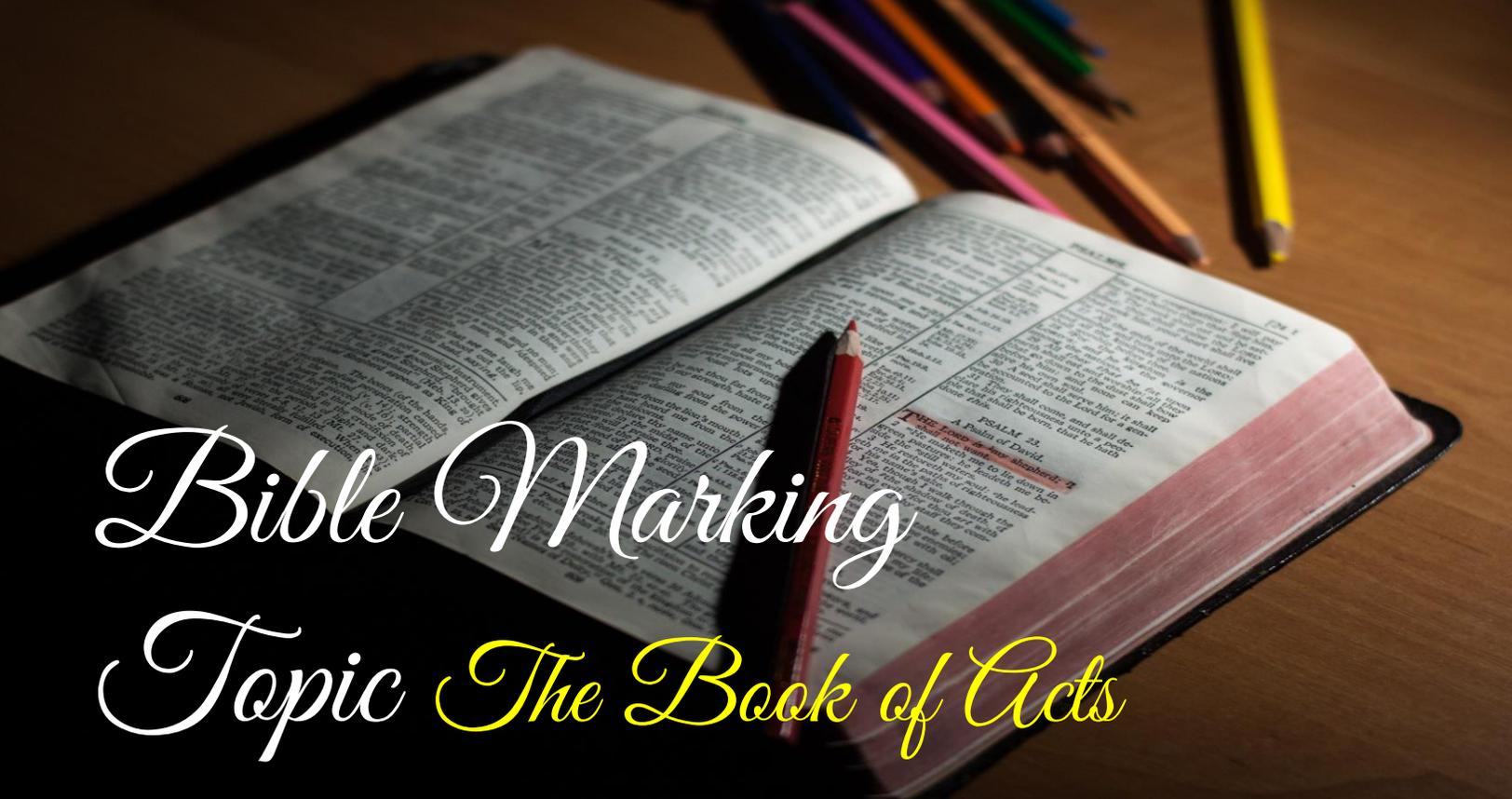
You never know what you can handle until you are in the middle of the fight. A few years ago, my husband had a massive stroke. I was told point blank that he was going to die. He was inoperable, and there was nothing the doctors could do for him. I never knew heartache, pain, and fear like I did at that moment. Looking back from the other side, I know the only thing that kept me sane was the strength I found in God. It was because of the trust I had in him that I had the courage to survive.

Courage may be one of the hardest challenges a Christian faces. Courage isn't something you are born with, despite what you may have been led to believe. Courage is cultivated. Courage is carrying on when you don't know how you're going to get through. In those first few months after my hub's stroke, I learned to keep moving one foot in front of the other. I trusted in God to see us through the hardships, and he has.

Having courage was easy because I had complete faith that there was nothing too big for God. When you find yourself at a crossroad, take a deep breath, pray then press forward. Know that having courage doesn't mean you don't know fear; it just means you lay it in God's hands and keep on going.

Courage Defined: The ability to do something that frightens one, or strength in a time of grief or pain (Google Dictionary).

- **God has given us a spirit of power** (II Timothy 1:7). God expects his people to live courageously. He has given us all we need to accomplish our work for him in his scriptures, and we are courageous because we are assured our father cares for us and knows our needs (Matthew 6:26).
- **A few examples of courageous Bible women:** Esther before the king (Esther 4:8,16); Ruth staying with Naomi (Ruth 1:16,17); Deborah as a judge (Judges 4:4-7); Hannah standing up for herself against the prophet Eli (I Samuel 1).
- **The Apostles are also fantastic examples of courage.** How many times were they beaten for the cause of Christ (Acts 7:54-60)? How many times were they told not to speak in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:18, 5:40)? (They did it anyway.) Why? Because God had given them a mission, and they were going to do it no matter what man did or said (Matthew 28:18-20)
- **Consider yourself.** Are you an example of courage? I bet you are! Don't ever give up. If you've been living fearfully, remember that God is with you, and if he is with you in whom shall you fear (Psalm 27:1)? You can live courageously, sister!



Bible Marking

Topic *The Book of Acts*

Church Firsts

This month we are looking at church firsts in the book of Acts. Choose your favorite color and highlight each verse in the color you choose.

For example:

And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. Acts 2:4

- First appearance of the Holy Spirit: Acts 2:1-4
- Establishment of the church: Acts 2:47
- First Gospel Sermon: Acts 2:14-36
- First baptism in the name of Jesus: Acts 2:38
- First New Testament worship: Acts 2:42
- First trouble in the church: 5:1-11
- First Christian martyr: Acts 7:54-60
- First Evangelist: Acts 8:26-40
- First Gentile Converted: Acts 10:44-48
- First Called Christians in Antioch: Acts 11:26
- First Missionary Journey: Acts 13:14
- First church in Europe: Acts 16:9-10



Are You Ready to Be Hated?

Susan Elliott

The strength of character is found in the foundation. --John Dewberry, PTP

Have you ever had a terrible day? You know, a day where you want to crawl up in a ball and hide? A day where you want to run for the hills because you have so much on your shoulders? Well, you're not alone.

Since my child went to the "far country" (Luke 15:13), I've had more than a few of those days. However, I have found that reading my Bible and listening to music does chase away my blues. Recently I was looking for new songs on YouTube from Praise and Harmony, and I came across a song called, *Trust in You* from the Faithful God CD. The first time I heard it, the words spoke to me so deeply that they brought me to tears. The first verse talks about letting go of dreams and laying them down at the Master's feet. It also mentions being weary of the fight against sin. You can feel the hopelessness in the words, and there are times I feel that way.

Like so many, I have dreams about my future. I have things I want to attain, but there are days that I see my dreams slipping from my fingers. A lot of times those dreams are shattered because of the sins of others, and because of that, I feel so battle weary that I long for the day I get to rejoice in Heaven and leave my cares behind (Revelation 21:4). At other times, I've found that I am prone to depression, and it is easy to get lost in the pain and forget that there is something better than this life.

In my pain and sadness, I feel like the entire world is trying its best to destroy me and my happiness. Would it surprise you to know that the world does want to knock each of us down? It also wants to rip away our joy in Christ. It is the influence of Satan that tries to make us feel miserable and reaches out for us (I Peter 5:8). The world doesn't want us to follow Christ. It wants us to conform to the evil it accepts. It wants us to partake in the pleasures of sin. It wants us to call good evil and evil good. That is what the world wants, but it isn't what our heavenly Father wants.

God wants us to succeed, but not at the cost of our souls (Mark 8:36). He wants us to be happy, but not without him (Ephesians 1:3). The beautiful thing is that when we have a moment of clarity amidst our suffering, we can remind ourselves that if Christ is our foundation (I Peter 2:6), we can learn to be joyful no matter what comes our way (Philippians 4:11).

Isn't it amazing to know that nothing on this earth can destroy God's foundation and that his church and word will stand forever (I Corinthians 3:1)? Even in the darkest times, God is there for us. All we have to do is seek him (Matthew 6:33).

That song *Trust in You* that I've come to love so much says this in the chorus:

Are You Ready to Be Hated

Cont...

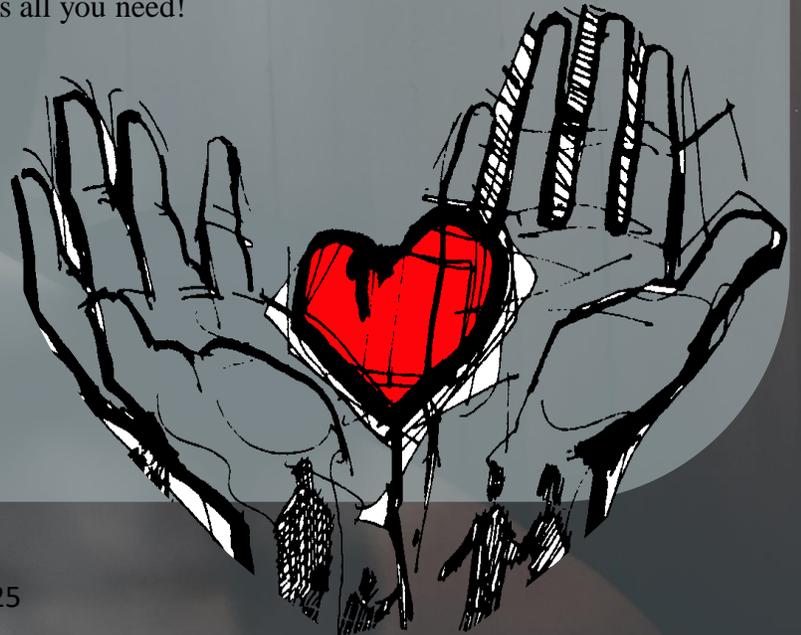
*When you don't move the mountains,
I'm needing you to move,
When you don't part the waters,
I wish I could walk through
When you don't give the answers
As I cry out to you
I will trust, I will trust, I will trust in you.*

We must remember that we can trust in God. He knows the answers. He sees the big picture. God is in control, and we have to believe that he knows what's best for us, even when we can't make sense of what's going on around us.

The world will hate those that follow God. My own child hates me and calls me Bio Mom because I follow God. We are going to be hated. But, we're in good company. The Jews hated Christ and refused to believe he was the Messiah. Romans hated him and his apostles. The first Christians were martyred for their faith. The world is going to hate you. Your family may hate you, but we are never alone.

Don't ever forget that Christ knows his children, and he knows what you're going through (II Timothy 2:19).

The next time you're having a rough day. Stop and pray. Remember that it doesn't matter if everyone around you hates you. God truly loves you, and he is all you need!



Living Fearless

E P C T S T M E D F I R S T W
 L R F H I B M O Y E C N Q H O
 H V U A R O U C D P L D O G L
 W C R S C I O L E E I L I F L
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Upcoming Events

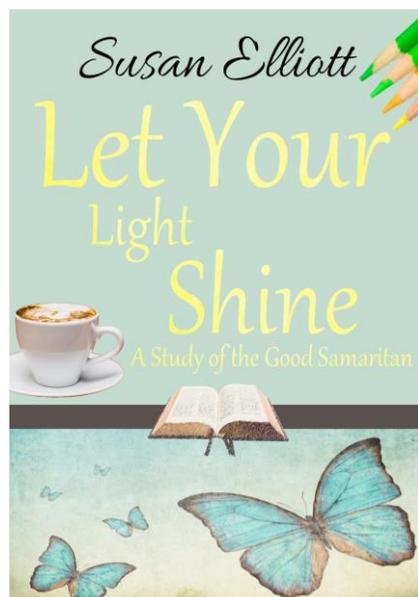
Polishing the Pulpit
 August 16-22
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Useful Websites

Gospel Broadcasting
 Network @ <http://gbntv.org>

Free Bible Images @
www.freebibleimages.org

Apologetics Press @
www.apologeticspress.org



How can you let your light shine, when you're certain your bulb has dimmed?

It's often easier to say "let your light shine" than to let it...
...but that doesn't have to be the case!

You can learn to be the friend and neighbor you were meant to be when the Good Samaritan is your guide.

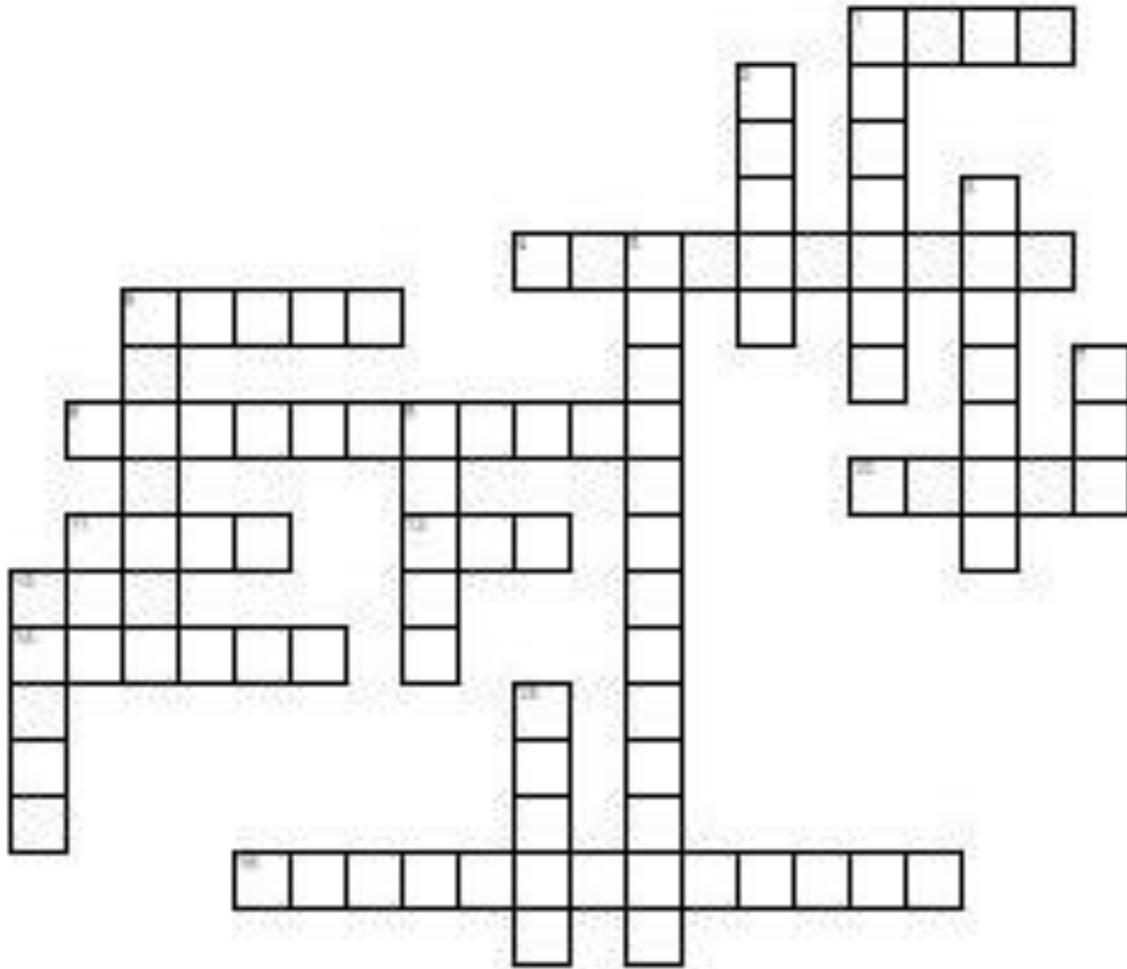
The Good Samaritan is a parable that deviated from the social norms of the time.

It opened the eyes of those who heard it, and...
still teaches us today that we must reach out to those around us.

It's time to let your light shine! Only on [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com) in print, ebook, and in Kindle Unlimited!

Bible Crossword

Living Fearless



ACROSS

1. We are to ___ the lost.
4. Joshua 1:9
6. My ___ I give to you (John 14:27)
8. I John 5:13
10. We bring the gospel message to the ___
11. Spirit of ___ II Timothy 1:7
12. Seek first
14. Courage is ___ in the face of fear
16. Live by the spirit Bible verse

DOWN

1. God wants us to ___ but not at the cost of our souls.
2. The world wants to ___ your happiness
3. Doesn't dictate God's standards
5. We should react with ___ and love
6. Jesus is ___ and loving
7. He loves us unconditionally
9. Walk in
13. Matthew 6:25-34
15. Don't stay in ___ situations



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