Joy's Corner... MORE OF GOD'S INCREDIBLE PLAN

The ten plagues of Egypt (Exod. 7:17 through 12:31), leading to the deliverance of Israel from Egypt and through the Red Sea, was certainly a great miracle. Not one of God's people died.

Yet, just three days after this great miracle of deliverance, God's children murmured their complaints against God—as they did for the next forty years of their journey to the promised land.

Indeed, God has unique ways to fight a battle! This was not the last time that God intervened for His people in a miraculous way. The book of Joshua (Josh. 6:2–20) describes Joshua's battle of Jericho as "...the wall fell down flat...." I'm always amazed at how God's battles are so different than when the people fought without asking for God's blessings first. And waiting for the Lord.

Many people have said to me: The Old Testament is full of battles. I can't serve a God like that." But I ask, "Look at the different types of battles. When they did not ask for God's help, the battles were terrible. Yet, when they asked for God's help, the battles resulted in a victory without a bloody mess.

And yet, shortly after Jericho, the Israelites struck out on a battle all their own. They did not consult God first. Thirty-six men lost their lives because of ignoring God and not putting Him first—before the battle.

Israel had to flee in disgrace and run for their lives. They learned a big lesson: that they should ask for God's guidance before acting. They were learning to TRUST God. God's incredible strategy for battle is mentioned many times, as seen in the following examples.

- At Jericho, a spectacular battle was won. Singing and blowing horns (not fighting) brought those walls down.
- After that spectacular battle, only some of the Israelites decided—without asking God—to capture a tiny town: Ai. Thirty men lost their lives. The others ran in disgrace for their lives, entirely defeated.

The next time they tried to capture Ai, they talked to God first. They had learned to trust God—to ask His will first, then act.

To me, as I face my tiny personal battles, I know God wants to be acknowledged. Then, trusting God's impressions on my mind, things turn out best.

The enemies were all dead—and the choir sang God's

praises! God's incredible strategy includes helping us fight our personal battles, too. It is God's fight, and our part is to have FAITH in His ability to help us.

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Another example of God's miraculous care for His people is given in 2 Chron. 20:1–24, when Jehoshaphat prayed, fasted, and sent the choir first into battle while Ammonites, Moabites, and the inhabitants of Mount Seir came with war on their minds. However, when the people of the Lord marched toward those enemies, they were amazed to find that the three armies had killed each other! The enemies were all dead—and the choir sang God's praises! God had rescued His people without a struggle!

When Elijah, the prophet of God, was on Mt. Carmel, facing the false prophets of Baal, all the people of Israel finally bowed down and admitted, "the Lord, He is God" (1 Kings 18:17-39).

When the Syrian army tried to capture the prophet Elisha, the soldiers were smitten with blindness (2 Kings 6:8–18). God's assurance in any battle is sure: it is part of God's way of dealing with the enemies of God's people. You don't need to fight the battle! Just stand still and see the salvation of the Lord on your behalf (2 Chron. 20:17).

David faced the giant Goliath with these words: "...I come to thee in the name of the Lord..." (1 Sam. 17:45). God's incredible plan includes helping us fight our personal battles, too. In my own personal battles, I like to think of God's assurance to me: "...be not afraid... for the battle is not yours, but God's" (2 Chron. 20:15).

The Bible verse 1 Timothy 6:12 affirms: "Fight the good fight of FAITH..." (emphasis added). It is God's fight, and our part is to have FAITH in His ability to help us.

Again, 1 John 5:4 assures us: "...this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our FAITH" (emphasis added).

Ephesians 6:14–17 lists the armor we need to wear while fighting life's battles. It includes the following: the BELT of truth, the BREASTPLATE of Christ's righteousness, the SHOES of the gospel of peace, the SHIELD of faith, the HELMET of salvation, and the SWORD, which is the word of God.

There finally had to be a solution for SIN. All sin is abominable to God. Jesus Christ, our Savior, came to earth to be born just as we are, to give an example of right-living (righteousness), and finally die on the cross for ALL sin.

HE WAS GOD'S INCREDIBLE PLAN in action. Salvation for us all (if we choose Him). Most of us have read or have heard the creation story: the beginning of the plan. This is written in Genesis, the first book of the Bible. How could any of us miss the story of the cross, as described in Matthew 27:27–54, Mark 15:22-37, Luke 23:18-44, John 19:16-30)? The next part of the plan is in the very near future. What is that plan? This same Jesus who was killed on the cross, who rose back to life three days later, and who returned to His home in heaven—HE IS COMING BACK! This is the best part of His plan. No more sin—ever again. You have a heaven to win. A hell to shun. ***************

Remember These 9 things when another Christian disappoints you.

Erin Davis

Maybe it's your pastor or chaplain.
Maybe it's someone in your Bible study.
Maybe it's a famous Christian in the news.
They've sinned. They've said they believe one thing and lived like they believed something else. Their life is messier than you could have imagined, and you feel disappointed, angry, confused, disillusioned, sad . . .
How are we supposed to feel when other Christians miss God's mark? How can we cope with the chaos other people's sin creates?
What should we say (if anything?)

Here are nine things to keep in mind when another Christian disappoints you.

1. ALL HAVE SINNED.

Romans 3:23 is a gut punch we all need from time to time: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

All have sinned. As in every single one of us. The fact that every person on earth is a sinner in desperate need of a Savior never stops being a shock to our systems, but it is a constant reminder of how desperately we need grace.

2. SIN EXPOSED IS A GOOD THING.

Ephesians 5:11-14 says, "Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, 'Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." Although painful, it is a gift when sin is dragged into the light. Jesus is the light of the world (John 8:12). He calls us to live like bright cities on a hill (Matt. 5:14-16). We have no business keeping parts of our life in the dark. When God exposes dark parts of a person's life or heart, it is an act of mercy and an opportunity for us to thank Him for His extravagant grace.

3. THE CROSS WAS BUILT FOR HEAVY LOADS. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed (1 Peter 2:24).

From time to time, we need a reminder of what makes us Christians. It isn't that we have perfect lives. It isn't that we listen to the right Christian music or say "no" to certain books or movies. We are Christians because we have put our faith in Jesus and His redemptive work on the cross. The violence of the cross is necessary because of our sin. Jesus did not have to hang on the cross any longer for your disgraced pastor or chaplain than He did for you. The cross is big enough to carry any sin, "big" or "small." There's no sin we can throw at it that the cross is not big enough to handle.

4. SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE

So that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ (Eph. 4:14-15).

God's intention is not that we live our lives in a constant tug of war. We are to protect and guide each other by speaking the truth in love. I once heard someone say, "Whatever 'speak the truth in love' means, it means to speak the truth." What is the truth, exactly? John 17:17 says, "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth."

We need to remind each other what God's Word says—often. That's not the same as blasting someone on your Facebook wall or on Twitter. Which brings us to #5.

5. GOSSIP ABOUT SINNERS IS A SIN.

Romans 1:29 lists gossipers among murderers, slanderers, and haters of God. Ephesians 4:29 says unless it builds others up, don't say it. Titus 3:2 urges us "to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people." Talking to others about someone else's sin does nothing to restore their relationship with God or others.

6. WATCH OUT FOR "PLANK EYE SYNDROME." Matthew 7:3-5 says, "Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye."

Responding to other people's sin with disgust or feelings of self-righteousness is like worrying about a little sawdust in a friend's eye while a two-by-four sticks out of our own. Our sin has a way of blinding us to the ways we are missing

the mark and making us hypersensitive to how others fall short.

While the Bible does teach us to lovingly remind other Christians about how God calls us to live, that's not our first mission. We must be most concerned with the sin in our own lives. When you see the impact of sin in the life of someone else, take the opportunity to assess your own life. Repeat the prayer of King David, and ask the Lord to root out all sin in your heart.

Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting! (Ps. 139:23-24).

7. FORGIVE FOR REAL.

In the wake of the horrific Charleston shooting in 2015, *USA Today* published an article that said this.

When Christians are in the news, it's usually because they have done something wrong—they've gotten on the wrong side of a culture war or cheated on their wife, or worse. What the world rarely gets to see is the powerful grace that flows from a deep faith predicated on the belief that we are all sinners in need of forgiveness.

The article went on to tell the story of a man whose wife and daughter were brutally killed. When asked what he would say to the killer if given the chance, he said, "I would say, 'I forgive you.' If he kissed me on the cheek, I would kiss him back."

These are graphic pictures of forgiveness. Forgiveness often feels so gut wrenching that we want to run in the opposite direction. But the Bible reminds us that we can extend forgiveness because we have been forgiven of so much. (Editors note. We can know when we have truly forgiven someone when we desire to be with them in Heaven!)

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you (Eph. 4:32).

8. THE WORLD IS WATCHING.

The article quoted above is proof that the world is watching. Yes, they watch when we fall short,

but they also watch when we respond to sin like God has called us to.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

We are the billboard God wants to use to tell the world about Him. What story are you telling with your response to sin in your own life and in the lives of others?

9. PRAYER IS A WEAPON THAT WORKS. When someone sins, we want to do something. God has given us a two-pronged plan of attack. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working (James 5:16). First, go to war with sin in your own life. Second, pray for others.

How You Can Rejoice in the Midst of Loss

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. - Colossians 3:1-2

One night in December of 1914, a fire in West Orange, New Jersey, claimed Thomas Edison's manufacturing facilities and with it, almost \$1 million worth of equipment and the record of much of his work. That's \$30,670,000.00 in today's money.

The next morning as he walked about the charred embers of much of his life's work, Edison said, "There is value in disaster. All our mistakes are burned up. Now we can start anew."

When material possessions are lost - be it a family heirloom, a retirement account, or a home - we have a choice in how we will respond. We can either throw up our hands in despair, or we can remember where our real security lies and look for a way forward.

How we react to losing worldly possessions says everything about our priorities. If we truly set our hearts on things above, not below, then however devastating our loss is, we can rejoice in knowing we have treasures in heaven that can never be destroyed.

So when you see the things of the world passing away, let it remind you of the coming world where moth nor rust nor nothing will pass away. Set your heart on heaven – not your earthly possessions – and you'll be able to rejoice even amidst worldly loss.

Prayer Challenge

OKAY Annie Yorty

"Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord will personally go ahead of you. He will be with you; he will neither fail you nor abandon you."Deuteronomy 31:8 NLT

I punched in the phone number with doubt in

my heart. Last I had seen Andrea, she seemed open to the possibility of going on a mission trip to Siberia. Yes, Siberia. Since then, though, I had moved, and now I didn't live close enough to personally shepherd her through the process. Would she go that far out of her comfort zone without me there to hold her hand? To be sure, Siberia was as far as anything could get outside Andrea's prior experience. With just two decades of life in rural Kentucky under her belt, she had barely left her hometown, much less flown on a plane to the opposite side of the world. Nevertheless, my doubts did not convince me to hang up before she answered. "Hello?" Andrea's chipper voice interrupted my

"Hey there!" I launched straight into my pitch. "Guess what time it is? I'm getting ready to go to Siberia. Do you remember how you said you might like to go?"

"Yeah," she replied.

thoughts.

"If you're going, now's the time to get started."
"Okay." Okay? Just like that? Thankfully, I
managed to keep the disbelief inside my head.
I took a deep breath, sure the list I was about to

unleash would send her running. "Let's go over what you need. First, you'll need to get a passport."

"Okav."

"Then you'll need to get some immunizations." "Okay."

Then I described the arduous travel, daily schedule, support raising, visa application, booking flights, packing, spiritual preparation, and myriad other tasks that would fill her to-do list. Her reply to each one? "Okay." I chalked up her unflappability to youthful naivete. Yet her calm acceptance in the face of all these unknowns impressed me. From where did such courage come?

Andrea possessed a certainty about God's calling—His plan to use her—that made her brave. She had learned about Him as a little girl because another person followed God's calling to bring the church van into her neighborhood to take kids to church. God's calling weaves the threads of lives together into a wonderful tapestry of His glory. A man named Isaiah from long ago is part of that glorious fabric. Much of what we know about him is mingled with tradition and speculation, but he writes about a dramatic event that instilled courage to follow God's calling. God filled Isaiah's mind with a vision of Himself seated on His throne in a heavenly temple. God's palpable glory overwhelmed Isaiah. Though the text doesn't explicitly say, I imagine Isaiah dropping flat on the floor as he realizes his utter unworthiness to be in the presence of God's holiness.

A winged creature attending God flew to Isaiah and cleansed him, removing his guilt and forgiving his sin. Then the unthinkable happened. God asked the room a question with an obvious outcome in mind (Isaiah 6:8 NLT). Then I heard the Lord asking, "Whom should I send as a messenger to this people? Who will go for us?"

Isaiah answered without hesitation. *I said,* "Here I am. Send me." In other words, Isaiah said, "Okay." God continues sending messengers to this day.

And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. The one who has believed and has been baptized will be saved; but the one who has not believed will be condemned. (Mark 16:15-16 NASB)
Sin condemns people until they hear the gospel message and believe in the Lord Jesus. God

called Andrea to speak His message of hope in Jesus to the people in Siberia. She's not a member of some elite squad He chooses for this task. Indeed, God chooses every follower to participate. No excuses.

Jesus admonished his reluctant disciples about their excuses. Do you not say, 'There are still four months, and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I tell you, raise your eyes and observe the fields, that they are white for harvest. (John 4:35 NASB)

The harvest represents people in this world whose hearts God's Spirit prepared to receive the good news of Jesus. Their situation is urgent. In fact, their lives hang in the balance. It's time for all of us to step up and say, "Okay." After my phone call to Andrea that day, she checked off one after another item on that daunting to-do list until she finally ended up in Krasnoyarsk, Siberia before dawn one freezing February morning. God used her all-in attitude to spread His healing gospel and glory to needy hearts. Those who received Jesus will meet us again in heaven one day as we enjoy eternity with Him.

All that comes from one simple word—okay.

Intersecting Faith and Life:

AMAZING FACTS.....

In 1967, the United Nations signed the international Outer Space Treaty, which forbids any government from claiming the moon, or any part of space, as their territory. The treaty failed to mention anything about private individuals or corporations, so this left a loophole in international law as big as the expanse of space itself.

In 1980, Dennis Hope of Gardnerville, Nevada, sent letters to the United Nations, the United States government, and the government of the Soviet Union, informing them that he was

officially claiming ownership of all planetary and lunar surfaces in our solar system (aside from Earth). He even gave them the opportunity to respond if they had objections, and as crazy as it sounds, he hasn't heard a word from any of them since.

So, for over 40 years Dennis Hope has been selling plots of acreage on the moon, Mars, and other heavenly bodies for a pretty reasonable price—about \$50 an acre! And he's been pursuing this not just as a novelty sale but a serious real estate transaction (complete with covenants and bylaws that prevent the unsightly or trivial usage of the property). His sales are accelerating, and his net worth is over \$100 trillion in 2023, and he owns 7 trillion acres of land on other planets. — enough to put serious pressure on the U.N. and the U.S. to recognize the government of Luna.

In the meantime, Dennis Hope, now 78, continues to operate his company selling people "official" title to land on the moon, Mars, and Venus. Although others are in the same business, he continues selling land on planets he has never been to and that he does not possess. Very clever!

But did you know that the Bible teaches there is some heavenly real estate you can truly own? And the price is already paid! Before Jesus left this earth, He told His disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:2, 3). I sure look forward to the heavenly real estate Jesus is planning for us, don't you?

"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

1 Corinthians 2:9

Come, I Will Teach You

Come—the Invitation of a Loving God

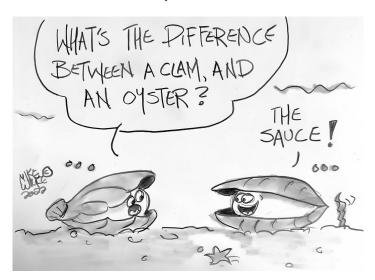
Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD. Psalm 34:11.

The Holy Spirit illumines our darkness, informs our ignorance, and understands and helps us in our manifold necessities. But the mind must be constantly going out after God. If coldness and worldliness are allowed to come in, we shall have no heart to pray, no courage to look up to Him who is the source of strength and wisdom. Then pray always, dear brethren and sisters, "lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." Urge your requests to the throne of grace, and rely upon God hour by hour and moment by moment. The service of Christ will regulate all your relations with your fellow-men, and make your life fruitful in good works.

Let none imagine that selfishness, self-esteem, and self-indulgence are compatible with the Spirit of Christ. Upon every truly converted man or woman there rests a responsibility that we cannot rightly estimate. The maxims and ways of the world are not to be adopted by the sons and daughters of the heavenly King....

The arduous struggle for conquest over self, for holiness and Heaven, is a life-long struggle. There is no release in this war; the effort must be continuous and persevering. Christian integrity must be sought with resistless energy, and maintained with a resolute fixedness of purpose. A genuine religious experience unfolds and intensifies. Continual advancement, increasing knowledge and power in the Word of God, is the natural result of a vital connection with God. The light of holy love will grow brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.

Humor's Hallway...



Why won't skeletons fight each other? They just don't have the guts.

What do you call a belt with a watch on it? A waist of time.

What happened when a faucet, a tomato, and some lettuce ran a race together? The lettuce was ahead, the faucet was running, and the tomato was trying to ketchup.

What did one elevator say to the other? I think I'm coming down with something.

What washes up on very small beaches? Micro-waves

I got a new job last week at Old MacDonald's farm.
I'm the new C-I-E-I-O.

Teacher: "If I gave you 2 cats and another 2 cats and another 2, how many would you have?" Johnny: "Seven." Teacher: "No, listen carefully... If I gave you two cats, and another two cats and another two, how many would you have?" Johnny: "Seven." Teacher: "Let me put it to you differently. If I gave you two apples, and another two

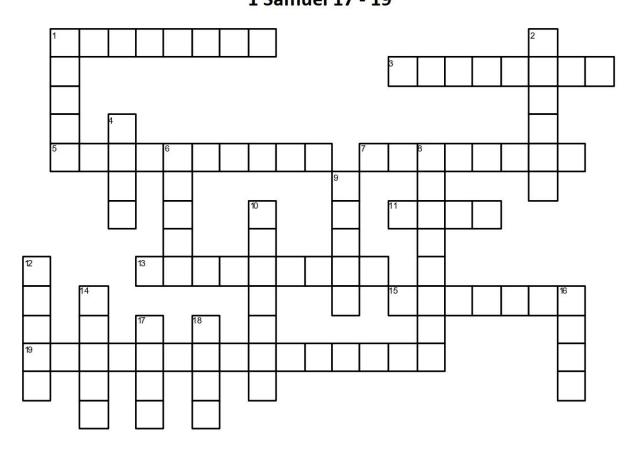
apples and another two, how many would you have?" Johnny: "Six." Teacher: "Good. Now if I gave you two cats, and another two cats and another two, how many would you have?" Johnny: "Seven!" Teacher: "Johnny, where in the heck do you get seven from?!" Johnny: "Because I've already got a cat!"

A boy asks his father, "Dad, are bugs good to eat?" "That's disgusting. Don't talk about things like that over dinner," the dad replies. After dinner the father asks, "Now, son, what did you want to ask me?" "Oh, nothing," the boy says. "There was a bug in your soup, but now it's gone."

There was an elderly couple who in their old age noticed that they were getting a lot more forgetful, so they decided to go to the doctor. The doctor told them that they should start writing things down so they don't forget. They went home and the old lady told her husband to get her a bowl of ice cream. "You might want to write it down," she said. The husband said, "No, I can remember that you want a bowl of ice cream." She then told her husband she wanted a bowl of ice cream with whipped cream. "Write it down," she told him, and again he said, "No, no, I can remember: you want a bowl of ice cream with whipped cream." Then the old lady said she wants a bowl of ice cream with whipped cream and a cherry on top. "Write it down," she told her husband and again he said, "No, I got it. You want a bowl of ice cream with whipped cream and a cherry on top." So he goes to get the ice cream and spends an unusually long time in the kitchen, over 30 minutes. He comes out to his wife and hands her a plate of eggs and bacon. The old wife stares at the plate for a moment, then looks at her husband and asks, "Where's the toast?"

Q: What starts with E, ends with E, and has only 1 letter in it? A: Envelope.

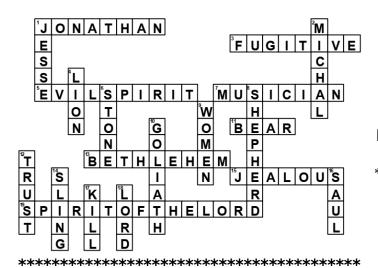
DAVID: HIS EARLY LIFE 1 Samuel 17 - 19



ACROSS

1	Who was a son of Saul that became a very close friend of David? (1 Sa. 18:3)
3	Since Saul attempted to kill David, David became a running from Saul the remainder of Saul's life. (1 Sa. 19)
5	When Saul was troubled by an, a harpist was sought to soothe him. (1 Sa. 16:17-18) two words
7	David was a skilled
11	At one time David killed a who was raiding his father's flocks. (1 Sa. 17:34-36)
13	Where was David when God sent Samuel to Jesse to anoint one of his sons? (1 Sa. 16:1, 11)
15	As David's fame and popularity grew with the people, Saul became (1 Sa. 18:8)
19	What departed from Saul that an evil spirit tormented him? (1 Sa. 16:14) four words
DC	WN Comments of the comments of
1	Who was David's father? (1 Sa. 16:1, 11)
2	Who was Saul's daughter that become David's wife? (1 Sa. 18:18)
4	At one time David killed a who was raiding his father's flocks. (1 Sa. 17:34-36)
6	What item did David take from his bag that was used to kill the Philistine giant Goliath? (1 Sa. 18:7)
8	As a young man David was a, keeping his father's sheep. (1 Sa. 16:11)
9	When David returned from his victory over Goliath, who danced and sang? (1 Sa. 18:7)
10	David first gained his reputation as a warrior during his contest with what man? (1 Sa. 17)
12	Throughout the early life of David, he placed his in the Lord and the Lord was with him.
14	Goliath came against David with a sword, a spear, and a javelin. What was one of the items David brought for the battle?
	(1 Sa. 17:48)
16	Who was king over Israel when David battle the Philistine giant Goliath? (1 Sa. 17)
17	Since David's fame and popularity grew with the people, Saul became jealous and attempted to David. (1
	Sa. 19)
18	When David came to Saul at the time Goliath was threatening Israel, to whom did David give credit for delivering him
	from the lion and the bear? (1 Sa. 17:37)

Puzzle answers....



SIGNS 24-03 HE'S ALIVE!

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