

Joy's Corner...

POWER IN PEACE

Why do we struggle so with anxiety or anger when we don't get our way? All of us experience these emotions. And perhaps they serve us well for a while. But there comes a time when our whole inner core wants relief.

"Peace at any cost" is not true peace. When we stand for the right, there is a certain peace from within—a peace that goes beyond human understanding. It is important to communicate with the ONE PERSON who can give you true peace. That PERSON is God.

PEACE. How do you arrive at peace's door? Open the door of your heart to the Lord, and experience it especially where you are right now. King David found this peace early on in his life. His psalm reassures us: "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety" (Ps. 4:8.).

Forgiveness is ready just for the asking. Jesus said, "...ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:24). This is not an empty promise. He forgives as soon as you ask for forgiveness for your wrong—for your sins—for ALL the things you have done or said that could displease God in any way. PEACE results from forgiveness.

It is important to communicate with the ONE PERSON who can give you true peace. That PERSON is God, Himself. He's always ready to hear your confession. Prayer is NOT difficult. No one has to talk to another human to get this peace. God is ready to hear you—right NOW.

Prayer is the one form of communication that can take place in your mind. God knows exactly what you are thinking. Wake up praying. Go to sleep praying. Sincere personal prayer is always answered.

There is a power in PEACE that creates personal freedom—no matter where we are or what we're doing. May God bless you with this peace right now.

God Bless... Joy

5 SIGNS GOD IS CLOSING A DOOR

(Continued from last month)

4. Lack of Sleep

Throughout the Bible, we witness many heroes of the faith, most notably King David, struggle with sleep when they are concerned about godly matters, typically struggling with unrepentant sin or debating surrender to God. Similarly, when we are trying to force doors open that won't budge, our bodies will be tired, but our souls will be wide awake, quickened by the Spirit to lean into what is right.

Let's be honest, conviction is no fun. It's the Holy Spirit reminding us that we aren't in the right situation or making the wisest decision, and we must not only repent of our stubbornness but walk toward the door God has opened for us instead.

We like to think we know what is best for us. After all, who knows us better than we know ourselves?

Well, we could stop there and say God knows us best, knitting us together in our mother's womb (Psalm 139:13). And we could further explore how little we know about the future, how ever-changing we are in our likes and dislikes, how often we have been wrong about ourselves in the past.

If this nagging notion that you don't always know what is best for you is keeping you up at night, if conviction is stealing your sleep, perhaps it's time to surrender to God's will and leave the door shut, declaring that you know God has bigger, better doors in store for you.

5. Recalling God's Character

Jesus took water and turned it into rich unfermented wine (John 2:1-11). He took a few fish and pieces of bread and fed thousands of people (Matthew 14:13-21). God takes good things and makes them fantastic. He

blows our definition of good out of the water. He becomes the God of miracles, the One to defy the impossible.

If you ever stop and consider, "I think God has better for me," realize that your spirit is affirming God's character. It's confirming that God's nature is rich with blessings we could never curate on our own.

Friend, if you have a good opportunity, one that makes sense and seems noble, but something in you keeps whispering, "But God has more in store," I encourage you to listen to that voice.

After all, it might not be your voice. It could be the still, small voice of God reminding you that some doors are meant to be shut so He can throw better ones wide open (1 Kings 19:11-13).

WITH GOD AT DAWN

The Life Is Transformed

"So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. "So then, you will know them by their fruits. Matthew 7:17-20. NASB

No matter how high his profession, he whose heart is not imbued with love for God and for his fellow-men, is not a disciple of Christ. Though he should possess great faith, and even have power to work miracles, yet without love his faith would be worthless. He might display great liberality, but should he from some other motive than genuine love, bestow all his goods to feed the poor, the act would not commend him to the favor of God. In his zeal he might even meet a martyr's death, yet if destitute of the gold of love he would be regarded by God as a deluded enthusiast or an ambitious hypocrite.

There is an eloquence far more powerful than the eloquence of words in the quiet, consistent life of a pure, true Christian. What a man is has more influence than what he says.... It is our own character and

experience that determine our influence upon others. In order to convince others of the power of Christ's grace, we must know its power in our own hearts and lives.

The gospel we present for the saving of souls must be the gospel by which our own souls are saved. Only through a living faith in Christ as a personal Saviour is it possible to make our influence felt in a skeptical world. If we would draw sinners out of the swift-running current, our own feet must be firmly set upon the Rock, Christ Jesus. The badge of Christianity is not an outward sign, not the wearing of a cross or a crown, but it is that which reveals the union of man with God.

My dear friend, we must ALL evaluate our own lives to see what type of fruit we are bearing. We need not try to remove the branches of others, while we are in desperate need of pruning! Editor Al

CRATE TRAINING

"Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." Ephesians 4:31-32 (NIV)

"Mom, we think you need a puppy."

Before my grown kids, who no longer live at home, got to the second syllable of the word "puppy," I said no.

There were many reasons. But mostly I felt like this whole conversation was code for "we want all the fun of a puppy without the daily responsibilities of said puppy." If they could talk me into it, they could love the puppy and enjoy him when they wanted but then choose to leave him with me to do everything else.

So of course I wound up getting a puppy. And it absolutely worked out exactly like I thought it would.

But what I hadn't counted on was completely falling in love with this little apricot-colored furball of pure joy. And you know how it's wise for some dogs to be crate trained? Yes, well, that wasn't working for my little pup named Givey. Every time I put him in his crate, he

cried and cried until I couldn't take it any longer and let him out.

But this pattern wasn't helping in the potty-training department or the don't-chew-up-my-stuff department at all.

One day, my friend Shae came over to work on some projects, and Givey was in rare form. Everything a good puppy should do, he was doing the opposite. I said, "I know I should put him in his crate for some timeout, but I just can't stand to hear him cry."

Shae replied, "You know, my mom had a really wise statement she would often say when we were crate training our dog, Rosie. When she started crying and we all felt bad for Rosie, my mom would say, 'Well, I'm not happy 100% of the time in my life either. She'll be just fine.'"

I mean, Mama has a real good point there.

Eventually, Givey not only got used to spending appropriate amounts of time in his crate but wound up liking it so much that now he sometimes goes in it on his own. I think the crate has become his safe place in this big world.

And it certainly brought a lot of relief to my puppy-mom life. Putting Givey in his crate when I left the house or he just needed some timeout helped establish a boundary between his personal space and mine. If he wants to chew something of his in his crate, great. But in the rest of my home, chewing up my stuff isn't acceptable.

Defining what is and is not acceptable is even more important with human relationships. If people are constantly annoying us, frustrating us, exhausting us or running all over us, chances are we either don't have the right kind of people in our lives or we don't have the right kind of boundaries. Or maybe it's both.

But if we see the process of implementing boundaries as a one-way ticket to someone thinking we're unkind, unchristian or uncaring, there will be no relief because we will be consumed with the grief of others not being pleased with us.

You might be thinking to yourself, *Boundaries don't bring relief. They can make the other person angry or disappointed enough in me to say hurtful things about*

me. I just want to keep the peace, so I'll go along with their attitudes and behavior so that I don't have to deal with the fallout of addressing all of this.

That might appear to work for a while. But without establishing appropriate boundaries, either there will be an eventual emotional explosion of frustration, which you'll later regret, or simmering resentments that will silently eat away at you until you start distancing yourself from the other person.

I've been that person. Sometimes losing my temper because I'd let things go so long I just couldn't hold back my frustration any longer. Or sometimes biting my tongue so long I lost the desire to stay in that relationship. I'm not proud of either of these extremes. And neither of these reactions matches who I really am as a person.

Ephesians 4:31-32 says, "*Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*"

I've read those verses so many times, and yet I never made the connection that implementing healthy boundaries in my life could actually help me be this kind of person.

This is where I've gotten boundaries wrong in the past. Boundaries don't *prevent* me from being the best version of myself. Boundaries *allow* me to be the best version of myself.

If I want to be a person of compassion, good boundaries will help me be more compassionate. If I want to be a woman of grace, good boundaries will help me be more gracious. If I want to be a woman of forgiveness, good boundaries will help me be more forgiving.

Good boundaries help us keep the best of who we are intact.

Keeping this in mind, we can prayerfully consider where necessary boundaries may be needed in some of the relationships in our lives without the added guilt or worry of what this person may think of us.

Just like Givey has learned to thrive within the parameters of his crate, I believe we can learn to thrive

in healthy, life-giving relationships, protected by sound, biblical boundaries.

Lord, give me wisdom to consider where boundaries may be needed in my life today. I don't want to be fearful of what others think of me ... I want to live marked by what You think of me. Please show me where I may be holding on to any people-pleasing tendencies so I can release that and live in the peace I'm really longing for in my relationships. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Nothing but a number *(Not what you think)*

Japanese mountain climber Yuichiro Miura reached the summit of Mount Everest at age 70. George Brunstad was also 70 when he swam the English Channel. Naval officer Grace Hopper became the first female rear admiral of the United States Navy when she was 79. Margaret Haggerty completed her quest to run a marathon on each of the seven continents when she was 84.

If stories like these teach us anything, it's that senior adults are capable of amazing things.

That was certainly true of Joshua. Even though he was probably nearing the century mark, God had a plan for him. Age didn't matter to God. Rather than telling Joshua to rest, retire or step aside for a younger replacement, God instructed him to get to work.

Perhaps we should take a cue from God in our attitude toward older adults. From an early age most of us were taught to respect our elders. However, too often we confuse politeness for respect. What's the difference? Politeness might include offering a hand to senior adults when they struggle with steps or making awkward small talk with aging relatives at family gatherings. Respect, however, would include realizing that with their years of challenges and experiences these adults are a rich, God-given resource.

In this age of politically correct labels, perhaps a better name for senior citizens is "ultra-experienced adults." God entrusted Joshua with an important duty a quarter century after Joshua reached retirement age because of his vast military experience and knowledge.

Think of the older adults you know. How does God want to use them in your life? What experiences of theirs might benefit you? What life lessons have they learned that might keep you from making a bad decision? And what might you be able to learn from hearing their stories and asking for their advice?

To Take Away

- How would you describe your attitude toward senior adults?
- Think of two or three seniors you know. What might getting to know them better add to your life?
- What steps can you take this week to build a mutually beneficial relationship with an older adult?

An Amazing Fact

"The Torch" claims to be the world's brightest flashlight. It is currently being tested by the Guinness Book of World Records as the world's most powerful flashlight, with 4,100 lumens of "raw light power." It is supposedly 100 lumens brighter than the previous record holder. It burns so hot that it can ignite paper, melt plastic, and even cook an egg. All yours for only \$149!

Ever since the invention of the light bulb, mankind has continued to make more powerful and brighter lights. One of the brightest lights in the world (claimed by its owners) is the tip of Luxor Hotel in Las Vegas, which contains a fixed-position spotlight that points directly upward. Its beam is supposedly 42.3 billion candlepower.

But you don't need to go to Las Vegas to find the brightest light in the world. David writes in 2 Samuel

22:29, “For You are my lamp, O Lord; the Lord shall enlighten my darkness.” From the first day of Creation when God proclaimed, “Let there be light” (Genesis 1:3), to the final book of Revelation, which tells us, “There shall be no more night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light” (Revelation 22:5), there is a clear association between our Lord and light.

Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life” (John 8:12). Then in John 12:36, Christ admonishes us, “While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of the light.” The Word of God, the Bible, is also referred to as light. In fact, David says, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105). You do not need the world’s most powerful flashlight to find your way to heaven. God provides the light you need through the Bible. Turn on your light every day.

What Are You Getting from God’s Word?

“Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.” -

Proverbs 30:5-6

Dr. Chuck Swindoll, in his introductory notes to the book of Romans, shares a story about a pastor named Donald Barnhouse, who started his ministry at Tenth Street Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. Barnhouse stepped into the pulpit on the Lords day and preached from the first verse of Romans 1.

The next week, he stood up and preached on the second verse of the same chapter – but didn’t even finish that verse. So the next week, he picked up where he had left off in the second verse and moved on into the third verse.

For 42 months – three and a half years – Barnhouse never preached on a text outside of Romans.

God’s Word is so rich – so full of truth that you can read and meditate on just one verse for hours. Yet it’s easy to just jump in and out of your devotional time, checking your box and forgetting what you just read, isn’t it?

Don’t turn your Bible reading into a race against the clock – trying to get as much in as you can. Take it verse by verse, absorb it slowly, and let incredible truth change your life!

Pray that God would use His Word – every word of it – to transform your life.

What have you been reading and learning in the Scriptures this week?

What’s one way you might be able to modify your devotional time to get more out of God’s Word?

Are You Using the Devil as a Scapegoat?

By Lynette Kittle

“The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work” - 1 John 3:8

Audiences in the 1970s found comedian Flip Wilson hilarious when he played his most popular character, Geraldine Jones, and said her famous and now iconic line, “The devil made me do it.” Wilson’s catchphrase for his sassy character, whenever “she” did anything wrong, caused viewers to roar with laughter. Excusing her own bad behavior and personal responsibility for her actions, along with using the devil as a scapegoat, struck a chord with the masses.

Excuses, Excuses

Geraldine’s character turned my thoughts to James 4:7, which urges, “Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” Like “her,” how many of us fail to own up to our poor choices in life and are using the devil as our scapegoat, too? Are we using the same excuse in a more subtle way? Because no matter what

the situation, Revelation 20:12 explains how we can't point our fingers at anyone else, not even the devil, when it comes to trying to justify our sinful behaviors and actions. In day-to-day living, it's good to ask ourselves if we are resisting the devil when tempted? If not, how do we begin to live it out in practical, everyday, sort of ways?

Using Others As Scapegoats

Often when feeling annoyed or angry with others like family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, and even strangers, we use them as scapegoats, too, for responding the way we do. But rather than going with those feelings and blaming our words and actions on them, there is a better way to respond by resisting to follow sinful tendencies. Instead of letting our negative feelings lead us, we can turn away from them and choose to respond, opposite to how fallen human nature wants us to respond. In choosing to do so, it's amazing how fast our entire outlook will change for the better within minutes. By doing so, we have accomplished what Romans 12:21 urges us to do: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

What Happens When We Don't Resist

Surprisingly, Star Wars Darth Vader's character can teach us about resisting the dark side. Although he gave into darkness, he lived the consequences of not resisting it. Born Anakin Skywalker, who became a chosen Jedi to restore the Force (light); instead, he fell into darkness and transformed into Vader. With each evil act committed, he strayed farther from the light, stating at one point, "You are unwise to lower your defenses." His words ring true because lowering our defenses and giving in to temptation leads to destruction. Yet, when it comes down to it, resisting temptation is really pretty simple. It's choosing to act and react opposite to the dark things we're tempted to do or say by following God's Light rather than the devil's darkness.

Practical Ways to Resist Temptation

Following are eight biblical insights to help us resist temptation.

1. Rather than giving in to our own emotions and understanding, give into God by following what His word says to do in situations (Proverbs 3:5).
2. When darkness tries to draw us in, instead follow the Light of Jesus, choosing His way to live over our own rationalizations and understandings (John 8:12).
3. Pay attention to godly leaders' counsel and insights, recognizing they have learned to walk in God's wisdom and counsel (1 Peter 5:5).
4. Put on humility by keeping ourselves in check and not thinking we know more than God knows (Ephesians 4:2).
5. Place our trust in Christ's strength rather than trying to rely on our own strength (Philippians 4:13).
6. Turn towards God with a repentant heart, unlike Geraldine's motto to blame her sinfulness on the devil (Psalm 51:17).
7. Keep running towards the finish line like Hebrews 12:1-2 urges.
8. Resist the devil's temptations and choose to obey God, turning from darkness to light, as Vader finally does at the end of his life. As Jesus proclaimed, "I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in Me should stay in darkness" (John 12:46).

Intersecting Faith and Life:

If faced with temptation this week, resist. However, if you fall into it, instead of pointing fingers and blaming the devil or those around you, go to God with a repentant heart. With a humble heart, turn toward Him for forgiveness and to strengthen you to overcome it the next time you're tempted.

Humor's Hallway...

If anyone tries to break into my house.....
They'll trip over all the dog and cat toys and die.

What kind of shoes do frogs wear?
OPEN TOAD ONES

So... if a cow doesn't produce milk...
Is it a milk dud or an udder failure?



I told my suitcase that would be NO vacation this year..
Now I'm dealing with emotional baggage

Found out all four of my sons want to valets when they
grow up... My Doctor says that's the worst case of
PARKING SONS disease he's ever heard of.



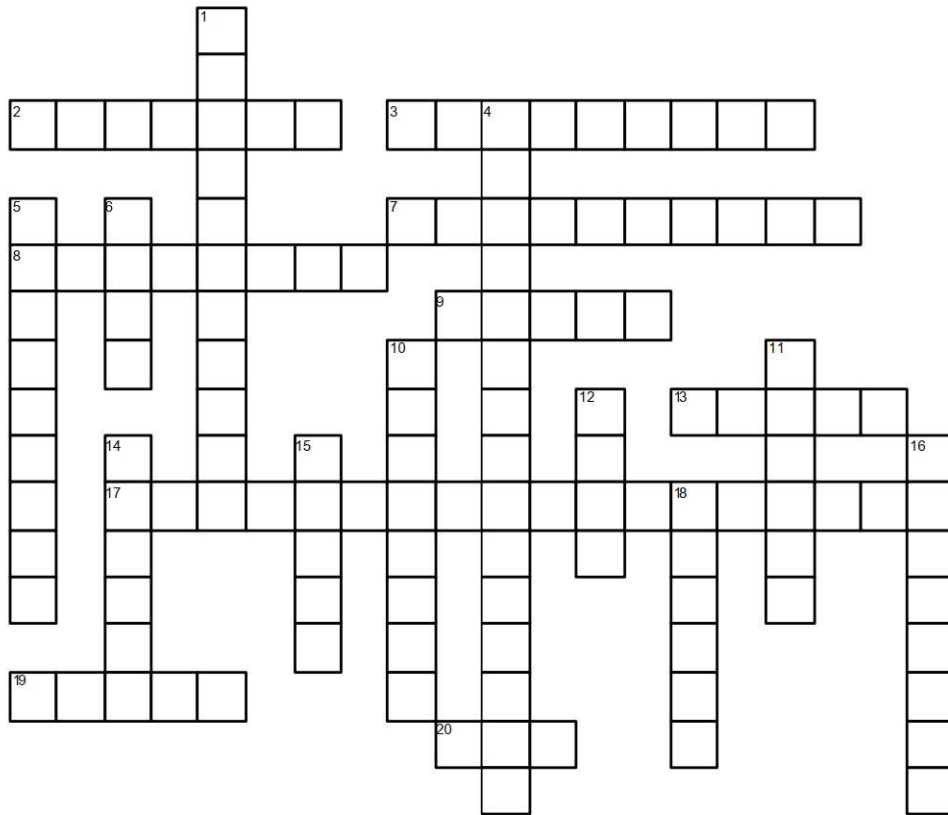
Can you tell me why a \$10.00 bill looks so small at the
grocery store or a gas station, but so big at church?

A local Pastor joined a community Service Club, and
the members thought they would have a little fun with
him. Under his name badge they printed, "Hog Caller"
as his occupation. Everyone made a big fanfare as the
badge was presented.

The Pastor responded by saying, " I usually am called
the "Shepherd of the sheep"... but I guess you know
your people better than I do."

THE EARLY LIFE OF SOLOMON

1 Kings 1 - 4



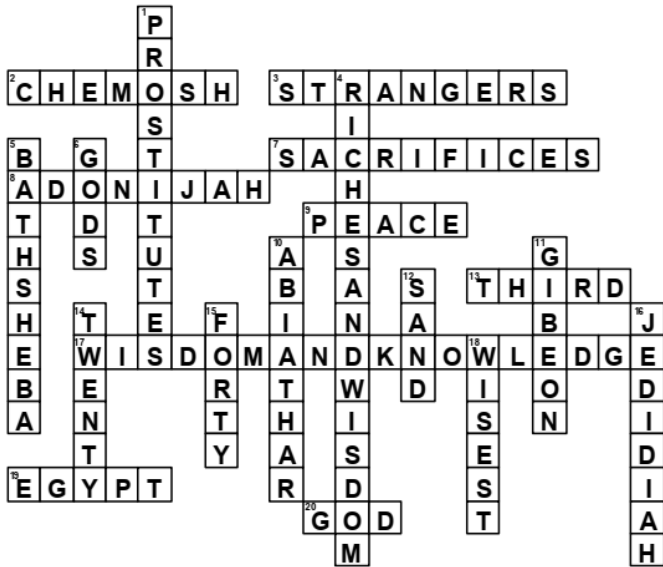
ACROSS

- 2 1 Kings 11:7 states that on a hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a high place for _____, the detestable god of Moab, and for Molech, the detestable god of the Ammonites.
- 3 Because of Solomon's great wisdom, many _____ from all over the world came to Jerusalem to listen to him. (1 Ki. 4:34)
- 7 One of the first things Solomon did when he became king was to go to Gibeon and offer _____ to the Lord. (1 Ki. 3:4-15)
- 8 As David's health was deteriorating, which one of David's son seized the opportunity to make himself king? (1 Ki. 2:26-27)
- 9 The people of Israel lived in safety and _____ all the days of Solomon's reign. (1 Ki. 4:25)
- 13 Solomon was the _____ king of Israel.
- 17 In 2 Chronicles 1:10, what did Solomon request to lead the people of Israel properly? three words
- 19 After Solomon became king, he entered into an alliance with the Pharaoh of this country by taken his daughter as his wife. (1 Ki. 3:1-3)
- 20 Where does true wisdom come from?

DOWN

- 1 As a proof of God's judicial wisdom given to Solomon, he (Solomon) was given a case of deciding which one of two _____ was the woman who did not kill her baby. (1 Ki. 3:16-28)
- 4 We are told in 2 Chron. 9:22 that King Solomon was greater in _____ than all the other kings of the world. three words
- 5 Who was the mother of Solomon? (1 Ki. 1:11-31; 2:13-21; 1 Chronicles 3:5)
- 6 As Solomon grew old, his many wives turned his heart after other _____ or idols. (1 Ki. 11:4)
- 10 Even though this priest carried the ark of the covenant before David, who did Solomon remove from the priesthood for supporting Adonijah as he tried to make himself king. (1 Ki. 2:26-27)
- 11 Where was Solomon sacrificing when, at night during a dream, the Lord asked Solomon to ask whatever you wish? (1 Ki. 3:4-5)
- 12 The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the _____ on the seashore. (1 Ki. 4:20)
- 14 How old was Solomon when he became king over all of Israel? (1 Ki. 11:42)
- 15 How many years did King Solomon reign?
- 16 When Solomon was born, what did Nathan, the prophet name him? (2 Sa. 12:24-25; 1 Ki. 4:1; 1 Chronicles 3:5)
- 18 King Solomon has been known as the world's _____ man. (1 Ki. 4:29-30)

Puzzle answers....



NOTE

Puzzle clues are from the K.J.V Bible

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May God richly bless you as you study His word and plan for your life's journey