



Live with Strength and Courage!

You're never alone. Whether you're 1 day or 30 years into your Christian faith, this truth stands firm for all that life can challenge us with. Learn how to embrace God's help effectively in this plan. Taken from the book, "Out of This World: A Christian's Guide to Growth and Purpose" by David J. Swandt

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"You're Never Alone"

It is often said that life consists of a series of highs and lows, times of enjoyment and promise mixed with seasons of challenge and doubt. Life is not just a steady climb to the top; rather it is a journey that consists of hills and valleys. Everyone, believers and non-believers alike, goes through life's ups and downs.

But as Christians, we have an incredible promise from God that we never have to face the valleys in life alone. Here are His encouraging words to us:

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."

Deuteronomy 31:6

The truth is that we need God's presence in both seasons of challenge and seasons of success. By knowing God is with us, we can face each challenge in life as a

stepping-stone toward success rather than a decline toward despair.

No mountain is too high nor valley too low where God cannot meet us. No matter our circumstances, God is faithful, and He's always with us!

"God has come to You!"

The promise of eternal life is a result of God coming to us rather than mankind trying to seek out and find God in some distant place.

Since the beginning of time, God has loved each of us with an unconditional and everlasting love. His original intention was to have a strong and vibrant relationship with each of us. However, when Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the Garden, their sin created a barrier between us and God. We became eternally separated from Him.

Rather than allowing us to remain separated from Him, God set in motion a perfect plan for restoration—one driven by His unending love and mercy for us. The goal of His plan is to fully restore even the most intimate aspects of His relationship with mankind as it existed before Adam and Eve sinned.

Over 2,000 years ago, God sent His Son to earth to remove the barrier caused by sin, and make salvation available to all.

*"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." **John 3:16-17***

Through his death and resurrection, Jesus made full payment on our behalf for the penalty of sin, and removed the barrier between us and God. This forgiveness is available to all who simply receive Him as their Savior.

But this was only the beginning. Before Jesus completed his time on earth to join His Father in Heaven, He described to His disciples another important element of God's broader plan to fully restore mankind to Himself:

"In my Father's house (Heaven) are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place

for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."

John 14:2-3

Not only did God send Jesus to remove the barrier of sin, but one day in the future Jesus will return to bring all believers ""home"" to be with Him forever.

“Heaven’s Ambassador – The Holy Spirit”

An ambassador is an official representative of one government sent to another to live among its people, to accomplish a mission of peace and good will. He fulfills his duties with the authority, generosity and resources of the government he represents. With utmost trust imparted to him, he accomplishes his purpose with dignity and to completion.

In many ways, the Holy Spirit's mission resembles that of an ambassador from Heaven. The Holy Spirit embodies all the authority, power and resources of God, and expresses and reveals God's love to every person on earth through His presence and His work.

As Jesus' time with His disciples was coming to a close, He told them they would not be left alone after He was gone. He told them of One who would be sent in His place to be with them, to guide them, teach

them, comfort them and lead them - the Holy Spirit. Jesus said:

"Unless I go away, the Counselor (Holy Spirit) will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you." **John 16:7**

After Jesus' work on earth was complete, He sent the Holy Spirit to be with us in his place until he returns again. The Holy Spirit provides guidance, leadership, comfort and counsel over our lives. Jesus described the Holy Spirit to His disciples in this way:

"But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." **John 14:26**

God's presence is with us today in the form of the Holy Spirit, and He is actively at work in our world and in our lives.

“His Mission is Personal”

From the beginning of creation, the Holy Spirit has been present, dwelling among us for all generations.

“Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.” **Genesis 1:2**

But it was not until Jesus completed his work on the cross that the Holy Spirit's ministry became personal and intimate to every believer. Jesus told His disciples before he died that the Holy Spirit was present among them, but not yet living in them.

“The world cannot accept him (the Holy Spirit) because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”

John 14:17-18

Jesus' promise of comfort to His disciples just prior to His death was that He would still be with them spiritually, through the presence of the Holy Spirit living in their lives. The work Jesus began continues in our lives through the Holy Spirit. God uses the Holy Spirit in us to do four things:

1. He makes salvation a personal reality.
2. He empowers you to live victoriously.
3. He builds Christian character to help you grow.
4. He works all things for your good.

“He Makes Salvation a Personal Reality”

While it was Jesus who paid for our salvation, it is God's presence through the Holy Spirit that makes salvation a personal reality to anyone who will receive it. Jesus made it clear that we don't just receive salvation when we're born. There is a spiritual rebirth that must take place, one which only the Holy Spirit can author.

Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water (natural birth) and the Spirit (spiritual renewal). Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit."

John 3:5-6

The moment someone receives Christ into their life, it invokes spiritual renewal in their inner person, resulting in the full removal of sin's penalty from their lives.

In addition, the Holy Spirit is at work in the lives of non-believers to reveal God's incredible love for them. Jesus said,

"When the Counselor (Holy Spirit) comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me."

John 15:26

Today, the Holy Spirit continues this wonderful ministry of making God's love known by proclaiming Jesus, the personified love of God, and all that He represents to both believers and non-believers in our world.

“He Empowers You to Live Victoriously”

Without the right tools for the job, even the simplest of chores can become overwhelming. For example, removing a screw is easy with a power screwdriver, but much more tiresome and difficult without one.

One of God's top priorities is to provide us with the right tools in life. Whether it be the wisdom to face a big decision, willpower to break a bad habit, or even extra faith and trust to face an impossible situation with confidence, God is faithful to equip us with what we need to live a fulfilled and blessed life.

“Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” **Isaiah 40:30-31**

Placing our hope in Him gives us access to a limitless tool chest to equip us for whatever we face. When we are empowered from above, we live in victory!

“He Builds Character to Help You Grow”

Good character is not something we just receive with salvation, but is learned and developed over time. Helping us build Christ-like character is one of God's primary goals. The Holy Spirit helps us become more like Jesus by building and developing His character in us. The Bible calls this the Fruit of the Spirit.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such there is no law.”

Galatians 5:22-23

In the midst of challenges, we sometimes try to overcome adversity by our own power. By doing so, we may even be tempted to compromise our Christian character to get past our difficulties, or "take a shortcut." But when we call upon the power of the Holy Spirit, He helps us stay the course with integrity, truth and honesty, no matter the circumstances.

During seasons of success, the same biblical standards should remain intact. Self-serving pride and arrogance are in direct conflict with the Christian character God wants to develop in our lives. In fact, meekness is a requirement for every Christian to continue receiving promotion from God.

"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth." **Matthew 5:5**

As we face both our challenges and successes with Christ-like character, we begin to grow in our walk with God. We even begin to recognize that operating in the Fruit of the Spirit works to our ultimate good and to His honor. The more we grow in our walk with God, the more God can entrust greater blessings into our lives!

“He Works All Things for Your Good”

God is in control over everything in every area of our lives. He is fully able to orchestrate any circumstance to work for our benefit as believers.

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him who have been called according to his purpose.” **Romans 8:28**

He is more than capable to handle even the most complicated of life's challenges, and will lead us down the course of fulfilling His plan for our lives. He simply wants us to trust Him to do so.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.” **Proverbs 3:5-6**

Putting our trust in God does not take the place of personal responsibility and good

stewardship. Rather, personal responsibility and trusting Him go hand in hand. When we do our part, God is always faithful to do His and lead us effectively.

In many cases, God's leading comes in the form of opening and closing "doors" in our circumstances. Other times, our situations require nothing short of God's divine intervention to heal, work a miracle, or accomplish something otherwise impossible to do.

*Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." **Matthew 19:26***

Whether it may be facing an incurable disease, a financial crisis, or even the unexpected loss of a loved one, God is present and able to work supernaturally during these times.

God is a specialist at turning tragedy into triumph and difficulty into joy through the Holy Spirit. Never doubt that God is still in the "miracle-working business" today. God

is able to intervene in any impossible situation!