

GOD at the CENTER

Habits for Spiritual Growth



Luis Palau



introduction

God at the Center

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Fitness gurus and medical professionals urge us to get regular exercise, eat properly, and practice common-sense stress management. And that's a good thing. After all, the apostle Paul didn't say that caring for our bodies is of *no* value. He said, "Physical training is of *some* value" (EMPHASIS ADDED).

But in the same literary breath Paul added, "godliness has value for all things" (1 TIMOTHY 4:8). So . . . how do we train ourselves for godliness?

We can draw some corollaries between physical and spiritual health. Think back to a time when you began a program of exercise or made a dietary change. How successful were you? Are you still engaged in it today? What do you want to change? By making and implementing a *realistic plan* that addresses your physical needs, you'll see progress in your health and well-being.

It's no different with our spiritual lives. A good way to improve our spiritual health is by setting *realistic goals* that will draw us close to the heart of the Father who designed us for relationship with Him and with each other. In this booklet, evangelist and author Luis Palau offers a concise, overview that will help you build spiritual habits into your life with the goal of closer relationship with Christ. We hope this will encourage you as you continue—or begin—a lifetime of healthy habits.

Our Daily Bread Ministries

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one

Talking with God in Prayer

Prayer As a Daily Habit

P **Prayer is one** of those things you learn by doing. I can give you Bible promises on prayer and share with you some of my own experiences with prayer, but I can't do your praying for you. Until you begin to pray yourself, you will never understand prayer.

Martin Luther said, "Just as the business of the tailor is to make clothing, and that of the shoemaker to mend shoes, so the business of the Christian is to pray."

The secret of Luther's revolutionary life was his commitment to spend time alone with God every day. I encourage you to take time every day to talk with God.

Don't just give Him 30 seconds while you're rushing around in the morning: "O Lord, bless this day, especially since it is Monday." Set aside a specific time each day for personal prayer.

As you pray, strive for order (see "An Exercise in Prayer") and faithfulness. It helps to establish a set time to pray, but avoid legalism. Don't feel guilty if you miss your intended time or even an entire day. Keep trying. On certain occasions you may need to adapt your schedule to talk to the Father. Nothing is wrong with that. Aim for consistency. Don't look at prayer as a duty to be "checked off" your list. Prayer is simply an honest conversation with our heavenly Father who loves us.

I find the early hours of the day are the best to pray. Evangelist D. L. Moody said, "We ought to see the face of God every morning before we see the face of man. If you have so much business to attend to that you have no time to pray, depend upon it that you have more business on hand than God ever intended." Make room in your schedule to begin each day alone with God in prayer.



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↪ *There is nothing magical about the **time of day** to pray. The prophet Daniel prayed at set times throughout the day. David said he meditated on the Lord in the night watches. The point is, setting a workable time and sticking to it will help you establish a healthy habit.*

On the other hand, prayer is something that should take place during the entire day. The Bible says, "Pray continually" (1 THESSALONIANS 5:17). At any moment, whatever the occasion, we are free to speak with our Father. We enjoy communion with the living God, who lives within us, through prayer.

It's always surprising to see how much time Jesus dedicated to prayer. He never considered himself too busy to pray. As the obligations increased and He faced big decisions, He went away alone to pray (LUKE 5:15–16). Will you form a similar habit?

Confidence in Prayer

"This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him" (1 JOHN 5:14–15).

Look at that! God has gone on record as saying that whatever we ask for according to His will, He will give it to us! But what do we do if we don't know God's will? Helpfully, God has revealed much of His will in the Bible. By becoming better acquainted with God's Word, you will learn many things about His will for your life.

Read 1 John 5:14–15 again. If you are not sure a prayer request is according to God's will, ask Him about it; He can tell you. And don't worry about making mistakes when you pray. Do you think the sovereignty of God will be shattered because one of His children makes a mistake while praying? Isn't it a bigger mistake not to pray at all?

If the answer to your request is "no," the Lord will communicate with you by the internal witness of the

Holy Spirit. But the answer may not be immediate. God may be developing your patient trust in His perfect will. A consistent prayer life in your walk with God will help a sensitivity develop between you and your heavenly Father.

When God says “no” to a request you make, trust His goodness. Jesus made the point that parents do not give their children worthless or bad gifts when they request something. How much more can we trust our heavenly Father, who always gives us what is good (MATTHEW 7:7–11). But we need to ask according to His will.

AN EXERCISE IN PRAYER:

Keep a Prayer Notebook

1. *Think of one area in your life where you really need an answer to prayer.*
2. *Write it down and date it. This is your first entry in your prayer notebook.*
3. *Study the following passages on prayer in your Bible: Matthew 7:7–11; 18:19–20; Mark 10:46–52; John 16:24; Romans 8:26–27; Ephesians 6:10–20; James 5:16–18.*
4. *Simply and specifically tell the Lord your request.*
5. *Thank the Lord that He is going to answer your prayer (PHILIPPIANS 4:6).*
6. *Record the answer when it comes and praise God for it (COLOSSIANS 4:2).*
7. *Repeat! Keep track of your prayers inside your notebook and marvel at how God answers your prayers over time.*



two

Reading God's Book

The Authority of Scripture

Belief in the full authority of Scripture¹ is vital to living an authentic and victorious Christian life. Only through such faith can we experience the joy of being God's children.

The Bible clearly states, "All Scripture is God-breathed" (2 TIMOTHY 3:16). The words of Scripture are inspired by God.

As God's children, we need to submit to Him. It is His authority that the Scriptures present. Consider the words of Psalm 119:137–138: "You are righteous, LORD, and your laws are right. The statutes you have laid down are righteous; they are fully trustworthy." Because Scripture

reflects the perfect character of God, it is the standard by which we measure everything else.

↗ *In speaking about God's law, Jesus said, "Until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished" (MATTHEW 5:18).*

Read and Memorize Scripture

One of my earliest memories is of sneaking out of bed early in the morning to watch my father kneel, pray, and read the Bible before going to work. That deeply impressed me as a child.

Every day my dad read a chapter from Proverbs, since it has 31 chapters and most months have 31 days. I still try to do that myself each day. In addition to other Bible studying and reading, I start the day with one chapter from Proverbs. And I have learned to do it on my knees.

Scripture exhorts us, "Be filled with the Spirit" (EPHESIANS 5:18). To be filled with the Spirit is a command, a duty, and a privilege for the Christian. To be filled with the Spirit means to be walking in His light and to let His presence guide our minds. To do this we must spend time each day reading and meditating on the Bible, filling our minds and hearts with the life-changing wisdom of the Bible (COLOSSIANS 3:16).

How about you? Have you disciplined yourself to read the Bible each day? If not, start today! Like my dad, begin in the book of Proverbs, and then systematically read each day. Start small and then build as your habit deepens. Why let another day go by without filling your

mind with the words that bring you knowledge of God?

Memorizing passages of Scripture is another way to grow closer to God. The Bible says, "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things" (PHILIPPIANS 4:8).

How can we think on what is pure when we are confronted daily with impurity? By purposefully meditating on Scripture.

We can't read the Bible all day, but we can always meditate on passages of Scripture—if we have memorized them. After 24 hours, research shows we accurately remember 5 percent of what we hear, 15 percent of what we read, 35 percent of what we study, but 100 percent of what we memorize.

Let me suggest five tips for memorizing Scripture. I think you will find them helpful.

- 1. Read the verse out loud at least ten times.*
- 2. Write it out on a 3 x 5 card, thinking about each word.*
- 3. Practice quoting it (it should be easy by now).*
- 4. Meditate on it throughout the day and review it on subsequent days.*
- 5. Share the verse with other people as you converse together.*



How can we think on what is pure when we are confronted daily with impurity? By purposefully meditating on Scripture.

12 Passages that Can Change Your Life

If you don't have an established Scripture memorization plan, start with these 12 passages. I have memorized and meditated on each one, and they have made a significant difference in my life. They can change your life as well!

NEW BIRTH

1. *Salvation: John 3:16*
2. *Identity as God's child: 1 John 3:1–2*

GOD

3. *Christ as the Word: John 1:1–2*
4. *God's strength: Ephesians 6:10–11*

FAMILY

5. *Wives and Husbands: Ephesians 5:21–33*
6. *Children: Ephesians 6:1–3*
7. *Parents: Ephesians 6:4*

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

8. *Temptation: 1 Corinthians 10:13*
9. *Confession and forgiveness: 1 John 1:9*
10. *Meeting together: Hebrews 10:24–25*
11. *Walk in the Spirit: Galatians 5:16–18*
12. *The Great Commission: Matthew 28:18–20*



three

Cultivating Dependence on God

Claiming God's Promises for Yourself

As you have read and memorized various passages in the Bible, what sections have seemed the most difficult to believe?

Prophecy? Narrative portions? Doctrinal passages? God's promises? ¹

Many Christians have trouble believing the promises of God. Oh, they sound nice, and sometimes they even cheer us up. But we wonder: Are they really true?

Subconsciously, at least, we question whether or not God keeps His promises.

↗ *The careful reader of Scripture will note the particular genre, or category, of the book being read. For example, proverbs are not promises but rather are examples of the underlying truth of wisdom literature. The Psalms are poetic, and thus use language differently than a historical narrative such as the book of Judges or Kings and Chronicles. Prophecies are directed to specific people at specific times. Context is vital.*

In the Old Testament we read, “Not one of all the LORD’S good promises to Israel failed; every one was fulfilled” (JOSHUA 21:45; COMPARE 23:14–15). Solomon later declared, “Praise be to the LORD, who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses” (1 KINGS 8:56). None of God’s promises has ever failed!

God has gone on record many times throughout His authoritative Word and has given us—His pilgrims passing through this world—“very great and precious promises” (2 PETER 1:4).

Some of His promises were made specifically to an individual (JOSHUA 14:9), a group (DEUTERONOMY 15:18), or a nation (HAGGAI 1:13). We must be careful not to haphazardly claim promises intended for someone else!

Many Old Testament promises, ↗ thankfully, are repeated in the New Testament and are ours to claim today. God promised Joshua, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (JOSHUA 1:5). In Hebrews 13:5 God transfers that promise to us as Christians.

↷ *Old Testament promises are sometimes carelessly given a wide application to all of us because there is an underlying truth in the promise. For example, Jeremiah 29:11 promises to “prosper” the people, and to give them “a hope and a future.” This has been widely claimed by many Christians, and it is true that God will give those who trust Him a hope and a future. But the promise itself is contained in a letter to the Jewish exiles who were to return to the land after 70 years.*

Charles Spurgeon stated, “Do not treat God’s promises as if they were curiosities for a museum; but believe them and use them.” We appropriate God’s promises by learning them through reading and memorization, by seeing our need for them through meditative prayer, and by giving God time to work them out in our daily experience.

Any of God’s promises that we can claim in Jesus’ name are guaranteed and will be performed for us by God for His glory (JOHN 14:13–14; 2 CORINTHIANS 1:20). What is the need of your heart today? The Lord has promised to meet that need! Simply take Him at His Word.

Claiming God’s Promises When We Hurt

But what about in times of crisis? We often remember Romans 8:28 in such times: “We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” That promise is a solid anchor when the storms of life beat heavily against us.

The apostle Paul claimed that very promise many times before he ever penned his famous letter to the Romans. As one of God’s pilgrims passing through this world, he knew what it was to suffer hardship, persecution, indifference, betrayal, loneliness, stonings, beatings, shipwreck,

nakedness, destitution, sleeplessness, and immense pressure.

What kept Paul from going under? I believe it was his utter confidence in the God who promises to sustain us. At the end of his life he could say, "I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day" (2 TIMOTHY 1:12).

In the Old Testament we read, "You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you" (ISAIAH 26:3). That promise applies to us even today, as the New Testament repeatedly affirms.

Do you face a difficult situation, my friend? God has not allowed this challenge to come into your life to discourage or defeat you. Every trial you and I face is an opportunity for God to demonstrate that He is the One we can always depend upon, no matter what.

King Hezekiah saw God demonstrate His care for him in a dramatic way. Read Isaiah 37 and record the steps King Hezekiah took when faced with a serious problem.

1. *Hezekiah acknowledged that he had a problem (37:1).*
2. *He sought to know what God's Word said about his problem (37:2–7).*
3. *He didn't allow anything to distort his perspective (37:8–13).*
4. *He prayed to God—first worshiping Him, then presenting his request, and finally asking that God would be glorified (37:14–20).*

Use these same steps when you face a difficulty or trial. Remember, it is in the hard places that we get to know Him better.



four

Practicing Obedience to God

Experiencing God's Forgiveness

The first step in forming a habit of obedience to God is experiencing His forgiveness. The Bible teaches that confession is prerequisite to God's forgiveness, whether for salvation or daily fellowship. This confession involves repentance and, when necessary, restitution.

Confession without repentance constitutes fraud. In Proverbs 28:13 we read, "Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy."

Confession sometimes involves restitution (EXODUS 22:1–15). Usually this is the forgotten aspect of confession. But if

our sin deprived someone of something that was rightfully theirs (whether goods or money or an honest amount of work), we must not only apologize to the offended person but also seek to repay him as soon as possible.

The beauty of Scripture is its good news that God freely forgives those who properly confess their sins. Manasseh was one of the most wicked men¹ to serve as king of Judah. He overturned Hezekiah's reforms and served false gods with more zeal than the nations God had destroyed (2 CHRONICLES 33:1–9). But after being captured by the Assyrians, Manasseh greatly humbled himself before the Lord—and God forgave him!

↪ **Manasseh** built pagan altars in the Lord's temple, practiced witchcraft, and even sacrificed his own children.

If God could forgive such a wicked king who humbled himself, surely He will forgive us when we truly confess our sins and repent. Confession is humbling, but “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 JOHN 1:9). Learn this verse and use it—often.

Here is another good verse to add to your Scripture memorization list: “Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more” (HEBREWS 10:17). How remarkable it is that the omniscient God promises not only to forgive our sins, but also to forget them forever!

God's Fences for Freedom

When I was growing up in Argentina, God's commandments, especially the Ten Commandments, were taught in such a legalistic way that I avoided any serious study of them until

after I had finished my graduate level biblical studies in the United States. I discovered at that time how little had been written about them.

Our sinful nature causes us to corrupt that which is beautiful. We turn God's moral law, which the apostle Paul called "holy, righteous and good" (ROMANS 7:12), into oppressive legalism. Perhaps that's why some will frown at the mere mention of the Ten Commandments.

↪ **Legalism** emphasizes keeping the letter of the law while missing the spirit of the law. Legalism always leads to pride and rule-keeping and turns us away from the heart of God, who simply wants us to love Him and consider the needs of others.

"They remind me of my grandmother, who had a fit if I ever wanted to play outside on Sundays," one person admits.

"Thinking of the commandments reminds me of my father, who refused to read the Sunday newspaper," says another.

The words of God should not elicit such reactions. Let's return to God's moral law and shake off the chains of sincere but sinful human beings who have twisted the beauty of God's commandments.

↪ *Much of Deuteronomy consists of Moses recalling all that the Lord had done for his people, including the instructions that were to guide them into peace and prosperity if they obeyed them. Deuteronomy 5 restates the Ten Commandments and concludes with a **promise of blessing** if they adhered to God's law (v. 33).*

When the Lord gave Israel the Ten Commandments, He says, in effect, "Listen, O Israel! I brought you out of bondage not to create another bondage for you but to

liberate you. And if you remain within the boundaries I am about to give you, then you will be free. You'll have plenty of room to maneuver. So enjoy all that I have given you."

God's statement includes a warning. In effect, it says: "As long as you stay within the fence, you will be free, but once you try to stretch the boundaries or jump over the fence, you will be in bondage once again."

I am convinced this is the way God intends us to view all of His commandments. The apostle John reminds us, "His commands are not burdensome" (1 JOHN 5:3). They are life!

Now obviously living up to the Ten Commandments doesn't give us salvation. We are all sinners (ROMANS 3:23) in need of a Savior (ROMANS 5:8). Both the Bible and experience teach us we couldn't keep the Ten Commandments perfectly even if we tried (ROMANS 7:1–8:4).

The purpose of God's commandments is to lay a foundation for us on which to build a life of love, freedom, and obedience.

Spend some time meditating on a commandment from God. Start with the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:1–17. As you study and pray, answer these questions: First, what does each commandment reveal about the character of God? Second, what does each commandment liberate me from? Third, how does each commandment protect me? Finally, if love is the fulfillment of the law (GALATIANS 5:14), then what does each commandment reveal about love?

I believe once you answer these four questions, you will look at the commandments of God with a new perspective. As the psalmist says, "Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight" (PSALM 119:35).



five

Serving God and Others

Recognizing How Any Old
Bush Will Do

've heard it said, "Whether these are the best of times or the worst of times, it's the only time we've got." That's a good reminder for us as God's ambassadors. This is our moment in history. We must serve the Lord daily during the time we have now. But how can we serve? What characterizes a genuine and successful ambassador for Christ?

Many Christians believe that if they work hard enough and pray long enough, then they'll be successful. But that's

the essence of legalism. This was the case with Moses when he killed an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew slave. Moses relied on his own power—the weapons of human strength.

This was my situation when I came to the United States in 1960 to further my biblical studies. I had big dreams I wanted to see quickly accomplished. My impatience led me to rely on my own power, not on the Lord's.

During one of the last chapel services before Christmas break, our speaker was Major Ian Thomas, founder of the Torchbearers in England. His theme was "Any Old Bush Will Do, As Long As God Is in the Bush." His reference, of course, alluded to God's choice of a burning bush to speak to Moses.

He pointed out that it took Moses 40 years in the wilderness to realize he was nothing. God was trying to tell Moses, "I don't need a pretty bush or an educated bush or an eloquent bush. If I am going to use you, I am going to use you. It will not be you doing something for Me, but Me doing something through you."

Major Thomas suggested that the bush in the desert was likely a bunch of dry sticks with hardly any foliage, yet Moses had to take off his shoes because God was in the bush.

I was like that ordinary bush. I could do nothing for God. All my reading, studying, asking questions, and trying to model myself after other people was worthless. Everything in my ministry was worthless unless God was in me. No wonder I felt so frustrated: Only He could make something supernatural happen.

When Major Thomas closed with Galatians 2:20, it all came together: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

I realized that I needed to depend on the indwelling, resurrected, almighty Lord Jesus Christ and not on myself. I had tremendous peace because I didn't have to struggle anymore. God was finally in control of this bush.

Perhaps that is your situation today. Remember, our inner resource is God himself because of our union with Jesus Christ (COLOSSIANS 2:9-15). Out of this understanding comes a godly sense of self-worth. You're God's child, His servant!

Dreaming Great Dreams

When I was about 17 years old and beginning to take the Bible seriously, one particular verse bothered me. I couldn't believe that it meant what it said. I checked several translations to see if I could find a better rendering. But the verse is worded essentially the same in each translation: "Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will



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do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father" (JOHN 14:12). ▸

▸ *Jesus told the disciples this on the very night before He was crucified. At the same time, He promised to send them "another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth" (JOHN 14:16–17). In John 14:25 He explains that this "Advocate" is the Holy Spirit. Jesus also cites this advocate in John 15:26, 16:7 and 16:13–15.*

That is a fantastic, almost incredible promise from the lips of the Lord Jesus, and it has been proven many times. Have you proven it true in your own life?

As a teenager growing up in Argentina, I felt frustrated about evangelizing those who did not yet know Christ. *Lord, there are millions of people in this country without Christ, I thought. Yet here we sit, Sunday after Sunday, the same people doing the same thing, seeing the same minimal results. We have to reach out.*

So several of us began to pray together, "Lord, get us out of here. Do something. Use us." Slowly, in my heart and in the hearts of the others, a vision began to grow—a vision of reaching millions of people.

Some of my dreams were so wild that I didn't tell anyone except



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my mother about them, and I didn't even tell her all of them. She encouraged us, saying, "Come on! You don't need a special message from the Lord. He gave the order centuries ago to preach the good news to everyone. So go. Don't keep waiting for more instructions."

So we began to evangelize, slowly, in a small way. Now I am constantly amazed how the Lord has fulfilled so many of our great dreams of sharing the gospel over the past thirty years. "Praise the Lord!" we've said again and again. "It's happening! The gospel is being spread!"

Today Christ is calling you and me, His ambassadors, to dream great dreams, because anyone who believes in Him can do the great works He did, spreading a message that reconciles people to God.

How is that possible? The key to this promise is twofold.

First, because Christ was going to the Father, He would send the Holy Spirit to indwell us. Now that the Spirit indwells us as believers, Christ does His works *through us!*

Second, Christ adds a condition to His promise: "Whoever *believes in me* will do the works I have been doing" (italics added). The Lord challenges us to have faith—not necessarily to have *more* faith, but faith *in Him*.



The Lord challenges us to have faith—not necessarily to have more faith, but faith in Him. It is an ongoing faith.

It is an ongoing faith. Another translation puts it this way: "He who continues to believe in me will also do the works that I do."

Have you stopped seeing great things happen in your life? Recognize that with God, "any old bush will do," and have faith that He will work through you, continuing Christ's work.



six

Becoming God's Ambassador

Catching a Vision for Evangelism

How big is your vision? Have you ever dreamed about what God could do through you to help win the world in our generation to Jesus Christ? As Oswald Smith said, the only generation that can reach this generation is our generation.

Even though the Lord limited His own public ministry to the area stretching from Judea into Phoenicia, He came and lived and died for the whole world. After His resurrection He commissioned His disciples to "make disciples of *all* nations" (MATTHEW 28:19,

ITALICS ADDED). He sent them as His ambassadors first to Jerusalem, then to all Judea and Samaria, and ultimately to the ends of the earth (ACTS 1:8).

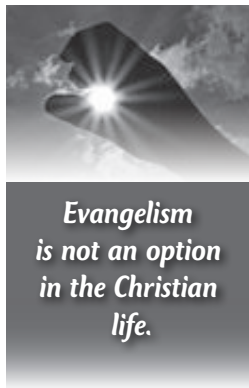
Those first-century Christians were hesitant to dream about how God would fulfill Christ's last commands.

The apostle Paul challenged their complacency by devoting his life to traveling and proclaiming Christ.

Paul explained his vision for evangelism in Romans 15. First, he could report, "From Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ" (ROMANS 15:19). Even his enemies admitted that Paul had saturated entire provinces with the gospel (ACTS 19:26).

Paul was not content to concentrate on spreading the gospel in one small area at the expense of the rest of the world. He had a strategy for reaching the entire Roman Empire. "But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions [Jerusalem to Illyricum], and since I have been longing for many years to visit you, I plan to do so when I go to Spain" (ROMANS 15:23–24).

Paul went on to explain his itinerary. In his mind he visualized every major city he would stop at on his way to Rome. He longed to win the people of this influential capital city to Christ (just as I long to see key cities around the world hear the voice of God). But beyond Rome, Paul



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ultimately wanted to reach the entire known world with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

As God's ambassadors our vision should be to win as many people as possible to Jesus Christ throughout the world. Evangelism is not an option in the Christian life. Paul admitted, "When I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1 CORINTHIANS 9:16). Whether by preaching or praying, traveling around the globe or speaking to those next door, we should all have a part in winning the world to Jesus Christ.

Make Great Plans

As new Christians, we are thrilled by the promises of God. We get excited about answers to prayer. The biographies and books of great men and women of God challenge us to act on our faith. But as time goes by, we lose the joy of the Christian life and become bored. Sometimes we even become hard and cynical. We hear of something wonderful God is doing and say "Oh," as if it's nothing!

The Lord Jesus Christ challenges us to abandon our complacency when He says, "Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father" (JOHN 14:12).

The Lord doesn't intend for us to sit idly by and dream of what could happen for His glory. He wants us to plan great plans so those dreams will come true!

Someone has well said, "We believe the Lord can do

anything, but we expect Him to do nothing." Often, when we have committed our life to Jesus Christ, we doubt God instead of continuing to trust Him for bigger things. We make no bigger plans.

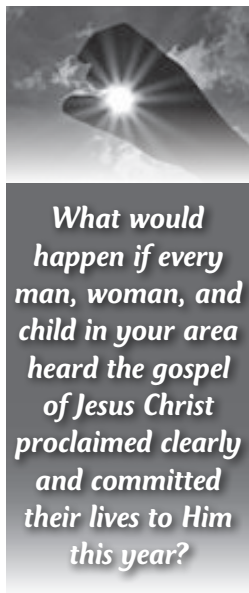
In order for God to use us again, we need to confess this unbelief and say, "Lord Jesus, renew my vision of Your power. Renew my confidence in Your abilities. Renew my trust of Your resources." Then dream and plan again.

Finishing the Unfinished Task

Imagine what would happen if every man, woman, and child in your area heard the gospel of Jesus Christ proclaimed clearly and committed their lives to Him this year. Every media outlet around the world would report on this "greatest revival of all time."

But our work would *not* be finished. What about the new children? What about the future immigrants? And what about the billions of people who have never heard a clear presentation of the gospel? Statistics can start to overwhelm us.

Scripture tells us that when Jesus saw the crowds, "he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and



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helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (MATTHEW 9:36). We need to ask God to move our hearts with the same compassion that moves His heart.

The greatest dangers we face as Christians are cynicism and a cool detachment. "Oh, yes, billions of people don't know Christ. That's too bad." We must not forget the *individuals*, including those we know and love, behind that vague number who live "without hope and without God in the world" (EPHESIANS 2:12).

The Lord pointed out the urgency of our task by reminding His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few" (MATTHEW 9:37). We must sense the urgency of our time.

Jesus Christ commanded His disciples: "Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (MATTHEW 9:38). Our Bibles end the chapter there, but the context continues. In the next five verses the Lord gave His disciples authority and sent them out into the harvest (10:1-5). The Twelve became an answer to their own prayer.

Listen again to Jesus' last words before His ascension: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." He is the Lord of lords. "Therefore go and make



Let's move ahead as His ambassadors and enjoy the excitement of obeying Him and inviting people to come into His kingdom.

disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (MATTHEW 28:18–20).

The Lord has not called us to sit around motionless. He's called us to action! Let's move ahead as His ambassadors and enjoy the excitement of obeying Him and inviting people to come into His kingdom. 🌱



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