

# MORE VALUABLE THAN GOLD

Diane C. Shore




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ISBN: 978-1-7362449-5-1

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2.7

***Such trials show the proven character of your faith, which is more valuable than gold—gold that is tested by fire, even though it is passing away—and will bring praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.*** **1 Peter 1:7 NET**

# Introduction

I had no plans to begin writing another book. But here I am. Maybe it's needed. Maybe it's not. Maybe what I will write is just something I must remind myself of.

An idea has been brewing in me. It is: "We know what to do. We just don't want to do it." Do what? Anything…with life, struggles, blessings, confusion, fears, anxiety, loneliness, or grief—the list is endless. But I believe the answer is always the same. Jesus.

Shouldn't that make it simple? It should. But it doesn't. Not always. We often fumble through the dark, far too long, before landing upon the answer to our questions—Jesus. This may be because there are so many roads that lead to Jesus. I'm not talking about different religions. I'm talking about different roads that can be full of trials, tears, confusion, doubt, joy, and happiness. Yes, they can even be roads filled with blessings. These journeys, and stops along the way, are all placed in our path to lead us to our Savior. We need Jesus. But sometimes we just miss that He *is* our greatest need.

So, on this day, I begin again putting *pen to paper*. It seems I'm knowing what to do, so I will do it. Then we'll just take it from there. I pray whatever it is I write, it will lead us all into a closer walk with Jesus…into His comfort, His hope, and His eternity.

# Prologue

Who are we on this day? Who are you? Who am I? If we can't answer that question, can we even move forward? I don't know. But if I were to answer that question, I would say I'm a woman. But even that statement will be debated in today's world. The question of "What is a woman?" confuses some camps. How far off track has our world gotten? So far off, that even the simplest question causes strife.

*"God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them."* Genesis 1:27 NET

Is it possible we confuse this in our minds? Yes. Can we mess with what God has created? Yes. Can our enemy Satan lie to us about this? Yes. Will the world disagree with what God says about this? Yes. Should we agree with the world? No!

*"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."* 1 John 2:15 NET

God's Word says we are created male and female. If we are having trouble with this, we should know what we need to do as Christ's followers. We run to Jesus as fast as we can. We dive into the Word. There, we will find Truth. We can also seek others who guide us in rightly dividing the Word of Truth.

*"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."* 2 Timothy 2:15 NKJV

Believing that God created us as male and female and that He has a plan for each life is crucial. Just this can give us a true sense of purpose and a proper starting point for knowing what to do about the life we live. It may even help us begin to find answers for situations we find ourselves in.

*"From one man he made every nation of the human race to inhabit the entire earth, determining their set times and the fixed limits of the places where they would live."* Acts 17:26 NET

Who we are, where we live, what we do each day has been foreseen by God. He is not limited in the same way we are. Our Father in heaven knows the past, the present, and the future. The Book of Revelation is not unknown to God. How the world ends, and all that He told John on the Island of Patmos was written because God not only planned it all, but He could already see it all.

When Jesus sat with His disciples on the Mount of Olives and told them what was to come, in what is now known as the Olivet Discourse, Jesus could only do that as God. As God, Jesus knew each human heart and what was coming in the future because He was part of the Trinity that planned it. Interestingly, the only detail Jesus didn't know was *when* He would return to take His Bride into His Kingdom. Jesus said, *"But as for that day and hour no one knows it—not even the angels in heaven—except the Father alone."* Matthew 24:36 NET

Jesus told His disciples what was to come when questioned about the signs. At the close of the age, they could expect deception, wars, famines, earthquakes, fires, and persecution. He told them not to be alarmed; these events must happen. Jesus states these are only the birth pains before His return. Like mothers in childbirth, as Christ's followers, we can feel the various contractions intensifying. We can realize that the time is near. But we cannot know the day or the hour when the delivery will happen. Our delivery into heaven is coming. But the day and the hour are only known by our Father in heaven.

For now, we find ourselves in a very confusing and dark world with only one thing that we can depend on…Jesus. So, whenever we find ourselves in a situation that needs an answer, that leaves us feeling hopeless, or pulls us in directions we shouldn't want to go both in mind and body, we need to call out to Jesus for help. And that takes knowing who our Savior is. Then we will, ultimately, know what to do because the greatest Counselor of all, the Holy Spirit, lives within each believer. God is the One we should turn to with all our questions. He is where our answers are found.

If you have not been introduced to Jesus, and you are interested in getting to know Him, it's not all that hard. He is the Savior, the Son of God, who came into this world as a precious baby in Bethlehem. He grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man. Starting around thirty years old, Jesus' ministry began and lasted 3 ½ years on this earth as He introduced people to who He is—the *Way*, the *Truth*, and the *Life*. No one can come to the Father in heaven except through Jesus—the Father's one and only Son.

When we choose to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, He died on the Cross for our sins, He was buried in a tomb, and He rose again on the third day conquering sin and death, we have begun to know the Good News, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Those who then repent (turning from worldly ways), confess with their mouth that Jesus is

Lord, and believe in their heart that God raised Jesus from the dead will receive salvation.

The meaning of salvation is a life of being sanctified (made to be more like Jesus) and walking daily in more and more obedience to Him. It doesn't mean a blissful life with no struggles or a life of perfection. It means a life of submission to the ways of Jesus, the truth of Jesus, and the life of Jesus. It means when we fail to achieve what Jesus displayed for us, we repent and confess our sins to the only One who can cleanse us from those sins. Then, we are washed clean by the blood of Jesus that was shed on the Cross at Calvary. We are forgiven. We are also given the gift of the Holy Spirit to strengthen us in the battles of this life. We can begin to understand, through Jesus, the Victory has already been accomplished. As Jesus said, *"It is finished."* We can believe it has.

When these steps of faith have been taken, and we continue walking through the desert wilderness of this life, parched, hungry, lonely, hurting, missing, and tired…we can walk each day with the indwelling Holy Spirit, knowing Jesus is helping us along the way. We can call out to God and find Him. We can know what to do then, because the answers are in God's instruction manual—the Bible. We can dive in deep, and we can live there, finding the manna of heaven which has been provided for us and brings us great joy. All this, as we await Jesus' glorious return to take us to be where He is right now. Jesus said:

*"And if I go and make ready a place for you, I will come again and take you to be with me, so that where I am you may be too."* John 14:3 NET

Now, let's dive together into *More Valuable Than Gold*, and hopefully learn how we might live each day of our lives, showing the proven character of our faith. The decisions we are making will display our character. Each decision should bring praise, glory, and honor to our God. But most times, it will take spiritual conditioning to walk this out.

Some, if not a lot of this book, might insult us. It could cut us to the quick. It will probably be uncomfortable. But how many of us are already uncomfortable and want to find a way through and out of whatever it is we are struggling with? The only way to do that is to look at the truth of our lives and seek God's help and answers each day. I have heard, "To heal, we have to get real."

God didn't allow me to begin writing this book until I'd taken a good hard look at myself. It's like God was saying, "Put your money where your mouth is." He's funny that way. So, I'm on this journey

just like all of you. God's demonstrating that for me. In knowing what to do, I gotta do it, too. So, let's be brave together. Let's not be easily offended. Let's walk in the way God would have us walk, giving Him all the praise, and glory, and honor each day.

*Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.*

*The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.*

*The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.*

*Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.*

Romans 8:5-8 NIV

# CHAPTER 1

## "People try to do all sorts of clever and difficult things to improve life instead of doing the simplest, easiest thing—refusing to participate in activities that make life bad."
Leo Tolstoy

If we've come here looking for all the answers about what we need to do in our own lives, the answers aren't here. But many of us do know where they can be found—the Word of God. It's about knowing the One who can help us. So, as I write the pages of this book, I will continually point us in that direction. We will focus on Jesus and the Word while I ramble on about all the stuff we don't really want to do, but kind of know we need to do. We will take this one step at a time. That's how great things are accomplished, by doing the next thing.

I don't know where this book finds you on this day. But our Father in heaven does, and He knows what we need to do…but will we? Why or why not? Those are the questions we will rake over the coals, chapter after chapter. If we know what's good for us, we will listen and obey our Father. Sadly, we can be very recalcitrant—being uncooperative toward authority or discipline—when God is prompting us.

God doesn't want us at the bottom of some deep dark pit with seemingly no way out. He wants all of us to walk in His light and follow His way to freedom from whatever it is we're struggling with. The world may be dark, but we have night vision when we know our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Will we be given more than we can handle in this life? Of course! Will God provide a way through and out of it? Yes. Our Father is faithful to do just that when we call on the name of Jesus in our trials. God will only give us what *He* can handle…let that sink in.

*"No trial has overtaken you that is not faced by others. And God is faithful: He will not let you be tried beyond what you are able to bear, but with the trial will also provide a way out so that you may be able to endure it."*
1 Corinthians 10:13 NET

The world hasn't totally gone to hell in a handbasket, as it's said. But it's swiftly moving in that direction. When I looked it up, I found that "Going to hell in a handbasket" may have originated with baskets that were used to catch guillotined heads in the eighteenth century. The phrase was further used in the nineteenth century in association with the gold rush of the 1840's. Men were lowered by hand in baskets down deep into mining shafts to set explosives and could have easily died. Today, the phrase is something we say when we see circumstances leading to a dreadful end. That's what was happening to me…so I'll begin by sharing my struggle, and we will go from there. Eventually, I hope you'll find what you are struggling with in the pages of this book. You'll probably know it when you read it. It won't feel good, and you'll want to put this book down. Or throw it across the room. That is a choice you'll make in that moment.

*My struggle*: Recently, I went to the doctor, and I'm not a doctor person. If at all possible, I will avoid going. But having recently moved to Idaho, and being in my late 60's now, it was time to make the dreaded appointment. Getting into a doctor, in Idaho, can take up to a year or more. There are so many "newbies" here there is even a name for us. Because we come from California, Oregon, or Washington we are called COW's. Why are people moving to Idaho in such large droves? Because where we were appeared to be going to hell in a handbasket. The cost of living was so high, and the acceptance of conservative Christians was waning. So, we, as well as thousands and thousands of families, have moved to other states. States like Idaho, Texas, Tennessee, Arizona, and others. Is life perfect in these new states we now call home? No. But it does give us a little more breathing room before total persecution begins.

Jesus said in Matthew 24:9 NET, *"Then they will hand you over to be persecuted and will kill you. You will be hated by all the nations because of my name."*

If you're upset with me as I describe what we see going on in our country, then you'd also need to be upset with Jesus. He is the one who first warned us about it. We are just recognizing what Jesus said in the pages of Scripture, which is happening more and more in the whole world today. And for now, my husband and I, personally, are just trying to create a little space between us and the chaos that's erupting. We are some of those who are feeling it's time to *"flee to the*

*mountains"* as Jesus described in Matthew 24:16. Satan is on the move, and it gets some of us moving also. Lest I digress…

Now, back to the doctor, and the title of this book, *More Valuable Than Gold – gold that is tested by fire.* At the doctor's office, I was given blood tests. The results weren't bad, but they weren't great. There was high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol numbers, my kidney function was slipping a bit, and so on. Many of the numbers were good, but the not-so-good numbers that could affect having a stroke, etc. were a bit concerning. Now, I knew what the problem was. I call it my own slothful gluttony through the years. A slothful gluttony, that I must admit, I was enjoying. I was sitting around eating too many of the wrong foods in larger quantities than necessary to sustain me. Also, I wasn't exercising, at all. How many can say, "Been there. Done that. Got the T-shirt"?

It was my wake-up call! Since I'm not a doctor person, I'm also not a pill-taking person. I was very pleased, before this visit, to be able to write "None" when questioned about my medications. From what I hear, that's unusual, even at my age of 66. I'm not old, but certainly getting up into the later seasons of life. After the visit, I knew what I needed to do. Initially, I didn't accept the meds suggested. Instead, I went home. I changed my diet. Began to exercise. Little by little the weight came off. And I started to feel better. Go figure!

Every day, I would roll out of bed, put on my walking clothes, and head out the door. I knew what to do. And I even wanted to do it. Did you catch that last sentence? I'll repeat it for you. "And I even wanted to do it." But maybe what I really mean is, "I chose to do it." Even though the lifestyle changes weren't going to be "fun". See, this is where the problem usually comes in. We know what to do—but more times than not we don't want to do it. It's hard. It's not fun. We're used to doing things the way they've always been done. However, when those ways no longer work, we must look for other ways. What do they say? "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over but expecting different results." Or something like that. So, let's not pretend to not know… So many times, we want the circumstances surrounding us to change. What usually needs to change is what's going on inside of us. When we get that switched around, it doesn't work all that well.

In my situation, some people decide pharmaceuticals are the answer, and sometimes they are. Some medications may be needed,

and they may eventually be needed in my case. But I was going to give a healthy diet, exercise, and weight loss the first go at this. I recently listened online to a physician discussing how doctors are no longer taught in medical schools how to heal a person; however, they are taught what medications to prescribe. As it turns out, many times we don't get better. But we do keep coming back for more meds. And so, it goes… I didn't want to be part of that system if I had a choice.

But then, in my story here, something else happened. I also had an appointment at the retina specialists because of a known bubble on my retina. It is fine. It just needs to be monitored. But what wasn't fine was my blood pressure was exceedingly high which was causing some eye damage. The specialist insisted that I go directly to the Emergency Room or Urgent Care for further medical intervention, which I did. The medical team took my blood pressure. It was 205 over some other number. I don't remember. I think they wanted to get me admitted for some IV treatments at that point. Instead, I left the building with a prescription for high blood pressure pills in hand, which I filled and began taking them that very night. Not that I wanted to. Oh, I DIDN'T want pills. But I did want my eyes to continue to function. I knew making life-style changes and seeing their effects was going to take more time and effort than the pills would, which might result in more damage to my eyes. So, I was compliant. I knew what to do now. Wisdom is needed in this life. God even says at the close of the age:

*"This calls for wisdom. Let the one who has insight calculate the beast's number, for it is man's number, and his number is 666."* Revelation 13:18 NET

Where does wisdom begin?

*"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."* Proverbs 9:10 NKJV

So as one of my favorite songs says, "Let's start at the very beginning…" We are to fear God, reverence Him, and listen to what He is trying to tell us.

*"The one who has an ear had better hear what the Spirit says to the churches."* Revelation 2:11 NET

Wisdom. A valuable tool in our belt, especially as the world seems to be nearing the close of the age. And as I am nearing the close of my age. Most of my life is behind me now. And it has been mostly a good one. But what is to come started looking a little dismal. I watch my own mom go through her "rusty years" as she calls them. These years are not the golden years that sound so much nicer. My mom's eyesight

is shot. Her hearing is decreasing. Her physical abilities are slowing way down…need I go on? My late eighties might not be looking good with the path that I seem to be presently on.

For me, it was back to the drawing board. I gave a thank-you to God for the wake-up call. I knew what I needed to do. My decision was to do it—and immediately. Like I said, this included walking, better eating habits, losing weight, and taking those pesky pills. The medication can be a bridge to better health with hopes of eventually being weaned off. Then I can enter into my "rusty years" with a little less corrosion than the generation before me.

How many times do we know what to do but we don't want to do it? I would imagine you are thinking of areas in your life that need some tweaking…it's there in your head, nagging at you, but you don't want to do it. That is not abnormal. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Many of us know that part of scripture so let's look at it in its entirety.

*"Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."* Matthew 26:41 NKJV

"Watch and pray." Instead, many of us are "blind and silent," and overcome by temptations. We're not asking God what we should do. We're doing our own thing and we call on God if/when He seems needed. We are not alone in this. It's the flesh. Life tempts us. Trust me, it does! From too much chocolate, too much television, too many cookies, too many time-consuming video games, or too much time spent on the phone. We all can make our lists. But ultimately, it's too much of the flesh (death) and not enough of the Spirit of God (life and peace) intervening in our lives. And then we end up too "rusty" in most areas instead of alive and vibrant—not living the abundant life Jesus died to give us. This isn't prosperity-Gospel language; this is God's language found in the book of John.

*"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come so that they may have life, and may have it abundantly."* John 10:10 NET

How many of us are handing our lives over to the thief? I was! Spiritually, I was on a pretty decent path with God. But physically, I was in a ditch. There are very few solid Christians who are completely derailed. But in some important physical ways, I had some of my wheels off the track, and it caused more stress to be put on my "engine" than it was designed for. Hence, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, eye damage, and kidney function being affected. I had a

decision to make and quickly. I made it. I pray that I'll be able to stay on a healthier path from here on out.

This is not unknown territory for me. I've been here many times, losing weight and getting into shape. Can anyone relate? I've lost more pounds over the years than I can count. However, I've never needed medicine to protect my body from damage—being overweight meant I couldn't fit into that pair of pants I wanted to. Now I have a serious reason to be motivated. And maybe this book has been sitting on the back burner, simmering for at least a year, not knowing what to write or even if I would…until such a time as this. It has seemed through the years that I can't write what I haven't experienced, so here I am…again.

Probably like most of us, I keep learning, growing, and knowing what it is I need to do. Probably like most of us, many times, there are selfish and fleshly reasons I choose not to do it. Right now, I don't know what the next chapters of this book will hold. Maybe, it will be stories I hear others discuss concerning their struggles/trials—things they need to make decisions about. (It seems like this could be.) There are things in all our lives that need to be discarded and added, so we can live the abundant Spirit-filled life Jesus died to give us—not a life of all ease, all comfort, all riches, and all happiness. But a life of seeing Jesus in all the details, knowing He is with us every step of the way, and choosing to live in a close relationship with our Lord that brings us true peace and joy.

Travel with me down the train track of "I think I can" with Jesus, and let's get to the "I thought I could" as we go. Then, let's offer some support to others who might be derailed along the way. Our lives are usually a group effort—a time of encouraging each other, praying for each other, and wanting the best for each other until Jesus comes to take us to His perfect Home in Heaven.

*"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God."* 2 Corinthians 1:3-5 NIV

# CHAPTER 2

## "We want affirmation for our bad choices."
Karen Gardner

Maybe it's not just humans we should look at. What about our pets? What about dogs that are out of shape and misbehaving? Are some dogs plump, waddling, and hips hurting? Are they pulling on their leash, biting people, or tearing things apart? Do we know what to do about that? I'm no dog expert. Is it hard to know what to do about dogs? Or do some dog owners just ignore the problems? Maybe that's easier, until it isn't?

A dog can't make its own food. It can't open the container and pour it into the bowl. If left accessible, it can rip open the bag. But then again, dog or human problem? I'm not here to make us feel guilty, or maybe I am. Maybe a little guilt can do us some good here. Maybe looking things square in the eye is what's needed in many areas of our lives.

I have a follow-up appointment tomorrow at my doctor's office. I feel like I'm going to the principal's office. Maybe that's a good thing? I'll have to look my doctor square in the eye and tell her what I'm doing, or not doing, to help my blood pressure. She will want to know if my eating habits have changed. If I'm doing any exercise. Those questions alone can cause my blood pressure to spike!

If a dog, or a cat, or any animal that we're in charge of feeding, has a problem, barring something that's out of our/their control, shouldn't we change what it is they are doing? What are we feeding our pets from the table? Maybe we should put a little less bacon grease on top of their bowl of food? Maybe we should put a little more if they've lost their appetite. Why should an animal suffer with being overweight or underweight when we could help their problem? We could spare them from getting a shot in their hip to relieve the pain that extra weight has caused. I'm just saying…

What if a dog has not been house-trained? How many are trained to walk beside their owner on a leash instead of running ahead? Some dogs pull so hard on the leash the owner has to jog behind them to keep up. Have we taught our dogs when the front door opens not to

dart outside? Have we taught them to sit and wait for our command before they eat from their food bowl? It is possible. I've seen it done. Dogs are capable of so much! Cats…I don't know. I just don't know much about them.

Now, I'm going to dive in even deeper here and mess with all of us a bit more. How about our children? Some eat more than others, granted. I have three children of my own. I've been there and done that. But if we have a small child that wants to live on cookies and candy, we can make those things unavailable. I'm not saying I was the best at it. I didn't feed my kids all the healthiest meals. But maybe someone needed to say something to me and tutor me in this area? Be bold enough to speak up? My kids were not severely obese. But some of them could have lost some poundage for sure. And maybe if I had taught them better when they were young, they would have less struggles now.

*"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."* Proverbs 22:6 NKJV

The Bible instructs us on how to help a child grow into all God created them to be. How much are we encouraging them in that direction? Looking back now, as a grandma, I see my mistakes as a mom. I would like to have done things differently. But then again, I don't have the energy I once did to start over. I do wish I had raised my children to know Jesus better. If I had known Jesus more then, I probably would have. But I was a young mother, just as confused and distracted as most. In talking with a young man in his 40's the other day, I strongly encouraged him to read his Bible. He admitted that he didn't read it as often as he should. I told him I understood. I was the same at his age. I got away with it. I'm still here. I've had decades to get to know Jesus even more. This young man may not have that time. The world seems to be crashing in on itself. He may not have the next 50 years like I once did. It's my responsibility to warn him and others now…while there is still time. If we could go back and do things differently, most of us would. But we can't do that. We can only start where we are and warn those that we can. And so, wherever we are, if we know what to do, let's do it! Now!

What is it we are focusing on each day? Are we paying attention to not only ourselves and our behavior, but our children and our pets? I've seen those dog whisperer shows. I've seen the nanny shows. They don't come in and train the dog and the child as much as they train the

owner and the parents. They don't come in saying the child or the dog is the problem. The dog whisperers work with the owners of the dogs. The nannies work with the parents. I believe our Father in Heaven also works with us…while we're usually waiting for God to work on those around us. We're usually hoping that the person sitting next to us in church is listening to the sermon that seems directed at them. In all actuality, it's probably just what we need to be hearing. It's amazing how it seems those around us begin to "change" when we start changing first. When we seek God with all our heart…when we hide His Word in our hearts…our sin life decreases. Our flesh begins to die as our spirit becomes more alive.

*"I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands.*
*I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."*
Psalm 119:10-11 NIV

Thinking back, I remember my mom running a day-care for many years. In her later years, she even did it with my dad. They had 12 children in their home. When naptime came, those little ones would line up just outside the living room door. Then, when told, they would walk in a single-file line into the bedroom that had been assigned to them. Four in a bedroom, with a three-bedroom house. They would take their naps, and when they woke up, they would wait quietly until my mom would go in and give them the okay to get up…not waking the other children. Sounds sort of impossible, doesn't it? But it wasn't. I remember one time when my mom was taking care of little Johnny. He was a wild one with his parents. But not with my mom. Sometimes after Johnny's parents would show up, little Johnny could then be found out front on top of his parents' car! When little Johnny needed a haircut, they would bring him to my dad. Johnny would sit like a little angel to get his haircut. But that's because his parents were out of sight…hiding around the corner from him. If he saw them, game over! Little Johnny knew what to do. My mom had taught him that. His parents hadn't.

If changes need to be made for things to run more smoothly, then let's do it. Doing it takes effort. I know! I grew up in a household with six children. My mom also worked hard training each one of us how to clean bathrooms, vacuum, do dishes, and all the rest. When Friday came, a list was made and before we went out to play after school, we had to have our list of chores checked off. My mom was chided by her friends that she had six children so we could clean for her. They didn't

understand how hard she worked to train each one of us. And to this day, we know how to clean. What great skills for us to have! In many areas, she knew what to do, and she did it. And it worked! Did she raise us to know the Word of God in the same way? Sadly, no. But I can't say I did that very well with my own children, in either area. Sometimes it might take someone to point things out to us. Maybe we will even find help in a book we are reading…

Let's do each other a favor and not coddle one another. Let's lovingly tell one another there might be a better way. Giving affirmations for our bad choices only makes things worse. No, this is not how to win friends. But true friends can be honest with each other. I'm not advising that we tell our daughters-in-law how to raise our grandchildren. That's best left to someone else. But we can pray about it and ask God to help them, and also to bring them someone wise into their lives who they will listen to if needed. Prayer can work wonders when it really isn't our job to interfere.

Right now, I'm helping my 15-year-old granddaughter work toward her Gold Award in Girl Scouts. It's the equivalent of the Eagle Award in Boy Scouts. The reason I was asked to take on this role is because her parents are wise. They know most 15-year-olds don't want to do what their parents tell them to. But sometimes they will listen to a grandparent more—if they have been raised to respect authority and family members, as my granddaughter has. She will listen to me and take advice from me that she might very well roll her eyes at with her parents. (With her back turned, of course…on her way to her room. She's not stupid!!) If we can't get the job done, let's find someone who can. When we know what to do, let's do it!

Dogs and children can have a lot in common. Both are very loved, and both need good parenting/ownership. They need someone who will be responsible, love them, and feed them as needed. I'm not saying everything is this cut and dry. If you have a situation that is beyond the norm, you have my sympathy. Our son battled cancer for over five years before going Home to heaven. He was on steroids for quite of bit of that time. Steroids made it so he never felt full. He ate more than he should have. But that was outside the norm. We have a granddaughter who is autistic. Sometimes, we need to make adjustments, depending on what's going on with her. But if we are living a normal, everyday kind of life, and things aren't as they should be, some things might need to change. Let's stop with the excuses and

do what we know needs to be done, for the benefit of all, while there is still time.

And most of all, let's pick up our Bible each day…when at all possible. Let's read the detailed manual we've been given by our Heavenly Father. God really does know what's best for us. We don't have to reinvent the wheel; we don't have to figure out what to do from scratch. We just have to follow the instructions that have already been written down for us. We just need to follow the examples that have been built on the foundation of Jesus Christ. It was wet cement for the Apostles. They "wrote" their names in it. It has dried. It is firm. We can walk on it now with full confidence in our Savior.

# CHAPTER 3

## "Get into the habit of dealing with God about everything. Open the door of your life completely and let God in from your first waking moment of each new day."
Oswald Chambers

I have a friend working with a woman right now who needs serious Biblical help. Demons are tormenting her. She admits it. And it's hard. Yes, she hears voices telling her to do things that aren't good. Her emotional and spiritual well-being are in jeopardy. And she is tired. My friend has patiently worked with her for quite a while now. There are specific things my wise friend has told her to do that this woman agrees with and starts to do. But then she quits before she truly makes any progress. Being inconsistent, considering how our enemy works, will not work.

*"I, therefore, the prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live worthily of the calling with which you have been called."* Ephesians 4:1 NET

When we seek help, it's important to actually want that help. I have told people who want certain things removed from their lives that they can't call them a "friend". If smoking is your best friend, you're not going to be freed from it until it becomes an enemy to you. If you're more comfortable being angry than being at peace with others, maybe anger has found a home within you. You may or may not believe that there are demons who toy with us, but the Bible tells us there are.

*"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy…"* John 10:10 NET

*"…sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it."* Genesis 4:7 NIV

Who is the thief? Our enemy! Are there more than one? Yes. There are Satanic forces all around us. How many angels went with Lucifer when he got kicked out of heaven? We don't have a number. But we know it's one-third of the angels. Did Lucifer entice those angels to follow him in a revolt? What are those fallen angels doing now? We can know there is a spiritual battle going on and it's causing us lots of problems. This is why we need to know our God and call out to Him daily.

*"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens."* Ephesians 6:12 NET

The "evil in the heavens" talked about has three divisions. The first heaven is the atmosphere surrounding the earth. The second heaven is outer space. And the third heaven is what Paul was caught up into and written about 2 Corinthians 12:2. Simply put, these are different realms—the sky, outer space, and then a spiritual heaven. Lucifer and his minions operate in a realm we can't see; however, we can certainly feel them. These forces might come in feelings of heaviness, sadness, anger, and depression. They can bring on addiction, lust, or merely frustration. They might make us physically sick with a disease or cause physical pain of some sort.

People will ask, how can God allow this? Well, this earth is a fallen world, and Satan is the prince and power of the air. When we blame God for the bad things that happen, we should actually be placing the blame on a different god, Satan. And it's ironic that when people wonder why God hasn't done something about these terrible things yet, we should think again—God has. He sent His one and only Son, Jesus, to save us. If we've not repented and believed, we are not saved by the blood of Jesus Christ. When God does do a final SOMETHING about it all, as we can already read about in Revelation, those not saved will be feeling the true wrath of our Holy God then. They will not be happy about it! They will be running and hiding from what is coming! God is giving the people of this world more time to repent and know Him before His wrath begins. He doesn't want anyone to perish.

*"Then the kings of the earth, the very important people, the generals, the rich, the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains."* Revelation 6:15 NET

And why were they running and hiding? Because God will have had enough of Lucifer and his army, and the sins of man! All will recognize the Lord of lords and the King of kings. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord.

*"They said to the mountains and to the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of the one who is seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, because the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to withstand it?'"* Revelation 6:16-17 NET

It will be catastrophic at that point. It will be the end of the world as we know it. This is no exaggeration! We can read the end of the story in God's Word. So, what do we do now with the story that is currently unfolding? We get to know our God and we stop playing around with things that come from that other god…Satan.

Some people understand these things far better than I do. Maybe I'm just here to open up that "page" for you so you can get a little better look at what might be going on. When my friend informs the woman who is seeking help that the demons she hears are her enemies, not her friends, that woman would be wise to pay attention and resist them. It is not craziness, it is reality. Prayer can help.

*"So submit to God. But resist the devil and he will flee from you."* James 4:7 NET

When we open ourselves up to demonic ways by participating in seances, yoga, New Age, spirituality that is not of Christ, cults, witchcraft, and so on…we are not only playing with fire—we are involved in a fire straight from the pit of hell. And that is exactly where Satan wants us to end up…hell. Hell was not created for us. God prepared hell for the devil and the fallen angels. (Matthew 25:41) But sadly many humans will end up there by playing with its fire and not believing in Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

If someone sheds light on this topic with someone ignorant of it (not stupid, just not knowing), then that is a very good thing. Once we are made knowledgeable about the workings of our enemy, we should heed the warnings and stay away from anything having to do with the dark side—those spiritual forces of evil in the heavens. (C.S. Lewis wrote an interesting book on this subject. It's called, "The Screwtape Letters".)

We can learn about spiritual problems, and what can be done about them. But still, will we cooperate with what scripture teaches us? That's where many of the problems arise. Many times, we don't take what's going on seriously enough…or as even being real. We also might think Christians can't have a problem with the dark spiritual realm. Some believe that once the Holy Spirit comes to live inside us, we should be free of these types of struggles. But we aren't. We are in this struggle every day. We are tempted, just as Jesus was in the wilderness. We can be lured into places and situations that are dark and evil. We can be too good at ignoring, not only our own consciences, and the wise words of others, but also the gentle whisper of God that can keep us

out of harm's way. In the beginning, when we allow our flesh to take control, we might not even realize what we are doing. We might not fully understand the long-term implications of our decisions. They can take us farther than we want to go and can keep us longer than we want to stay. They can cost us so much more than we ever wanted to pay.

Where and how do we escape this? By being in the Word of God and then living by the Word of God. God tells us what to do and what not to do. And if we read it, are taught by it, and will abide with Christ in it, the demons will have so much less control over our lives. Once again:

*"…submit to God. But resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you."* James 4:7-8 NET

Most times being tempted by demons happens in stages. It might even seem fun or harmless for a time. One door leads to another and another. Deeper and deeper, we wander down into the dark abyss. At that deeper stage, it is harder to find the light of Jesus. God is there. But we have quieted Him so much in our own minds, it's harder to hear Him. Our consciences can be seared. If we stop at a first temptation, a first step, a first word of warning, we'll be so much better off for it.

We fall. We do! Many times. We make mistakes. We disobey God. But as we grow in our relationship with Jesus, we will get up faster and faster each time and repent. As we mature in our faith, we can begin to recognize the pull in the wrong direction more quickly. We won't answer it as much. We will listen to the voice of our Shepherd more and more. We will recognize our God, and we will want to follow Him. We will begin to understand that is where true peace and joy are found.

My friend has not given up on this woman who is struggling with the demonic realm—she is tenacious in battling the ways of the enemy in this woman's life. But after many warnings to this woman about continuing to want the dark more than the light, not much else can be done for her. As she learns what to do, but still chooses not to do it, she will be stuck in the pit of mud and mire. She will remain in the struggle instead of gradually making her way out of it through prayer, time in the Word, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the urging of my friend. It's sad because we have a Helper. But we don't call on Him as we should.

*"He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand."* Psalm 40:2 NIV

"You can't become who you want to be because you are too attached to who you've been." Anonymous