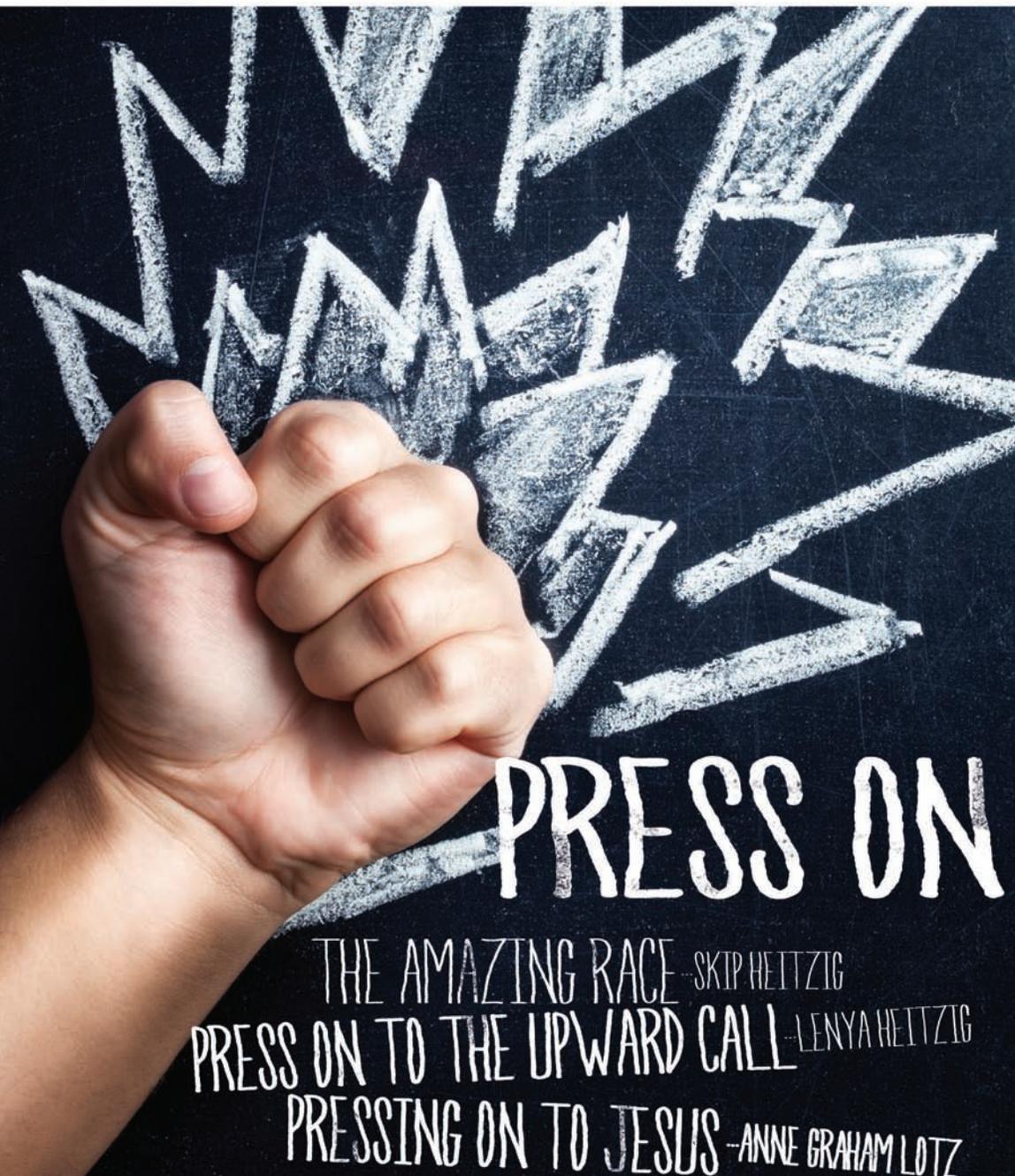


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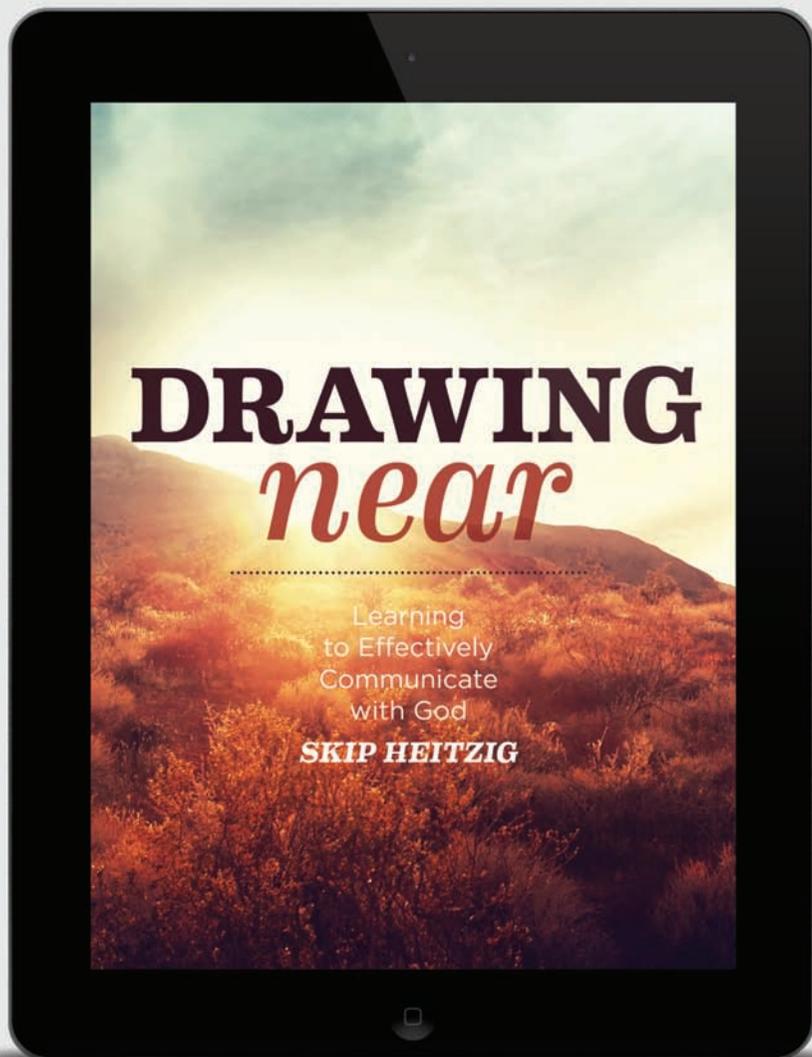
ISSUE 18 / JANUARY – MARCH 2013



PRESS ON

THE AMAZING RACE — SKIP HEITZIG
PRESS ON TO THE UPWARD CALL — LENYA HEITZIG
PRESSING ON TO JESUS — ANNE GRAHAM LOTZ

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Dear Friends,

As we move into another new year, I'm reminded that our calling as Christians is to "run with perseverance the race marked out for us" (Hebrews 12:1, NIV). We're not in a 50-yard dash to the finish line, but a long, sometimes grueling marathon. But it's worth it because the prize is an eternity with God!

With that in mind, our theme for this issue of Connection—the magazine is "Press On!" In the pages that follow, we examine what that means, why it's important, the barriers we must overcome, and the rewards that God has in store for us.

In addition, there are thoughts from Anne Graham Lotz, the daughter of Billy Graham, Lenya and myself, and the early church father St. John Chrysostom. And we're including a great conversation with Alistair Begg on preaching the Word.

So lace up your running shoes, grab that water bottle, and run along with us as we examine what it takes to "Press On!"

In His strong love,

Skip



OUR MISSION:

We pursue the God who is passionately pursuing a lost world; we do this with each other, through worship, by the Word, to the world.

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THE AMAZING RACE

The *Amazing Race* is a primetime reality show where teams of two people who are in a personal relationship (married couples, best friends, or relatives) race around the world, competing against other teams. The teams gather clues and perform tasks or challenges where they gain time and advantage over the competition. They arrive at checkpoints or Pit Stops along the way. Whoever arrives at the Pit Stop last is eliminated from *The Amazing Race*. Usually, the prize for coming in first is one million dollars. When I first saw this TV show I thought, *They're probably playing on the hymn "Amazing Grace." After all, there's no more Amazing Race than the Christian life.* One of the apostle Paul's favorite analogies for living the Christian life was running a race.

Paul often used this metaphor or word picture in his New Testament letters. He wrote to the Corinthian church, "Don't you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one

person gets the prize? So run to win!" (1 Corinthians 9:24, NLT). We only have a limited amount of time to run the race—it's a marathon more than a hundred-yard dash.

DETERMINATION TO PRESS ON

One essential to winning the race of faith is a determination to press on. Two times in these verses Paul told the Philippians to "press on" or "press toward." He said, "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on" (Philippians 3:12). Soon afterward he wrote, "I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (v. 14).

The word "press" means to exert energy; to sweat it out; to put every possible fiber of your being into a task. The Greek word for press, *dioko*, carries the idea of speeding on earnestly. Think about this as a principle for your life. What if you put as much determination into pursuing Christ as



E ZING RACE

BY SKIP HEITZIG



→

*WHEN WE GET TO GLORY, WE'LL
RECEIVE OUR REWARD. ISN'T THAT
ENOUGH TO KEEP YOU RUNNING?*

←

you do your favorite hobby, like golf or shopping? This is the type of dedication and determination that Paul is talking about.

In the movie *Chariots of Fire*, one of the characters, Harold Abrahams, was running a preliminary race for the Olympics when he suffered his first defeat. He went to the bleachers, sat down, and began to pout. His girlfriend came to console him and he said angrily (listen for a Scottish brogue in your mind), “If I can’t win, I won’t r-r-r-run.” She said something so logical we need to take it to heart: “But if you don’t run, you can’t win.” In real life, Harold Abrahams went on to win the gold medal for the 100-meter sprint. The same is true with your race of faith: If you don’t run, you can’t win. Be determined. Run. Press on. Keep going. Don’t stop!

RECOGNITION OF PRIZES

The second essential in running the race of faith is recognition of the prizes you’re seeking. Do you know the prize for winning the Olympics 2,000 years ago? The winning athletes would stand on a pedestal to be crowned with a laurel wreath. It might have gotten a little better than that: The citizens would laud them, erect a statue in their hometown, and they would be exempt from paying taxes. Not bad prizes—public recognition and tax-free living.

In the book of Philippians, Paul spoke about two prizes: one temporal, one eternal. In a temporal sense, he spoke of knowing his purpose in life: “I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me” (Philippians 3:12). The prize is to come to the point in life where I discover the reason God chose me—to lay hold of the reason that He laid hold of me. One of the

worst ways to live the Christian life is to meander aimlessly, not knowing why God picked you as His or what your purpose is in life. There’s a prize in knowing the reason for which you live.

We’re also promised an eternal prize: “I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (v. 14). The “call from above” is the call from heaven. This is the time when the believer is called to glory. The believer crosses the finish line. At the end of this earthly life, God says, “Come home,” and you’re in heaven. When Paul knew he was at the end of his life, he wrote to Timothy, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day” (2 Timothy 4:7-8). As a believer, you can recognize the prize of knowing God’s purpose for you on earth—what a wonderful temporal prize to keep you running the race of faith. The other prize is the eternal prize: When we get to glory, we’ll receive our reward. Isn’t that enough to keep you running?

PARTICIPATION WITH THE PACK

The third essential in running the race of faith is participation with the pack. “Let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind” (Philippians 3:15-16, emphasis added).

Notice the frequent use of words like “we” and “us.” Not “I,” “my,” and “me,” but “we” and “us.” Runners run better in packs. It’s like iron sharpening iron.



*SO HERE WE ARE ON EARTH, ON THE
WAY TO HEAVEN. GOD HAS GIVEN US
THIS TIME TO PACE OURSELVES, TO RUN
WELL, AND TO FINISH WELL.*



They encourage one another. When one is discouraged, the others can say, “Come on, you can do it!” It’s important to have others around you. To sum it up: Think progress, not perfection. Think together, not alone. Befriend other runners and finish the race.

It was the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City. By 7 pm at the 42-kilometer marathon, all of the runners had finished the race—except one. The stadium doors were left open. Sirens sounded in the distance as the lone runner appeared on the track in the stadium. He had fallen at the 19-kilometer point, dislocating his knee and hitting his shoulder hard on the pavement. Barely hobbling, bandaged, and wearing the colors of his country, Tanzania, John Stephen Akhwari dragged himself into the dark stadium where a crowd of 1,000 people remained. A camera crew from the medal ceremony was sent to interview him. “Why didn’t you quit?” they asked. “You weren’t going to win.” Akhwari replied in broken English, “My country did not send me 5,000

miles to start the race; they sent me 5,000 miles to finish the race.”

So here we are on earth, on the way to heaven. God has given us this time to pace ourselves, to run well, and to finish well. We can’t do it looking backwards—we’ll get frustrated. We can’t do it looking around at other Christians—we’ll get prideful or discouraged.

Let’s run with determination to press on, no matter what comes our way. Run recognizing the temporal and eternal prizes God has set before us. Run with other believers, so we don’t lose heart. But most of all, remember that we cannot finish the amazing race without God’s amazing grace. ◀

// SKIP HEITZIG

Skip Heitzig is the author of numerous books, and is the senior pastor of Calvary Albuquerque. You can access his teachings at skipheitzig.com and you can follow him on Twitter and Instagram @skipheitzig



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*IN 1942, WITH THE
COUNTRY AT WAR IN
EUROPE, AN ICON OF
RESOLUTE POWER AND
COMMITMENT ARRIVED
ON THE AMERICAN
SCENE: ROSIE THE
RIVETER.*

With the great majority of the male population called into military service, factory positions vital to the war effort had been vacated. The poster of Rosie the Riveter, a pretty, young woman, hair held in a no-nonsense bandana and sleeve pulled back to reveal a strong arm, challenged: “We Can Do It.” The appeal was aimed at the American housewives to rise up and answer the call of their country. And rise up they did. In one year, the population of working women increased from 12 million to 18 million. Women filled riveting lines on B-29 and B-24 bombers and countless other needed jobs.

We are still at war. Literally, we are in an ongoing war on terror, and we are at war in Afghanistan. Spiritually, we are on a battlefield of war with Satan. This war is personal. Maybe your battlefield has you crouched on the front lines of fear. If so, press on. Perhaps you are burdened, worried, depressed, or dealing with disease. Press on. Your battle may be a conflict in the family, a struggle with finances, or a relentless tug-of-war with sin. Don't give up—press on. The first step toward victory is the recognition that we are at war. Like Rosie the Riveter's creed, our strength comes in knowing that no matter the foe, no matter the failure, no matter the fear, with our God, “We Can Do It.”

For believers, pressing on is much more than a creed, it's a high calling that reaches an apex at Jesus Christ.

Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:12-14)

The apostle Paul realized the marathon mentality of living through both the small victories and the deep valleys of life with the goal of one day receiving the glorious prize that waits. He took a studied approach to winning the prize and answering the call of Jesus.

DIVINE DISSATISFACTION

Paul's first step in his pursuit of pressing on was to evaluate his current spiritual condition with unflinching honesty. He readily admitted that he had not attained perfection nor grasped the fullness of God's purpose for his life. Yet, this was Paul the apostle, who wrote most of the epistles in the Bible! Initially, God grabbed Paul's attention with a personal invitation that knocked him right off his Damascus-bound horse. He would endure shipwreck and persecution, yet he steadily pressed on to bring the gospel, always in pursuit of greater understanding of and closeness with Christ.

We might ask ourselves if we are satisfied with our Christian walk. Is it all you dreamed it would be? Paul always wanted more and wanted

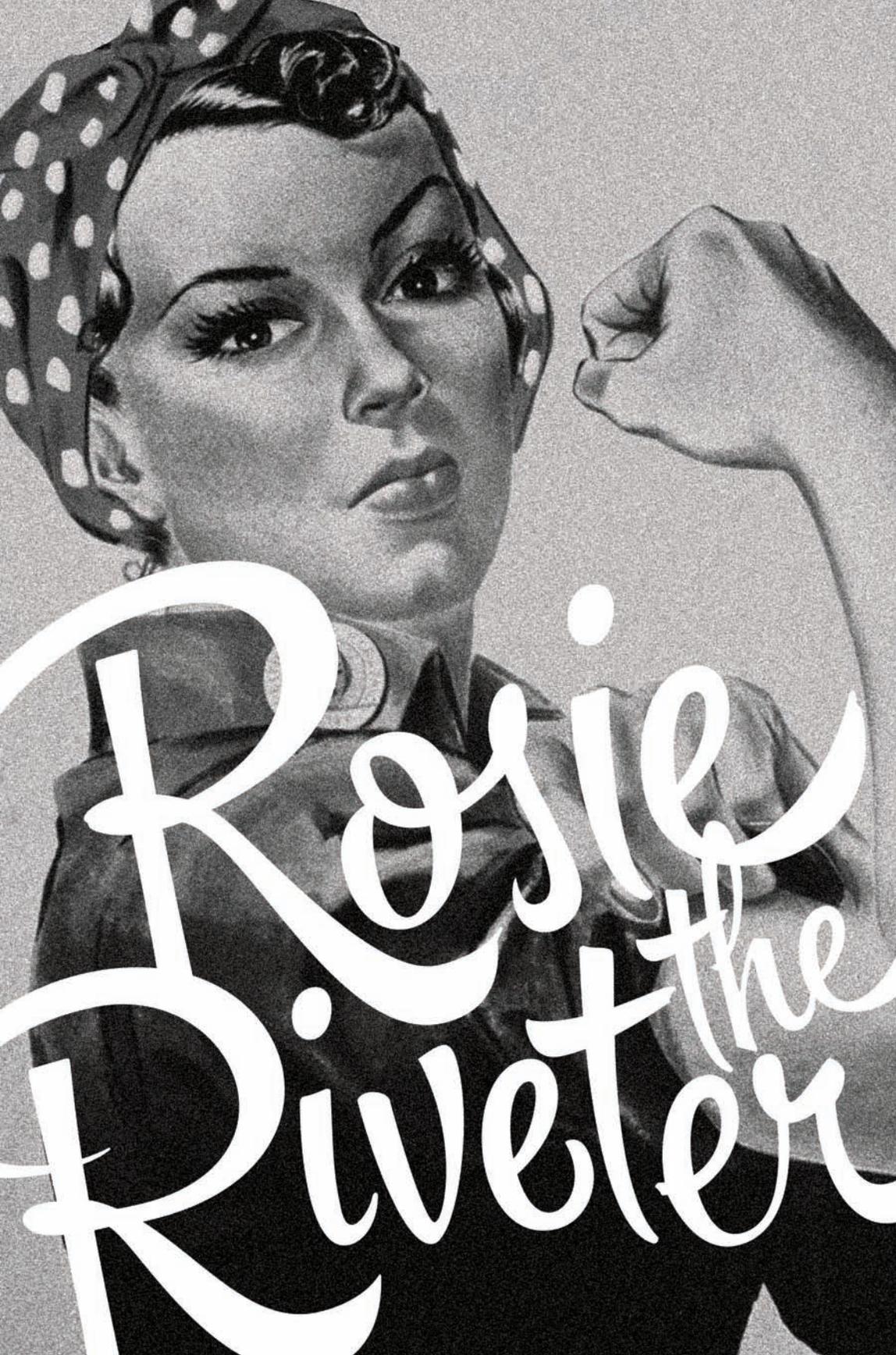
other believers to want more as well. Note that he was not dissatisfied with Christ but with his own personal Christian life. Warren Wiersbe said, "A sanctified dissatisfaction is the first essential to progress in the Christian race." If you want to press on, I recommend that you get dissatisfied. This divine dissatisfaction is familiar among many saints in the Bible. After the miracles of the Red Sea and the plagues, Moses cried out to God, "Please, show me Your glory" (Exodus 33:18). In Psalm 42, David described his deep longing for God as that of the ongoing thirst of a deer panting for water. In Matthew 5:6, Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness." He is pleased with our hunger and our seeking.

SINGLE-MINDED FOCUS

In our culture, we are usually doing more than one thing at a time. We're on the phone, cooking dinner, helping the kids with their homework, and watching the news. CNN recently cited a scientific study of the results of multitasking on our effectiveness. It indicated that carrying on several duties at once might actually reduce productivity rather than increase it.

Paul had a singular focus on his pursuit of the Lord: "But *one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal*" (Philippians 3:13-14, emphasis added). This might be likened to a case of spiritual OCD—being on the obsessive-compulsive side of pursuing the Lord.

Single-minded saints are found throughout Scripture. David said, "One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my



Rosie the Riveter

Regardless of the earthly hurdles standing between ourselves & Christ, we must reach forward.

life” (Psalm 27:4, emphasis added). When speaking to the rich young ruler, Jesus said, “You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me” (Luke 18:22, emphasis added). To Martha, the sister of Mary, Jesus said, “But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:42, emphasis added).

Is it possible we need to start practicing radical elimination in our lives so we can do one thing better? We’ve heard it said that a good thing becomes a bad thing if it keeps you from the best thing. In this text, we find Paul in a singular pursuit that he might gain Christ.

Doing this one thing necessitates forgetting about the hindrances from yesterday. “Forgetting those things which are behind.” Paul was not trying to minimize his past or his sins; he was forgetting his spiritual pedigree that he previously relied on to elevate himself above others and validate his worth: “Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of

Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews” (Philippians 3:5). He went on to say that he counted it all as dung “that I may gain Christ” (v. 8). Every day we must renew our objective to know Christ, and to press on with a clear priority.

FORWARD AND UPWARD!

Paul said, “Reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13-14). Reaching and straining forward are terms that refer to athletics. Like the Olympian who presses forward to gain a fraction of an inch or a fraction of a second in order to win the gold medal, we too must keep the prize held fast in our mind’s eye.

Regardless of the earthly hurdles standing between ourselves and the prize, we must reach forward. Maybe you need to keep reaching forward in your marriage, or focusing upward in prayers for your prodigal. Maybe you must exercise restraint to live within a budget, or press on every day in a challenging job. The great missionary

wardles the prize each forward.

David Livingstone was asked, "Where are you going to go now?" He answered, "I'm going to go anywhere as long as it's forward."

Even when he endured the confinement of prison, Paul strained forward to an upward call and a prize. He told Timothy, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).

Ancient victorious Olympians received a crown of a laurel wreath, and today they receive a gold medal. For believers, there are many possible crowns waiting for those who stay in the race. For example, if you are longing for His appearing, you will receive the crown of righteousness (see 2 Timothy 4:8); if you stand firm through your testing and maintain your love for Him, there is the crown of life (James 1: 12), and, if you have led others to Christ, the crown of rejoicing has your name on it (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20).

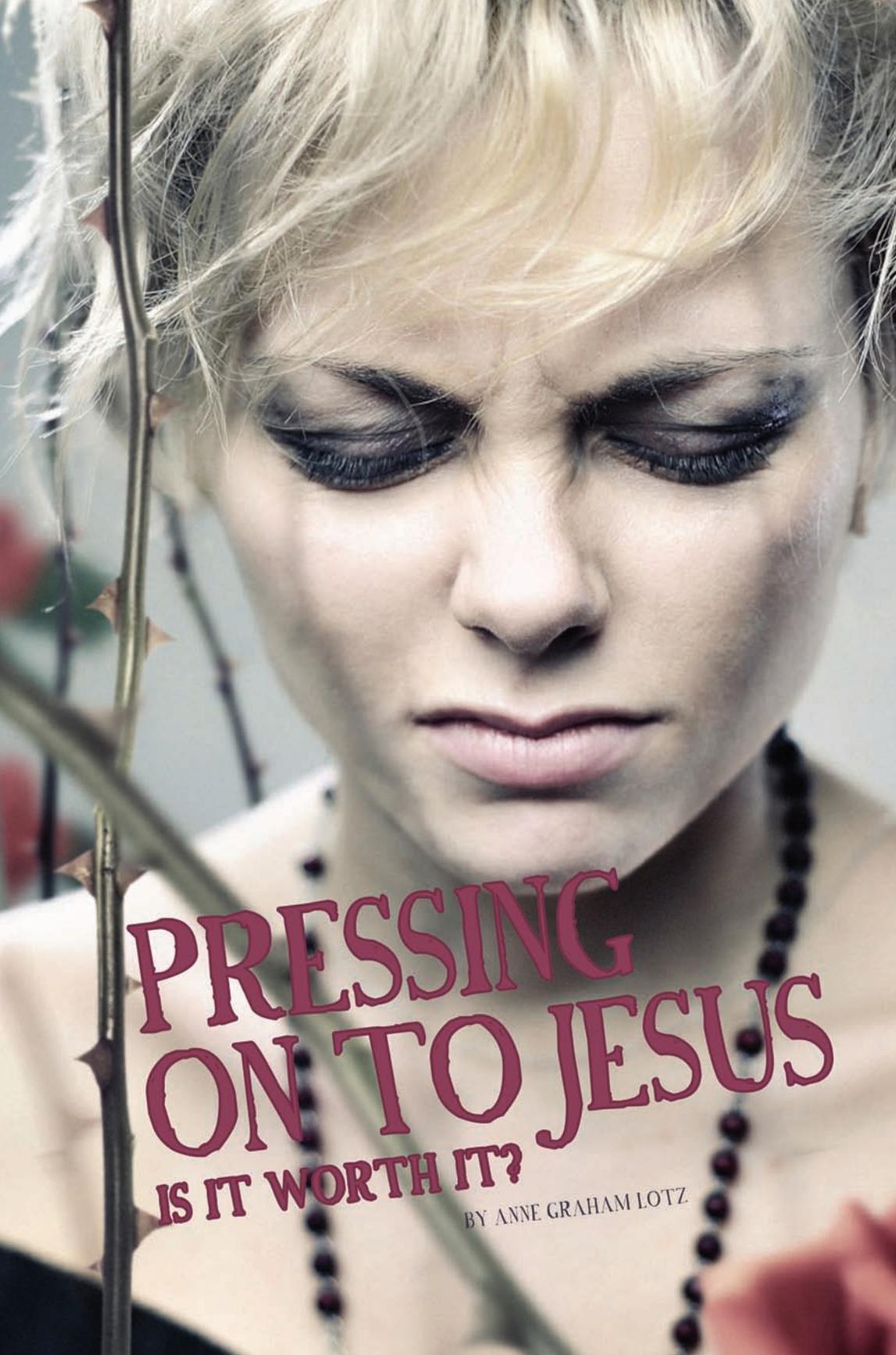
All Christians will one day reach heaven, but not all Christians will receive crowns. But those who receive crowns will not pridefully wear them

to gain admiration from others. Instead they will cast them before the throne of the Lamb of God and say, "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power" (Revelation 4:11).

I don't know about you, but I don't want to arrive in heaven empty headed (well, you know what I mean). While we wait for that day, remember that we are pressing forward not for an earthly crown that tarnishes and fades or for a medal that one day is found in a pawn shop, but for the sound of our Lord's voice saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant... Enter into the joy of your lord" (Matthew 25:23). Worth pressing on for, isn't it? ←

// LENYA HEITZIG

Lenya Heitzig is an award-winning author and sought-after speaker at conferences and retreats worldwide. Visit Lenya's blog at sheabq.org and follow her on Twitter and Instagram @lenyaheitzig



**PRESSING
ON TO JESUS**
IS IT WORTH IT?

BY ANNE GRAHAM LOTZ

*WHEN WE PRESS ON,
WE WIN. WE'RE NOT
GOING TO LOSE THE
MATCH.*

I loved the Olympics, but I'm so busy that I had to watch a lot online, after the fact. But I caught something on video that was amazing, and I think it went viral. It was just one point in the women's volleyball game between South Korea and Brazil. One of the Brazilian women made a move that nobody could remember seeing before in volleyball.

It was a soccer move and it was a spectacular save. She slid on the floor, kick-saved the ball, and sent it back over the net. You could see her intensity and the effort she put into it, as her eye never left the ball. And they won the point, but they lost the match. She probably had a skin burn and maybe a bruise where she banged her head, so you wonder if she thought, "Was it worth it? Putting that kind of effort and making that kind of a save—was it worth it, when we ended up losing anyway?"

Today, as you press on in the Christian life, I wonder if you're asking, "Is it really worth it?" Especially when life throws you a curve—you go to the doctor and you get a bad diagnosis, or your child rebels and you find him on drugs, or your spouse walks out, or you lose your job. Do you ask, "Is it really worth it?"



Is it worth it to get up 30 minutes early to spend time with the Lord in prayer and Bible reading? Is it worth it to share the gospel with your friends and lose their friendship? Is it worth it to live your life with integrity and purity, and lose a promotion or maybe even get fired because of it? Is it worth it to deny yourself and your plans and ambitions, and take up the cross of God's will and follow Him in this life of faith?

Is it worth it to press on to Jesus? You can make up your own mind, but my answer is "Yes! It's worth it! It's worth it because Jesus is worth it!"

When we press on, we win. We're not going to lose the match. We have the victory because Jesus has already won it. Sometimes it helps to know what we're aiming for, where we're going, and why we're doing what we're doing. It motivates us to press on. So let's look at Revelation 5 for three reasons that we press on to Jesus.

We press on because He is unequalled in His position. In verse 1, God the Father is seated on the throne, and in His hand is a scroll, which I believe symbolizes that the person who holds the scroll has the ability and the power to fulfill God's purpose for the human race. He's the victor, the winner; it's like the gold medal, in a sense. And when no one in heaven or on earth can open the scroll or even look inside it, one of the elders tells John, "The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll" (v. 5, NIV).

The One who is able to rule the universe is the same One who is able to rule the details of your life, and His name is Jesus. Take your life and



I'VE DECIDED I WANT TO LIVE MY LIFE ON MY KNEES, MY TONGUE CONFESSING, "JESUS, YOU ARE LORD. YOU ARE KING."

everything that's in it, and lay it down before Him. Let Him rule it rightly. He knows what He's doing. He's unequalled in His position; He is Lord.

We press on because He is undisputed in His power. John says, "Then I saw a Lamb looking as if it had been slain" (v. 6). In the Old Testament, when somebody sinned, a lamb would die in the sinner's place. And when Jesus, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), poured out His blood at the cross to make atonement for sin, we were forgiven!

He's perfect in His power because He's the Almighty. In verse 7, Jesus just walks over and takes the scroll that nobody else had been able to

grasp, or even look inside, right out of the hands of God the Father. He created everything in the beginning. He bought it at Calvary. And He has the right to rule it.

He made us at creation, and He bought us at Calvary, so He has the right to rule our lives. He is undisputed in His power. So why would we dispute His power or resist His will?

And we press on because He is unrivaled in His praise. Verse 9 says, “And they sang a new song.” It was new because it was about the end of the story, when Jesus wins and asserts His right to rule. “You are worthy to take the scroll and open its seals because you were slain. With your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.”

Verse 12 says, “In a loud voice they sang: ‘Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!’” He alone is worthy of all praise because He is Lord.

Notice that the four living creatures and the 24 elders each have a harp (v. 8). A harp represents your song, your joy. Have you lost your joy because you’re separated from God, or you’re angry or offended with Him because of what He’s allowed in your life? Do you want your joy back? Surrender your life to the lordship of Jesus. Stop complaining, stop resisting. Just give Him everything, and then He’s in charge, He’s responsible. Just rest in His will, and the joy will come back.

I’ve decided I want to live my life on my knees, my tongue confessing, “Jesus, You are Lord. You are King.” Jesus is the answer; He’s the One

who wins. He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. So if He is your Lord, are you saying so? Are you confessing it with your mouth, to the glory of God?

I challenge you to press on to Jesus. Let me tell you, sometimes there’s no other reason I press on. I don’t feel like it, I don’t want to, it’s hard, I hurt, and the pain in my life goes deep. But I press on because I know what the goal is. Press on to Jesus! And one day you and I will stand before him, take those crowns that He has given us, and lay them at His nail-pierced feet. On that day we’re going to know by experience that it’s worth it! Whatever the pain, whatever the sacrifice, whatever you think you have to give up, lay down, leave behind, let go, it’s worth it a thousand times over—because Jesus is worth it!

We know we’re on the winning side. So let’s choose to rest in Him, surrendering everything, asking for the power of the Holy Spirit to enable us to take the next step and live the next day, to continue this journey called the Christian life, to press on until we meet Him face to face.

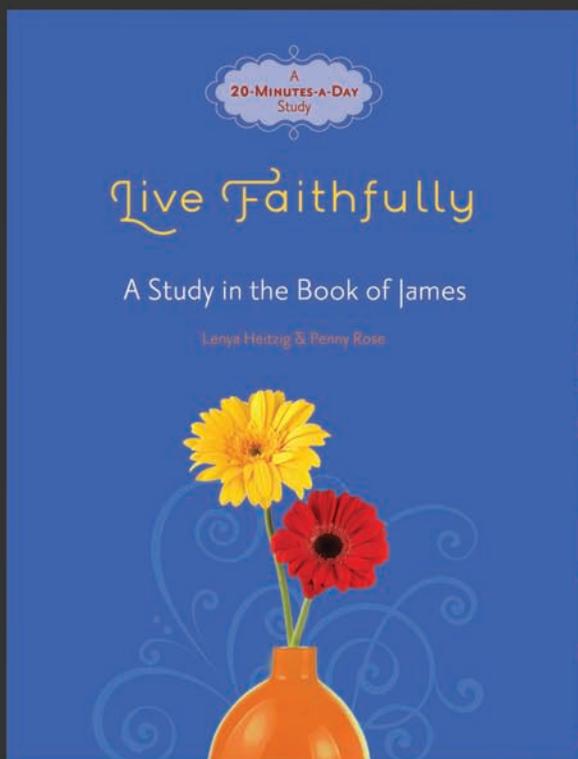
It’s not a sprint, it’s a marathon, so pace yourself as you aim for the finish line. Keep pressing on to Jesus! ←

// ANNE GRAHAM LOTZ

Anne Graham Lotz has been named one of the five most influential evangelists of her generation by *The New York Times*. Her father, Billy Graham, calls her the best preacher in the family. Her Just Give Me Jesus revivals have been held around the globe. Her most recent books are *Expecting to See Jesus* and her first children’s book, *Heaven: God’s Promise for Me*.

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Your life is short, your duties many, your assistance great, and your reward sure; therefore faint not, hold on and hold up, in ways of well-doing, and heaven shall make amends for all. -Thomas Brooks

*By perseverance the snail
reached the ark.* -C.S. Lewis

When we are foiled, let us believe we shall overcome; when we have fallen, let us believe we shall rise again... So let us never give up, but, in our thoughts knit the beginning, progress, and end together, and then we shall see ourselves in heaven out of the reach of all enemies. -Richard Sibbes

Press forward. Do not stop, do not linger in your journey, but strive for the mark set before you. -George Whitefield

A constant attention to the work which God entrusts us with is a mark of solid piety.

-John Wesley

Beginning well is a momentary thing; finishing well is a lifelong thing.

-Ravi Zacharias

*Faint not; the miles to
heaven are but few and
short.* -Samuel Rutherford

the Connection

with Skip Heitzig

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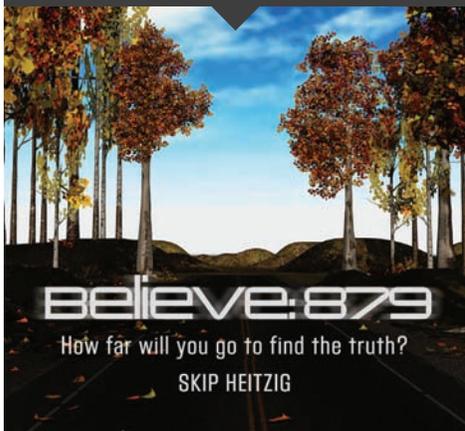
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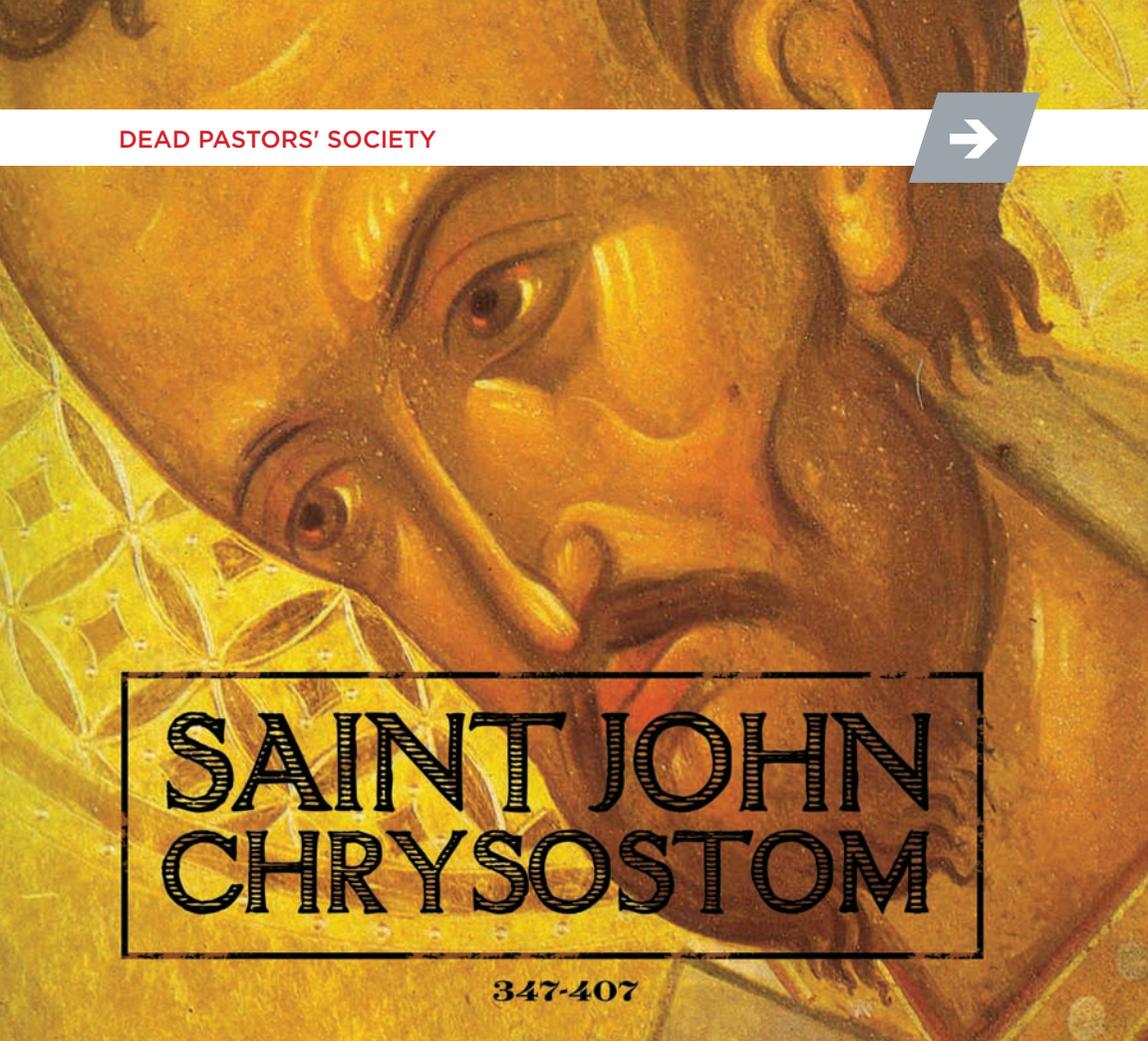
Believe:879 is an epic journey through the book of John led by Pastor Skip Heitzig of Calvary Albuquerque. As we explore each of the 879 verses of this gospel, we'll grow in grace and in our knowledge of Jesus Christ. From His pre-incarnate existence, to His public ministry, through His death and His resurrection, we'll traverse familiar territory and embark on new adventures of faith.

FROM THE LISTENERS

Pastor Skip,

I recently started listening to your broadcast on 106.9, The Light. Your current series on the end times is an answer to my prayer of finding someone who will teach the unadulterated, pure Word of God. After being disillusioned by many false teachings of the past regarding the end times, I had resorted to just reading the Bible on my own. I asked the Lord to open up my understanding of His Word on this matter. He began to deal with my heart by drawing me back to the book of Revelation. He led me just recently to your broadcasts which are very clear and easy to understand. ...The Bible should be read cover to cover and not just the first 5 books or just the NT only. I have some serious studying to do! I believe the Word of God does not have to be so complex as many teachers have made it... The ministry I am currently a part of also encourages its attendees to bring a pen and a notebook to Bible study and service just as you do. I have seen very few congregations do this. I do believe it is important because this way a person will have something to go back to and reflect on what was taught. Thank you for allowing God to use you in this way.

Sincerely, Martha



SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

347-407

Nothing so renders our real excellences vain and puffs them away, as to be remembering the good deeds we have done; for this produces two evils, it both renders us remiss, and raises us to haughtiness. Wherefore see how Paul, since he knew our nature to be easily inclined to remissness, though he had given great praise to the Philippians, now subdues their mind by many other things above, but chiefly by his present words. And what are they?

“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended” [Philippians 3:13, KJV].

But if Paul had not as yet apprehended, and is not confident about the Resurrection and things to come, hardly should they be so, who have not attained the smallest proportion of his excellence. That is, I consider that I have not as yet apprehended all virtue, as if one were speaking of a runner. Not as yet, saith he, have I completed all. And if in another place he saith, “I have fought the good fight” (2 Timothy 4:7), but here, “I count myself not as yet to have apprehended”; anyone who reads carefully will well know the reason both of those..

But “one thing,” says he, “forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” [Philippians 3:13-14]. For what made him reach forward unto the things which are before, was his forgetting the things that are behind. He then, who thinks that all is accomplished, and that nothing is wanting to him for the perfecting of virtue, may cease running, as having apprehended all. But he who thinks that he is still distant from the goal, will never cease running. This then we should always consider, even though we have wrought ten thousand good deeds; for if Paul, after ten thousand deaths, after so many dangers, considered this, how much more should we? ... Thus too we should act, we should forget our successes, and throw them behind us. For the runner reckons not up how many circuits he hath finished, but how many are left. We too should reckon up, not how far we are advanced in virtue, but how much remains for us. For what doth that which is finished profit us, when that which is deficient is not added? Moreover he did not say, I do not reckon up, but I do not even remember...

“Stretching forward,” saith he; before we arrive, we strive to obtain. For he that stretches forward is one who, though his feet are running, endeavors to outstrip them with the rest of his body, stretching himself towards the front, and reaching out his hands, that he may accomplish somewhat more of the course. And this comes from great eagerness, from much warmth; thus the runner should run with great earnestness, with so great eagerness, without relaxation...

See how great a distance this is that

HE WHO THINKS THAT HE IS STILL DISTANT FROM THE GOAL, WILL NEVER CEASE RUNNING

must be run over! See how great an ascent! Thither we must fly up with the wings of the Spirit, otherwise it is impossible to surmount this height. Thither must we go with the body, for it is allowed. “For our citizenship is in heaven” (Philippians 3:20), there is the prize; seest thou the runners, how they live by rule, how they touch nothing that relaxes their strength, how they exercise themselves every day in the palæstra [wrestling school], under a master, and by rule? Imitate them, or rather exhibit even greater eagerness... Teach thy feet to be sure, for there are many slippery places, and if thou fallest, straightway thou lovest much. But yet if thou fall, rise up again. Even thus mayst thou obtain the victory... Look upward, where the prize is; the sight of the prize increaseth the determination of our will. The hope of taking it suffereth not to perceive the toils, it maketh the distance appear short. And what is this prize? No palm branch; but what? The kingdom of heaven, everlasting rest, glory together with Christ, the inheritance, brotherhood, ten thousand good things, which it is impossible to name. ←

// SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Saint John Chrysostom (347-407), archbishop of Constantinople, was a preacher, theologian, and early church father, called the “golden mouth” for his eloquence. He was noted for his asceticism, and for his denunciation of abuse of authority both within the church and in the Roman Empire.



◆ ◆

WHAT DOES
IT MEAN TO

**"PRESS TOWARD
THE GOAL"**

AS IT SAYS IN
PHILIPPIANS
3:14?

First of all, “pressing on” means we have to be focused on the future, on moving forward.

That’s the march of the Christian life—forward. If you want to live a miserable life, always look back over your shoulder and live in regret—what it could have been, what it should have been, what you needed but didn’t get, etc. In Philippians 3, Paul is saying, “All of my previous life, good or bad, is over.” We have to be like that, “forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead” (v. 13). “Reaching forward” is an athletic term for sprinting for the finish line. At the end of the race, you will always see the runners stretching forward, putting all their effort into reaching that goal.

Secondly, I think it also means that we should be dissatisfied, and I hope you are. But perhaps I should explain that statement.

Whatever level of relationship with the Lord that you have right now, it’s my prayer that you’ll never say, “That’s enough. I don’t need to get any more spiritual, any holier than I am. What I have is sufficient.” I pray that you’ll crave more, that you’ll always want to learn more about Him, and to get closer to Him. I pray that you’ll have a holy, sanctified kind of discontentment.

There is a classic little book by A.W. Tozer called *The Pursuit of God*, and I recommend it to you. It’s one that truly changed my life. I recently thumbed through it, and was struck by the first couple of paragraphs. Tozer describes the kind of people who have that pursuit of God. He says, “These are lives that are marked by a growing hunger after God Himself. They will not be satisfied until

they have drunk deep of the fountain of living waters.”

That’s the kind of dissatisfaction I mean, where we have tasted the living water and said, “It’s good, it’s wonderful, but I want more. I want to go further. I want to go deeper.” Paul the apostle had that very same desire. Even after 30 years of walking with Christ, Paul said he was still pressing on, still running with everything that was in him, still stretching toward that finish line. He was going forward, with that healthy, holy dissatisfaction that I pray we will all have.

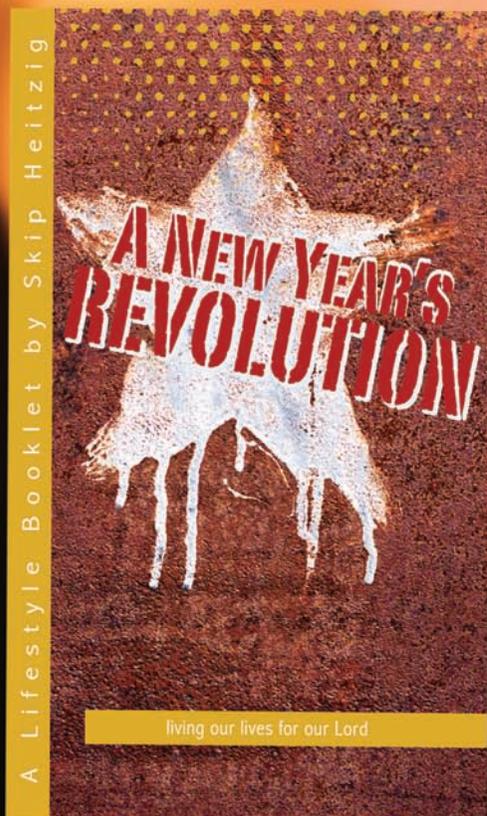
I PRAY THAT YOU'LL CRAVE MORE, THAT YOU'LL ALWAYS WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HIM.

Thomas Edison once said, “Show me a thoroughly satisfied man, and I’ll show you a failure.” So it’s true that the more we learn about God—His majesty, His attributes, His grandeur—and the more we taste of the relationship with Him, the more we say, “I want to know Him more, to learn more and experience more of Him.”

The goal will not be reached until we see Him face to face, and only then will we be thoroughly satisfied! ←

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Researcher George Barna polled self-professed Christians and listed four barriers that must be overcome before they will “persevere and maximize their connection with God.”

COMMITMENT: Christians often lack “a full determination to live like Christ and for Him.”

- 78% said spirituality is very important to them.
- 52% believe there is much more to the Christian life than they have experienced.
- Only 18% are totally committed to investing in their own spiritual development.
- Only 22% say they are “completely dependent upon God.”

REPENTANCE: Few Christians are “serious about abandoning the lure of sin and handing total control of their life to God.”

- Only 12% said they had recognized the significance of their sins on a deep, emotional level.
- Only 3% have surrendered control to God and submitted to His will for their life.

ACTIVITY: Christians confuse religious activity with spiritual significance and depth. On a weekly basis:

- 39% participate in “normal” Christian activities (attending church, praying, reading the Bible).
- Less than 10% talk about their faith with non-Christians, fast for religious purposes, and spend time in spiritual reflection.

SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY: There is not much vulnerability and accountability among believers.

- Only 21% believe spiritual maturity requires a connection to a church.
- Only 35% have confessed their sins to another believer in the past quarter.

OFF THE CUFF



CONSECUTIVELY TEACHING THROUGH
THE BIBLE
WITH ALISTAIR BEGG

Connection host Peter Benson asked Pastor Alistair Begg about his method for “systematically, consecutively teaching through the Bible.”

How do you prepare to deliver a teaching from Scripture? Does that change from week to week, from passage to passage, or do you have a systematic way of your own study time?

Well, every week is different, but the one thing that isn't different is that Sunday comes around and that the influences and the responsibilities of a week somehow or another get folded into the preparation. You know, it's hard to be involved in the loss of life of someone, or to be engaged in the pastoral concerns of somebody who's been diagnosed with a terminal illness, or a child who's been lost in a car accident without that actually becoming part of the framework out of which we turn to the Scriptures. But when I come to the Bible, I come to it really the same way, that I start and try and think myself empty. In other words, just come to the text and read it, and think what there is that strikes me. And then I try and read myself full, and then I try and write myself clear, and then I try and pray myself hot, and then I try and preach and be myself and forget myself.

That's a great process. Why is expounding the word still relevant?

That's a good question, isn't it? Because in the minds of some people, it isn't relevant. And really for as long as I've lived my life there have been prophets of doom who have been mentioning the fact that preaching is in the shadows and it's pretty well over. And yet here we are in the second decade of the twenty-first century and the churches that are ef-

fective in terms of biblical emphases are largely those where the Scriptures have a central place in all that they're doing. And one of the challenges that is represented for folks is the idea of, how do we make the Bible relevant? And you know, even to ask that question is so wrong because what we discover is the Bible is relevant. It's only our responsibility to show how relevant it is. And when we have a conviction regarding that, that we believe the Bible is authoritative, we believe that it is sufficient, then it gives us courage and confidence in opening up the Scriptures and allowing them to do what God has intended for them to do.

You're alluding to the fact that maybe some could be watering down the Word. We think of “seeker-friendly,” or those type of terms. What are some of your biggest concerns of the expounding of God's word, the challenges, or what you see for fellowships that aren't as “Word-centric” or “expounding-centric”?

Well, there's a couple of things. Obviously, there's a huge difference between a model that is kind of an entertainment model and one that is a proclamation model. That seems to me to be fairly obvious. And I think the chickens are coming home to roost on that kind of thing already. People who bought into that idea and have thought that it was really going to be wonderfully satisfying, many of them who are genuinely interested in coming to an understanding of the Scriptures have gone off in search of Bible-teaching ministries. So that's fairly straightforward. One of the other things, though, that I have detected is that there are some congregations where the idea of preaching is sort of passé and that what they really believe is the key to it all is in small-group study. And we gather together in small groups

and all share our various ideas. Now, obviously we wouldn't want to stand against the notion of small groups and the importance of studying the Bible in that way. But when that becomes a substitute for or an alternative for the actual gathered congregation sitting together under the instruction of the Bible, then I think it becomes a dangerous thing and also a potentially harmful thing. Because what we're called to do is to sit, if you like, underneath the Word. In the old days, in the Scottish pulpits, they were built in such a way that it was very obvious to the congregation that the Bible was central in all that was taking place. And there's a huge difference between that sense of the minister himself being under the authority of Scripture and then together the congregation learning the same text of Scripture and sitting under its instruction together, from sitting around in a circle and everybody giving their view on what they think the passage means or might mean.

Are you teaching and training other young pastors to come up and preach the Word?

Yes, we are. I mean, we're doing it by design, but we're also doing it, if you like, by default, in that as a result of just doing what we do along with others who do the same, we discover that young men in particular are seeking us out, that they are downloading materials, that they are inquiring as to how we do what we do and why we do it. And on my pastoral team, which is an increasingly young team, we also have a cluster of interns on an annual basis who themselves have identified the fact that they would like to come here and learn what they can about the whole approach to teaching the Bible in a way that is clear and is obviously relevant.

Now, with that, is there some discernment for the application of preachers, teachers—a more evangelistic-oriented kind of outreach? Does that flesh itself out over time, Alistair?

You mean in terms of people's personal giftedness? Yes, I think so. I think it was Samuel Bolton who said that if we preach the Bible, we preach Christ. And if we preach Christ, then every sermon will at least by implication be evangelistic. So that when we turn to the Scriptures and we realize that the story of the Bible is the story of what God has done for sinners in and through the person and work of Jesus Christ, then that saves us from turning the stories of the Bible into sort of moral precepts. And it also helps us to understand that from Genesis all the way to Revelation, the story is the same, and that is that God saves people, and that He puts people into His family, and faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. And so while some contexts make it more advantageous to go at things from an evangelistic perspective, I find that people are coming to Christ—not in as large numbers as I would long for, but nevertheless are coming to Christ—just as a result of the faithful, consistent teaching of the Bible. ←

// ALISTAIR BEGG

Alistair Begg is senior pastor at Parkside Church near Cleveland, Ohio. A native of Scotland, he has been in the ministry since 1975, and is heard throughout the U.S. on his radio program, Truth For Life. He can be heard in Albuquerque on KNKT 107.1 FM.

PRESS ON, PRESS ON, YE WORKERS

By: Fanny Crosby and John R. Sweney

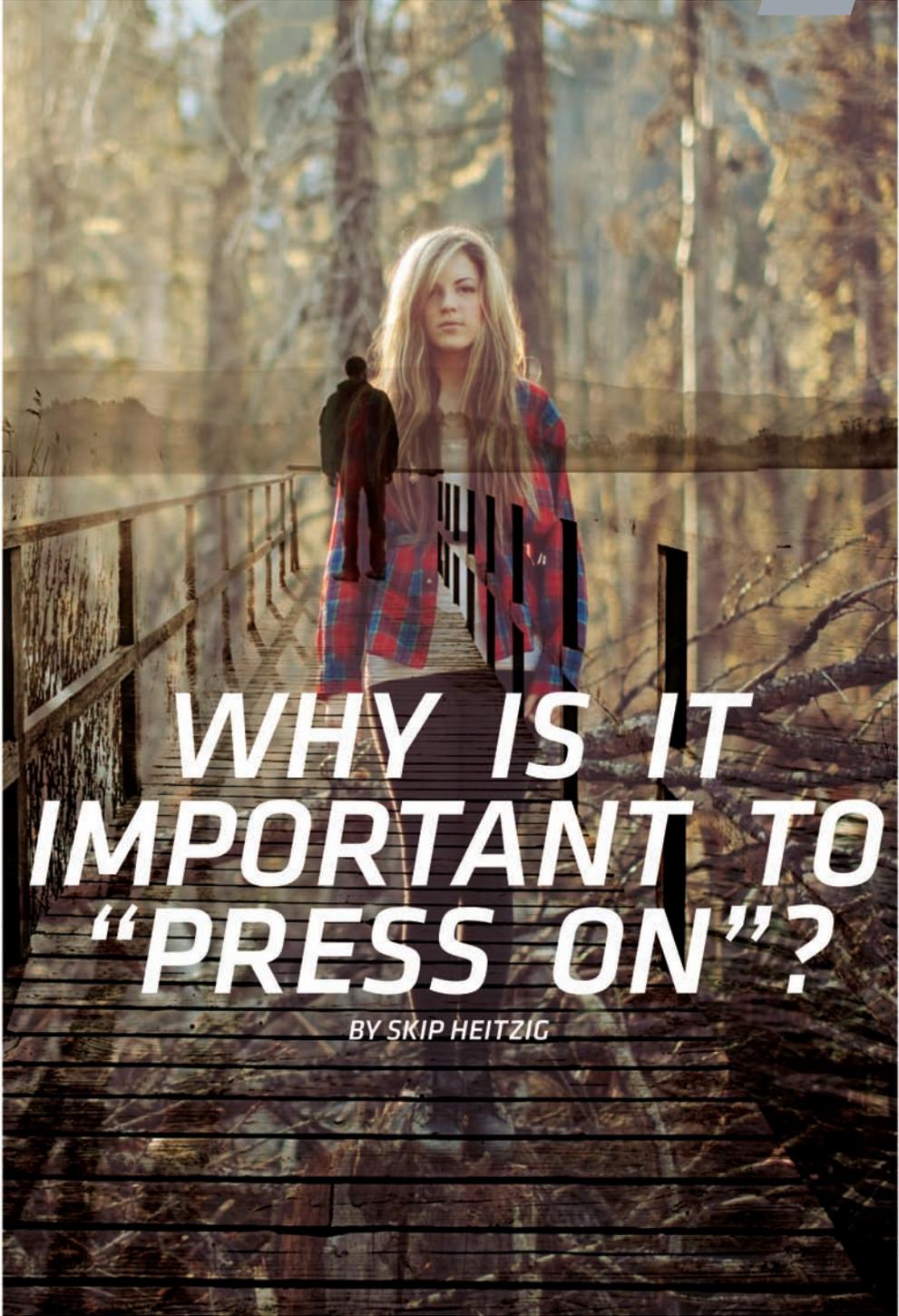
*Press on, press on, ye workers
Be loyal, brave and true
Great things the Lord is doing
And greater things will do
His army, still increasing
With each revolving year
Shall send a sound of rapture forth
That all the world shall hear*

*Rejoice, rejoice, ye workers all, rejoice!
O clap your hands and sing!
O clap your hands and sing!
God's holy Church shall triumph yet
And He shall reign our King*

*The walls of leagued oppression
To dust shall fall away
The sword of truth eternal
No pow'r on earth can stay
Tho' all the hosts of darkness
Were marshaled on the field
The Church of God would stand unmoved
With Christ her strength and shield*

*Behold her marching onward
In majesty sublime
Along the rolling prairies
That bound our western clime
And soon from every hamlet
On all our vast frontier
Glad songs shall rise to Jesus
While skeptics turn to hear*





WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO “PRESS ON”?

BY SKIP HEITZIG

The apostle Peter said, “Add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:5-8). What these traits add up to is a portrait of a mature Christian, and to be that you must always be in the process of growing, adding, and climbing—pressing on, or as this passage says, persevering.

Mature Christians persevere in troubles. They won't pick up their football and go home, no matter what happens to them. They are committed to the will of God, whatever it is, and however it comes.

In Chapter 5 of James, he addresses persecuted, suffering believers, those who are being oppressed: “Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain” (v. 7).

Farmers have to persevere. One simple reason, of course, is that they cannot control the weather. Whatever comes, comes, and they have to take what they get and work around it. Their attitude must be, “Growing something takes time, so I am in this for the long haul, come what may, good years and bad years. I intend to be diligent.”

Verses 10-11 give a couple of further examples: “My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that

YOU MUST ALWAYS BE IN THE PROCESS OF GROWING, ADDING, AND CLIMBING—PRESSING ON.

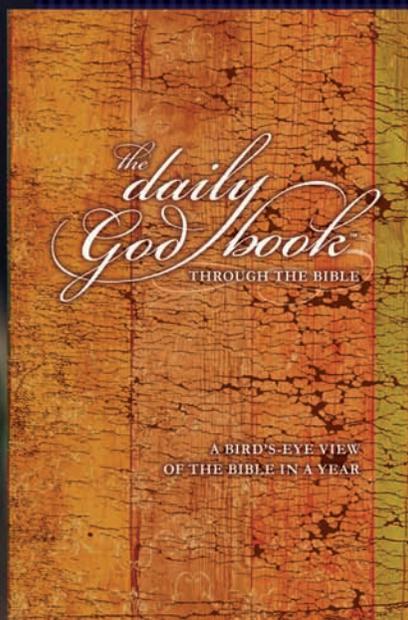
the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.”

Job is a classic example of somebody who persevered, because he didn't understand what he was going through. Job didn't have the advantage of going behind the curtain and listening to the conversation that Satan and God had together about him. He lived in real-time, not knowing what was really going on behind the scenes. What happened to him was horrible, but he persevered. In fact, when he lost his children, his home, and his health, the Bible says he fell down on his face and he worshiped. He said, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21). That's perseverance!

So this faithful man was the prime example for the apostle James of the mature Christian that we should all strive to emulate. Mature Christians are shaped by the trials and temptations they face. They remain humble, they are patient, and they persevere. That's a mature believer.

Spiritual growth is a process, it's not instantaneous—and it's not an absolute. You can be a spiritual person (and a lot of people these days say they are) without being a spiritually mature person. You need patience and perseverance to come to maturity. ←

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→ JANUARY

JANUARY 1

READ: Genesis 1-2
REFLECT: *Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good (Genesis 1:31).*
RETURN: Genesis 3

JANUARY 2

READ: Genesis 4-5
REFLECT: *If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it (Genesis 4:7).*
RETURN: Genesis 6

JANUARY 3

READ: Genesis 7-8
REFLECT: *For after seven more days I will cause it to rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and I will destroy from the face of the earth all living things that I have made (Genesis 7:4).*
RETURN: Genesis 9

JANUARY 4

READ: Genesis 10-11
REFLECT: *Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth (Genesis 11:9).*
RETURN: Genesis 12

JANUARY 5

READ: Genesis 13-14
REFLECT: *For all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever (Genesis 13:15).*
RETURN: Genesis 15

JANUARY 6

READ: Genesis 16-17
REFLECT: *When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless” (Genesis 17:1).*
RETURN: Genesis 18

JANUARY 7

READ: Genesis 19-21
REFLECT: *She also said, “Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? For I have borne him a son in his old age” (Genesis 21:7).*
RETURN: Genesis 22-23

JANUARY 8

READ: Genesis 24-25
REFLECT: *And the LORD said to her: “Two nations are in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body; one people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger” (Genesis 25:23).*
RETURN: Genesis 26

JANUARY 9

READ: Genesis 27-28
REFLECT: *Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it” (Genesis 28:16).*
RETURN: Genesis 29

JANUARY 10

READ: Genesis 30-31
REFLECT: *And she conceived and bore a son, and said, “God has taken away my reproach” (Genesis 30:23).*
RETURN: Genesis 32

JANUARY 11

READ: Genesis 33-34

REFLECT: *But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept* (Genesis 33:4).

RETURN: Genesis 35

JANUARY 12

READ: Genesis 36-37

REFLECT: *Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age. Also he made him a tunic of many colors* (Genesis 37:3).

RETURN: Genesis 38

JANUARY 13

READ: Genesis 39-40

REFLECT: *But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison* (Genesis 39:21).

RETURN: Genesis 41

JANUARY 14

READ: Genesis 42-44

REFLECT: *Then Judah said to Israel his father, "Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you and also our little ones"* (Genesis 43:8).

RETURN: Genesis 45-46

JANUARY 15

READ: Genesis 47-48

REFLECT: *Now there was no bread in all the land; for the famine was very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished because of the famine* (Genesis 47:13).

RETURN: Genesis 49

JANUARY 16

READ: Genesis 50, Exodus 1

REFLECT: *So Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, "Every son who is born you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive"* (Exodus 1:22).

RETURN: Exodus 2

JANUARY 17

READ: Exodus 3-4

REFLECT: *And the LORD said: "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows"* (Exodus 3:7).

RETURN: Exodus 5

JANUARY 18

READ: Exodus 6-7

REFLECT: *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Go in, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the children of Israel go out of his land"* (Exodus 6:10-11).

RETURN: Exodus 8

JANUARY 19

READ: Exodus 9-10

REFLECT: *But the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh; and he did not heed them, just as the LORD had spoken to Moses* (Exodus 9:12).

RETURN: Exodus 11

JANUARY 20

READ: Exodus 12-13

REFLECT: *And thus you shall eat it: with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD's Passover* (Exodus 12:11).

RETURN: Exodus 14

JANUARY 21

READ: Exodus 15-17

REFLECT: *Your right hand, O LORD, has become glorious in power; Your right hand, O LORD, has dashed the enemy in pieces.* (Exodus 15:6).

RETURN: Exodus 18-19

JANUARY 22

READ: Exodus 20-21

REFLECT: *I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me* (Exodus 20:2-3).

RETURN: Exodus 22

JANUARY 23

READ: Exodus 23-24

REFLECT: *Keep yourself far from a false matter; do not kill the innocent and righteous. For I will not justify the wicked* (Exodus 23:7).

RETURN: Exodus 25

JANUARY 24

READ: Exodus 26-27

REFLECT: *And you shall raise up the tabernacle according to its pattern which you were shown on the mountain* (Exodus 26:30).

RETURN: Exodus 28

JANUARY 25

READ: Exodus 29-30

REFLECT: *And Aaron and his sons you shall bring to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and you shall wash them with water* (Exodus 29:4).

RETURN: Exodus 31

JANUARY 26

READ: Exodus 32-33

REFLECT: *And he received the gold from their hand... and made a molded calf.*

Then they said, "This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!" (Exodus 32:4).

RETURN: Exodus 34

JANUARY 27

READ: Exodus 35-36

REFLECT: *Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh day shall be a holy day for you, a Sabbath of rest to the LORD (Exodus 35:2).*

RETURN: Exodus 37

JANUARY 28

READ: Exodus 38-40

REFLECT: *Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34).*

RETURN: Leviticus 1-2

JANUARY 29

READ: Leviticus 3-4

REFLECT: *And Aaron's sons shall burn it on the altar upon the burnt sacrifice, which is on the wood that is on the fire, as an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD (Leviticus 3:5).*

RETURN: Leviticus 5

JANUARY 30

READ: Leviticus 6-7

REFLECT: *Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Command Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the law of the burnt offering'" (Leviticus 6:8-9).*

RETURN: Leviticus 8

JANUARY 31

READ: Leviticus 9-10

REFLECT: *Then Moses said, "This is the thing which the Lord commanded you to do, and the glory of the LORD will appear to you"*

(Leviticus 9:6).

RETURN: Leviticus 11

→ FEBRUARY

FEBRUARY 1

READ: Leviticus 12-13

REFLECT: *And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised (Leviticus 12:3).*

RETURN: Leviticus 14

FEBRUARY 2

READ: Leviticus 15-16

REFLECT: *So he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins (Leviticus 16:16).*

RETURN: Leviticus 17

FEBRUARY 3

READ: Leviticus 18-19

REFLECT: *You shall observe My judgments and keep My ordinances, to walk in them: I am the LORD your God (Leviticus 18:4).*

RETURN: Leviticus 20

FEBRUARY 4

READ: Leviticus 21-23

REFLECT: *Whatever has a defect, you shall not offer, for it shall not be acceptable on your behalf (Leviticus 22:20).*

RETURN: Leviticus 24-25

FEBRUARY 5

READ: Leviticus 26-27

REFLECT: *I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people (Leviticus 26:12).*

RETURN: Numbers 1

FEBRUARY 6

READ: Numbers 2-3

REFLECT: *Now these are the records of Aaron and Moses when the LORD spoke with Moses on Mount Sinai (Numbers 3:1).*

RETURN: Numbers 4

FEBRUARY 7

READ: Numbers 5-6

REFLECT: *The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace (Numbers 6:24-26).*

RETURN: Numbers 7

FEBRUARY 8

READ: Numbers 8-9

REFLECT: *And they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month, at twilight, in the Wilderness of Sinai; according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did (Numbers 9:5).*

RETURN: Numbers 10

FEBRUARY 9

READ: Numbers 11-12

REFLECT: *Where am I to get meat to give to all these people? For they weep all over me, saying, "Give us meat, that we may eat" (Numbers 11:13).*

RETURN: Numbers 13

FEBRUARY 10

READ: Numbers 14-15

REFLECT: *Then the LORD said to Moses: "How long will these people reject Me? And how long will they not believe Me, with all the signs which I have performed among them? (Numbers 14:11).*

RETURN: Numbers 16

FEBRUARY 11

READ: Numbers 17-19

REFLECT: *Behold, I Myself have taken your brethren the Levites from among the children of Israel; they are a gift to you, given by the LORD, to do the work of the tabernacle of meeting* (Numbers 18:6).

RETURN: Numbers 20-21

FEBRUARY 12

READ: Numbers 22-23

REFLECT: *And God said to Balaam, "You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed."* (Numbers 22:12).

RETURN: Numbers 24

FEBRUARY 13

READ: Numbers 25-26

REFLECT: *Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel from twenty years old and above, by their fathers' houses, all who are able to go to war in Israel* (Numbers 26:2).

RETURN: Numbers 27

FEBRUARY 14

READ: Numbers 28-29

REFLECT: *Command the children of Israel, and say to them, "My offering, My food for My offerings made by fire as a sweet aroma to Me, you shall be careful to offer to Me at their appointed time"* (Numbers 28:2).

RETURN: Numbers 30

FEBRUARY 15

READ: Numbers 31-32

REFLECT: *Therefore they said, "If we have found favor in your sight, let this land be given to your servants as a possession.*

Do not take us over the Jordan" (Numbers 32:5).

RETURN: Numbers 33

FEBRUARY 16

READ: Numbers 34-35

REFLECT: *Command the children of Israel, and say to them: "When you come into the land of Canaan, this is the land that shall fall to you as an inheritance—the land of Canaan to its boundaries"*

(Numbers 34:2).

RETURN: Numbers 36

FEBRUARY 17

READ: Deuteronomy 1-2

REFLECT: *See, I have set the land before you; go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to your fathers—to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—to give to them and their descendants after them* (Deuteronomy 1:8).

RETURN: Deuteronomy 3

FEBRUARY 18

READ: Deuteronomy 4-6

REFLECT: *You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you* (Deuteronomy 4:2).

RETURN: Deuteronomy 7-8

FEBRUARY 19

READ: Deuteronomy 9-10

REFLECT: *Remember! Do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day that you departed from the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD* (Deuteronomy 9:7).

RETURN: Deuteronomy 11

FEBRUARY 20

READ: Deuteronomy 12-13

REFLECT: *These are the statutes and judgments which you shall be careful to observe in the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you to possess, all the days that you live on the earth* (Deuteronomy 12:1).

RETURN: Deuteronomy 14

FEBRUARY 21

READ: Deuteronomy 15-16

REFLECT: *For the poor will never cease from the land; therefore I command you, saying, "You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy, in your land"* (Deuteronomy 15:11).

RETURN: Deuteronomy 17

FEBRUARY 22

READ: Deuteronomy 18-19

REFLECT: *You shall be blameless before the LORD your God* (Deuteronomy 18:13).

RETURN: Deuteronomy 20

FEBRUARY 23

READ: Deuteronomy 21-22

REFLECT: *Provide atonement, O LORD, for Your people Israel, whom You have redeemed, and do not lay innocent blood to the charge of Your people Israel* (Deuteronomy 21:8).

RETURN: Deuteronomy 23

FEBRUARY 24

READ: Deuteronomy 24-25

REFLECT: *When a man has taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war or be charged with any business; he shall be free at home one year, and bring happiness to his wife whom he has taken*

(Deuteronomy 24:5).

RETURN: Deuteronomy 26

FEBRUARY 25

READ: Deuteronomy 27-29

REFLECT: *You shall build with whole stones the altar of the LORD your God, and offer burnt offerings on it to the LORD your God (Deuteronomy 27:6).*

RETURN: Deuteronomy 30-31

FEBRUARY 26

READ: Deuteronomy 32-33

REFLECT: *For the LORD will judge His people and have compassion on His servants (Deuteronomy 32:36).*

RETURN: Deuteronomy 34

FEBRUARY 27

READ: Joshua 1-2

REFLECT: *Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go (Joshua 1:9).*

RETURN: Joshua 3

FEBRUARY 28

READ: Joshua 4-5

REFLECT: *Now the people came up from the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and they camped in Gilgal on the east border of Jericho (Joshua 4:19).*

RETURN: Joshua 6

→ MARCH

MARCH 1

READ: Joshua 7-8

REFLECT: *Israel has sinned, and they have also trans-*

gressed My covenant which I commanded them (Joshua 7:11).

RETURN: Joshua 9

MARCH 2

READ: Joshua 10-11

REFLECT: *So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day (Joshua 10:13).*

RETURN: Joshua 12

MARCH 3

READ: Joshua 13-14

REFLECT: *And the LORD said to him: "You are old, advanced in years, and there remains very much land yet to be possessed" (Joshua 13:1).*

RETURN: Joshua 15

MARCH 4

READ: Joshua 16-18

REFLECT: *And they came near before Eleazar the priest, before Joshua the son of Nun, and before the rulers, saying, "The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brothers" (Joshua 17:4).*

RETURN: Joshua 19-20

MARCH 5

READ: Joshua 21-22

REFLECT: *So the LORD gave to Israel all the land of which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they took possession of it and dwelt in it (Joshua 21:43).*

RETURN: Joshua 23

MARCH 6

READ: Joshua 24, Judges 1

REFLECT: *And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites under tribute, but did not completely*

drive them out (Judges 1:28).

RETURN: Judges 2

MARCH 7

READ: Judges 3-4

REFLECT: *So the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD They forgot the LORD their God, and served the Baals and Asherahs (Judges 3:7).*

RETURN: Judges 5

MARCH 8

READ: Judges 6-7

REFLECT: *And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him, and said to him, "The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!" (Judges 6:12).*

RETURN: Judges 8

MARCH 9

READ: Judges 9-10

REFLECT: *So the LORD said to the children of Israel, "Did I not deliver you from the Egyptians and from the Amorites and from the people of Ammon and from the Philistines?" (Judges 10:11).*

RETURN: Judges 11

MARCH 10

READ: Judges 12-13

REFLECT: *Again the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years (Judges 13:1).*

RETURN: Judges 14

MARCH 11

READ: Judges 15-17

REFLECT: *But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him (Judges 16:20).*

RETURN: Judges 18-19

MARCH 12**READ:** Judges 20-21**REFLECT:** *So the children of Israel inquired of the LORD (the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days) (Judges 20:27).***RETURN:** Ruth 1**MARCH 13****READ:** Ruth 2-3**REFLECT:** *The LORD repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge (Ruth 2:12).***RETURN:** Ruth 4**MARCH 14****READ:** 1 Samuel 1-2**REFLECT:** *For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition which I asked of Him (1 Samuel 1:27).***RETURN:** 1 Samuel 3**MARCH 15****READ:** 1 Samuel 4-5**REFLECT:** *So the Philistines were afraid, for they said, "God has come into the camp!" (1 Samuel 4:7).***RETURN:** 1 Samuel 6**MARCH 16****READ:** 1 Samuel 7-8**REFLECT:** *And the LORD said to Samuel, "Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them" (1 Samuel 8:7).***RETURN:** 1 Samuel 9**MARCH 17****READ:** 1 Samuel 10-11**REFLECT:** *But Saul said, "Not a man shall be put to death this day, for today the LORD has accomplished**salvation in Israel"*

(1 Samuel 11:13).

RETURN: 1 Samuel 12**MARCH 18****READ:** 1 Samuel 13-15**REFLECT:** *The LORD has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be commander over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you (1 Samuel 13:14).***RETURN:** 1 Samuel 16-17**MARCH 19****READ:** 1 Samuel 18-19**REFLECT:** *And David behaved wisely in all his ways, and the LORD was with him (1 Samuel 18:14).***RETURN:** 1 Samuel 20**MARCH 20****READ:** 1 Samuel 21-22**REFLECT:** *So the priest gave him holy bread; for there was no bread there but the showbread which had been taken from before the LORD (1 Samuel 21:6).***RETURN:** 1 Samuel 23**MARCH 21****READ:** 1 Samuel 24-25**REFLECT:** *Let the LORD judge between you and me, and let the LORD avenge me on you. But my hand shall not be against you (1 Samuel 24:12).***RETURN:** 1 Samuel 26**MARCH 22****READ:** 1 Samuel 27-28**REFLECT:** *And when Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by the prophets (1 Samuel 28:6).***RETURN:** 1 Samuel 29**MARCH 23****READ:** 1 Samuel 30-31**REFLECT:** *Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God (1 Samuel 30:6).***RETURN:** 2 Samuel 1**MARCH 24****READ:** 2 Samuel 2-3**REFLECT:** *And now may the LORD show kindness and truth to you. I also will repay you this kindness, because you have done this thing (2 Samuel 2:6).***RETURN:** 2 Samuel 4**MARCH 25****READ:** 2 Samuel 5-7**REFLECT:** *So David went on and became great, and the LORD God of hosts was with him (2 Samuel 5:10).***RETURN:** 2 Samuel 8-9**MARCH 26****READ:** 2 Samuel 10-11**REFLECT:** *Then it happened one evening that David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king's house. And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful to behold (2 Samuel 11:2).***RETURN:** 2 Samuel 12**MARCH 27****READ:** 2 Samuel 13-14**REFLECT:** *And Absalom spoke to his brother Amnon neither good nor bad. For Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister Tamar (2 Samuel 13:22).***RETURN:** 2 Samuel 15

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