

What others are saying about The Believer's Heart...

This information is important because the writer is telling us about matters of the heart. Many times we allow our emotions to deceive us. She says there must be a connection between our hearts and God. It's not good to listen to your heart when it is not connected to God. Therefore, read this book and let God speak to you.

—Bishop Ernest E. Jackson

THE
BELIEVER'S
Heart

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GAYNELL E. HICKMAN



TATE PUBLISHING
AND ENTERPRISES, LLC

The Believer's Heart

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Dedication

To the memory of my wonderful late mother, Mrs. Leatha Mae Hickman, who was a true disciple of Christ and the backbone of our family. She once told me that if I kept on writing, I would get published. I love you, Mama, and miss you so much, but I know I will see you again someday. If only God could have spared you to see this day; however, although your family loves you very much, God loves you more.

This dedication also goes out to my loving sons, Kevin Hickman and Trevor Embers, my beloved grandsons, Kevin Hickman Jr. and Chaz Hickman, and the rest of my family.

I cannot forget my pastor, Bishop Ernest E. Jackson, who is my mentor and father in the ministry, and who wrote the foreword. Also, Lady Debra Jackson, my beautiful first lady who has a wonderful personality and great sense of humor. She recently said to me, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard the things God has prepared for you." That occurred before I got my book publishing contract.

Acknowledgments

Thank you, thank you, thank you, God, for this wonderful, glorious day!

You told me this would be the year you would give me the two desires of my heart: my husband and having my book published. Heavenly Father, you do just what you say you will do; you cannot tell a lie. As for my Boaz, he may be in my life now. He's new. A little time will tell. Father, you told me you have given me better judgment of men so I can choose the one you have for me on my own.

You took a once very shy little girl with a bad inferiority complex diagnosed with bipolar disorder at the age of seventeen and made a preacher out of her, a recording artist, and a published author. Wow! The devil meant it for bad, but I'm so glad God meant it for my good, hallelujah!

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Prologue

There are numerous scriptures in the Bible in regard to the heart, which is what prompted me to write *The Believer's Heart*.

God judges us by our hearts, and he is the only righteous judge, the only one in a position to judge. Whereas people judge one another by race, class, religious denomination, appearance, educational level, speech/eloquence, sports savvy, personal choices, interests, etc. Getting back to our beloved Heavenly Father, he created us and we are all beautiful in his sight. We are fearfully and wonderfully made.

God interacts with and works on our hearts. This is why our hearts must be clean/pure. The Lord God Jehovah speaks to our hearts, but it is as though we can hear his voice in our heads, his still, quiet voice. Now Satan works on our minds, so we must be very careful with our thoughts. We can sin with our thoughts. We must not allow the devil access. It does not take a large opening for the enemy to enter our minds. Therefore we must guard our hearts and keep them spiritually healthy. There are times when the devil attempts to trick us into thinking he is God speaking to us. That's why it is very important that we stay connected to God through constant prayer, his Word, and yes, communication. If you have a relationship with

our Heavenly Father you can communicate with him. You speak to him, and he speaks to you also. Praying to the Father is formal; communicating with him is casual—but very important as well.

God is love and is far removed from hate. I see God as a gigantic heart. He is all about the truth, truth, and nothing but the truth. Lying is Satan's specialty.

Love is the key to God's kingdom; faith unlocks the door.

Come along with me. Let us consider ourselves heart surgeons temporarily. We will dissect the spiritual heart of the believer.

The Various Functions of a Christian Heart

The mechanism of a Christian's heart is a complicated thing. **Albeit** we are supposed to have a pure heart, a heart that is **powered by love**: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matt 5:8, kjv). There are **times**, still, when our hearts are geared toward self or invaded by Satan. God knows we are abiding by his will when our hearts are pure/clean. "But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him.' The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (Sam 16:7, kjv). Twice since I began my ministry, a good Samaritan has offered to pay for a grocery item I did not have enough money for. I graciously accepted. Just as the good Samaritan Jesus spoke of, the hearts of these folks were pure (see Lk. 10:30-35, kjv). If we have or when we have God in our hearts, they are automatically pure. People allow their emotions to rule their hearts, and hearts can oftentimes be deceitful, **fearful**, and troubled. When we step out on faith, we cannot do so with fear in our hearts. We must be bold. Now that I'm beginning to tithe the way God's word teaches us to, I intend to step out on

faith more often. I manage my money better now, calculate every penny. However, I expect the Lord to bless me more since I am obeying him regarding his tenth. **Therefore** I will not plan ahead all the time anymore. I will trust God to supply me with the means by which to pay this bill or that bill and purchase groceries. Trusting God means not having fear in our hearts. In past years, I have considered myself a hopeless romantic. Although I told myself I would wait on the Lord to supply me with a mate, I continued to attempt to find one on my own—big mistake. For some **reason**, my attraction to men was geared toward those who were not satisfied with one good woman; that is what I am. My hopeless-romantic nature caused me to have a deceitful heart. My heart deceived me into thinking “He’s the one” with several guys I had dated or had relationships with. Satan was at work here, preying on my weakness. I followed my heart more than my head. This can be dangerous. You know, it’s a good thing most believers don’t dwell on the past; we focus on the future. They say, “Milk does a body good.” This saying came from a TV commercial, years ago. Well, having a good heart does a spirit good. As believers, we should always have a welcome mat laid out in our hearts for Jesus, but keep the door closed on Satan. If we kept Jesus in our hearts constantly, it stands to reason that we would love one another as God commands us to. Also, when we keep love in our hearts, we keep God in our hearts because God is love (see 1 Jn. 4:8, kjv). Some people in the course

of biblical history who basically had good hearts were Adam, Abel, Noah, Moses, David, Job, Abraham, Naomi, Rehab, Mary Magdalene, and the woman at the well who gave Jesus water (historians think she is Mary Magdalene) to name a few. Read their stories. They all had such love for God they repented of their sins and had much faith. It is said, "A mind is a terrible thing to waste." A heart is also a terrible thing to waste. Jesus's heart was as pure as the driven snow. Okay, so I'm using a lot of clichés. They are necessary to get my point across. There are people in the world who, seemingly, have no heart at all or their heart is evil any way you want to look at it. I cannot hold a grudge against anyone. This indicates that my heart is a good heart, and anyone who has a good heart in times like these has to be spiritual. Mark my words. There is no other explanation. Let us always be mindful that when we sin in our minds, it is counted as sin. It's vitally important for us to remember that. God acknowledges sinful thoughts. Before I became more spiritual, I had many a sinful thought, which I did not repent of. Now I know better and am constantly repenting of these thoughts. "A wise person's heart will obey God's commandment to love one another as God loves us, and he will know how to apply it at the proper time" (Eccl. 8:5, kjv). "Trust in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways, acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 3:5-6, kjv). "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life"

(Prov. 4:23, kjv). We should protect our hearts from the devil and in situations that could cause them harm. It is important that we keep our hearts spiritually healthy so we can persevere in life. Also, when our hearts are **unguarded**, we are easily hurt.

The Connection Between Our Hearts, God, and Heaven

It is Christmastime. When you put a lot of thought into your gifts—make the presents something folks really need or want—you are giving from the heart. Homemade gifts are always gifts from the heart. It is easy to purchase something for someone; however, when you use your precious time to assemble, cook, or bake a gift, it is evidence that you truly *care* for the recipient. Homemade gifts give the receiver the warm feeling you get when your child brings home that lopsided cup he made for you in school or the beautiful, colorful, abstract picture he presents to you with a smile. Make someone happy. You can also uplift people with a kind word, a good deed, encouragement, a pat on the back, a hug, a reassuring hand on the shoulder, a thumbs-up, or even a smile. Use your gifts from God to help others aside from uplifting the Lord—that's the reason he gave them to you—and you uplift God by helping someone else. Jimmy Durante once sang a song that began with these lyrics: "Make someone happy. Make just one someone happy..." It was the theme song at the end of the movie *Sleepless in Seattle*. Folks who have good hearts enjoy making other folks happy. Making other people happy is also contagious

it makes you happy too. It would be nice if you always left home with this prayer: “Lord, please enable me to lift up at least one bowed-down head today.” I am going to take my own advice, glory to **God**; and hey, humor helps. Let me pause for a joke. People who don’t like Windows computers can say, “I don’t do Windows.”

Are you aware that your faith and trust in God comes from your heart? It does. It is a most evil thing to put fear in one’s heart. You must answer to the Lord for that. Going back to making someone happy, in doing so, you also make that person feel loved. Another song title is “Love Makes the World Go Round,” which was written by Bob Merrill. Children’s choirs in churches sang, “Praise him. Praise him, all the little children. God is love, God is love,” written by E. Rawdon Bailey. Thank God for the wonderful hearts of my sons. They took great care of me as I grieved my mother’s death. I have two “daddies,” but **sometimes**, children (dependent as well as grown) use role reversal to care for their parents and protect them. I have two sons, about twenty-one years apart in age. I’m a single mom. Our hearts are in the right place when we discipline our children. Discipline shows love. Those who don’t discipline their children need to get their hearts right. “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen” (1 John 4:20, kjv). We cannot love God without loving everyone else. It’s

not possible to love God and have hate in your heart for your fellow man. You know, it's a dangerous thing when Satan rules your head, albeit more dangerous when he rules your heart. He can get to your heart *through* your head. For what a man thinks, oftentimes, that is exactly what he does. Diligently bear this in mind. When we have a pure heart, we are at peace with ourselves. Having a pure heart brings about peace, hallelujah! Imagine what it would be like if every soul in the world developed a pure heart. Why, Jesus would have to make a beeline back to collect his bride, the church. But that's not feasible. Not all of us will accept Jesus as our own personal Lord and Savior. Our hearts are symbolic of what God is all about. God is *all* heart. He's our provider, protector, our best friend and this is just a tip of the ice berg. Let us not forget he's our Heavenly Father. No earthly father measures up to him. He chastises those he loves, those who belong to him; praise you, Jesus! (see Heb. 12:6, kjv). If he does not chastise you, you are lost. If he does not chastise you, you are a bastard and not his (see Heb. 12:8, kjv).

It is easy for a believer to detect a person with a good spirit. After having been introduced to a lady, she told me I have a beautiful spirit. When you encounter a person with a good heart, you can sense their spiritual aura. I was also told by one of my surrogate mothers at church, after accepting my calling to the ministry, I glow. Trust me, I'm not blowing my own horn. I'm simply using myself as

an example. I thank God for allowing his light to shine through me. As always, the glory belongs to him.

When we have confidence in our faith, we use good posture and walk with our heads held high. Did you know that having good posture helps you to lose weight? It does; try it. Some people may think we are conceited because of our good posture and heads held high, but people are going to think what they want to think about you regardless of how you carry yourself. The Lord our God wants us to rend or tear apart our hearts for him.

“‘Even now’, declares the Lord, ‘return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning. Rend your heart and not your garments.’ Return to the Lord, your God for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity” (Joel 2:12-13, kjv). Do not store your treasures on earth where they will rot and lose their worth. Store them in heaven. Where you store your treasures, that’s where your heart is (Matt. 6:19-21 rev. kjv). This scripture is telling us a Christian’s heart should be more connected to heaven more so than to earth. The good man brings out the good inside himself, and the evil man brings out the evil inside himself. We have to give an account, on our judgment day, of the manner in which we speak to people (see Matt. 12:35-37, kjv). We must be meek and lowly in heart. It’s imperative that one loves God with all one’s heart, soul, strength, and mind (see Luke 10:27, kjv).

Allow me to share something interesting with you. There are at least twenty-eight scriptures in the Bible in regard to the heart. That is what prompted me to use the believer's heart as a subject for this book. It is God's will that we suffer from being righteous (work for the Lord) rather than suffer from doing evil. Have you hugged your God today, meaning have you done God's will? Have you asked him to order your steps and followed his orders? Don't only hug him, draw from his spirit as you do so. When one says to you, "Have a heart," one means "be merciful and kind." The bride of Jesus (the church) possesses his heart and Jesus is the heart of the church. Our Lord and Savior play many roles in our lives.

The Responsible Christian Life

It is our hearts that lead us to accept Jesus as our own personal Lord and Savior. It takes a good heart to be a true Christian. If no one in this world possessed a good heart, *everyone* would go straight to hell following their judgment. God does not play. What's in your heart: love, joy, peace, and happiness or hate, jealousy, envy, and strife? Accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative. Here's another good joke: Where did Jesus shop while he was here on earth? Why, Save A Lot, of course, where he could save a lot of souls. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1, kjv). When you first began believing in God and his spiritually awesome Son, it took faith to do so. I think I've asked this question before, but it won't hurt to ask it again: "Where do you think your faith in God comes from? You guessed it (or remembered it): your heart. To say that a boxer does not have heart means he/she has no courage. In regard to the physical heart, a person can be brain-dead and be kept alive by their heart, which is yet functioning. The Lord looks at our hearts because our hearts are the most spiritual parts of our makeup. God can quicken/revive believers through our hearts. In other words, he can keep us alive spiritually by working on our hearts. We, as human beings, have the habit

of using a creative symbol of the heart to imply love. Our heart is the only organ that enables us to feel love. Making love is engaging in sexual intercourse with the one you love; otherwise, it's just sex. Isn't it incredible that we can both love and hate with our hearts? This seems so at odds; think about it. I believe a certain cliché came about as a result: There's a thin line between love and hate. "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring" (Gen. 3:15a, kjv). Because of Adam and Eve's sin, God put hostility between them and their children. This is why men and women can love and hate one another at the same time. My mother, rest her soul, possessed a generous and sacrificial heart. She was generous to a fault and made sacrifices for her family. She was also loving and caring and was, without a doubt, a true disciple of Christ. She did not have a selfish bone in her body. My mom was one of the greatest mothers in the course of history, and that's not a biased opinion. How pure is your heart on a scale of one to ten? (One is not pure at all and ten is very pure.) The Lord would snatch us away from here should we reach ten. The worse thing we can do with our hearts is harden them. "Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness" (Heb. 3:8, kjv). There is an old saying, "Home is where the heart is." It's not meant to be taken literally; the writer doesn't mean our literal home but any place you feel loved. My brother made this statement after our maternal aunt, who was like a second mother

to me, passed away: "If there is a God, why do we have to die?" I was not spiritual then and could not answer his question. First of all, death is the penalty for sin. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23, KJV). Not to mention, God loves us and wants us to go to heaven. Flesh and blood cannot enter heaven. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be quickened and caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:16-17, KJV). The word *quickened* means "to become a spirit." There are spiritual beings *only* in heaven. Do you notice how much nicer and kinder folks are at Christmastide? Why is this the only time of year we have "peace on earth and good will towards men"? It would be wonderful and totally awesome if we kept the Christmas spirit all year round. Imagine that. I have a three-section plaque on my living room wall that says, "*Lord*, let there be *love* in our hearts, *joy* in our lives, *peace* in our home." That says it all. I gave one like it to my main surrogate mother for her birthday. She is my main surrogate mother because she and my mom were good friends, and their personalities were so similar.

I will never understand why it is easier for human beings to hate than it is for us to love. The subject title of my

initial sermon was “It’s All about Love.” I had written two other sermons before it; however, it was only after writing it that the Lord said, “That’s the one,” Small wonder; it was obviously what the congregation needed to hear. In fact, God gave me the idea to write this message through the above-mentioned surrogate mother. She said to me over the phone, “People just don’t love one another like they used to.” We need to be mindful of the fact that God has commanded us to love one another and he is still on the throne. My belief is that when our Heavenly Father imitates Cupid, connects two believers, the attraction begins in their hearts. This explains why some couples marry following whirlwind courtships and remain married “until death do them part.” Only you, Lord, only you can bring this about. Others who have connected hearts are mother and child, father and child, siblings, family per se, friends, and mentors. You don’t encounter many people who have a “heart of gold” these days, but they do exist. For those of us who love the Lord, we must remember “only what you do for Christ will last.” Everything else fades away, and remember, loving the Lord means loving others. I cannot emphasize that enough. “But those things which proceed out the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For, out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness blasphemies” (Matt. 15:19, KJV). This goes to show that there can be entities from your heart that are not of

God but of Satan. Can I get a witness? “It doesn’t matter what you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men” (Col. 3:23, *KJV*). “The word of God brings out what is in your heart” (read Heb. 4:12, *KJV*). First Peter 3:4, *KJV* speaks of our **conscience**, which is ruled by our heart. Of course our conscience informs us that we are wrong. The blood is pumped away from our hearts through our arteries, flows back to our hearts by way of our veins, thus beginning the cycle all over again. The blood distribution ends at the very place it begins **although** there are two different routes of the blood. This is an analogy of God creating and re-creating the world in accordance to the books of Genesis and Revelation. These are the books of the Bible that explains God as the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. When we say an individual has a “big **heart**,” we are referring to the quality, not the size. The Lord presented our spiritual hearts to us so that we could radiate love—love and only love. He never meant for us to use them for evil or sin. I theorize that after God presented Eve to Adam, he performed the very first wedding ceremony thereby the first lesson on love. Since God taught us to love one another, why is it so difficult for us to *learn* this? Philippians 2:3, *KJV* says, “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.” This scripture is not there for decoration, people, any more than all scripture is.

Your Status as a Christian is Revealed by Your Heart

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts, see if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Ps. 139:23-24, KJV). These verses explain why preachers are constantly praying this prayer before preaching: “Lord, search my heart and if you find anything that shouldn’t be there, please remove it.” You cannot come before God or be in his will if there is anything negative in your heart, if your heart contains anything detrimental to the Lord’s teachings. I have begun to use my good heart—hallelujah—to clean up my mouth. I confess I tend to use profanity when I am angry, but at least I don’t make it part of my everyday language as some do. “Those of us who sing, sing from our hearts however, we also cry when our hearts are in pain” (see Is. 65:12, KJV). Allow me to share a poem I wrote following my mother’s death: “The Worst Day of My Life.”

I received the devastating news;
it was over the phone.
Released such a wretched,
uncontrollable cry,
my son rushed to find out what was wrong.

My child returned to his room,
unable to handle the situation, no doubt.
I felt as though something had parted my chest,
and tore my heart out.
Then a friend so wonderful so kind,
held me *securely* in His arms comforting, divine.
He allowed me to purge myself, get it all out of my
system,
and afterwards, let me know I would always have
Him.
Through bad times and good times,
matters *not* what my need may be,
my elderly brother in Zion would *always* be there
for me.
He knew I was hurting bad;
so to release some of the pain,
reminded me that my mother was in the arms of
God,
and there, forever, she would remain.
Oh, how I love Jesus!

I was unable to write this poem, though, until over a year had passed. It would have been too painful for me if I had written it sooner. Jesus possesses such a gentle and humble heart; we can rest our weary and burdened souls in his comforting arms. He forgives instantly when we ask for forgiveness and will not place heavy burdens on us. Praise you, Lord! "Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way! Thou art the Potter, I am the clay. Mold me and make

me after Thy will, while I am waiting, yielded and still. Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way! Search me and try me, Master, today! Whiter than snow, Lord, wash me just now, as in Thy presence humbly I bow. Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way! Wounded and weary, help me, I pray! Power, all power, surely is Thine! Touch me and heal me, Savoir divine. Have thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way! Hold o'er my being absolute sway! Fill with Thy Spirit til all shall see Christ only, always, living in me." The title of this wonderful song is "Have Thine Own Way Lord", written by Adelaide A. Pollard. If you can relate to the words of this song, you are asking God to give you a clean heart. I just finished watching a movie on TV, which portrayed an amazing show of love. The title of the movie is "*I Am Sam*", starring Sean Penn and Dakota Fanning. In the movie, an autistic man rushed from his job at a coffee house to get to the hospital for the birth of his baby girl. The baby's mother abandoned both the baby and father upon leaving the hospital, and he raised her with the help of a friend until she reached the age of seven. I missed part of it, but the father somehow ended up in court after someone reported him to the authorities, claiming that he did not have the presence of mind to continue raising the child. Regardless of his handicap, he was a wonderful father, and father and child taught each other. Push came to shove and the foster mother, who had decided along with her husband to file for custody of the little girl, changed

her mind. She realized she could not tear the father and child apart because their love for each other was so strong. She even told the father she would testify on his behalf, and they (father and former foster parents) became friends after the court awarded him his little girl. The religious status of the father and child was not evident in the movie; however, in my opinion he had to be a believer, for he had a believer's heart.

I am reminded of a brief story I should tell. An incident occurred which involved my oldest grandson and a friend of his. They came to my house seeking help. I was led to call the police. The officer arrived promptly. He handled it in a professional, but humanitarian way. Are you familiar with that old saying we say to people when we're angry because somebody calls us a name "It takes one to know one"? Well, it doesn't always have to be said in anger. I'm a believer, a spiritual one, and I can discern for the most part when someone else is a believer, also. That officer possessed the heart of a believer. First Corinthians 2:9-10, kjv reveals to us that we cannot perceive the things that God has for people who love him. These things God makes known to us through his Spirit, for all things are found through God's Spirit. God's Spirit shows us even his most powerful substance. During my initial sermon, I made this statement: "I theorize that love is the key to God's kingdom." Therefore it is our hearts that lead us to salvation. It's all about love. An analogy of our lives is as one never-ending

institution of learning where our top professor is the Lord God Jehovah, and the number one class is Love 111”—one for the Father, one for the Son, and one for the Holy Spirit. *No one* teaches love as our Creator does. *Feel* His love then spread it around, spread it around, spread it around. “I was sinking deep in sin far from a peaceful shore, very deeply stained within, sinking to rise no more. But, the Master of the sea, heard my despairing cry, from the waters lifted me, now safe am I. Love lifted me. Love lifted me. When nothing else could help, love lifted me,” the song says. The title is “Love Lifted Me.” This one was written by a gentleman named James Rowe. I believe *love* is the most powerful word in the world. Our hearts should be full of love and only love. How could you not love the Lord? He is the very essence of your being. He’s the reason you are here, on earth. Love is the core of all things living. Scientists are searching for answers and explanations to verify life forms. Well, guess what? The answer is pure and simple: it’s love. Why make life, the living part of it, more complicated than it is? Don’t the modes of life, circumstances, situations, problems, stress, anxiety make life difficult enough? God wants us to return to the basics. The love for one another that we have lost has caused the world to become a “ball of confusion,” as the Temptations once sang. This mass of confusion has brought about wars, rumors of wars, murders, rapes, desecration, tragedy, polluted souls—all things grossly negative.

The Marriage of Our Hearts and Love

We should sing to the Lord from our hearts. “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in our heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19, kjv). “Give me a clean heart so I may serve thee. Lord, fix my heart so that I may be moved by thee, for I’m not worthy of all these blessings. Give me a clean heart and I’ll follow thee,” the chorus of this song says. The title is “Give Me A Clean Heart, and the songwriter is Margaret Pleasant Douroux. Just as the ribs protect the physical heart, God protects the spiritual heart if you belong to him. Spirits in Heaven and believers on Earth Are in Reverence to Thee, H-E-A-R-T. Home is where the heart is, and heart is where the home is. While Christians are on earth, heaven is in our hearts. Heaven is our true home. Comprenez-vous? (Do you understand?) In the game of tennis, the word *love* means your score is zero. If you are a loving person in life, you are pure in heart. In this respect, love will win you a ticket to see God. “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8, kjv). If you have high blood pressure, it could affect your physical heart in a negative way. If you have high love

pressure, it can affect your spiritual heart in a positive way. Just as we have veins that lead to our scientific heart, Jesus is our vein that leads to our spiritual heart and from there to our home—heaven. Jesus leads us home. Call on him when you cannot find your way. “His yoke is easy and His burden is light” (Matt. 11:30, kjv). I’m a sure enough witness. We have a cliché: “Follow your heart.” However, we can do so only if our heart is in a spiritual mode; otherwise, it could lead us astray. It has led me astray many times. Follow your spiritual heart when it comes to obtaining a mate, believers, for God knows who is best for you. He knows us better than we know ourselves, and has only our best interests at heart. As for our elderly brother in Zion, “If you ever need a friend who’ll stick by you closer than any brother, I recommend Jesus, Jesus because he’s that kind of friend,” taken from the song entitled “He’s That Kind Of Friend.” Tramaine Hawkins is the songwriter and recording artist. If he is the only friend you’ve got, that’s all right. You don’t need another, trust me. He is my closest friend, but I’m willing to share him, hallelujah!

Let’s discuss Valentine’s Day. This is a holiday that some folks see as one for lovers, especially those of us who have no companion and are lonely, such as I used to be. However, my mom brought to my attention, years ago, that Valentine’s Day is a day to express your love for loved ones in general. It is an occasion to show love to *all* that you love. Well, this certainly made me feel better, for I was going through a

dry spell. Here is a tip for single believers who have no one to share Valentine's Day with: Have a conversation with God. Ask him to allow you to feel his presence. If you have a relationship with the Lord, he will do so anyway. I'm a witness. Do this particularly if you are depressed on that special day, as I often was. Sometimes I didn't feel loved on that day, but God reminded me that I was, and not by him alone. We need that human touch. As a matter of fact, take this advice generally, not just regarding Valentine's Day. It is a very hot summer day, but we should rejoice and be exceedingly glad for every day, for the Lord does not have to wake us up to live it. Every day is beautiful simply because God made it, and everything he made is good. The Lord does tremendously much for us. How could we not serve a God like that? Nobody shows love as God does, and he has shown us how to love. "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deut. 6:5, KJV).

Matthew 5:44-45, KJV says, "But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh the sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." You see, God loves us no matter what type of people we are, whether we love him or not. It is easy to love those who love us but takes much practice and

prayer to love those who don't love us. Enlist the aid of the Holy Spirit to do this and pray without ceasing. If ever there was a time to love, it's now, people (see 1 Thess. 5:17, kjv). Then of course there are some things we should not love (see Eccl. 3:8, kjv). We should love ourselves, for we cannot love others without loving ourselves. Although we should not bestow so much love on ourselves that we have none left for everyone else. There is not a single, solitary person on the face of this planet who does not want to feel loved or be loved. Some folks have a hardened heart and claim that they don't *need* love, but we believers know better, don't we? Mary Magdalene loved Jesus so much she took her hair down (a shameful thing for a woman to do in public those days) and used it with very expensive ointment and perfume to clean Jesus's feet. Moses denied himself the pleasure of remaining a prince of Egypt because he loved God and wished to help his people. Noah loved God so much he obeyed him and built an arc knowing he would be ridiculed. Warriors such as Joshua and Samson loved the Lord God Jehovah and did his bidding. Job suffered *severely* and was persecuted; however, in the midst of his suffering and persecution, he *never* denied God. He kept the faith. This is one of the greatest displays of love for God told by the Bible. There are numerous occasions in God's word, which show tremendous love for him, hallelujah! "Because thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise

thee" (Ps. 63:3, kjv). This verse is an ultimate example of God's love toward us.

My nephew is such a good Christian young man who gives to and helps others from the heart. He possesses a heart of gold. He most certainly has the gift of generosity and is a deacon at his church. My pastor, at one time, said to me, "I'm a little concerned about you. You're overzealous, but it could be because you're new to the ministry." I must confess, that rubbed me the wrong way. I was not overzealous, I was zealous. First and foremost, the Baptist church covenant includes "to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of God," so there is nothing wrong with a Christian being zealous while working for the Lord. Also, he did not know my story. He knew not what God has done for me, where he has brought me from. My Heavenly Father has delivered me from darkness in a big way, the darkness brought on by my bipolar disorder, which was diagnosed when I was seventeen years old. It has taken me to hell, and God brought me back; thank you, Lord! That is why the third verse of "Amazing Grace" is my testimony. "Through many dangers, toils, and snares I have already come; 'tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home," written by a gentleman named John Newton. Glory to God!

I have had horrible experiences, which only God and I know about. My family doesn't even know about them. **Therefore** how could I *not* be excited and praise God with

all my might? This joy I have, the world didn't give it to me and the world can't take it away! Saints, don't you let anyone steal your joy—not anybody! Believers accomplish more in life when their hearts are in the right place. That is my theory from my heart to yours. God loves us so much that he sacrificed his only begotten Son for us. Ain't that good news? Are you aware, readers, that the definition of *gospel* is "good news"? It's the good news regarding our Lord and Savior. Let us examine the saying, "Let's get to the heart of the matter." This simply means the person speaking wants to talk about the important aspects of a certain topic. My youngest grandson was delighted when I attended one of his little league football games. This shows his love for his "Granny Gay", bless his heart.

God's Everlasting Love

*D*o you think there is nothing you can do for the Lord? Think again. Everyone has at least one gift from God, and if we are good stewards of that one gift, he will reward us with others. We all have a job(s) to do for God. This is part of his plan. Don't you just love it when a plan comes together? I am so happy when my writing "gels," when it coordinates. Let it be known that God equips us to do what he calls us to do. I've learned that the best writing is in the rewriting. You do it over and over again until you get it right. When believers witness to folks constantly, we get it right. "Practice makes perfect." Oh, all right, that's another cliché. What can I tell you? I am full of them. At least they make sense, and I believe in using common sense. No matter what it is that God wants us to do for him, he expects us to do it from the heart, put all our heart into it. When we put all our heart into the things we do for the Lord, we give him 100 percent. We don't do anything halfway. As I stated before, only what you do for Christ will last. This song says, "What God has for me, it is for me. What God has for me, it is for me. I know without a doubt he will bring me out. What God has for me, it is for me." The title is "It Is For Me (What God Has 4 Me), recorded by Miami Mass Choir. God has something he wants only

you to do for him, and he has individual blessings for each and every one of us. Therefore we should not be envious or jealous in regard to what the Lord has for others. When the Lord God Almighty put us on the potter's wheel, he planted a seed in us that would grow and would *glorify him* after it reaches its capacity. You better recognize. We all have something unique within us that God expects us to use to his glory—not our glory, but his. This essence, God gave us. The Lord helps us to do what honors him the most. We should all be grateful that God has instilled in us something personal he commands we use to magnify him. God has to be greater, and we have to be lesser, for he is our Creator and our ruler as well as our Heavenly Father. The number one reason he placed us here is so we can worship, praise, and serve him. Let us focus on this. Sometimes God says no to certain prayers, because he knows that granting those prayer requests is not in our best interest. He allows particular circumstances to continue in our lives as part of his plan for our lives. He means us no harm. God enables us to see only the small picture as he watches our future as well as our past and present **on his big-screen TV**. Dottie Peoples sang, “He meant it for my good. God meant it for my good. He brought me out, without a doubt. I knew that he would. Now, I know no defeat. I’m strong when I’m weak. God gave me a song now I must sing on; The devil meant it for bad, but I’m so glad God meant it for my good.” The title is “He Meant It For My Good”.

I once had a precious baby niece born to my brother and his wife. She was their first little girl after two boys. She was diagnosed with a malignant liver, and God took her at just a few months of age. Naturally, the tragedy was so very difficult for my brother to accept. He was angry with God. The family did not have a clue as to God's reason for it; however, he has a purpose for everything he does. God has blessed my brother and his now ex-wife (they're back together, by the way) with a beautiful granddaughter who was named after her deceased aunt. God meant it for their good. My nephew and his wife lost the first baby that was born to them, a little boy. Afterwards, they had two more gorgeous children, and now my nephew has been blessed with still another child following his divorce. My sister-in-law (this nephew's mother) had begun to wonder if she'd ever have grandchildren; now she has three. God meant it for their good.

My bipolar disorder has made me stronger in Christ. It will also make me a powerful messenger for Christ. God meant it for my good. I formerly had a big inferiority complex, so much so that I felt I had no purpose in life until God called me to preach his word and gave me confirmation on that. Stand up for Jesus. If you don't stand for something, you will fall for anything. Everything the Lord does for us and everything we do (in spirit and in truth) for him comes from the heart. Of course we know that God does not have a physical heart for he is a Spirit. However, "God is love" (1

John 4:8b, kjv). He possesses one enormous spiritual heart. Preachers need to cease saying that *good* is the best word in the English language to describe God's goodness. Their vocabulary is truly limited. Since God has *all* power, we should use more powerful words to describe him, words such as *great*, as in "how great thou art"; *excellent*, as in "Oh, how excellent is thy name in all the heavens and earth"; *magnificent*; and *superb*. God expects us to help save souls.

However, we must also be people persons; in other words, we should love people and be geared toward helping **them**—that's mandatory. The soul is the essence of a person; therefore how can we possibly help save a soul if we do not cater to that person's physical needs? We cannot do so. If we don't show love to people and help supply their needs, we are not serving God—bottom line. And yet some of us are just downright mean; we truly are. There are preachers who walk right past homeless people begging for change; when God tells us, "Give it to them, if you have it," then it's between them and God what they do with it. Some pastors deny certain folks who ask the church for help, and the beat goes on. You cannot serve God and not serve man. We preachers are in a position of service, make no mistake about it, and definitely should not cause others to feel inferior to us. How can folks respect us when we are nasty to them? That is not the way to gain respect. My late but great pastor once said, from the pulpit, that he had a dream in which he was allowed to see into hell, and all

he saw there were preachers. “Then he said to them all: If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23, KJV). You know, it is so very difficult to deny yourself although we have to do so if we are striving to follow the footsteps of Jesus. Philippians 2:3b, KJV says, “But in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.” Disciple apprentices, it is imperative that we learn to place others ahead of ourselves—their needs, welfare, happiness, etc. It is then and only then that we can truly become disciples of Christ as opposed to being merely Christians. We must constantly pray and ask God to remove “self.” If you don’t clean up your hearts, you may find yourself foretold in this passage: “Enoch the seventh from Adam prophesied about these men: ‘See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of His holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against Him. These men are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage’” (Jude 14-16, KJV). Now let’s discuss witnessing for the Lord. For those of us who are timid about it as I was, here is an approach: During conversation say, “I’ve got a friend you might know,” then wait for their response. They most likely will answer, “Who is it?” Then you answer, “Jesus. Do you know him?” In other words, be creative with

your witnessing; make it interesting. It's not a requirement to know someone in order to witness to them. One of the exercises in an extensive Bible study called Masterlife 1 is to become friends with a person who is not a Christian then witness to them and tell the class about them. This is basically good. Albeit believers must be careful while befriending nonbelievers because instead of them accepting Christ, because of your witnessing, they may "flip the script" on you. They may influence you to backslide, especially if you become close friends. They will go to places you should not go to. They will do things you should not do. Satan would love it if you fell into that trap, so beware. "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?" (2 Cor. 6:14-15, kjv)

It is a good thing the heart takes the blood through a purification process, because sin is in the blood. My pastor taught that to the Bible study class. I thank God for the hearts of my family members who attended my initial sermon. Family members should support one another. Marriage should be described as two hearts joined together as one. The only motive for marriage ought to be love. However, there are marriages of convenience, business-type marriages, those that result from the female being pregnant and those where couples finally decide to make it legal after

“shacking up.” Even believers marry people God has not joined them to, and some of us wonder why the divorce rate is so high. It was so simple in the old school; when a couple loved each other, they got married, period. If it does not last “until death do you part,” it was not powered by love but perhaps lust. People don’t take marriage seriously anymore. They start out with the wrong attitude; “If it doesn’t work out, there’s always divorce,” they say. The marriage is doomed before the vows are exchanged. Let’s face it: marriage is not the ultimate commitment these days as it’s supposed to be. Couples put more work into planning their weddings and receptions than they put into their marriage. Even those who have never been married, such as me, know that marriage takes a lot of work to succeed. Some mistakenly think the marriage will take care of itself—not. My mom used to say, “What it takes to get them it takes the same thing to keep them.” We do it backwards. We date to marry, but the Bible teaches us that we should marry to date. The word date/court is not mentioned in God’s word. It only speaks of marriage. When we marry to date, we don’t commit fornication. In today’s society dating automatically includes sex. Besides, we don’t really get to know someone until we have lived with them. Couples who “shack up” use this as an excuse. It’s always good to have loving friends in your life. I’m talking about friends who are with you through thick and thin, friends you can depend on when the going gets rough. You need the type of friends who

will not abandon you no matter what betides—Webster’s dictionary definition of *friends*. I read a novelty item in a catalogue, which said, “Friends are angels with wings.” We can tell our troubles to the Lord, but we all need that human touch. Nobody loves me like Jesus loves me, and I love him because he first loved me. This song recorded by Whitney Houston says, “I love the Lord. He heard my cry, and pitied every groan. Long as I live, and troubles rise, I’ll hasten to his throne.” Whitney Houston sang it in the movie, “The Preacher’s Wife”. Nobody can do me like Jesus, thanks be to God. He and I have a close relationship. We have conversations like father and child. I can talk to God about anything, and he actually *listens* to me as no one else can or does. If it had not been for the Lord, I would have committed suicide years ago. There is no way *anyone* could damage my relationship with my Father. He has been too good to me for me to allow that.

The Battle is Not Yours; It's the Lord's

Satan thinks love stinks, and we believers know that he thinks this, don't we? That is why he has set out to destroy it. Love is his enemy, because God is love. Satan's spirit heart has to be as black as night. Don't allow the enemy to ruin the love you have for others. If you do so, you will get a ticket to hell. Wouldn't you rather learn than burn? "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman who needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15, kjv). If an associate tells you to jump off a bridge, would you do so? Oftentimes, when the devil tells us to do something, we do so without giving it any thought. Do not fall prey to this head demon, for in doing so, you may fall into the fire-filled pit of hell. Stand on God's promises; don't fall on the devil's lies, for the devil is a liar and the truth is not in him. If something is not the truth, it can be nothing but a lie. There is no in between. For the most part, the world is black and white. The black symbolizes lies, and the white represents truth/honesty. If you live a life full of lies, you are living in darkness. However, if you live a life of truth/honesty, you are living in the light—Jesus, the light of the world!

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another” (Gal. 5:22–26, KJV). God spreads love and peace. The only *true* peace comes from God. Allow me to elaborate on peace. The peace God gives you enables you to remain calm, cool, and collected in the midst of the storms of life. “Don’t tell God how big your storm **is**; tell your storm how big your God is.” I first read that on an item in a catalogue. You can receive such peace only through faith in God, and faith comes from the heart. The later part of the statement bears repeating. Move over, Laila Ali; make way for “the contender of the cross”—that’s me. I have much heart especially when it comes to fighting for the Lord. I will fight “tooth and nail” for him. My boxing gloves are made of the whole armor of God. That’s the least I can do for Christ since He died for me (see Eph. 6:9, KJV). Who is willing to fight with me? I’m a soldier in the army of the Lord, how about you? If you are not, I *plead* with you to join me. You’ll be glad you did. The only hands, arms, legs, and feet God has are ours. But most importantly, the only mouth God has is ours. I am God’s mouthpiece, that’s all. He has to use our mouths to spread his word. But wait a minute! On the other hand, if we don’t speak for the Lord, he will cause the rocks to cry out for him, hallelujah! Once

he had a donkey speak for him. My main goal in life is to make God proud of me. Our hearts should cause us to press on for the Lord, amen? Don't you want to go to heaven? *H*-home, *E*-away from earth, *A*-around God's throne, *V*-victory in Jesus, *E*-everlasting, *N*-new Jerusalem. God has been good, sweet, and kind to me. James Cleveland wrote, "God has smiled on me. He has set me free. God has smiled on me. He's been good to me." Even though the prince of this world (Satan) is on a rampage, God is still in control. Make no mistake about it. I repeat: my number one goal in life is to make God proud of me. That should be the number one goal of all believers. In this day and age of massive heart attacks, we should focus on having massive "love" attacks. The Lord uses sunshine to express his love for us especially when it's cold. When we are going through a heat wave perhaps, God is saying to us, "It will be hotter in hell. So if you can't stand the heat here, you do not want to go to hell." Folks have this hypothetical description of the devil: red suit, pitchfork, **horns**, and tail. Well, I've got news for you. Satan dresses up for church just as we do. He attends church every Sunday looking good, and he's attractive, not ugly. At least he's attractive when he wants to be. Oftentimes, we take him to church with us in case we're wondering how he got there. Trust me, we do not want to do that. He has a way of making sin irresistible. Beware, believers. Here is a song I love, by Shirley Caesar, "Satan we're gonna tear your kingdom down. Satan, we're gonna tear your kingdom down. You've been building your

kingdom all over this land. Satan, we're gonna tear your kingdom down."

Love really does conquer all, and we can use it to obtain victory over the enemy: Satan, Lucifer, Beelzebub, the devil. Those of us who are a child of the King already have the victory because of Jesus shedding his blood for the remission of our sins. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13, kjv). I never thought I'd be a public speaker, but God is certainly working with me. The second time I spoke to a congregation, at my oldest brother's memorial service, I managed to look at the people as I spoke. **Therefore I** am making progress. Although it is a small church, it was full. Family members complimented me, not that compliments mean that much to me anymore. I just need to know I am making progress in my work for the Lord. Even more so, I allow the Lord to work *through* me. God equips us to do what he calls us to do. In other words, he gives us the know-how to do it. Each Christian is called to witness for the Lord and make a disciple of Christ—not a church member, but a disciple. God has given each one of us a gift to glorify him, I repeat. If you don't know what your gift is, pray and ask God to reveal it to you. This is vitally important. We are to use our gifts for the Lord, only for him.

Let's discuss romantic love a bit. Female believers, we must be less concerned with a man's physical appearance and more concerned with his heart, and vice versa. But then

on the other hand, it is important that we are physically attracted to the person we marry, and I'll tell you why. If you are not physically attracted to your mate, if there is no chemistry between the two of you, you may encounter someone whom you *are* physically attracted to and commit adultery. Your love for each other should be stronger than that, but you know how we are. This is food for thought. Even though your mate will lose their attractiveness as they age, your love should be strong enough to overcome that. After all, you will lose your attractiveness, also. Unless God has actually brought a couple together, not just according to the wedding vows but chose them for one another, it will not be unconditional love. In fact, the only cases of unconditional love I know of are God's love for us and the love a good parent/grandparent has for their children/grandchildren. We need to talk about the forgiving heart. "Bless the Lord oh my soul, and forget not all his benefits. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases" (Ps. 103:2-3, KJV). God forgives us over and over again, and he requires us to forgive each other. "For if we forgive men (their trespasses), your Heavenly Father will also forgive you" (Matt. 6:14, KJV). God gave Jesus the power to forgive us. "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house," (Matt. 9:6, KJV).

God has commanded us to “forgive and forget.” We ought to forgive people for whatever they do to us. As for the forget part, God knows we will not literally forget although we are not to remind the person who committed the transgression against us of their sin. Though many of us do this, it does not corroborate with the forgetting part. If you possess a good heart, you cannot hold a grudge. This has been my experience. God forgives us, he gave Jesus the power to forgive us, and with the Holy Spirit, we can forgive. **God...Jesus...Holy Spirit...People.** Let us bear in mind that God is well aware it is not easy for us to forgive and forget, but life itself is not easy. Forgiving is one of the things we need to pray over often. Joseph M. Scriven so eloquently wrote, “What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer. Oh, what peace we often forfeit. Oh, what needless pain we bare, all because we do not carry, everything to God in prayer.” The believer’s heart should be focused on the things of heaven, not on the things of this world, for we are in the world but not of the world. “But I say unto you, ‘Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you’” (Matt. 5:44, kjv). This is very difficult to do; however, God commands us to do so. We need to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to aid us in doing so. God never told us this Christian race would be easy. We should allow the Holy Spirit to lead and

guide us. This enables us to obey God. It is most definitely a sin in itself when we disobey God. Believers, there is one thing you must realize: without God, there would be no you. There are no big sins or little sins. One sin is not worse than another. God sees it all as sin. Although we should not commit premeditated sin, thinking, "Well, I'm going to sin anyway, so I should just go on and sin now." That is premeditated sin. My theory is that God is more upset with us when we are guilty of premeditated sins rather than sins that occur naturally to us, sins we give no thought to. Obeying God is just a drop in the bucket considering how he blesses us over and over again. God is a sovereign God. He does what he wants to do. He does not have to bless us. Even when we disobey God, he blesses us, all the more so when we obey him. We must obey the Lord in order for him to protect us. Say for instance God tells us, "Don't eat that." We eat it anyway and get very sick. Another example: When our Heavenly Father tells us, "Don't get romantically involved with that man/woman," we do so anyway and that person uses/abuses us. Our Heavenly Father cannot protect us if we do not obey him. That's the bottom line. Isaiah 25:8, kjv says, "He will swallow up death forever. The sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of His people from all the earth. The Lord has spoken." Now is that love or is that love? If you are not pleased with the work you have done for the Lord this year, start all over again and do it right next year.

Get Your Heart Right: Time is Winding Down

We need to work on lifting up the name of the Lord, believers, and stomping the devil down, as Kirk Franklin sang. It's past time for nonbelievers to become believers because time is winding down. Read the book of Revelation. It's no joke. The end is near, people. God's word is fulfilling itself, and there is not much left to be fulfilled. If there was ever a time to do so, it's time to put God first in your life then he will take it from there. If you place the Lord first in your life and obey him, there is *nothing* he won't do for you. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33, kjv). Be encouraged by the Father... the Son...the Holy Spirit. As stated before, we need to work on our love pressure even more so than our blood pressure. Lord, please give us the love that flows from heart to heart and breast to breast. Is your heart in the right place or do you worship idols? That is the question. Is your mind set on things above or the material things of this world? Do you wear the breastplate of righteousness or aid Satan in his vendetta against our Creator? Ephesians 6:14, kjv says, "Stand therefore, having your loins gird about with

truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness.” Do you want to go to heaven bad enough to obey God? Do you want to make heaven your home or hell your fate? I’m just giving you something to think about. “Silver and gold—silver and gold. I’d rather have Jesus than silver and gold. No fame or fortune—Nor riches untold. I’d rather have Jesus than silver and gold.” This strong gospel song was written by Kirk Franklin. As I’ve stated before, drunks show more love for one another than Christians do. Ain’t that a shame? Two drunks could be walking down the sidewalk, and one falls then the other one helps him up. I tell you, we’re going to be surprised to see some souls in heaven, but even more so to find that we made it there. It’s all about love. Single Christian ladies should be more concerned with what’s in a guy’s heart, not what’s in his wallet. This bears repeating. Get your priorities straight, from my heart to yours. Just because a man has money, it does not mean he is going to treat you right. Let us get to the heart of the matter. As for me, nobody does me like Jesus does. He is my temporary husband until God joins the man he has chosen for me and I together. We need to meet face-to-face. “I really love the Lord. I really love the Lord. You don’t know what He’s done for me, gave me the victory. I love Him. I love Him. I really love the Lord.” The title is “I Really Love The Lord.” This piece was written by Jimmy Dowell and originally recorded by St. James Mass Choir. Who wouldn’t love one like that? “Jesus, you’re the center of my joy. All that’s

good and perfect comes from you. You're the heart of my contentment, hope for all I do; Jesus, you're the center of my joy." The title of this delightful gospel song is "Center Of My Joy," written by Richard Smallwood.

I experienced a deep meditation after arguing with my rebellious teenage son. Afterwards, I was so refreshed. The stress, the tension was gone, glory to God! Only you can do this for me, Lord, only you. Thank God things have gotten better between us.

Beware, believers. Satan loves lazy believers because he can use **them; and** he has weak Christians for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. But sometimes believers seem to be lazy when they are not. Think about how easygoing Jesus was. I'm sure many folks of his time mistook him for being lazy. This is definitely food for thought. You need a good heart in order to forgive—this bears repeating. Does your heart bear good fruit or bad?

A man notices that a little boy is cheerful all the time, and he knows his family is poor. One day, he asks the little boy, "How can you be happy all the time when your family has no money?" The little boy answers, "My father is rich. He takes real good care of me." Who do you suppose this little boy is referring to as his father? Once again, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you (see Matt. 6:25-30, kjv). More and more, this is becoming evident in my life. All we need to do is stay connected to God and keep our eyes on

the prize (eternal life in glory) then the Lord will take care of the rest. When we are struggling through this Christian race, God connects us with other believers whose hearts are full of love. Don't you just love it when you begin to see the silver lining behind the dark clouds? I certainly do. Our symbolic heart is red. Red is a passionate color. **Albeit sex is** not the only thing you can be passionate about. You can have a passion for anything, for instance food, clothes, homes, love, preaching, writing, singing, computers, wireless phones, cooking, housework, driving, etc. Whatever it is you love to do, that's your passion. Jesus had a passion for teaching and preaching about our Heavenly Father. Also, he was passionate regarding healing and raising folks from the dead as well as encouraging people. However, he not only had passion, he had *compassion* as well. We should have compassion for others also, believers. I possess a passion to tell the world the story of our Lord and Savior as it has never been told before, and I believe God will give me power from the Holy Ghost to do so, because we (God and I) have a relationship. I want to lift the Lord up like he has never been lifted up before. I wish for others to see him as I see him. Jesus is *everything* to me. When I wake up in the morning, both the sun and the Son shine on me. Upon awakening, I thank God for another day in the land of the dying and ask him to order my steps for said day. Therefore he leads me and guides me throughout that day. Whether it's a good day or a bad day, God has a way of preventing

the bad from harming me. He gives me perfect peace as no one or nothing else could. Christ causes the sun to shine in my heart, which brings about cheer. Sometimes, he alerts me when something bad is going to happen; or when evil is around me, he helps me to prepare for it. Christ helps me get through a difficult day by giving me strength and encouragement. On dark days, he brings me out of that darkness and into his marvelous light. When I lay my head on my pillow at night, although I often forget to ask him to, God sends my guardian angel to watch over and protect my son and me throughout the night as we sleep. Since I talk to the Lord every day and sometimes all throughout the day, I don't say a bedtime prayer per se. The Lord does not get my attention only once in the morning and once at night. "Jesus is the answer for the world today. Above him there is no other. Jesus is the way. Jesus is the answer for the world today. Above him, there is no other. Jesus is the way," is a song Andrae Crouch wrote. I dare you to debate with me on this. When you pray, pray with all your heart and God will surely hear and answer you. I'm a witness. Be sincere in your praying; be humble, and there is nothing he won't do for you unless he feels that you don't need what you pray for or he knows it would do you more harm than good. There are times when God does answer prayers that fall into this category to teach you a lesson. Hence be careful what you pray for because you might get it. God wants us to be prudent with our praying. Believers, develop

a relationship with the Lord through constant prayer, studying his Word, and actually communicate with him. Meditate on the Lord, focus on him. Trust me. You'll be glad you did. As stated before, without God/Jesus, there would be no you. God...Jesus...People. Nonbelievers, do you honestly believe that your existence has nothing to do with God? Do you truly believe you would be here had Jesus not died for your sins? If so, you have a very defeated belief. Come on over to our side. John 3:16, *KJV* says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever shall believeth in him, should not perish but have everlasting life." "For I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6, *KJV*). Were it not for Christ, God would have destroyed the world and us in it. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23, *KJV*). God's Word is no joke. The Bible is basic instructions before leaving earth. Salvation is offered to everyone; it is up to us to accept or deny it. Nonbelievers, we have just about come full circle, the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end. We are living in the end times. You decide your fate. You know sometimes when you wake up in the middle of the night and cannot go back to sleep, God wants you to read your Bible. Perhaps, he has a message for you. The work you do for the Lord, or rather the work you allow the Lord to do through you, is more rewarding than any other work you do in life. It is fruit bearing. Some

folks don't realize that in helping others they are helping themselves. Are you having a "pity party"? Get involved in helping someone else and that "pity party" will quickly be over. I guarantee you. With every beat of your heart, God is reminding you to love others and show that love. We must remember that *love* is a verb as well as a noun. Therefore how can we say we love someone and not show it? That cannot be done, right? If you have not learned to love, you are playing right into the devil's hands. He has gotten you where he wants you—big time. I've said it before and I'll say it again: love is Satan's enemy because God is love and God is Satan's immortal enemy. The Lord has made love powerful, the most powerful emotion, be not deceived. Your heart is the boss of your body. When it stops, you stop. We need to work on that "love pressure," I kid you not. Now, when somebody blatantly asks me to do something against the will of God, my answer is, "No can do." Practice making that your response as well. "Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin; Each vict'ry will help you some other to win. Fight manfully onward, dark passions subdue; Look ever to Jesus, He'll carry you through. Ask the Savior to help you, comfort, strengthen, and keep you; He is willing to aid you, He will carry you through." The title of this timeless hymn is "Yield Not To Temptation," written by Horatio R. Palmer. It takes heart (courage) to be a disciple of Christ. You must be strong-willed. There are no ifs, ands, or buts about it. Alone we are weak, but in Christ we are strong.

Christian ladies, examine that man's heart. Be sure that his mind does not travel on one track. Make sure that his priorities are straight. Pray for your mate and be reminded that it's the man who gets the wife; it's not the woman who gets the husband. That's the biblical way. Wait for God to lead your "Boaz" to you. It pays to wait on the Lord for your blessings. I am most definitely a witness! The loneliness gets to you at times; however, Jesus fills all the voids in your life. Trust me on that. Nobody loves you like Jesus does, absolutely nobody. The chorus of "Only What You Do for Christ Will Last" says, "Remember, only what you do for Christ will last. Remember, only what you do for Christ will last. Only what you do for him will be counted at the end. Only what you do for Christ will last." This song was written by a gentleman named Raymond Rasberry. "The service of Jesus true pleasure affords, In him there is joy without an alloy. 'Tis heaven to trust Him and rest on His words; It pays to serve Jesus each day. It pays to serve Jesus, it pays every day, It pays every step of the way, Though the pathway to glory may sometimes be drear, you'll be happy each step of the way." The song title is "It Pays To Serve Jesus", written by Frank C. Huston. You know how wonderful it is to feel loved; therefore spread that wonderful feeling to another human being. Don't just be human, be humane. If you possess a good heart, treasure it, nurture it. Do not damage it and do all you can to avoid it being hurt by others, for it can win you a ticket to heaven. I'm talking

about glory—paradise! Have you hugged your heart today? Treat it right. When agape love blossoms, positive entities occur: Your faith and trust in God grows. You become more obedient to the Lord God Jehovah. You desire to spread love all around. You remove self and focus on others. You are happy. You are at peace. You see the silver lining behind the dark clouds. All is right with the world in your sight despite the “helter-skelter,” hallelujah! Your outlook on life is optimistic. Need I say more? Accept Christ as your Lord and Savior, folks, while the blood is still running warm in your veins. I *dare* you. I *challenge* you to do so. As hip-hop recording artists Salt-n-Pepa sang, “What a man! What a man! What a man! What a *mighty* good man! Yes, he is!”

In times like these, you need a savior: In times of wars and rumors of wars, murders, all sorts of crime, drug addiction, alcohol abuse, parents killing/abusing children, children killing/abusing parents, and the beat goes on. Making Christ the center of your life should be your current resolution, not your New Year's resolution. There is no better one you could make. The Lord has a way of bringing other believers into your life. When believers get together and talk about Jesus, they strengthen one another, revive one another, and praise God together!

You Really Can't Judge a Book by Its Cover

*A*llow me to talk about our outward appearance, the believer's physical appearance in particular. As stated before, our Heavenly Father does everything for a purpose, including the "shells" he gave us. It is no accident that we all look different. However, people judge outward appearances and have come up with words to identify them: attractive, pretty, beautiful, handsome, fine, plain, and ugly. Because of this, we compare our physical appearance with that of others and assume other folks look better than we do. This brings that old "green-eyed monster" to life—jealousy, or as we call it today, hate. Some people who are considered ugly on the outside are beautiful or handsome on the inside. God uses this quality and our "shells" to attract nonbelievers, to draw them to us so we can witness to them. There is an old saying, "Handsome is as handsome does." When your heart is pure/clean, it shows. Believers, when we leave the house, we are to look our very best. We don't need to be dressed up, but well-groomed, yes, because we have a mission, a mission to witness for the Lord. To God be the glory for the things he has done. How many of you know that God is still moving? He's still moving in my heart and soul. "If I can

help somebody as I travel along. If I can help somebody in a word or a song. If I can help somebody from doing wrong, no my living shall not be in vain. If I can help somebody as I travel along. If I can help somebody in a word or a song. If I can help somebody from doing wrong, no my living shall not be in vain. No my living shall not be in vain. No my living shall not be in vain. If I can help somebody while I'm singing this song, no my living shall not be in vain. No my living shall not be in vain. No my living shall not be in vain. If I can help somebody while I'm singing this song, no my living shall not be in vain." The title of this wonderful song is "If I Can Help Somebody". The gospel version was written by Bonita C. Ruff and originally recorded by Mahalia Jackson.

Believers ought to possess a giving heart, a generous heart, if you will. We need to give without expecting anything in return. I love giving when I've got *to* give. Second Corinthians 9:7b, kjv says, "For God loveth a cheerful giver." We should not give grudgingly; that does not make for Christian giving. Doris Akers, songwriter of "You Can't Beat God Giving" said, "You can't beat God giving, no matter how you try." I've noticed recently that God is bringing his children together in these end times. "The church that was scattered is now the church that is gathered," the veteran associate minister at my church once included in a prayer. I learned something very important in the Masterlife 1 class I took concerning prayer. It's not only

about what we want from God, but about what he wants for us and providing us with the means by which to honor him. The latter makes the Lord sound selfish; however, he has every right to be, just like he has good reason to want us to worship him and only him. God is our number one provider, and he blesses us constantly. It's not about us, it's about Jesus. I cannot say that enough. The Lord God Jehovah is more than worthy to be praised. He does not always answer our prayers the way we want him to, and sometimes his answer is *no* or *wait*. Sometimes, I believe, God says *wait* to teach us to have patience. As I've stated before, the times he says *no*, it's because we don't need what we are praying for or it would be harmful to us. God's purpose for some things must remain a mystery. If he told us everything, there would be no need for us to have faith and trust in him. Don't you agree? Luke 9:16, KJV implies that Jesus prayed with his eyes open. He was looking up. "Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the multitude." Therefore, the ways in which we are taught to pray must be man-made—eyes closed, bowed-down head, sometimes kneeling. Of course, the kneeling position is the most *humble* way to pray. Have you prayed today? Prayer ought to be part of your everyday schedule. It is a ritual we all should make time for, as well as reading the Bible. "I am satisfied with Jesus. He has done so much for me. He has suffered to redeem me. He has died

to set me free. I am satisfied. I am satisfied. I am satisfied with Jesus. But the question comes to me, as I think of Calvary. Is my Master satisfied with me?" The title of this song is "I Am Satisfied With Jesus", written by Baylus Benjamin McKinney.

The Hearts of Believers Connect

At noon day Bible study at another church. In a day Bible study at another church one noon the pastor spoke of temptation, how we should stay on our knees in prayer to overcome it especially when it comes to basic human need. We should wait for God's answer to that need. He and I touched and agreed on parts of the lesson, meaning some things I have written in this book he brought out in his lesson. Strong believers are often connected in that way. While praying for others, when you cannot recall a person's/people's names, you should say something to this effect, "Lord, if I failed to mention someone I should have mentioned, please credit it to my brain and not my heart." Become a "prayer warrior," as one of my former prayer partners was, and abounding in faith, as another one was. They both had the gift of encouragement. I thanked God for them. You know, I used to think God only spoke to preachers; boy was I wrong. When God speaks to you, he speaks to your heart albeit it's as though you can hear him speak inside your head. This bears repeating. All you have to do is open up to the Lord, get into that *spiritual* mode, and then you can hear him. "Let not your heart be troubled:

ye believe in God, believe also in me.” John 14:1, kjv is saying don’t be confused; if you believe in the Father, you should also believe in the Son.

I just came from the store where the checkout clerk bagged my groceries with plastic bags. I asked if I could have four paper bags to use in my wastebasket. She gave me nine paper bags, bless her heart. This is an example of a good heart. My landlord is a God-fearing elderly man who also has a good heart. He shows concern when I’m not feeling well, and he’s a wealthy man. Many wealthy folks couldn’t care less about poor folks. That number two son of mine is too easygoing, seems to me. However, maybe that is because God has given him much inner peace. If only I could have such peace. He does have a temper, though. But it takes quite a bit to anger him unless he’s under stress. My five surrogate mothers have hearts of gold. They are all members of my church. I thank God for them. One of the heads/members of the gospel group I was formerly a member of has a heart of gold as well. He is constantly doing things for others and is a hard worker. He is in the ministry also. He was raised right. His mom is one of my surrogate mothers.

A prime example of showing your love for our Heavenly Father is obeying him. What part of “obey God” don’t we understand? That is the only way he can protect us. The Lord also expects wives to obey their husbands for the same reason, so that the husband can protect the wife (see Eph.

5:22-24, KJV). Exodus 20:6, KJV shows that if you love God, you will keep his commandments. Remember, God looks at your heart, not your outward appearance. Thereby keeping God's commandments comes straight from the heart.

Upon first entering the living room of my apartment to view it, this wonderful Spirit overcame me and gave me the feeling "this is home," before I saw the rest of it. God's Spirit is here although the enemy has invaded it since, through my teenage son, and quite possibly me too. But thank you, Jesus, the sweet Spirit has been restored through prayer. "There's a sweet, sweet Spirit in this place, and I know that it's the Spirit of the Lord. There are sweet expressions on each face, and I know that it's the presence of the Lord. Sweet Holy Spirit, sweet heavenly dove, stay right here with us filling us with your love. And for these blessings, we lift our hearts in praise. Without a doubt we'll know that we have been revived, when we shall leave this place." The title of this song is "There's A Sweet Sweet Sprit In This Place", written by Doris Akers. Sometimes I get impatient with the Lord waiting for him to bless me. You know how we do. Although I am well aware that he may not come when you want him, but he is always right on time. I witness this over and over again and still get impatient. Do you fall into that category? The Lord answers our prayers when he gets ready. He is a sovereign God. God does not want us to work for him; he wants to work through us. If our hearts are pure/clean, bearing in

mind that we feel love with our hearts and God is love we should follow our hearts—but only if we have pure/clean hearts. Comprenez-vous? (Do you understand?)

With every beat of my heart, I love the Lord. For he is the reason my heart is still beating. God is also responsible for the fact that my heart can “take a licking and keep on ticking.” Again, have you hugged your God today? You hug him by abiding in his Word, obeying him, having faith and trust in him, and acknowledging him in all that you do. That is how you hug God. Here is a song that came from Hezekiah Walker’s heart: “I need you. You need me. We are a part of God’s body. Stand with me, agree with me. We are a part of God’s body. It is His will that every need be supplied. You are important to me, I need you to survive. You are important to me, I need you to survive. I pray for you. You pray for me. I love you, I need you to survive. I won’t harm you with words from my mouth, I love you. I need you to survive. It is His will that every need be supplied. You are important to me. I need you to survive. You are important to me. I need you to survive.” The title is “I Need You To Survive”.

You know, a true disciple of Christ should not be concerned with what people think about them, or at least not overly concerned. For instance, I had not had a man in my life for many years because of my vow to God to abstain from fornication. I’m sure some folks think I am a lesbian, but that does not bother me. We should be less concerned

about what people *think* about us and more concerned about what God *knows* about us. Don't you agree? Even though some folks may think I'm a lesbian, they are going to be mighty surprised when I marry the man God has for me. "A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity" (Prov. 17:17, KJV). Sometimes we wonder why we can get along with a friend easier than we can get along with a sibling. This scripture explains it. Come on board the **disciple-of-Christ** train! Get your ticket and come on board! Remember, when you have faith in Jesus and you are in the midst of a storm, he will give you perfect peace. I **repeat**—don't tell God how big your storm is, tell your storm how big your God is. Read Luke 15:11–24, KJV. This passage of scripture shows how compassion is born out of love. How often do you show compassion for another? Do you have a compassionate heart? Passion is what we feel for things we treasure; of course there is sexual passion. Compassion is treasuring other people, understanding the value of human life. All believers should have and show compassion. However, we can do this only if we love one another. Jesus constantly showed compassion to folks. Matthew 9:36, KJV says, "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd." "Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fails" (Lam. 3:22, KJV).

I love water. Nothing quenches our thirst as well as water does. I call it the nectar of God. Water also symbolizes cleansing and purification. It works wonders for your health. My belief is that it is benefiting my kidney disease. I tend to eat more salt than I should, and the water has to be flushing the salt from my system. My nephrologist is *amazed* at how well I am doing thank you, Jesus! There are many passages of scripture, which utilizes water: The woman at the well who gave Jesus water (John 4:9, kjv) baptism (Matt. 3:11, kjv). Other verses present water as a symbol, i.e., “beside the still water” (Ps. 23:2, kjv) “bread upon the water” (Eccl. 11:1, kjv) “water to a thirsty soul” (Prov. 25:25, kjv) and “fountain of living water” (Jer. 2:13, kjv). Nothing in nature has God placed here accidentally or because it looks good. He has given us all nature has to offer for a purpose. The Lord loaned the world to us so that we could use it to glorify him. When we take care of our bodies, we uplift our Heavenly Father, for our bodies are temples of our Creator. When we don’t witness for the Lord, he could cause the rocks to cry out on his behalf. Also, there is the time God used a donkey to say a word, praise you, Jesus! These bear repeating. As I have stated before, you should lay out a welcome mat in your heart for Jesus; but whatever you do, *do not* allow Satan access. If you do, you are inviting evil into your heart. Trust me you do not want to do that. You know, Jesus has a platinum heart; however, he is as tough as nails. Pun intended. If

our Lord and Savior were living on earth today and he got checkups, this is how the routine would go: When the doctor examined his heart with a stethoscope, it would be like a tiny drummer beating loudly. Upon examining his lungs, there would be a “rushing mighty wind.” His blood would flow through his veins as peaceful water. The doctor would not need to check his pulse for he/she could see his skin move with each heartbeat. Should an optometrist examine his eyes, he/she would not be able to look into them longer than a second for a brilliant light would shine through them. His hearing would be supersonic, like Superman. The few times Jesus would become **angry**, his blood would become like a raging sea, and all he would have to do to calm himself down would be to say, “Peace, be still.” The Master was reported to be a handsome man, and his physique was probably not slim as portrayed in movies, but somewhat muscular. Christ was a kind, thoughtful, considerate, and understanding man. I’ve got to say it again: “What a man! What a man! What a man! What a mighty good man. Yes, he is!” Has God given you better judgment since you have become spiritual then told you he trusts you to follow the Holy Spirit and be more discerning? That is what he has done with me. More and more every day I am relying on this scripture. “Trust in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths,” (Prov. 3:5-6, kjv). Perhaps our Heavenly Father feels that

at some point, he must trust us as he expects us to trust him. It's along the lines of earthly parents. In order for our children to become trustworthy, we must trust them. Are you a true believer? Does your heart reflect it?

It's All about Love

If you have a good heart especially a clean/pure heart it is not difficult for you to love. “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but, rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres” (1 Corinth. 13:4-6, KJV).

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law” (Gal. 5:22-23, KJV). Loving one another enables us to show affection for each other. “Be kindly affectionate one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another” (Rom. 12:10, KJV). Colossians 3:2, KJV says, “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” We truly must be careful of how we treat people. Some of the people we mistreat will be folks we need help from further down the road.” Hebrews 13:2, KJV says, “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” It is very important to our Heavenly Father that his work remains a mystery to us. “He hath made everything beautiful in his time; also he hath set the world in their heart, so that

no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end” (Ecl. 3:11, kjv).

God taught us how to love, and we have patterned our love for one another after his love for us. Once again, I quote John 3:16, kjv “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. That whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.” “And lo a voice from heaven, saying, ‘This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased,’” (Matt. 3:17, kjv). Romantic love, or eros, is fine and dandy; but agape love is what God requires of us—love for mankind. Agape comes before eros, for how can we fall in love before our hearts *contain* love for one another? Love is a blessing from the Lord. Single Christian ladies, flee from men who are lovers of the flesh, meaning those one-track-minded men, of course. However, God did not make man monogamous. Why? Well, this is one of his mysteries. As we grow in spirituality, we become less carnal. It has been said that men must be persuaded to marry. Therefore, no married woman should be “puffed up” simply because she is married. Her man needed to be coaxed into marriage. Also many, women are married. No, I am not jealous. I will, get my Boaz. So many believers make the mistake of *not* waiting for the mate God wants them to have. When we love one another, we should have the ability to comfort one another also. The burdens of this world sometimes weigh us down. Although no one comforts us as the comforter does—the Holy Spirit. Commitment is

borne out of love. For instance, how can a man and woman commit to one another, if they do not *love* one another. Doesn't having a clear conscience make you content? That's how it affects me. Love gives you courage to do things you would not ordinarily do. It makes you bold and without fear. Psalm 37:4, KJV says, "Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart." I'm a witness! You know that Jesus is our friend, but do you know that Jesus considers us, believers, as his friends?

John 15:4-15, KJV says, "You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead I have called you, friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you." When we love one another, as God taught us, it leads to happiness whether or not people return our love because we are being obedient to the Lord. So if they do not love you, they are the ones with the problem. Also, when you don't love someone who loves you, it works on your conscience. Love produces kindness as well. People are so nasty toward each other these days; even strangers are nasty to us, but that also includes believers. If you ask me, if your heart is not right, you could not be a true believer in Christ. I have mood swings attributed to my bipolar disorder and sometimes get irritable toward folks. I am not making excuses, however. I know right from wrong, and I need to fight those mood swings.

God shows his love toward us in many ways albeit especially through his grace and mercy. Hallelujah! There are some things we love, which can be poison to our souls, for instance our love for money. “For the love of money is the root of all evil” (1 Tim. 6:10a, kjv). We must remember that the money we have does not belong to us. It belongs to God. He has loaned it to us, and if we are good stewards of it (use it to his glory) he blesses us with more. But don’t fret when you know someone who is a nonbeliever and is wealthy. Satan blesses folks too. Also, let us not forget we cannot take it with us when we leave this world. I don’t care if somebody puts it in your casket with your remains. If we love the Lord, it stands to reason that we will worship and praise him. It is so precious when the believer’s heart is in the right place. This is pleasing in God’s sight. Romans 8:28, kjv says, “And we know that all things work for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” As far as I’m concerned, that says it all. “And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight” (John 3:22, kjv). I watched a month-long show on TV One called *Way Black When*, in honor of Black History Month. Sheila E. was one of the guests. She is a celebrity entertainer, known for her zest as a percussionist. She was most popular during the ’70s and ’80s although she had a CD out at the time. It came to my attention that many black recording artists of secular music are believers.

Sheila E. began playing percussions in church where many black artists got their start. She had begun a charitable organization for foster children, called Elevate Hope Foundation, saying in an interview on the show that her wish was to give back to the community. This is wonderful, a lady with a heart of gold. Vanity, another black recording artist of the past, is a believer. She too sang secular music and worked with Prince. Still, others who are Christians are Patti Labelle, Gladys Knight, Aretha Franklin, etc. The members of Earth, Wind & Fire recorded a spiritual song by the title of "Keep Your Head to the Sky." I just thought of others: Natalie Cole, Luther Vandross, Gerald Levert, and the members of the O'Jays are too. Also, let us not forget Al Green, who is now a minister of the Gospel.

Do you believe? Do you actually believe that Jesus lived on earth preaching and teaching about the Father and that he hung, bled, and died on the cross to save the world from sin? Do you truly believe that he rose again on the third day, declaring all power in heaven and earth is in his hands? Because you *must* believe this with all your heart in order to be saved. Then your life will reflect your belief, and let us not forget that you also have to confess your belief publicly. If you wish to accept Christ as your Lord and Savior now, pray this prayer: "Lord Jesus, please forgive me of my sins and come into my heart, please **now. Lord.** Show me the way." If you have just prayed this prayer, the kingdom of heaven awaits you. The rest is a growing process. You grow

in Christ, become spiritual; however, don't expect this to happen overnight. It takes time, more time for some than for others. Don't rush it; let it happen naturally. Let go and let God.

Mo'Nique, award-winning comedian/actress and talk show host, ended her show in an adorable way. She had the members of the audience hug themselves. Have you hugged yourself today? Try it. If you are feeling blue, it has a healing effect. Imagine what would happen if all believers who have the kind of love that flows from heart to heart and breast to breast got together with other such believers and taught this to folks in general. It would cause a chain reaction. Look out, world! Don't allow the enemy to prevent you from showing love. It does no good to have it and not show it. As a matter of fact, if your heart is full of love, it's got to show. Just remember, love is a verb as well as a noun. God, thank you so much for having put my former prayer partners from my Masterlife 1 group in my life. These two young ladies definitely possess the heart of a believer. The Lord spoke to me through them. They encouraged, they uplifted, they were simply awesome. Our Father was truly working through them. Between them and my five surrogate mothers, I felt thoroughly blessed. "How can I say thanks for the things you have done for me, things so undeserved, yet you give to prove your love for me. The voices of a million angels cannot express my gratitude. All that I am or ever hope to be, I owe it all to thee.

How can I say thanks for the things you have done for me, things so undeserved yet you gave to prove your love for me. The voices of a million angels cannot express my gratitude. "All that I am or ever hope to be, I owe it all to thee. To God be the glory, to God be the glory, to God be the glory, for the things he has done. With his blood, he has saved me. With his power, he has raised me. To God be the glory, for the things he has done." This song title is "To God Be The Glory, by Andrae Crouch.

Has God done great things in your life? He certainly has in my life. If he has done great things in your life, don't keep it to yourself. Tell folks about it—testify. "I love to tell the story of unseen things above. Of Jesus and His glory. Of Jesus and His love. And nothing else can do, because I know it's true. I love to tell the story. It'll be my theme in glory. I wanna tell the world of Jesus and His love. I love to tell the story. It'll be my theme in glory. For some have never heard of Jesus and His love." The title of this wonderful song is, "I Love To Tell The Story". It was written by Ian Ashley Eskelin. Your heart pressure is by far more important than your blood pressure. I'm speaking of your emotional heart. In all we do, believers, it should be one for the Father, one for the Son, and one for the Holy Ghost. The Father represents one heart, standing alone. Then there is the Father and the Son where two hearts are beating as one. Don't forget to add the Holy Ghost; now the two have become three hearts beating as one. People

say, “Third time’s a charm.” The trinity represents three hearts as one. When you become a disciple of Christ, you can proudly say, “How you like me now??!” The believer’s heart has a huge hunger and thirst for God’s Word. It cannot get enough of the Bible. This is when the Lord’s Spirit dwells within you. The more you learn, the more you want to learn.

Once again, the Bible is basic instructions before leaving earth. The nonbeliever’s heart is dark and cold. There are some nice people in the world who are not believers, and their hearts need to be reconstructed. They are not saved; you cannot make it to heaven by being nice. That’s all well and good, but you don’t get your ticket to heaven that way, trust me. There is only *one* way: Jesus. So amazed and excited I am about the manner in which God is working in my life. Thank you, Jesus! The wonderful surrogate mothers God has blessed me with ever since he took my own mother are totally nurturing and caring. I promise you, Dad, the more you bless me, the more I will bless others, whether it’s spiritually or financially.

You know, they say it takes a whole village to raise a child. God has also blessed me with members of my family who helped me to raise my teenage son. I needed all the help I could get. Still, the Lord gave me the strength to raise him as a single mom, hallelujah! Alone I am weak, but in Christ I am strong. Are you a struggling single mom? Call on the Lord and he will work it out. He’s good at

working out all our problems and troubles. Trust me on that. Hating people drains you of energy. It takes a lot of negative energy to hate. **Thereby** loving people gets you going like the Energizer bunny. Come on now, wouldn't you rather love than hate? God is not the author of hate, the devil is. God is not the author of trouble, the devil is. God is not the author of emotional pain, the devil is. God is not the author of evil, the devil is, and the beat goes on. Who dries your tears when you cry? Who picks you up when you're down? Who enables you to feel his presence when you are lonely? Who turns your frown upside down? Who provides for you? Who caused your terrifying diagnosis to disappear? Who makes you feel as though the sun is shining when it's cloudy? Who makes your enemies your footstool? Who wrote the map (Bible) of life? Who turns pessimism into optimism? Tomorrow is a mystery to me but, as long as I have Jesus, I have *everything*. That goes for you as well. No matter what material items we may have, if we don't have Jesus, we have nothing. You choose: Jesus and everlasting life or Satan and eternal inferno. Accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative. That helps us to make the correct choice. Since we are all wrapped up in the cocoonlike heart of our Creator, how could we be defective? Now there's food for thought. We know that we can always count on God **albeit** we need to reach a plateau whereby he can always count on us (believers) too. Remember that old Dr. Pepper commercial jingle? "I'm a pepper we're a pepper,

she's a pepper, he's a pepper, wouldn't you like to be a pepper too? Be a pepper, drink Dr. Pepper. Be a pepper, drink Dr. Pepper." Paraphrased: I'm a believer, we're a believer, she's a believer, he's a believer; wouldn't you like to be a believer too? Be a believer. Be a believer. Let's weigh the pros and cons of being a believer.

PROS:

1. Everlasting life.
2. Having a very protective and caring "friend" who loves you.
3. You have no fear of death because heaven is your eternal home.
4. That special Friend is your crutch, so you don't need drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, or sex to be your crutches.
5. The Friend is always there when you need him. He will never leave or forsake you.
6. No matter how dark your night is, joy comes in the morning!
7. You see the morning as a chance to start all over, have a fresh beginning.
8. You can take your burdens to your Friend and he will work them out.
9. You experience *perfect peace*, even in the midst of a storm.

10. Your Friend supplies all your needs and some of your wants.
11. You have a Comforter who comforts like no human being can.

CONS:

Need I say more?

“Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28, kjv). Let’s talk about resting in Jesus. Woooh! That is a rest like none other. As stated before, if you stay connected to the Lord, he will keep you in perfect peace; and with all the evil, devastation, tragedy, and just plain ole disharmony in the world, that is a miraculous feat. Just think about it, being able to block out all the troubles of this world as we are one with the Lord, why it’s simply incredible! Only you, Lord, only you can accomplish that, nobody but you. Thank you, elderly brother in Zion. You are without a doubt better to us than we are to ourselves. You take much better care of us. Resting in Jesus does not mean we do not live life as usual; it means our minds are at peace regardless of what is going on around us. Is that glorious or not? Why is it so difficult for us to express what’s in our hearts, the positive things that is, especially for men? Although there are exceptions to the rule. A woman’s personal wedding vows make women cry, but a man’s personal wedding vows are mechanical and brief for the most part. Believe it or not, one of my problems

used to be expressing myself orally before I received much of my deceased mother's spirit. Still, if you gave me a pen and paper, there was nothing I could not say; the words just flowed. A believer's heart should be filled with sunshine and bright, cheerful treasured essence. If opposing elements enter it, those elements will be filtered out. As I am, are you poor but you wake up in the morning feeling rich, knowing that Jesus will bless your day? Do you have faith that when you ask the Lord to order your steps, you can count on him to do so if you promise to follow his orders? Do you feel his Spirit as you pray? Are your steps brighter? Are your burdens lighter? Do you feel as though you can praise the Lord indefinitely? Do you feel like shouting the highest praise (hallelujah) all day? I do. Woohh! The Holy Spirit has truly got a hold on me this time. As a matter of fact, I am wealthy. My Father owns the cattle on a thousand hills, so I know I'm going to get some beef some time. Believers, when you've got Jesus, you've got everything. I kid you not. Say, "How you like me now?"

God works with the hearts of teen believers. One Valentine's Day, as usual, I fell into a deep depression. On that Valentine's Day, my teenage son came home and found me crying uncontrollably, and he held and comforted me. I said, "Nobody loves me." He said, "Yes, somebody does love you. I love you. A lot of people love you." He had just left the house, but it was as though God told him I needed him, so he came back, hallelujah! It is times like this when

I feel God's presence the most. He is such a wonderful, awesome God.

You know, I can usually identify another believer by talking to them for as few as ten minutes. As they say, "It takes one to know one." True believers (disciples of Christ) talk the talk and walk the walk. Perceive God as being one gigantic spiritual heart. He's all that and then some. If you are going to be a representative of the Lord, please know that it is *serious* business. Some folks play with God, which is playing with fire! How can you play with one who has the whole world in his hand? People who do so are clearly not clothed in their right minds. What are your thoughts on the subject? If you possess a believer's heart, no matter what your denomination you will be a member of "the church" Jesus comes back for. It is not about denominations, trust me. It's all about John 3:16, don't you agree? "We give you praise, Lord. We give you praise, Lord. We give you praise, Lord for all you've done. We give you praise, Lord. We give you praise, Lord. We give you praise, Lord for all you've done. We give you all the glory. We give you all the praise. We lift our hands to you Lord for your mercy and your grace. We give you praise, Lord. We give you praise, Lord. We give you praise, Lord, for all you've done." The title is "We Give You Praise Lord, by Dottie Peoples.

Love Strengthens Us and Leads Us Home

*M*y heart is troubled when folks I know give up on the Lord. We should not allow Satan to claim the victory over us. Luke 15:1–6, KJV says, “Now the tax collectors and ‘sinners’ were all gathering around to hear him. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, ‘This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.’” Then Jesus told them this parable: “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says; Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.” After reading this, I know those people will be just fine. Nobody makes your life worth living as Jesus does. Folks who do not have him in their lives are pitiful. As stated before, when we have Jesus, we have everything. We don’t need anything else. I’ve got Jesus and that’s enough. Having Jesus makes you feel treasured, cherished. You feel like the royalty that you are—joint heirs with Jesus to the throne of God’s grace.

Shall we talk about the Holy Spirit? My Bible dictionary definition of the Holy Spirit is “the mysterious creative power of God, possessing and inspiring men, manifested especially in ecstatic conditions, prophesying, and special gifts and abilities such as strength, leadership, wisdom, judgment and skill; sometimes conceived as a quasi-physical force impelling it’s recipient somewhat in the manner of the wind, but coming to be recognized as the personal activity of God himself.” The Holy Spirit is the voice of God. He is how the Lord communicates with us. He also creates action and atmosphere that is sometimes so thick you can cut it with a knife. The Holy Spirit causes people to do strange things, things that are strange to those who are not spiritual, but God knows what he is doing, always. As mentioned before, the Holy Spirit is my cowriter. Even more so the Holy Ghost is my *ghost* writer. Not a single solitary word could I write without him. In the Bible, the Holy Spirit is also known as the Comforter. Jesus informed the disciples that he would send the Comforter to them after he ascended to heaven. “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever” (John 14:16, kjv). Have you ever felt the presence of someone and you were alone? It’s the Holy Spirit. The believer’s heart contains the trinity: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. There is the Holy Ghost and the Holy Spirit. The phrase the Holy Ghost came about because Jesus actually left his ghost/Spirit

behind with the disciples, so it pertains to the Son. The Holy Spirit is connected with the Father, for not only is the Father a Spirit, he is the “head honcho” Spirit. The heart of the believer tells the Father to have his own way in our life. Each beat of our hearts should remind us of how much God loves us and that we are his children. Be mindful of the fact that God’s love for us is unconditional and he expects us to possess that same kind of love for others; difficult though it is. When we all get to heaven, saints, our spiritual hearts will beam! We will certainly let our lights shine **there**—no ifs, ands, or buts about it. We are all born with pure/clean hearts; however, we have all allowed Satan to taint them. Believers, please know that the enemy can enter our heads and cause damage to our hearts. God deals with the heart only. Pure/clean hearts lead to us loving one another, thereby activating God’s saving grace, which gives us our ticket to heaven.

Epilogue

Wouldn't you rather walk in the light—Jesus, the light of the world—than in darkness? If so, then come on board with the believers and your life will forever change for the better.

Aren't you tired of living in sin? Sure, it's fun, but there are *dangerous* consequences. You can hold up the bloodstained banner, die in the flesh, and gain eternal life in an *exquisitely* beautiful place called heaven, glory, paradise, the Promised Land, the New Jerusalem! Read about it in **Revelation 22**. The only other option is to burn and be tormented, forever, in Satan's lair. I cannot sugarcoat it.

As the preacher says in church during the invitation to discipleship, "If there is anyone here who has not accepted Jesus as your own personal Lord and Savior, now is the time to do so. Jesus loves you so much he hung, bled, and died on Calvary's cross for the remission of your sins. Our sentence was to burn in hell forever. God was about to destroy the world and everyone in it because of sin, but Jesus became our attorney, pleaded our case to our Heavenly Father, and he granted us a 'stay.' Won't you come?"

Only the world's most *precious* jewel, who was born in a lowly stable, can change your heart, life, your very soul.

