

Devotions to Use or Adapt freely

We live in a culture where anger is looked at as being okay. We can be angry at, or even hate, people in authority, and everyone is okay with it. Children can talk back to their parents in anger. We see that in so many movies today. That is not how God has designed the family to work, though. They are to work together in unity and grow together in Christlikeness. Does yelling at each other help with that? Does tattling on siblings help bring you, your sibling, and parents closer to the Lord?

So what is anger? It is a physical and emotional reaction to injustice. It gives us energy to accomplish tasks we could not accomplish otherwise. It wants something. It wants the score to be evened. It gives the need energy to accomplish tasks. **Exodus 32:19**. Would Moses have broken the tablets if he was not angry? No, he would have placed them down gently. However, he saw an injustice and his body reacted in extra energy.

Anger spreads like wildfire. It is very contagious. When one person is angry, it spreads to the others around. **Proverbs 26:21**. If you are angry, it spreads to your siblings. And, as this verse says, it burns up the wood and coals. It can burn up relationships that we desire. Some people are so angry that they do not have friends, which then kindles their anger, which then drives away their friends, which then makes them angry. Anger is a vicious cycle. 1 Samuel 20 shows Saul getting so angry at his son Jonathan that he tried to kill his own son! How does that make for a close father and son relationship? **Proverbs 21:19**. This verse shows that an angry person is not fun to be around.

So how can we be less angry? **Romans 12:1-2**. If we know the Lord as our Savior, our lives are not our own. We are His, and we need to sacrifice our will and desires to Him. We need to present everything about our bodies to Him and surrender to His control. We are to transform our lives to His. We are to put away selfish anger that wants to right injustices against me. We are to renew our minds to be like Christ's. It is okay that we are not the most important or if someone else got the x-box game we wanted. We do not need to treat the other person with a cold shoulder. We need to love others. We need to treat them how we would want to be treated. Would you want people to be constantly angry at you or around you? Not a chance!

Blame is something that Christians tend to overlook. It is looked as something that is culturally normal and okay. Americans sue for all kinds of things. A lady can sue McDonald's because she didn't know her fresh, hot cup of coffee would be hot. People can blame a poor report card on the teacher not presenting the material right, even though the student was up until 3:00am playing video games the morning of the test.

We can blame others for a variety of things. You ever say things like, "My little sister just makes me so mad when she does ____!" Really? Does she somehow get into your brain and turn on the angry emotion? No, YOU choose to be angry by what she has done. Someone else cannot MAKE you be angry.

We see right after the very first sin in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve blamed others for their own actions.

Gen 3:12 And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.

Gen 3:13 And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.

Neither Adam nor Eve took responsibility for what they had done. So was the devil the only one sinning here? Did he MAKE Adam and Eve sin? No, they had a free will and CHOSE to sin. They were not forced into sinning against their will.

Pro 28:13 He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

When we do something great, we like to receive attention for it, right? Sometimes we don't do anything great, but we think we do, and we want to receive credit for it because we think it is pretty neat. However, when it comes to doing something wrong or something we think someone else might not like, we are very quick to blame someone else and say it's not our fault.

How often do we say, "It wasn't my fault!"? Does it really matter whose fault it is? Does it matter that you point out it was your brother who spilled your milk, not you? God wants us to confess our own faults and problems and not cast them on other people.

What does blaming do? It makes us feel like we got off the hook easily, right? Well, whether or not you get off the hook, it is a form of lying when you are saying someone else did what you are completely responsible for. So let's not blame others for our actions, but rather take responsibility for our own actions because we can only grow from mistakes if we admit they are OUR mistakes.

When God created the world, it was perfect and without sin. However, when Adam and Eve sinned, they brought sin and pain into everything. [“For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain...” \(Rom 8:22\)](#). Death and suffering is everywhere, and because each of us have sinned ([Romans 3:23](#)), we deserve death. God has provided salvation to save us from eternal death (separation from Him). We need to receive the gift of salvation by admitting we are sinners and repenting (turning from our sin), believing Christ Who never sinned died and rose again to pay for our sin, and asking God to forgive us of our sins.

God will end the pain and suffering we see in the world. Christians look forward to the rapture which is when Jesus will come in the air and take all of the Christians to heaven. ([read I Thes. 4:16-18](#)) God will shout a command, the archangel will speak, and the trumpet of God will sound. At that moment, the bodies of the people who are saved but have died will rise first, and then those Christians who are still alive will also go in the air to be with Jesus. This will all happen in the time it takes to blink. We do not know when the rapture will happen, so it is important to repent or turn from our sins and ask Jesus to save us if we have not already done so.

After the rapture, for those who have not repented of their sins and asked Jesus to save them, there will be 7 years of terrible times on the earth – called the Great Tribulation. There will be a man (referred to as Antichrist) who will lie and make people think he is god. He will encourage people to sin against God. During this time, God will punish people on the earth because of their sin. There will be a lot of death, earthquakes, and pain. The people will hate God and hate the Israelites which are God’s chosen people. Many armies will try to destroy the land of Israel. But God will come back and protect Israel by destroying all of the armies which attack Israel.

Although there is a lot of pain, death, and suffering in the Tribulation, God’s plan for earth does not end with suffering. God desires to have earth be a place of beauty and peace like He originally created it before there was sin. At the end of the Tribulation, God will come to earth and reign as King for 1,000 years (Millennium). During this time, Satan will be locked up in a bottomless pit. People will worship God, enjoy being with God and each other, be at peace with each other, and have plenty of food (very fast food growth). At the end of the 1,000 years, Satan will be released for a very short time, and he will convince a lot of people to hate God and to fight God. Ultimately, God will destroy those armies, and cast Satan into the lake of fire (hell) where he will be forever. God ultimately wins! God is all powerful - no one can beat God.

Then God will do another really cool thing, He will make a new heaven and a new earth. They will be gorgeous and will never have sin in them. There will never be fighting, pain, or death. Christians will be able to freely go from heaven to earth and back again. What a glorious time that will be.

(Closing Questions) The question is, are you ready for Christ to come in the rapture? Have you repented of your sins and asked Jesus to save you? If you have not, then you will not be able to enjoy being with God and experiencing all of the joys of having your sins forgiven and living in heaven. If you would like to be saved or have any questions, please feel free to talk me, Drew, James, or any other camp staff member. We would love to show you from the Bible how you can have your sins forgiven.

Closing Verse: [“...Surely I come quickly.](#) Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” [Rev 22:20](#)

Because of our sin, we deserve to be judged by God – we break God’s standard of being holy or w/out sin. We deserve God’s judgment of our sin because we have sinned. Unless we agree with God that our sin is awful, and we are sorry for our sin and believe that Jesus’ death and resurrection paid for our sins, we will be eternally judged with separation from God in hell. We need to tell God we are sorry for our sins, believe that Jesus, God’s Son, died and rose again to take our punishment of death, and ask Him to save us from our sin. When we do, God forgives us of our sins because the sin’s penalty has already been paid for by Jesus. We are then saved or have become a Christian. Having our sins forgiven restores fellowship with God – we are no longer separated from God because of our sin.

I. We are to obey authority.

A. Authority is God ordained.

Rom 13:1 Let every soul be subject (obey) unto the higher powers (authorities such as government, counselors, teachers etc.). For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

Rom 13:2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God (the authorities of God): and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. (will be judged)

Tit 3:1 Put them in mind (remind them) to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates (political leaders), to be ready to every good work,

II. We are to speak well of authority and other people.

Tit 3:2 To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.

Jas 4:11 Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.

Act 23:5b (Paul speaking)... Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people. (quoting from Exodus 22:28)

III. We are to obey our parents – comes with a blessing.

Eph 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.

Eph 6:2 Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)

Eph 6:3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

- Generally safer for not playing with outlet
- Safer if not doing something harmful that we are warned about.

IV. The reason obeying is so hard.

A. We are sinners wanting our own way.

Isa 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

B. Rebellion is serious

1Sa 15:23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.

I. Man's Problem - All have sinned

(Rom. 3:23 - For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.)

- A. Sin is anything that goes against God.**
- B. Sin has affected all mankind.**

(Rom. 3:10 - There is none righteous, no not one.)

- 1. No one is innocent.**
- 2. All are guilty.**
- 3. God sets the standards; the accused do not have the right of accusing the Judge.**

II. Man's Predicament - Sin requires punishment

(Rom. 6:23 - For the wages of sin is death.)

- A. Sin is serious.**
- B. Sin is terminal.**

(Ezekiel 18:20 - The soul that sinneth, it shall die.)

III. God's Provision - Christ paid our penalty

(I Cor. 15:1-4 - Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you...how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.)

- A. Christ died so mankind did not have to die.**

(John 3:16 - 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.)

- B. Christ died as our substitute.**

IV. My Response - I must accept God's payment by faith

(John 14:6 - Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.)

- A. It is a choice everyone must make – receive the free gift.**
- B. It is the only way to be right with God.**
 - 1. If I could be right with God any other way, why did Christ die?**
 - 2. If I could be rescued from sin by good works, God was a fool to let Christ die.**

Monday Devotional
(from my first year of being a Sr. Counselor in 2011)

Jared Mielke

Ask how many people have been to camp before.
Camp is fun.
I remember being a camper when this theme was used in the past.

For tonight's devotional, we are going to focus on what area we would like to grow during this week of camp.

Examples:
 Being considerate of others
 Working hard on verses

There are many other options, too.

We need to put off the flesh, and put Godly actions and characteristics into our lives. If we are not saved, our efforts to try to be good will be in vain. Our works cannot save us, only faith alone in Christ paying our sin's penalty and asking Christ to forgive us can save us, and then we can be God's sons.

Isaiah 64:6 But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

Rom 3:10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

Now starting with me and my Junior Counselor _____, we are going to each pick something from our life that we are going to improve during this week of camp.

This part can certainly be adapted.

I oftentimes live my life trying to make my self acceptable to God, instead of remembering He loves me, and died for me. He loved me even before I was saved.

Rom 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

If I live in rebellion to God, God will be saddened, but I cannot lose my salvation. Salvation is a free gift that after it is received, salvation will never be taken away.

During this week, I am going to remember that God loves me, and I will rest in His love and grace.

2 Timothy 1:7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

Rom 6:1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

Rom 6:2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

Matthew 5:16 **Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.**

One question people often struggle with is, "If we as Christians always sin and God will always give us grace and forgiveness, then why should we even try to do good?" Yes, God will give us grace when we mess up and sin, but we are to do good works to glorify God. However, works do not give us salvation. They only are the fruit of or faith in God. Matthew 7:20 "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."

Good works are God's guard rails for us. (Illustrate with talking about guard rails, cars, and roads.) Deut. 6:24 "And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, **to fear the LORD our God, for our good always**, that he might **preserve** us alive, as *it is* at this day." God set up good works to keep us out of dangerous places. We may not see results right away when we sin, but sooner or later they will catch up with us. Stealing a \$10 bill out of a friend's wallet may seem small. We weren't as bad as the guy who robbed the bank down town. It was only \$10! However, if we can get by with it once, then maybe we will try something bigger. Stealing \$10 is still stealing. We can choose our sin, but we cannot choose our consequences. In the Christian life on this earth, we will not be sinless, but we are to sin less. God gives us grace because He knows we will mess up, but purposely sinning is dishonoring to God.

When we have been forgiven, we naturally want to serve the forgiver. We should want to serve God who has given us eternal life through His son. He paid the ultimate price.

The Holiness of God

Jared Mielke

Isaiah 6:1-5

God visited the temple and was seen by a man. God is holy and deserves reverence.

The holiness of God is not to be taken lightly; He is majestic. He is without sin and stands in separation from sin. Because of God's holiness, there should be a reverence and a respect in worship.

In the passage, we see God filling the Jerusalem temple. The temple was the Jews' place of worship and how fitting it is to see God's holiness in that place. God's holiness should not be a small part of worship but should be an integral part of worship. God's holiness separates Him from being a mere mortal. If God were not holy, He would be undeserving of worship or praise.

Not only is God separate from sin, but His holiness brings reverence and respect as opposed to lightness. The seraphim announced God's exclusive holiness by thrice stating His holiness, "Holy, holy, holy..." The angels were not flippantly chatting, "Oh yeah, God is holy." The angles were not high-fiving each other, but their behavior showed God reverence. The temple itself reacted to God's majestic holiness when the door posts moved from the declaration. Isaiah himself responded by seeing how sinful he was in comparison to God.

Being at a church service is a great way to worship and to show reverence to God, and the same can be done as we faithfully read His Word in our personal times with Him and then bow in humble service to God's will.

However, attending church or doing good deeds will not cause us to be holy and go to heaven. The way to heaven is only through Christ's free gift of salvation. We receive Christ's free gift of salvation by faith and without works. We cannot earn God's salvation, for Ephesians 2:8, 9 tell us, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

And Titus 3:5a states, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us..."

We read in Romans 6:23 that there is a penalty or payment for our sin, and that the penalty is death. However, we read in [2 Corinthians 5:21](#), that Christ Who did not sin took our penalty so "we might be made the righteousness of God..." We can receive Christ's free gift of salvation when we admit we are sinners, confess our sin and turn from it, believe Christ's death and resurrection paid for our sin penalty and completely forgives us, and we ask Jesus to save us. Jesus did not stay dead, but He rose from the dead and is coming someday to gather His children home.

Our Response - we must accept God's payment by faith

A. It is a choice everyone must make – receive the free gift.

B. It is the only way to be right with God. When we receive the gift of salvation, we then can experience having all of our sins forgiven.

1. If I could be right with God any other way, why did Christ die or say that no one comes to the Father except through Jesus?

2. If I could be rescued from sin by good works, God would be a fool to let Christ die.

God is holy, and our sin separates us from God. Salvation allows us access to the holy God of the universe.

Heaven a Glorious Home

Jared Mielke

Revelation 22:3-7

“What a day that will be when my Jesus I shall see...”

Remember having a friend that you would soon see and what a longing joy you had to see the friend again? Jesus is our best friend and what a joy that we can see Him soon. Not only will we get to see Him, but we will be able to live with Him – forever.

Home is where we feel comfortable and have a sense of belonging and do not feel out of place. Heaven is our home, and soon we will be there (II Cor. 5:8). It will feel welcoming. We will feel that we belong there. Sadly, heaven is often thought of as a boring place of drudgery, but the Bible paints a different picture with describing many glorious details about heaven – we will be with God (I Cor. 2:9). There will be no darkness because God is the light. There will be no pain. We will fellowship with believers of the ages. Imagine being able to visit with Noah about the world wide flood or with Mary and her first time of holding Jesus. We will also have a chance to see how accurate our Sunday School drawings are in depicting the men and women of faith.

On earth, we often search for the perfect home of our dreams. In our heavenly home, Jesus Himself is preparing the perfect home for each of His children (John 14:2). What a gorgeous house God is making for His children. He is the master designer.

May the blessed hope of our home in heaven cheer us today and cause us to serve God with gladness.

Passage: John 14:1-6 *In vs. 2 – (Greek word) monay* has the definition of “a dwelling” or “an abode.”

<https://carm.org/questions/about-bible/what-does-term-mansion-mean-john-142>

In the culture of the Bible times – people would build additional rooms on the Father’s house for the family members as the family grew. When we become part of God’s family, He builds a place for us in Heaven where He dwells. There is room in heaven for God’s children. What a glorious thought to be able to live with God for eternity!

The disciples were sad to hear that Jesus would be leaving soon. Jesus comforted them by letting them know that He was going to heaven, and that He would prepare a place for them. Jesus said in John 14:6 that the way to heaven was only through Jesus. “Jesus saith unto him, **I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me**” (John 14:6).

This leads to the question - what does it mean Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life? Jesus stated that salvation from sin and entrance into heaven only comes by believing in Jesus and what He did on the cross. There is no other way into heaven.

We receive Christ’s free gift of salvation by faith and without works. We cannot earn God’s salvation, for Ephesians 2:8, 9 tell us, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

And Titus 3:5a states, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us...”

We read in Romans 6:23 that there is a penalty or payment for our sin, and that the penalty is death. However, we read in [2 Corinthians 5:21](#), that Christ Who did not sin took our penalty so “we might be made the righteousness of God...” If we died, we would be paying for our own sin, but because Jesus never sinned, His death paid for others. We can receive Christ’s free gift of salvation when we admit we are sinners, believe Jesus is God and never sinned, confess our sin and repent from it, believe Christ’s death paid for our sin penalty and completely forgives us, and we ask Jesus to save us. Jesus did not stay dead, but He rose from the dead and is coming someday to gather His children home.

IV. Our Response - we must accept God's payment by faith

A. It is a choice everyone must make – receive the free gift.

B. It is the only way to be right with God.

1. If I could be right with God any other way, why did Christ die or say that no one comes to the Father except through Jesus?

2. If I could be rescued from sin by good works, God would be a fool to let Christ die.

When we ask Jesus to rescue us from our sin and sin’s penalty of separation from God, we are born again into God’s family. We then have the blessed hope and surety of living with Christ when we leave this earth.

Those who are in God’s family, look forward to the rapture which is when Jesus will come in the air and take all of the Christians to heaven. ([read I Thes. 4:16-18](#)) God will shout a command, the archangel will speak, and the trumpet of God will sound. At that moment, the bodies of the people who are saved but have died will rise first, and then those Christians who are still alive will also go in the air to be with Jesus. This will all happen in the time it takes to blink. We do not know when the rapture will happen, so it is important to repent or turn from our sins and ask Jesus to save us if we have not already done so.

*Point III's information is quoted or based on info from Answers to Genesis' article "[Seven Compelling Evidences Confirm the Bible Is True](https://answersingenesis.org/the-word-of-god/3-unity-of-the-bible/)"

I. What is the Bible?

A. The Bible is from God and is God's Word for us and is filled with amazing truths. From the Bible, we can learn about God and how He wants us to live. God knows what is best for us.

B. The Bible is one big book with 66 little books divided into the New Testament and the Old Testament. The Old Testament is the first section, and it has 39 books. The New Testament is the second section, and it has 27 books.

II. How to Understand the Bible?

A. We can read the Bible or listen while other people read the Bible. If there is something we do not understand, we can ask our parents, grandparents, pastors, and children's teachers at church.

B. The Bible is God's Word, and we cannot fully understand the Bible without the help of God the Holy Spirit. For those who are Christians, the Holy Spirit will help explain and teach the Bible to us.

C. It is important to memorize God's Word because then we can think about the verses throughout our lives and have an easier time of staying away from sin. We must not let things like TV or video games keep us from reading or hearing God's Word. Mack Thomas in his book "The Bible Tells Me So" said "The Bible is not a storybook to merely (just) entertain us, but the powerful Word of God for cleaning and changing us."

III. How Long will the Bible Last?

A. The Bible will never be destroyed. Isaiah 40:8 "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever."

B. Mankind has often tried to destroy the Bible, but the Bible still exists after thousands of years.

Give example of people (maybe in Inquisition) buying the Bibles to destroy them, and the Christians using the money to go print more Bibles.

*III. What makes the Bible special?

- The Bible is God's Words which He breathed out to people who wrote them down for us. God could have written them Himself, but He chose to have people write down the words.
 - o 2 Timothy 3:16 "All scripture is given by inspiration of God..."

"The Bible was written"

- About 1,500 year span
- God used 40 different people from 3 continents
- Written by shepherds, kings, fishermen, prophets, a military general and others
- Written in palaces, prisons, the wilderness

Yet, the Bible "never contradicts itself or its common theme [which is the glory of God]."

All of the books of the Bible are connected and share the theme of giving God glory – [giving honor or showing how amazing God is]

The Bible also does not lie or say something that is the opposite of what the Bible says somewhere else. God cannot lie, and since the Bible is God's Word written down for us, the Bible does not tell us lies.

Two parts of the Bible – OT and NT. [\[show Bible chart\]](#) All of the books talk about God and His glory. For example, the very first book tells us that God created everything, and that gives God glory because it shows He is completely powerful. God chose to give us His Words in a book so that we could read and learn about Him.

Bible Verse: Isaiah 40:8 "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever."

Optional Bible Verse Game: Each person says one word of the verse and passes the spoon (or other object) to the next person who says the next word. Keep repeating the verse section several times.

39 OT and 27 NT books = 66 books

In the first five books of the Old Testament we learn about:

- God created everything including humans
- Adam and Eve sinned by disobeying God
- God sent a worldwide flood to punish the sin – rainbow as a promise not to destroy the whole world with a flood
- God chose Abraham to be the father of the nation of Israel or the Jews. Jesus was a Jew.
- God had the Jews do animal sacrifices to show that Jesus would come and be the sacrifice for our sin by dying on the cross.

Iv. Bonus Sneak Peak About the First Four Books of the New Testament

Christ's life on earth is written in the four Gospels which are the first four books of the New Testament.

These are exciting to read or hear about how Christ (God the Son) lived and how He obeyed God the Father.

Matthew – written to Jews - shows that Jesus Christ is King

Mark – written to Romans - shows that Jesus is a Servant (obeys God the Father and helps people)

Luke – written to Theophilus who was a Greek – shows that Jesus is the Perfect Man (without sin)

John – written to Jews - shows that Jesus is the Son of God and is God (part of the trinity)

Why four books about Christ's time on earth? Because God allowed Christ's story to be told with different details and in slightly different ways. Just like each of us would remember different details about Jr. Church and tell about it a little differently to our parents or grandparents. However, with the books of the Bible, they are 100% accurate with no mistakes because God told the authors what to write, and God never lies.

A. We can be joyful in the Lord despite hard times.

John 16:22 (Christ said) **And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.**

Joy is not based upon circumstances, and with God's power, we can choose to be thankful and experience joy. Paul and Silas praised God and sang even in the prison. We experience difficulties in these modern days, but we can **choose** to count our blessings. Some people have suggested writing down a few things each day for which you are thankful. After several days, it can be encouraging to see many blessings God has bestowed.

B. Not only can we be joyful in the Lord despite hard times, We can shine the joy of the Lord to others.

Matthew 5:16 (Christ said) **Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.**

There is no need to keep God's joy to ourselves. In fact, when we are joyful, we naturally display the joy to people around us. The spreading of joy can help draw unbelievers to God and draw believers closer to God. By letting our light of God's joy shine, people will praise God for how He is working in our lives. It is encouraging to visit with people and to hear about the joys of their lives.

C. We can be joyful to others and be bold even if others are complaining around us.

Romans 5:11 And not only *so*, but we also **joy** in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

The source of joy comes from knowing God, and this joy is possible despite unpleasant circumstances. We can know God because of Christ's death on the cross and the power He provides when we by faith receive His free gift of salvation. We cannot earn God's salvation, for Ephesians 2:8, 9 tell us, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

And Titus 3:5a states, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us..."

We read in Romans that there is a penalty or payment for our sin, and that the penalty is spiritual and physical death and separation from God. However, we read in [2 Corinthians 5:21](#), that Christ Who did not sin took our penalty so "we might be made the righteousness of God..." We can receive Christ's free gift of salvation when we admit we are sinners, confess our sin and turn from it, believe Christ's death paid for our death penalty, and we ask Jesus to save us.

When we are saved from our sin or born again into God's family, we have the blessed hope and surety of living with Christ when we leave this earth. Christ could come and rapture His children home at any time, and we know not when. If we are His child, whatever means we may pass from this life into Heaven, we can rest in the confidence that we shall rise and live with God. Meanwhile, while we are on earth, let us shine the joy of the Lord to others around us despite hard times or even if others are complaining.

Do you sing? Often people say they do not sing, and they are afraid to sing in public, but when they are alone such as in the car or shower, they burst into song.

Singing is a natural response when experiencing joy. A Christian who is right with God will have joy. Even when going through pain and suffering, God provides a special peace and joy for those in fellowship with Him (Isaiah 26:3 and I Peter 1:6-9). We may be able to hide many of our thoughts, feelings, and actions, but it is interesting to note that singing is very hard to hide. It is possible to sing quietly, but an unrestrained singing heart will naturally break forth into loud notes.

The gathering of believers together is a great time to sing and shout with the joy of the Lord. Psalm 149:1b says, "Sing unto the LORD a new song, and His praise in the congregation of saints." Because singing is a vocalized action and not only a silent thought in the head, singing allows one to impact others and point them to God. Singing is not only an encouragement to believers, but it can also be a great witnessing tool to the lost. They might not see or feel the joy we have inside, but when we express it outwardly in song, they may wonder how we have joy. This can provide an opportunity to represent Christ to the lost. Psalm 40:3 tells us "He (God) hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord." Paul and Silas sang when in prison, and it not only lifted their hearts in praise and gave them peace, it drew unbelievers to God.

Who knows who you may be able to point to the Lord through song! Lift your heart in song to the Lord "and shout for joy."

Look Up

Jared Mielke

I Thessalonians 4:15-18

Looking for comfort? Christ is coming to catch us away.

Since Pentecost, Christians have often looked forward to Christ rapturing us out of this world to spend eternity with Him. We know not the day or the hour of the rapture, but God tells us that the day will come. What God has promised will come to pass. He never lies.

What a blessing that just like we do not have to do anything to keep our salvation, we do not have to do anything to make sure we go in the rapture. Our going in the rapture is not dependent on scanning the skies to make sure we do not miss the rapture. God will do the work of catching us up into the air.

Thankfully, the rapture is not just for those who are living. Christ will raise the bodies of those believers who have already died. Both the Christians who have died and those who are still living will be raised into the air to meet the Lord (I Thessalonians 4:16-17). Although we need not fear the outcome of death since we know what awaits us after death, the process of dying can at times be frightening. What a joy it will be if we are the generation of believers that does not taste death but rather is caught away to meet the Lord in the air.

Not only does God tell us about His coming, He offers a crown of righteousness for those who look forward to His coming (II Timothy 4:8). Let us be faithful in watching and purifying our lives (I John 3:3).

May we long for the day of being united with Jesus and pray “even so, come, Lord Jesus” Revelation 22:20.