

# Solution for Life



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*We are excited to send this newsletter to you! Our desire is to bless and encourage you with the words of Christ, who expresses His love and hope to us daily. Recently I have been studying about what it looks like to develop a deeper walk in prayer and intercession. I want to share with you a quote I read today: "Our motivation for prayer will be found in the power of love." (Doug Sheets) The power of His love for us and our love for Him is beyond our imagination. He loves to be in relationship with us. We pray you grow deeper in love with Him and sense His presence more every day.*

*Blessings, Jessie*

## CHRIST OUR LIFE | by Daniel Westlund

Do you have a goal for your life? A focus that gives you a reason for living? A purpose that makes life a journey with meaning? Do you have a life mission that makes sense and gives true worth to all your activities?

In our culture we are told we should reach for the stars. We must set goals to achieve our desires. As followers of Christ our goal is heaven and to please the One we will meet in heaven, our Precious Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Everything we do must be in light of that goal. The Apostle Paul said, "But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13-14 NIV) In life we have disappointments and failures, but each day we can put our past behind us and press on to our heavenward call in Christ. We can learn that out of our relationship in Christ, we have the special blessing of living life to its fullest, both now and forevermore.

At work or school we do our best because we serve and represent the Lord. In our homes we love our spouse and children for the Lord. In our communities we help, serve, and assist as

unto the Lord. My work, ethics, family life and community life are all representative and an outflow of my life mission of my heavenward call in Christ. Though I am only a temporary resident here on earth, who I am and what I do flows from my life in Christ while in this body and prepares me for life in my eternal home with my precious Savior, Jesus Christ. In this world we face daily conflict because of sin. However, as a follower of Christ my clothing is the righteousness of Christ. My life flows out of my walk and relationship with Him. My daily activities all have meaning and purpose, for my focus is heaven and until I am called home, I am an ambassador of my Savior, His representative in every activity of my life. I have the privilege to bring Christ and His life into every situation and circumstance. There is no higher calling, and it is the calling of every child of God who is born of the Spirit of God and is a member of God's family. When Christ is our mission for life and our life goal is our heavenward call in Christ, we have a desire to see others discover what life is truly all about, to share with them the Good News, so that they can move from death to life through faith

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### CONTACT US AT:

P.O. Box 3510  
Carmel, Indiana  
46082-3510  
Phone: 371-319-5838  
email: [sfl@solutionforlife.org](mailto:sfl@solutionforlife.org)  
[www.solutionforlife.org](http://www.solutionforlife.org)

# Solution for growth

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## The Days of Noah | by Stephen Westlund

Do you find yourself having more to do and less time to do it? Do you find yourself needing to say “no” more than you used to? Do you find the pace of life is increasing, but less is getting done? Maybe it’s the stage of life I am in, maybe others feel it too, or perhaps I am alone in this observation, but it seems to me that the busyness of life is increasing as activity upon activity squeezes out every spare minute of the day. And with the busyness, there are a myriad of voices telling us which way to go and redefining truth, which we know in our hearts really are just lies. But we stay quiet, fulfilling the prophetic words of the Proverbs, “when the wicked rise to power, people go into hiding.” (Proverbs 28:28) And in it all, common decency for one another, let alone love for one another, is becoming a thing we once practiced.

All of this should come as no surprise for, before our Lord returns, all these things must come to pass. Our Lord Jesus said, “As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.” (Matthew 24:37-39) The description of eating and drinking and marriage describes people going about with their busy lives. And those with a heart to read and understand should also consider the days of Noah. These were wicked days. So wicked, the Lord saved only eight people on the face of the entire earth.

The days we live in are becoming increasingly evil, much like the days of Noah. Things once only practiced in hiding are now in full display in the day light, and we are being told, “this is good,” and “this is normal.” Jesus said, “Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” (Matthew 24:12-14) So, what must we do? Read Matthew 24 and, mixed into pretty much some of the scariest parts of the Bible, you will find the instructions Jesus gave for how we are to live in the days of Noah.

1. “Watch out that no one deceives you.” (v. 4)
2. “See to it you are not alarmed.” (v. 6)
3. “Stand firm to the end.” (v. 13)
4. “Do not follow and believe false teachers.” (vs. 23 & 26)
5. “Keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.” (v. 42)
6. “Be about the Master’s business.” (v. 46)

Six is the number of man, and here in Mathew 24 are six instructions from the Lord for how men, people, are to approach and live in the days of Noah. The first five are instructions of action: “Watch Out, See, Stand Firm, Do Not, Keep Watch.” The final instruction is about who we are and how should live every day: “Be.” Trying to live life through a list of dos and don’ts is quite exhausting. But life becomes light and easy when we learn, in Christ, to just be, even amid the busyness and wickedness. The lesson here is, you can do the first five instructions, but if you are not daily being who Jesus has called you to be, then you will eventually fail in all six.

Jesus is our Master. He is the Lord of all creation, and soon He will bring an end to these days of Noah. Until that day, live every day being about the master’s business. If you are unsure what the master’s business is, it is also found in Matthew 24. Take some time to read verse 14, make yourself available to the Master, and ask the Lord where and how you can be used by Him in the good work of His Kingdom. ■

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in the Lord Jesus Christ. And as we move and live in our circle of family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers we can bring hope and the light of the Gospel, the light and life of Jesus Christ.

My life goal, my purpose for living, my mission is Christ and my heavenward call. I live for the day when I shall see my precious Savior face to face. Out of this goal, this life mission, comes meaning, joy, peace and purpose in everything I do.

A young man was asked what his goal for life was. Being in high school, he said, “to graduate.” Then what? “Well, I will go to college and get my degree.” Then what? “Well, I will find that special girl, get married, find a good job, raise a family, and build a home.” Then what? “Well, hopefully I will be wise and set aside enough money for a nice retirement, to travel, enjoy my grandchildren.” Then what? “Well, I suppose I will die.” One last time, the questioner asked, “Then what?” There was silence. All of life gains purpose and meaning only when our focus, our mission for life is Christ and our goal for life is our heavenward call in Him. The question for you is, what is your life mission? ■

# IDENTITY AND DIGNITY for ME

by Debbie Bellevue

One of my favorite things about God is how He has created us. There is never going to be another you. You have been uniquely created and bear the image of God. No one has ever or will ever have fingerprints like yours. You are one of a kind. Psalm 139 tells us that God has intimate knowledge of us. Isaiah 46:16 says, “Look here. I have made you a part of Me, written you on the palms of My hands...” Oh, there may be family similarities, but you are uniquely you and God is pleased with who you are and has a purpose for your life. The problem often comes when we don’t have a sense of who we are. We are all searching for the answer to the question “WHO AM I?” It is where we get our IDENTITY, our meaning, our passion for life. Often when meeting people for the first time, if we listen carefully to them and to ourselves, we will see how that first encounter can reveal our fears and insecurities simply by how we describe ourselves. We may try to present ourselves by revealing only the things that we feel will put us in the best light, thus exposing the lie we believe that we are the sum of what we have and, perhaps, have not done, both good and bad. What is really true is that we are much more than what we have done or not done, what we have, and what others think of us. So, what do we mean by IDENTITY? Theologians Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, after studying IDENTITY AND DIGNITY said, “IDENTITY answers the question, ‘Who Am I?’ while DIGNITY answers the question, ‘What Am I Worth?’” This is the starting point for understanding where we get our value (dignity), and who we truly are in Christ (identity). Our value is not earned but credited to us when we put our trust in Jesus and His sacrifice for us on the cross. If we start by recognizing, meditating, resting, and accepting what God says is true about our value in Him, our DIGNITY, then the truth of our IDENTITY will begin to naturally flow forward. It is the opposite of what the world tells us and, perhaps, what we have been taught from the time we were very young. For many of us we start by creating an identity that we feel is acceptable to us, our family,

and the world around us. We believe that the more attractive our identity is the more valuable we become, only to find out that it is never enough. We end up creating a false self and then are left to try and preserve it, always needing more to feel truly good about ourselves. We find ourselves in an addictive struggle to validate our worth (dignity) by perpetuating an unrealistic and unattainable expectation of who we think we need to be (identity) in order to be accepted and loved, to have value. So how do we free ourselves from the false identities that we’ve built or are building? We have to create space to be with God, to hear His voice and embrace what He has to say to us about who we are in Christ. We must practice rhythms that slow us down and cause us to hear from God, contemplative practices that allow God to speak affirmation and truth into our lives that reveals to us WHAT IS TRUE ABOUT OUR DIGNITY and IDENTITY. Practices like listening prayer, silence, solitude, stillness, meditating on Scripture, and journaling. God knows you and wants to reveal to you who you are and the unique purpose that He has planned for you. Psalm 139:14-16 says it well... “Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it. You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.” So, how should we respond to this truth about our DIGNITY and IDENTITY? We must embrace, by faith, our identity in Christ and, by God’s grace, live full into His purposes for our lives. “We have become his poetry, a re-created people that will fulfill the destiny he has given each of us, for we are joined to Jesus, the Anointed One. Even before we were born, God planned our destiny and the good works we would do to fulfill it!” Ephesians 2:10 ■



## Light | by Jessie Westlund

The holidays will be here soon and there will be twinkling lights on trees and homes, along with candles in windows. Let these be symbols of Jesus’ precious gift of light. Jesus said, “I am the light of the world, whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life” John 8:12. Jesus came to earth, was born of a virgin, and placed in a dirty pile of hay, all for the purpose of loving us. At the young age of 33 he died a cruel death to give light to our lives in this dark world. His light gives hope, guides, protects, gives peace, and everlasting love.

“Come to the light, shining for you.  
Sweetly the light has dawned upon me.  
Once I was blind, but now I can see:  
The Light of the world is Jesus!”

These are the words from the chorus of an old hymn by Phillip Bliss written in 1875. They were the truth then and they are the same truth for today. As we come to precious Jesus and reflect on His gift of light in this dark world we can be encouraged. Like the song expresses come to Jesus and experience His sweet light filling our lives. We will no longer be blinded by the dark world that tries to weigh us down.

Jesus is our light and hope. This Christmas and New Year each time we see twinkling lights, candlelight, stars, and sunrises, whisper a prayer to Him. Dear Jesus, thank you for you are my light and my hope.



# Solution for the future

## Watch & Pray | by Daniel Westlund

In the New Testament it is stated over 300 times that Jesus Christ is returning. In Revelation 20:1-6 we are told He will reign on earth for 1,000 years or for a millennium after His return. God has thus revealed to us that the return of Christ will be what is referred to as pre-millennial. Since the day Christ ascended back to heaven there has been much speculation and confusion about when and how He would return. It is revealed in John 21: 22-23 that even in the early church some thought that the Apostle John would not die before Christ returned. "But Jesus did not say he (John) would not die." We must be so careful to not misinterpret the words of Christ or make assumptions about the return of Christ revealed to us in the scriptures. It is important we let the Holy Spirit "tell us what is yet to come." John 16:13.

In Acts 1:1-11 we find amazing truth, not only related to the Holy Spirit, but to the second coming of Christ. The disciples wanted to know if it was now the time for the restoration of the kingdom of Israel. (Acts 1:6) It was not for them to know the time or dates, but they were to begin the process to fulfill one of the key signs to the return of Christ found in Matthew 24:14, "And this gospel will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." Yes, the Kingdom of Israel would be restored; this is the promise of God found in multiple places in the Bible, including Psalm



102:12-18 and Isaiah 49:6-23. But much more work needs to be completed for this promise to be fulfilled.

What is also incredible about the events described in Acts 1:1-11 is the way it describes the coming of Christ. In verse 11, the two angels (men, dressed in white) said, "This same Jesus, who was taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." How was Jesus taken to heaven? Visibly, bodily, suddenly, and in the clouds. This is the same way Jesus is coming back.

Two key signs are given in this passage that occur simultaneously: the spread of the gospel and the restoration of Israel. What is interesting is the promise found in Psalm 102:18, "written for a future generation," which means, in the original, the terminal or last generation. "At that time, they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." (Luke 21:27-28)

Remember, no one knows the time or date but it will be, "Visibly, bodily, suddenly and in the clouds." It could be soon.

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## Bulletin Board

- Dan has developed a study on **Our Throne Rights**, the victory in the battles in life. The study is for small groups and Bible study groups.
- Dan is having the privilege of mentoring a wonderful young man through His ordination process
- Women's Advisory Group met in September and have begun the planning process to be carried out over the next six months. There will be an update in our future newsletters.

## Message from Dan and Jessie

As changes are evolving in the world, these are impacted USA. We are experiencing many needs being brought to our attention for more one-on-one spiritual teachings as well as mentoring. Jessie is working with several women with different needs. More people are limited with illnesses and the ability to take care of basic needs. SFL has given assistance with utilities, food and rent. Thankfully, the funds have been available to minister to these people. In many cases people tell us how the encouragement of these gifts have help them see how much Jesus loves them. We covet your continual prayers and financial support to make this ministry available through many pathways of teaching, caring, spiritual grow.

Thank you for your faithfulness,

Dan & Jessie