

# Solution for Life



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*Your life matters. With all of the recent extreme weather and the ensuing damage and loss of life that has happened, it has reminded me how easy it can be to feel like things are out of control and wonder if God cares about us and our circumstances, to wonder if we even matter. Even when you do not see God answer prayers in the way you long for Him to do, you matter to Christ. In whatever you face, He is always drawing you to Himself and seeking to have a meaningful relationship with you. His purpose is to create a hunger for Him and His kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. In this newsletter we write this personal message to you to remind all of you how much He loves you and uses many things on earth to draw you close. Your story matters to Him and those He wants to reach around you. I pray you experience His blessings as you read each message contained in this newsletter. Draw near to Him and He will draw near to you.*

*Blessings and Prayers, Jessie Westlund*

## It is Finished | by Daniel Westlund

The last few weeks I keep singing the song "It is Finished." It keeps repeating in my mind and soul. Not all the original words of the Bill Gaither song, but the words as follows: It is finished, the battle is over. It is finished no time for tomorrow. It is finished the end of the ages and Jesus is Lord.

My thoughts drift back to the cross in the darkness at 3:00 in the afternoon when Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit." (John 19:30). Then my thoughts go to Revelation 22:20, "Yes I am coming soon." The "...mystery of God, namely Christ." (Colossians 2:2).

It was in my sophomore year of college at the University of Minnesota that I had a divine encounter that I have never forgotten. I knew Christ as my Savior, but I was drifting. I did not have time for church, time to read the Bible, time for prayer, time for God. I was walking alone on campus when a man approached and said to me as he passed, "What are you going to do with Jesus?" I turned around to answer him and he was gone. He had vanished.

What was I going to do with Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior? We have one of two choices: follow Him or reject Him. The story is told in the Bible of a religious leader, a member of the Jewish ruling council, who came to Jesus at night to inquire of Him. His name was Nicodemus, and he recognized that Jesus was a teacher who had come from God. The whole conversation is found in John 3:1-21. Jesus tells Nicodemus that if he wants to see the Kingdom of God he must be "born again." Nicodemus had a choice. To follow Jesus or reject Him.

What you are going to do with Jesus is life's greatest decision. It determines the whole course of your life both now and forever more. You may ask, "Where do I begin my journey to be a follower of Jesus Christ?" The answer is by inviting Christ into your life as your Savior and Lord. To do this you must first recognize that sin has separated you from God: "for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). What is the origin of sin that separates us from God? The original sin of the parents of all mankind, Adam, and Eve:

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# Solution for growth

## More Like Christ | by Stephen Westlund

I first believed in Jesus when I was five. I publicly said I belong to Jesus when I was baptized at 12. When I was in college, I wrote my undergraduate thesis on the state of nature, the fall of man, and the new nature in Christ. At the age of 22, I wrote thousands and thousands of words to understand the struggle to be more like Christ. God wrote this: "...for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds. Put on your new nature and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him." (Colossians 3:9-10)

Easy, right? Not so much. After college, I wrestled for years to understand, "what exactly does it mean to become like Jesus?" I had the head knowledge, but I wasn't living it every day. In fact, I was plagued by anxiety, fear, and several dark seasons of depression. But God never let me go. And one day I was reading the book of Judges and I read about where God sent His angel to speak with a man named Gideon. When the angel of the LORD addressed Gideon he said, "The LORD is with you, Mighty Warrior." To which Gideon responded, "Who me? You must have me mixed up with someone else. I am the least of the least. I am not a mighty warrior." I can just picture Gideon looking over his shoulder to see if there was someone behind him the Angel of the LORD was speaking to. But there wasn't. He was speaking to Gideon, the least of the least.

I had read this story before, but on this occasion I recall God putting the following thought in my mind and on my heart. "My child, when I look at you, I don't see you as you see yourself. No, I see my Son, and I see who you are in Jesus. And my child, I rejoice over you!"

In all my trying to be more like Jesus, in all the words I wrote in college, I never considered that, in spiritual places, the work is done. God is not up there looking down on me, He is up there dancing and rejoicing over me. And guess what, if you belong to Jesus, He is dancing and rejoicing over you also!

But, if you are like me, there is still that nasty sinful nature to deal with.... Every... Single... Day! It can be so exhausting.

But guess what, He doesn't want it to be exhausting. Jesus said He came to set us free. Think about your life right now. Are you free?

Prior to the spring of 2017, I belonged to Jesus, my head knowledge was slowly being converted to heart knowledge, but I wasn't free. I was still afraid. I was still anxious. And I was still battling depression. I sure didn't feel like I was becoming like Jesus. But God met me where I was again. One day on the way to work, I paused at a park to read my Bible, and I read these words: "Lord my God, I called to you for help, and you healed me." (Psalm 30:2) And the words jumped off the page at me like they were the biggest, boldest print I have ever seen. And I prayed a very simple prayer, "Lord, I believe you have the power to heal this fear, this sadness, and this depression in me. I call out to you Lord. Heal me." At that moment the peace of God washed over me, and I have never experienced a minute of depression again. And since that moment, I have faced fear many times and in the power of Christ time and time again, I look fear straight in the eye and I say, "Nope, not today." Am I like Christ yet? In God's eyes, yes. In my own eyes, I know the power of Christ is at work in me and the more I seek Him, the more I find Him, and the more I become like Him. As I continue to wrestle to become more like Christ, I take a lot of encouragement from these words, "Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brothers and sisters, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:12-14) Do you want to become more and more like Christ? There is only one way: do one thing every day – forget what is behind, reach forward, and press toward the goal in Christ Jesus.

## Deeply Rooted | by Debbie Bellevue

We have been blessed this past month to spend some time at the beach in Florida and were struck by the damage that was done to the coast from last year's late season hurricane "Nicole." The shifting sand of beach erosion has the beach communities scrambling to shore up the beach properties.

One day while sitting on the beach, I noticed a scraggly bush coming up out of the sand. There were no other such bushes and I realized that even with the coming and going of the tides and the hurricanes that it still stands there

bedraggled and rough, looking immovable. I wondered why everything else around it had been washed out to the sea, while it still stood. I thought that it must have a strong foundation, its root system like the house built on the rock must be unusually strong. "Whoever hears these words of Mine and does them, will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain came down. The water came up. The wind

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blew and hit the house. The house did not fall because it was built on rock.” Matthew 7:24-25

Sometimes, especially over the last couple of years, I have felt, and I’m sure have looked, bedraggled like that bush. And yet by the grace of God, somehow our family and myself have remained standing through the nineteen months of sickness and the death of our beautiful Bella.

Many times in the Bible, God will use natural phenomenon to explain supernatural truth. When David wrote Psalm 23, sheep and sheep-tending were certainly things that both he and the people of his culture understood. David was a shepherd and was very familiar with the habits of sheep. I was not, until I did some research about the ways of sheep. In this Psalm, we find ways to become and remain deeply rooted no matter the storms that come or the tides that will certainly rise and fall in our lives. Psalm 23:1-3 says,

The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths. for his name’s sake.

Here some facts about sheep. Sheep are dumb creatures that require endless attention and meticulous care. They can’t self-feed. If you let them, they will eat themselves to death. They are easily spooked and have a mob instinct. They are totally dependent on their shepherd, and nothing calms them like the Shepherd’s voice. For sheep to be cared for, they must learn to lie down. Verse 2 of the Psalm says, “He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside quiet waters.” There are four things that must happen for a sheep to lie down and only the shepherd can provide these things.

1. Sheep will not lie down unless they are free from fear. They are defenseless creatures and their only recourse

when faced with danger is to run. Fear is a paralyzing emotion that does not allow deep roots to form.

2. Sheep will not lie down when there is tension, rivalry, and cruel competition within the flock. The sheep get so busy defending their rights and contesting the challenges that they cannot lie down and rest. There is probably nothing in my life that causes me more unrest than trying to defend and keep track of my rights.
3. Sheep will not lie down when there are distractions or pests in the pasture. The sheep are driven crazy by the flies and ticks and literally get up and start stamping their feet and shaking their heads and want to rush off. They are just little annoyances but cause the sheep great concern. These are like the day-to-day things that we let get to us.
4. The sheep will not lie down when they are hungry and thirsty. It is the responsibility of the Shepherd to provide the green pastures for the sheep to graze and lie in when faced with danger and to provide the water they need in the dry and thirsty land that they live in. If they do not get enough to eat or drink, they will not lie down.

For us to have deep roots that can stand against any storm and the tides of life, we must learn to lie down in the presence of our Shepherd. Lying down in His presence brings an intimacy and trust that cannot be gained anywhere else. Jesus was constantly drawing away to be alone with the Father. It is where He and we, too, gain peace, strength, wisdom, and health. Practicing spiritual disciplines like silence, solitude, and stillness are essential. Times of retreating, meditating on Scripture, and perhaps seeking spiritual direction are practices that open us up to the voice of our Shepherd and allow us to be and fulfill our Kingdom destiny for His glory.

“wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned” (Romans 5:12). The death spoken of here is eternal separation from God, our creator, “for the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

Christ paid the price for sins when He died upon the cross: “but God commended His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). The question remains, how do I receive Jesus Christ as my Savior, eternal life, and forgiveness of my sins?

“That if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and you believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart, a man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scriptures say, whoever believes on Him (Jesus) will not be ashamed” (Romans 10:9-11). “For whoever calls on the name of Jesus will be saved” (Romans 10:13). For those of us who know Jesus, the question becomes what will we do with Him to share Him with others for their eternal destiny?

How do I receive Christ as my Savior? How do I call upon His name? Through prayer. “Dear Jesus, forgive me of my sins and save my soul. I ask you to come into my life and be the Lord of my life. Take control of my life, for I give myself to you. Thank you, Lord, for hearing my prayer, coming into my life, and saving my soul. In Jesus name, I pray. Amen.”

The promise of God is, “to all who receive Him (Jesus), to those who believe in His name, He gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12). “And this is the record that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in the Son (Jesus). He that has the Son has life; and he that does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you that believe in the name of the Son of God (Jesus); that you may know that you have eternal life and that you believe in the name of the Son of God.” (1 John 5:11-13)

The question remains, what are you going to do with Jesus? And for those of us who know Jesus, what are we doing to spread the word to others of the precious Savior’s love?



# Solution for the future

## Watch & Pray | by Daniel Westlund

One prophecy Christ fulfilled is found in Psalm 78:2 “I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world.” Parables were used by Christ to communicate truths about the Kingdom of God using natural or earthly things with spiritual meaning. **In Matthew 24, Jesus gives a list of signs that precede His coming.**

- Watch out that no one deceives you.
- For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many.
- You will hear of wars and rumors of wars but see to it that you are not alarmed.
- Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.
- There will be famines and earthquakes in various places.
- All these are the beginning of birth pains.
- You will be persecuted and put to death for Christ’s sake.
- You will be hated by all nations because of Me.
- At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other.
- Many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.
- The increase of wickedness, and the love of most will grow cold.
- The one who stands firm to the end will be saved. The gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

After the signs He mentioned, Jesus then uses several parables to describe what His second coming will be like. The first is found in Matthew 25:1-13 involving a comparison between ten virgins waiting for His coming. We are told there are ten virgins. Ten is an interesting number that symbolizes the completion of a cycle. It is the number of heaven and the world and universal creation. Laban changed Jacob’s wages 10 times before he left, 10 commandments that are universal, 10 plagues in Egypt before the Israelites left. When Jesus comes a cycle (phase) is completed.

There is a sign we need to be looking for in this parable related to the coming of Christ. The bridegroom is Christ, the virgins would represent Christendom, those who profess the name of Christ. The oil represents the Holy Spirit, the key difference between the wise and the foolish. In Romans 8:9 we are told, “And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.” Jesus in Matthew 7:21 in the Sermon on the Mount said, “not everyone who says to me ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the kingdom of heaven.” We are told in the parable it

will be a long time before Christ comes. It has now been two thousand years and still counting. But just prior to His arrival there is an awaking that takes place, a move of the Spirit, but only in those who have oil, the Spirit of Christ, in their life. The wise virgins are ready and go into the wedding banquet (heaven), but for the foolish virgins it is too late. They plead to be let in, but the door is shut and the bridegroom, Christ, says “I do not know you.”

The question is - are we like the wise or the foolish virgins? Are we seeking the Lord? Are we watching? Are we prepared to share with others God’s love and warnings we are facing now?

We should expect a move of the Spirit in those who have the Spirit of Christ living in them just prior to the coming of Christ that coincides with other signs including the rebirth of Israel as a nation, a form of godliness that has no power (II Timothy 3:5) and the formation of the eighth and final beast (governing body) that controls all commerce (Revelation 13: 16-17). Even now we are seeing an outpouring of the Spirit all over the world.

The last words of Christ in this parable relating to His second coming are: “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or hour.”

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## Message from Dan and Jessie

We are thankful for your prayers and support for the ministry. The ministry is growing with dedicated prayer time with and for people who find themselves in situations that are overwhelming. Also, monthly, we assist people who have financial and spiritual needs. Due to the economy, there are more authentic referrals. It is a God-send to have people come alongside us and volunteer as we minister. The women’s ministry is growing as Jessie reaches out to women to help support their spiritual growth. If you would like to contribute to the ministry, send a check in the enclosed envelope or go online to [www.solutionforlife.org](http://www.solutionforlife.org). Thank you again for your faithfulness.

Sincerely, Dan and Jessie