

providing a future with hope

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Challenges

enlightening empowering equipping

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Promises That Persevere

By Jeff Bonzelaar, Executive Director

Terrance was in our program several years ago. He came to us from Maryland with a cocaine addiction. While he progressed well initially, problems back home began to weigh him down. His boys were acting out in school. His wife was getting behind with the bills. Things at his house started breaking down.

One particular day he looked like the end of the world had come. I asked him, "Terrance, what are you doing about your situation?" Exasperated, he replied, "I'm praying about it." I shot back, "Well, it's going to take a lot more than prayer." He looked at me rather quizzically. "What do you mean?" I asked him, "What promises of God are you standing upon?"

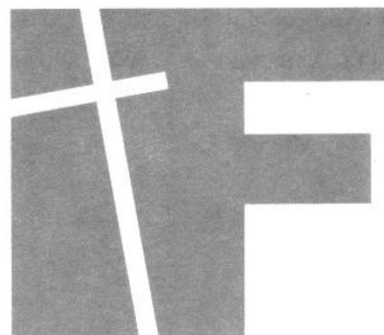
He muttered a few things about God and His love but could give me no specific verse from the Bible.

Don't get me wrong, prayer is important. But if we're going to stand strong in the days ahead, we need to cling to God's Word. The psalmist put it like

this, "*My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life*" (119:50). Notice: This struggling believer didn't say his relief came from being delivered *from* his troubles (I wish this were the case). No, his consolation came in knowing certain divine truths *in the midst* of them.

"Everything is going according to plan. There are no accidents in this world. Relax."

As we face another year, I want to share with you three bedrock promises about God that will keep you sane, alive, and courageous in the days ahead.



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1. God is Sovereign

God is in control. He reigns. Ps. 135:5-6 declares, "I know that the Lord is great, that our Lord is greater than all gods. The Lord does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths."

God has no serious competitors. He is the "only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of Lords" (1 Tim. 6:15). Nothing is outside His realm of authority. Nothing can frustrate His purposes. God does all that He pleases.

This is reassuring in uncertain times. God is calling the shots. Everything is going according to plan. There are no accidents in this world. Relax.

2. God is Sympathetic

Hebrews 4:15 tells us that "we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses." This can read clumsily at first due

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to the double negative construction—"do not" and "unable." The significance of this, however, is that in the original Greek, when a negative is stacked upon another negative, the force of the verb is intensified. So, a more accurate translation might be, "We have a high priest who can

really and truly sympathize with our weaknesses."

God not only understands the *fact* of our weaknesses, He understands the very *feeling* of them. He is not indifferent to your pain and stress. He experienced every conceivable abuse, cruelty, hurt, and frustration. He can fully sympathize. "He was . . . a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering" (Is. 53:3).

This is comforting. Because our God put on flesh 2,000 years ago in His Son, "He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness" (Heb. 5:2).

3. God is Sufficient

God will supply you and me with everything we need to do His will and remain faithful to Him whatever the circumstances. Whether He calls us to plenty or want, to be well fed or to go hungry, "(We) can do everything *through him* who gives me strength" (Phil. 4:13).

He may not remove the "thorn" from our side, but He promises us that His grace is sufficient (enough) and that "His power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9).

So rejoice! Not only does God promise to NOT allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear (1 Cor. 10:13), He promises to equip you and me with every mercy necessary for us to live as more than conquerors. Paul put it like this, "My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19)

*"These words hold me up in bad times;
yes, your promises rejuvenate me."
(Ps. 119:50; Msg)*

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Testimony Shawn Fant

"I am the younger of two boys born November 28, 1981, in Monroe, Michigan. My parents loved me and gave me everything I needed. We went to church, but I paid little attention.

I smoked marijuana for the first time when I was 17. My friends had been offering it to me for about a year. I felt I deserved some reward for being good all this time. I tried it and was hooked. I soon started taking or smoking anything that would get me high.

Within a year I began taking Vicodin which eventually led to heroin. I was able to hide my drug use from my family and maintain a normal lifestyle. I had a job and a girlfriend. No one suspected anything.

But my addiction began to take over. I started pawning jewelry and stealing money from my parents to support my habit. My parents put two and two together. They turned to a friend, a detective on the police force who was a Christian. He came to my apartment when I wasn't home. He left his card with a note asking me to call him and let him help. I did not return his call.

A few days later my mom showed up at my apartment with the detective right behind her. They started questioning me, and my mom asked me to show her my arms. When I rolled up my sleeves and my mom saw where I had been shooting heroin, she began to cry. I felt so much shame and guilt for the life I was living.

The detective took me outside and began to tell me about the Lord and what Jesus had done for me. He also explained Life Challenge to me. He told me that I needed to enter the program. I agreed, even though I thought it wouldn't help.

I entered the program on April 24, 2006. I didn't like it at first. I wasn't used to having structure. I wanted to go home. There were all kinds of rules. People were telling me what to do.

After two weeks, my bags were packed, and I was

ready to leave. But minutes before I walked out the door, my first letter from family arrived. My parents had written to tell me how proud they were of me for sticking to my decision to come to Life Challenge. God has perfect timing. I decided to stay and give it another try.

I needed a miracle to believe in Jesus. I said the sinner's prayer every day for two months straight but nothing happened. I just wanted God to change me.

One evening in a church service something seemingly 'jarred loose' within me. I got a little scared and turned to my friend next to me. He told me I was feeling the Holy Spirit, the presence of God! I instantly went from *wanting* to believe in Jesus to *believing* in Him. I got saved!

Being at Life Challenge helped me develop a devotional life, work ethic, much needed discipline, and fellowship with other believers. The classes introduced me to a greater understanding of Jesus and the Christian life I wanted to live.

I graduated on April 20, 2007. I got established in a church, made Christian friends, found a job, and started school. But after a year-and-a-half, the Lord put it on my heart to return to Life Challenge. I began serving a six month internship on September 25, 2008. It is by far the most gratifying serving experience I have ever had. I love Jesus and Life Challenge! To God be the glory!"

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We continue to need your financial support as we seek to bring Christ's salvation to 60+ former alcoholics and drug addicts. Thanks for all your help!

Together for souls,

Jeff