

COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS

**Five spiritual blessings
worthy of thanking God for
this holiday season.**



**When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings, name them one by one
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done!**

**When you look at others with their lands and gold,
Think that Christ has promised you His wealth untold.
Count your many blessings money cannot buy
Your reward in heaven or your home on high!**

**Count your many blessings, name them one by one;
Count your many blessings, see what God has done!**

— Johnson Oatman



**An undenominational publication
devoted to the teachings of Jesus
and His apostles and dedicated to
those who seek the truth.**

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1 JESUS LOVES YOU & ME

Is there anything more important than to be loved? We seek it everywhere we go! We are desperate to find love that will make us feel complete. The problem is we are unable to fulfill this need consistently without help. Why? We are frail, weak and often damaged by hurtful people.



What if I told you it's easy to find this deeply fulfilling love we are looking for? Love so complete that every waking hour you would be overwhelmed by the power of this love? Would you jump at the chance to have it? I know I did! Once I understood how to find it, nothing could stop me from having this deeply satisfying love.

This love has always been available, you just didn't know it. This love is the love of Jesus Himself. Jesus has wanted to shower you with His affection from before you were even knit in your mother's womb. You probably are saying so why hasn't He given it to me? Well it's like this. Most of us have been living where our frailty and weaknesses have produced damaging things, even things that work against our ability to accept the love of Jesus.

Here's the problem: Jesus can't have anything to do with things that are ungodly. The Bible refers to these things as sin. All of us have lived sinful lives.

Sin reminds me of a big boulder in the

middle the road that no one can get around. The boulder represents sin in our lives blocking us from Jesus. You are on one side urgently longing for Jesus' love and Jesus is on the other side. He wants you to get to His side so He can shower you with His love. The good news is this: Jesus has provided a way to remove sin in each of us.

How much does Jesus really love us? *"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life"* (John 3:16). Jesus wants to shower you with love. He died on the cross in order to love you for eternity. That's how much Jesus loves you! All He asks is that you love Him, believe in Him and out of love obey his teaching.

Find a Bible. Call or visit a congregation of the Church of Christ and ask someone to teach you about Jesus. Get started now because Jesus loves you.

— Kirk Israel, Church of Christ
Castleton, Vermont

2

GOD SPEAKS TODAY



“Kids don’t come with instruction manuals you know,” said the nurse at the hospital when my child was born.

Have you ever heard someone lamenting that he did not have a guide to help him make decisions in life? God has indeed provided an instruction manual for life: the Bible. You may be thinking “The Bible was written thousands of years ago. How could it be an instruction manual for my life?” Well, I am glad you asked.

The Hebrews writer points out: “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son” (Hebrews 1:1-2).

Though Jesus walked among men and taught over two thousand years ago, His words still apply and are accurately recorded for us today.

The apostle John wrote: “*Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,*

and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:30-31).

Jesus told His apostles that the Holy Spirit would direct them in what to write, giving them perfect memory of what Jesus had said so that they would write accurately (John 14:26).

The principles of how to deal with life are timeless and relevant; all we have to do is to apply God’s word to our lives. Each one of us needs to take the time to honestly examine the Bible. This requires looking into our own hearts, admitting our flaws and sins, and being willing to take action based on what we read there.

Thank God that we have His instruction manual, because without it we would be going through this life guessing what to do and confronting many dead ends!

— **David Rollert, Church of Christ
Tilton, New Hampshire**

3 A CHANCE TO START OVER



Are you someone who is having a hard time forgiving yourself for bad things done in the past, I must tell you this: you are not the only one. Millions of people are struggling with guilt on a daily basis.

It might be an encouragement to you, a much-needed solace for your soul, to know that feeling guilty can be a valuable emotion. It can mean you have been doing some soul-searching and recognized mistakes of the past. That is a good start, my friend. It can make you a better person if you regret the bad things you did and are sorry for hurting other people.

You may have even taken a proactive approach and tried to make amends to those you have hurt, to make it up for them in some way.

Still feeling guilty? You need to know something many people do not know: *God, the Creator of the universe will give total forgiveness!*

You will be able to forgive yourself and be in peace and harmony with your feelings when you surrender your guilt to Jesus Christ, the Son of God. These might be the most important words you need to start a new life.

Do you want to turn a new leaf in the book of your life, to make a new start, to wipe the slate clean? Avail yourself of the opportunity God is giving you, and discover a new life in Christ. Here are some Bible verses that will help: Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Hebrews 10:22.

— **Edelto Villa, Church of Christ
Union City, New Jersey**

4

GOD'S CARE FOR SEEKERS



A while back I lost my whole ring of keys and in a panic wished that I could seek them with a few key-strokes in my computer search bar or even call them like when my cell phone was lost. No, there was no help but a long and methodical retracing of steps to find them.

How about searching for God? Does He help us in seeking Him? Does He want to be found?

In speaking to the pagans in Athens who worshipped many gods, Paul gave some startling news. He said that God did not “live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if He needed anything, because He Himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.” These Greeks did not know what to do with a God that men did not travel great distances to find but instead came to them or a God who was not served by men but served men instead.

Paul said: “God did this so that men would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He

is not far from each one of us.”

Perhaps as a child you were blindfolded at a party, spun around, and then tried to tag the other kids in the room. They didn’t want to be caught and, being able to see, stayed just out of reach. That is not God. He wants to be sought, is willing to be found, and is just within reach.

In His providential love He promises that if we seek Him, we will find Him. God yearns for us so much that though we feel like we’re groping in the dark, His hands are reaching for us and strong arms wrap us up in His embrace.

Some fear being drawn into an intimate relationship with the Creator because that will make them give up the world’s pleasures and empty promises. Sadly, they let the opportunity to seek Him pass though He still stays near. Seek Him today. He will be found.

— Doug Kashorek, Church of Christ
Plattsburg, New York

5 PROMISE of ETERNAL LIFE

“God’s very great and precious promises”

— 2 Peter 1:4

Jesus said: “*For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life*” (John 3:16). The promise of *eternal life* is for those who believe in Him and respond to the good news of salvation.



The apostle John placed Jesus statement about *eternal life* at the beginning of his gospel to entice his readers to read all the way to the end of his book and come to an understanding about Jesus. Reading the entire Gospel of John will reveal the full story about Jesus and what He accomplished through His death, burial and resurrection. There is enough information to bring the reader to believe in Jesus Christ.

But, is simple belief in Jesus as the Son of God sufficient for one to have eternal life? If you were to lift John 3:16 out of its context one might think so. *To ignore the context would be to dismiss the rest of what John shared about the Son of God.* We must realize that John’s account was intended to be read through completely before the decision about belief in Jesus was made. Once the decision to believe is made, the reader must decide what to do with that belief. A sincere believer must ask: what do I need to do with

my faith? What do I have to do to have eternal life? A little more study and one can know what to do with his faith in Jesus as God’s Son. The gospel of John says we must be “*born of water and the Spirit*” to enter the kingdom of God (John 3:5).

Go to the book of Acts in your Bible and read Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost in chapter two. In the first sermon preached about Jesus after His death, burial and resurrection you will find people asking what to do after they came to believe in Jesus. Peter had the answer for them: “*Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins*” (Acts 2:38).

Consider the precious promise of *eternal life*. Do you want to receive that promise? Turn your faith in Jesus into active obedience and that promise will become yours!

— **Leo Woodman**
Church of Christ, Kittery, Maine

God's Plan for Us What We Must Do To Be Forgiven



Believe on (trust in) the Lord Jesus Christ

Acts 16:31; John 3:16

Repent of your sins (change your ways)

Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30-31

Confess that Jesus is the Lord, the Son of God

Romans 10:9-10

Be Immersed in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of your sins

Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:38

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