

GRACE MOMENTS

*I've Got
the Blues*

TIME OF
GRACE
WITH PASTOR MARK JESKE



BY PASTOR MARK JESKE

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*Daily readings written to provide
straight talk and real hope.*

I've Got the Blues

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Direct quotations from the
Bible (NIV) are printed in **bold**.

Foreword

The blues is a musical gift to Americans and the world. The songs come from the African-American experience, birthed from the pain of slavery, hopeless toil, and separation. The blues' ancestors were work songs, call-and-response verses to make the day go faster. Blues songs in church are called spirituals.

*Nobody knows the trouble I've seen;
Nobody knows my sorrow.*

Slavery is gone from the American scene, but the blues are not. Everybody hurts. Everybody sins, and everybody is the victim of someone else's selfishness and cruelty.

*There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole;
There is a balm in Gilead to soothe the sin-sick soul.*

What are you struggling with right now? Money blues?
More debts than assets? Left by someone you loved?
Career going nowhere?

*I looked over Jordan and what did I see?
A band of angels comin' after me,
Comin' for to carry me home.*

Here is a word from God for each day of your month. May God comfort your heart to know that he listens to everything on your mind, has a tender heart for you, and is already planning how he will ease your troubled mind.

Pastor Mark Jeske
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ONE: *I've Got the Blues*

I'm afraid

When you wake up in the middle of the night in a cold sweat, what is your worst personal fear? Come on, admit it. Everybody has fears. When you're little, it's the monsters lurking under your bed. When you're a teen, it's being rejected and having no friends. Young mothers worry about their babies. New homeowners worry about being swamped in debt. Later your issues might be infertility, rebellious children, business failure, or an unfaithful spouse.

Whatever your fears may be, God is there for you when you need him. The Bible says, **“Because he loves me, says the LORD, ‘I will rescue him. . . . He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble’”** (Psalm 91:14,15).

“Let go and let God” is a somewhat overworked cliché, but it's still true. Psalm 91 guarantees that the supreme power in the universe is interested in your struggles, cares about you in a personal way, and will get involved to help at just the right time.

I feel better already.

I'm too far gone

Are you a *Star Wars* fan? Remember how Darth Vader fought off all of Luke Skywalker's attempts to bring him back to the good side? Vader thought that he was too far gone. He had resigned himself to service to the evil emperor.

Perhaps you have felt that your sins are too great for God ever to love and accept you. Perhaps your years of guilt and shame keep you from God's house and enjoying the fellowship of God's other children. Perhaps you are so aware of your unworthiness that you just can't bring yourself to pray.

The Bible says in Romans 5:20, **“Where sin increased, grace increased all the more.”** In other words, God's forgiveness is greater than your greatest sin. Christ is greater than Satan. God's mercy is greater than your guilt.

Perhaps you know someone who feels that he or she is too far gone and is resigned to fear and damnation. You can be God's agent of hope. Feel the love. Share the love.

I'm confused

“What do I do now?” Have you ever groaned that question? What could be worse than confusion? Sometimes our choices in life all seem bad or they all seem dreadfully hard or there are so many different choices. Do you stick with a difficult boyfriend? Do you rat out a friend who is doing something illegal?

Do you help a child do math problems or make her figure them out on her own? Do you protect a coworker or tell the boss? What do you do about your daughter's problem pregnancy? How can you cope with bankruptcy?

Well, guess what? God guides your walk. He cares enough about your life to provide foundational principles to help you deal with life's toughest questions. Do you feel surrounded by darkness and unsure of what to do? Let him speak to you.

The Bible says in Psalm 119:105, “[LORD,] **your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.**” There you will find eternal and true principles about how to think about money, love, sex, your job, your family, and yourself.

I doubt that God could love me

We all sing the blues sometimes. What's in your blues song this week? Dumped? Betrayed? Broke? Hung over? Robbed? Hopeless?

It's hard to lift yourself out of the blues. Satan wants to keep you down, whispering “Loser!” in your ears. That's why God sends us friends, whose words of praise or comfort can help us back on our feet.

The ultimate comforting friend is God the Holy Spirit. When I am plagued by doubts, and especially the worst of all doubts—doubts that God loves me—the Spirit reminds me of the Calvary love of Christ our Savior. He helps me believe that such a great treasure can actually be mine, that heaven can actually be my destination too.

The Bible says, “**The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ**” (Romans 8:16,17). In the Spirit you've got a friend. In your God you've got a Father.

I'm tired

Why do you suppose so many people run away from God and try their best to avoid going to church? My guess is that a lot of people are afraid of getting hustled. They assume that the church just wants to *take* from them. They assume that Christianity is basically a load of rules that will just add to their life's burdens.

Would it surprise you to know that God's basic message to you is what he wants to *give you*, that God's first desire for you is to lighten your load rather than increase it? The Lord Jesus says in Matthew 11:28, **“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”**

Some perhaps well-meaning religious people have tried to portray the church as a country club, where membership brings exclusivity and insiders-only benefits. Some portray it as a gym, where you submit to discipline and work out until you look better.

In fact, God wants his church to be a M.A.S.H. unit out in the world where medics can bring in wounded people to be restored in Jesus.

I feel like a loser

Every day you are reminded that there are some very wealthy people on this earth. You see their vehicles whiz by. You see the huge buildings they own. You don't seem to have much by comparison. Every day people say and do things that make you feel worthless. Every day somebody makes you feel like a loser. Perhaps you call yourself a loser.

God happens to think that you are precious. Do you want to know just how valuable you are to God? Look what it cost him to bring you out of hell into heaven: God's Son, Jesus, needed to come to our world to suffer and die a horrible death on the cross. But he was willing to do it all for you.

The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 8:9, **“You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.”**

God's grace to us is free—but it was a very expensive gift. Today would be a good day to thank him.

I feel so guilty

Blaming other people for your problems seems to work for a while. But eventually the truth crashes in—your pain is self-inflicted. It's your fault. You cheated on her. You made the terrible investments. You took the drugs. You stole the money. You fired the weapon.

One of the most paralyzing of all human experiences is guilt. Guilt makes you think you're destined to be like that. Guilt smothers hope. Guilt just keeps digging the hole deeper. Guilt keeps you from praying or reading the Bible. Guilt makes you hide from God, the very one whose voice you most need to hear.

Jesus' mission on this earth was to neutralize and remove your guilt. His death and resurrection provide an unlimited source of the forgiving relief that we all need. King David wrote in Psalm 32:3,5, **“When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. . . . I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD’—and you forgave the guilt of my sin.”**

Ready for your load of guilt to be lightened? Throw it on Jesus today and let him have it.

I'm sick

We all expect to get sick now and then, and that doesn't bother us particularly. But when serious illness strikes, it can turn our lives upside down. Sickness shatters our illusion of control. Major sickness can destroy your savings, your career, your future.

God is there for us when we need him. When we put our trust in him, we give him the chance to make the illness work for us. Once when Jesus' friend Lazarus was seriously ill, everybody around him was panicking. But in John 11:4, Jesus simply said, **“This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it.”** He then demonstrated his power by raising Lazarus from the dead and by raising up a strong faith in those who were there.

Even if you can't see it right away, God will make your life better in some significant way. Even more important, he uses major illness to advance *his* agenda. Your life becomes a canvas for him to paint on. Your sickness will be for God's glory.

I can't take it anymore

Every boiler has a pressure gauge. That gauge is an extremely valuable indicator of the health of the system. The boiler engineer adjusts the pressure so that it stays within the limits for which it was designed. He doesn't want it to blow open any joints or pipes on his watch.

When Christians suffer, and especially when they have it really bad, we're tempted to think that God isn't paying attention, or worse, doesn't care. Did you know that the opposite is true? Like a skilled boiler engineer, God watches each of us in our struggles, and he carefully sets limits to our pressures according to what he knows about our inner abilities.

The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 10:13, **"God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."**

He made you. He loves you. He knows your limits.

Am I dying?

Even tough guys are afraid to die. In the weeks following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on New York and Washington D.C., what became instant hot sellers? You got it—gas masks and vaccines. Terrorism does indeed breed terror.

We cling to life and do everything we can to preserve it. We pour billions into medical research and care. In the 1950s and 1960s, we built bomb shelters in case of nuclear attack. We work out, huffing and puffing on treadmills. We look for heart-healthy menu items. We eat vitamins and tofu, yogurt, and bean curd.

And yet, no matter what we do, we will never be able to anticipate and defend ourselves and our loved ones against all the many ways that death could come upon us. There is only one way not to die—Jesus Christ. He alone holds the key to death. Jesus said in John 11:25,26, **"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die."**

If you allow yourself to believe that promise, your fear of dying evaporates.



TWO: *Whom Are We Worshiping?*

God is omnipotent

How strong are you? How much of your world can you control? Can you bench-press 5,000 pounds? Can you lift a mountain? Can you change the weather? Well, of course you can't.

But your God can. God is omnipotent. That means that there is no limit to his power. When God came to earth in the person of Jesus Christ, his disciples watched in awe as he showed total mastery over all creation. The gospel of Mark tells how Jesus' disciples were amazed when he silenced a violent storm that had threatened to swamp their boat. They said, **"Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"** (Mark 4:41).

Isn't it good to know that wherever you sail your little boat today, the master of wind and wave is riding along?

God is omniscient

Normally we don't like it when people think of themselves as smarter than we are. We call them know-it-alls, and that name is not meant as a compliment. Well, guess what? God is omniscient; he really does know it all. His mind is vast enough to track all the thoughts and actions of all the people on earth. His memory has enough RAM to remember all human history, small and great.

Psalm 139:1,2 says, **"O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar."** This has to be terrifying to an unbeliever. It means that you will never ever get away with anything.

But those who believe they are forgiven in Christ will find the concept of an omniscient God greatly comforting. It means that we are worshiping a great big God. It means he won't forget to take care of us, the way we forget to feed the fish and find them floating upside down. It means he remembers all his promises, keeps all his commitments, and won't ever lose track of a single one of us.

Immanuel: God with us

Does it ever bother you that you are invited to worship a God that you can't see? If there really is a divine Maker of this world, why doesn't he hang around to let us get to know him? God's seeming absence from this planet has led some to fear that we are all alone here and that there is nobody and nothing greater than man.

Ah, but that's not so. The Bible says that **“in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form”** (Colossians 2:9). Think of it—God himself actually took on human flesh and entered our lives. The prophet Isaiah says that the child born through a wondrous virgin birth should be called “Immanuel,” which in Hebrew means “God is with us.”

Next time you feel isolated and alone, fearful that nobody is listening when you pray, just whisper, “Immanuel!” That will help you remember, “God, you are right here with us!”

Our living Redeemer

There are times in our lives when we feel strong, smart, invincible, immortal, and totally in control. And then there are those times when we know we are broken, miserable, weak, lost, and trapped. The apostle Paul didn't mind those times. God had told him, **“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness”** (2 Corinthians 12:9).

That's why Paul could conclude, **“Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong”** (verses 9,10).

One of the most precious names for our God is Redeemer. A redeemer is a mighty rescuer—often a relative—who bails you out of a tough situation at great personal cost.

You have a living Redeemer in Jesus, who willingly gave his life so that you could live with him forever. He doesn't mind it at all when you feel weak. When you are full of yourself and proud, you don't feel like you need God. It is only when you cry out your need to him that he can fill it with himself.

God controls nature

Sometimes the world we live in seems like a beautiful, peaceful place. But our environment can be nasty too—sometimes it seems as though nature itself is trying to destroy the people who live in it. Wildfires, hailstorms, typhoons, avalanches, hurricanes, tidal waves, and earthquakes can destroy property and people.

St. Paul explains why nature sometimes seems so broken. It's because it is. **“The creation was subjected to frustration . . . in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God”** (Romans 8:20,21).

It comes as a great comfort to read in the Bible the stories of the miracles of Jesus and to watch him work. Everyone who as a child trembled during severe thunderstorms will be comforted by hearing how Jesus could still a violent storm with just a word.

The Christian faith is not merely an interesting philosophy. It is trust and confidence in the one who made the world and the one who still controls it.

God controls death

When you're making a list of the things that make the world look out of control, surely *death* will be near the top. What is more terrifying than seeing someone you love in a coffin or watching your own life slip away? Are you afraid of death?

In Luke 7:11-17, the Bible tells the story of how Jesus interrupted a funeral procession leaving the little town of Nain. First he told the sobbing mother, **“Don't cry.”** Then he did something even more arresting—he raised the corpse of her son back to life.

It is Jesus' intention to give each of *you* that same gift—resurrection of your body and life forever with him. Every coffin will be opened by our Lord—not in a ghoulish way as a grave robber, but as a grave liberator.

Ever noticed how funeral directors make the casket look like a comfy bed where the deceased is just taking a little nap? I kind of like it that way. When it's a Christian in there, that's what it is. Don't cry.



THREE: *God's Loving Promises*

You're not on your own

A repeated human tragedy that always hurts my heart is to hear about a child who was abandoned by both parents. The kid later says, "I've been on my own since I was _____ (fill in the blank here with some terribly young age).

Satan seeks to destroy you spiritually, and so he lies to you. He wants you to fear that you've been abandoned by your God, that you're on your own in life, that God only watches from above but is not actually engaged in making anything happen for you personally.

This is rot. God does indeed watch over you personally and individually, all the time. But he also acts on your behalf, giving you the things you need and arranging things to make your life better. Read Psalm 121 for its intensely personal comfort: "**The LORD watches over you. . . . [He] will neither slumber nor sleep. . . . The LORD will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life . . . both now and forevermore**" (verses 5,4,7,8).

You never walk alone.

It'll be all right

How are you feeling right now? How are your insides doing? Are you calm and peaceful, or are your feelings all churned up?

All of us live with a lot of stress. The people you walk past on the street—yeah, the ones who look so normal—are dealing with debts, gambling addictions, family breakups, job layoffs, health crises, STDs, and huge auto repair bills. But the worst kind of stress is to live with a permanent fear that God is angry with us and is going to punish us sooner or later. But get this—one of the Spirit's main goals for your life, one of his *fruits*, is to give you peace inside.

The Bible says in Romans 5:1, "**Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.**" Whenever you let the Spirit speak to you through his Word, he gives you the calm assurance that you are God's child, that your sins have been forgiven, and that God actually likes you.

Everything will be all right.

He is in your future

My brother knows more about cars than I ever will. But even he sometimes met his match. He bought a 1950 Ford once that was in pretty rough shape. After working on it for many months, he just felt overwhelmed and gave up on it. The car sat in the driveway for a long time, its dull brown primer making it look like a candidate for the junkyard.

Do you ever feel as though your once-bright hopes will never come true? Has your optimism ground to a halt? Do you no longer believe that anything good is coming in your future?

I've got some good news for all you. God lives in your future. He likes you a lot and loves to get involved in making things happen for people he cares about.

God isn't just an observer, just watching as your hopes and dreams wither. He cares about you. He created you for a purpose, rescued you at the cost of his Son's life, and wants to spend eternity enjoying life with you. He gets no thrill from your misery. God says in Jeremiah 29:11, **"I know the plans I have for you . . . plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."**

There is hope in his Word. Let him talk to you today.

He gets the last word

One of the girls in my sixth-grade class loved to see naughty boys get caught by the teacher. "Cheaters never prosper," she would cackle.

Ah, if only she were right. Alas, my sad life experience is that cheaters seem to do very well. Everything's a hustle. Everything's for sale. Them that's got shall get.

Do you ever feel as though you are wasting your time trying to get ahead through honesty and hard work? Do you ever fantasize about taking shortcuts to prosperity like everyone else? King David knew that feeling. In Psalm 12:1,2 he wrote, **"Help, LORD, for the godly are no more; the faithful have vanished. . . . Everyone lies to his neighbor."**

But the planet is not out of God's control, and your life isn't either. He sees *everything* going on around you, cares about you, and acts at just the right time. That same psalm says, **"Because of the oppression of the weak and the groaning of the needy, I will now arise," says the LORD. "I will protect them"** (verse 5).

God always gets the last word, and his last word is "I love you."

You wear the uniform

It's not just sports teams that love to wear their colors. Sports fans, bridesmaids, restaurant waitstaff, and jockeys all proudly wear uniforms that identify them with their team.

The day that you were baptized, you were given the uniform of heaven to wear. You might call them the "colors of Christ." The Bible says in Galatians 3:27, **"All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."** You can't see these clothes (yet). But what matters most is that God can.

He sees the clothes of Christ and claims you as he does his Son. He sees the holiness of Christ wrapped around you and regards you now as holy as his Son. The angels have absolutely no trouble picking out which are God's own. Their new uniforms shine.

He is smiling at you

You can read a lot from people's faces, can't you? Without ever hearing a word, you can sense irritation, pleasure, doubt, worry, and fear. You can sense condemnation too. You can tell if someone is angry with you before a word is said. How good are you at forgiving people who have done you wrong? Not so hot? Do you hold grudges sometimes?

Sometimes we assume that that's how God looks at us—never really forgiving completely, still angry, still remembering our moral failures. If we try to imagine his face, we fear that he is frowning.

Our God eagerly desires a loving relationship with all of his lost and estranged children. That's why he arranged for our wrongs to be placed on the head of an innocent substitute, his own Son. That's why he instructed Moses to speak words of kindness to the believers and bless them like this: **"The LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you"** (Numbers 6:25).

Visualize God's face right now. Visualize him smiling at you. He likes you, you know.

He knows you inside out

The longer you're married, the harder it is to bluff your way through life. My wife knows most of my dodges and cons. She can see through me like a pane of glass. She rolls her eyes at my dumb jokes and corrects my self-serving stories when I embellish them a little too much.

How do you feel about the idea that God knows every thought in your head, every secret in your heart, every deed in your past, and hears every word from your mouth—spoken, shouted, or mumbled? Isn't that a little intimidating? How can you hold your head up in church? How can you not feel dirty in his presence?

If God knows what a bluffer and faker you really are, can he like you? King David wrote about the concept of God's knowing him inside and out: **“O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. . . . You are familiar with all my ways”** (Psalm 139:1,3).

It is the cleansing blood of Christ that takes away our fear. It is the cleansing blood of Christ that makes God's closeness a feeling of safety and security. He knows you. He likes you anyway.

He gives you friends

“It is not good for the man to be alone,” said God, as he created the first woman. It still isn't good for people to be isolated. He made us to be social creatures. He also created the concept of the church because it is not good for people to be in spiritual isolation.

Satan has an easier time picking off the strays. Left to ourselves we can get lost, eat things not good for us, and fall prey to any one of the thousand or so temptations that the devil has found successful in destroying people's bodies and souls.

“They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42). Every one of those divine activities builds up people's faith and spiritual strength. Every one is a gift from God intended to be enjoyed by a spiritual family.

I need my Christian friends. I need someone to tell me if I'm getting weird in my beliefs. I need someone to tell me if I am rationalizing a sinful lifestyle. I need encouragement when I am down and a posterior kick when I am being stubborn. So do you. Do you have a congregation? Love it! Do you need a congregation? Find one!

You can expect God's blessings

People get down when they feel that all their efforts are wasted and pointless. They get cynical and say things like, "Virtue is its own punishment" and "No good deed ever goes unpunished." We think we know too many stories about how cheaters prosper and the violent always win.

That's just bitter talk. Blind too. The Bible says that the Lord **"blesses the home of the righteous. . . . You will go on your way in safety. . . . When you lie down, your sleep will be sweet"** (Proverbs 3:33,23,24). The Lord pays attention. He remembers. And then he acts.

The word *bless* means that God intervenes in our lives to make them better. He accepted the obligation of fatherhood when we were washed with water and the Word. He promised to make good things happen to the righteous. When things are right with you and God, your sleep is sweet indeed.

You can understand his message

There are some areas of human knowledge that are completely over my head. I know nothing of mathematical analysis or calculus. You can talk about it all day, and I won't get a word.

Some people never studied a foreign language. They hear French or Arabic and hear only babbling, meaningless syllables.

Here is another example of how much God loves you: he gave you the plan of salvation in plain words you can understand, remember, and speak. The Bible says in Romans 10:8,9, **"The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart.' . . . If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."**

Ponder with me how awesome a gift is our language. Long before you are allowed to see him face-to-face, Christ himself comes to you through words.

He is full of compassion

Do you put off thinking about God because you are so ashamed of certain features of your life? Do you find it hard to pray because you'd feel like such a hypocrite? Have you sinned often, not out of ignorance but in spite of knowing better?

Are you possibly afraid of God himself? Are you afraid that judgment day will be terrifying because you are so unworthy? Are you afraid to die? Well, guess what—your Savior Jesus knew that you needed his help. He died and rose again to take away your guilt. All of it. He did it not to give a reward to the perfect but to be able to forgive sinful fools like you.

In repentance and faith, just throw your guilt at the foot of his cross. In Luke chapter 15, Jesus tells us that when the prodigal son returned home in sorrow, he humbled himself before his father: **“His father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him”** (verse 20).

That's the kind of hug from God that is waiting for you.

He has a plan

You can bear almost any burden if you think that tomorrow has a chance of getting better. If you're laid off from work or have a major chronic illness, you dream about the next interview, the next operation. But when hopes are crushed, the light goes out in your eyes.

The stories of God's Old Testament people Israel will break your heart. The years 721 and 586 B.C. mark the disintegration and collapse of the two kingdoms. But God told his suffering and exiled people, **“The days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when [people] . . . will say, “As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.” For I will restore them to the land I gave their forefathers”** (Jeremiah 16:14,15).

And he did! After 70 years of captivity, God restored the nation to its land and at just the right time sent the Savior of the world to be born.

God knows your needs and your pain. You can give him your fears. He had a plan for Israel, and he has a plan for you too.



FOUR: *Heaven Is Waiting*

No more tears

Bath time for small children is partly fun and partly an ordeal. There are plenty of giggles with the bubbles, but there will be angry shrieks when soap gets in their eyes. Some lab and marketing geniuses developed a “no more tears” children’s shampoo that takes the crying out of the experience.

Don’t you wish that you could shampoo your hair with some miracle substance in the morning that would guarantee that you wouldn’t need to cry that day? The reality is that we have to live in a broken and sinful world. Stuff happens. We get hurt.

When you cry, God’s heart aches too. His answer to your misery was to put his Son through hell on Calvary. That sacrifice opens up his pure and peaceful everlasting kingdom. I think we will like living there.

The Bible promises all believers in Revelation 21:4 that God “**will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.**” Really. No more tears.

Glorified bodies

I’ve occasionally heard people say, “I don’t need money, fancy vacations, fame, or a huge home as long as I have my health.” Well, what if you don’t have your health anymore? Most baby boomers will remember a famous line from The Who song “My Generation” that talked about hoping to die before getting old. Are you afraid of the aging process? Do you feel sick or weak or old right now?

If you’re a believer in Christ, you can enjoy the wisdom and serenity that come with age, knowing that shaky hands and bad knees are only temporary. Soon we will all enjoy glorified bodies. Isaiah says in chapter 35, “Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts . . . your God will come . . . to save you” (verses 3,4).

Complete physical restoration of bone, tissue, cartilage, blood, hair, and skin is a piece of cake to the Lord of the universe. We’re going to look so good in heaven that we will probably need name tags to recognize one another.

In the direct presence of God

If you listen for it, you will hear the word *heaven* pop up in people's talk now and then. "Heavenly" desserts and chocolate treats, Caribbean cruises, and therapeutic massages are all nice. Unfortunately, the things we call heavenly on earth are pale shadows of the grand reality.

In heaven your pain will be gone. You will get back all the Christian friends and loved ones that you laid to rest. You will live in absolute security, bothered no longer by Satan and his temptations. You will never sin again.

But the best is that you will be very, very close to, actually in the personal presence of, our God. You will be very close to the ultimate source of life, goodness, and love, and you will feel it throughout your being.

In Revelation 21:3 John wrote, **"I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with [people], and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.'"**

We will be like Jesus

Have you ever noticed that your praying tapers off when you have a guilty conscience? Guilt makes us slink away from God's presence instead of running to meet him.

One of the greatest things about life in heaven someday is that we will be pure and sinless forever. Never again will we hurt or disappoint our heavenly Father. Never again will we feel shame and guilt.

The Bible says in 1 John 3:2, **"What we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when [Jesus] appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."** You know what? I can't wait to be like Jesus. I am thrilled that my physical body will be restored from all its damage and imperfections. I am even more excited that my heart and soul and mind will be as pure as Jesus' also.

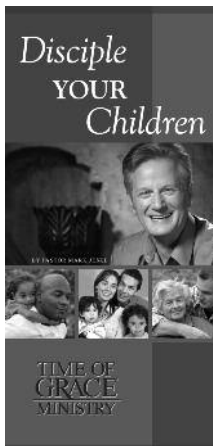
In heaven I will never hurt anybody again. In heaven I will never hurt my God again.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE



Every week, Pastor Mark Jeske brings his message of God's unconditional love, forgiveness, and acceptance to you through *Time of Grace's* broadcast, a half-hour Bible study.

You or someone you know also may find additional *Time of Grace* publications, DVDs, CDs, or tapes helpful. These messages by Pastor Jeske are produced so that people can stay close to God's Word and/or share the materials with others. The titles for various publications currently available are listed on the inside of the envelope enclosed with this booklet. And if you are able, your donation would be appreciated. *Thank you!*



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