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[**The Serious Business of Heaven**](https://newbreak.church/the-serious-business-of-heaven/)

December 18, 2023

The Serious Business of Heaven

This Christmas, learn how to find and share contagious joy with your friends, family, and neighbors in and around Newbreak Church.

I recently had the privilege of surprising both of my nephews at one of their weekday events. I was so excited to see them, and I got there early because I didn’t want to miss anything. As I waited in my car, my mind was going through all of the memories that I have with them and some of the funny things that they say. For instance, my nephew Joshua recently said, “The world would be a whole lot better if everyone thought like me.” Kids truly do say some of the funniest things.

The time finally came, the wait was over, and both boys hopped out of the car and were so excited to see that I was there. The hugs, the laughs, and the walk to the event filled us all with enough joy to start an engine. Then the most beautiful moment happened. My nephew Johnny (12) is currently in Tae Kwon Do, and while he was practicing his moves, he would look over to see if I was still looking at him. Of course, I was, those boys are precious to me.

It reminded me of how it must have felt for Mary, the mother of Jesus, when she was reminded that God looked at her. Mary, after she is told that she would be the Magnificent Mother of the Messiah, she breaks out into song. It was like High School Musical, but much better of course. She sings, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, because he has looked with favor on the humble condition of his servant. Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed…” – Luke 1:46-48 (CSB)

Mary magnifies God, she zooms in on all that God is and all that He has done, and then she shares why. Mary says, “Because He has looked with favor…” God sees you. God sees me. The same way that my eyes were locked in on my nephews as I saw them enjoying life, playing in the sand, and practicing Tae Kwon Do. God’s eyes are on you. He is not looking with anger or with frustration, God is looking with favor!

That word favor means, "a demonstrated delight."

Think about that for a moment, the way that God looks at you is with a demonstrated delight. I can just imagine God looking at you with a smile as you drive the kids to school, pick them up, head to work, walk around the house, no matter where you are, God sees you. And the way He sees you and me, is the reason Mary broke out in song. Mary saw the delight of God because of who He is and who she belongs to.

You belong to God and He looks at you with a demonstrated delight and a divine kindness! That should cause us to celebrate with Joy! So how do we rejoice? Follow what Mary did:

Magnify God over my circumstances

Remember all of the great things God has done

Watch how contagious our joy becomes

2. <https://newbreak.church/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/paykyb-8er8-1536x1025.jpg>

[**Holding onto God’s Promises**](https://newbreak.church/holding-onto-gods-promises/)

January 1, 2024

# **Holding onto God’s Promises**

**“LET US HOLD TIGHTLY WITHOUT WAVERING TO THE HOPE WE AFFIRM, FOR GOD CAN BE TRUSTED TO KEEP HIS PROMISE.”**[**HEBREWS 10:23 (NLT)**](https://biblia.com/bible/nlt/Heb%2010.23)

My family and I went to Missouri over the summer to visit my mom. Misery you say? Yes, that’s what I said. The weather was very hot and humid. My mom lives about 30 miles from Branson. If you haven’t been to Branson—it's like [Disneyland](https://disneylandnews.com/) for people who love Jesus. There are a lot of entertainment shows and family attractions. You know how families go to Disneyland with matching t-shirts? Well, Branson...same…except they all have Bible verses on the back instead of Mickey Mouse.

On this trip, my kids wanted to try another mountain coaster. I say another because there are 3 mountain coasters in Branson and the last time we visited my mom, they LOVED the mountain coaster we went on. When they found out there were 2 more of them, they came up with their own “mountain coaster bucket list” of sorts. So, for 2023, we decided to conquer the [Copperhead Mountain Coaster](https://theshepherdofthehills.com/coaster/) which is at the top of Shepherd of the Hills, the highest point in Southwest Missouri.

“The 3,350-ft-long roller coaster ride offers riveting loops, drops, and curves amidst the beautiful Ozark Mountains. The Copperhead Mountain Coaster comes fully equipped with the latest and newest advanced braking system on any mountain coaster.”

Now let me explain this braking system to you. If you’ve never been on a mountain coaster, each car can fit one adult and if you have a small child, they can ride on a seat in between your legs. When you sit down in the coaster, on each side of you is a lever. How it works is, that if you want your coaster car to move, you must hold both levers down as far as they will go. If you come up even a little, your car starts to slow down. If you stop holding them altogether, your car will come to a complete stop.

When we were being given instructions on how to operate the coaster, the employees were extremely adamant about everyone pushing down on their levers as hard as they could. “Keep holding your levers down, DO NOT STOP ON THE TRACKS!” I can imagine that would be a terrible pile-up if someone stopped on the tracks---that’s why you sign a waiver, people! Can I just tell you that it was incredibly difficult to keep those levers down for the duration of the ride? There was resistance happening, my back started hurting. My body was getting whipped around. It took everything within me to hold on.

### **Here's the Spiritual Drop**

1. Our lives are much the same.
2. We encounter difficulties and hardships in this coaster of life --at work and church, with family, on social media; in health.
3. These difficulties are going to make us want to stop in our tracks. To give up.

## ****God keeps his promises; my job is to hold on.****

January 1 is one of the most hopeful days of the year because it’s a new start and a new beginning. Everyone is ready to tackle the year and it feels like nothing will be able to stop us. That’s incredible! We need to remember that feeling because let’s be honest, this year will inevitably have hard times.

In the hard times, you will naturally go toward the comfort and rhythms we have in life. For many of us our rhythms are drinking, drugs, mindless scrolling, worrying.

### **When you have godly rhythms set in place, those will replace the negative ones.**

That’s why we need our routines and rhythms to carry us through as predetermined commitments.

Did you know that there are 7,487 promises that God has given to us? This is about 85% of all the promises in the Bible. I want to encourage you to start a rhythm of putting God’s promises in your heart and mind. One way you can do this is to start your year reading God’s promises, starting right here with the YouVersion app and the ["Promises of God" reading plan](https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/12940-promises-of-god).

### **If God is a promise-maker and promise-keeper, then we are His promise-holders!**

There is something that happens to us when God’s promises permeate our thoughts. We become more optimistic! Don’t believe me? Try it! If you pre-decide to make God’s promises front and center you’ll change your outlook!

# **Holding onto God’s Promises**

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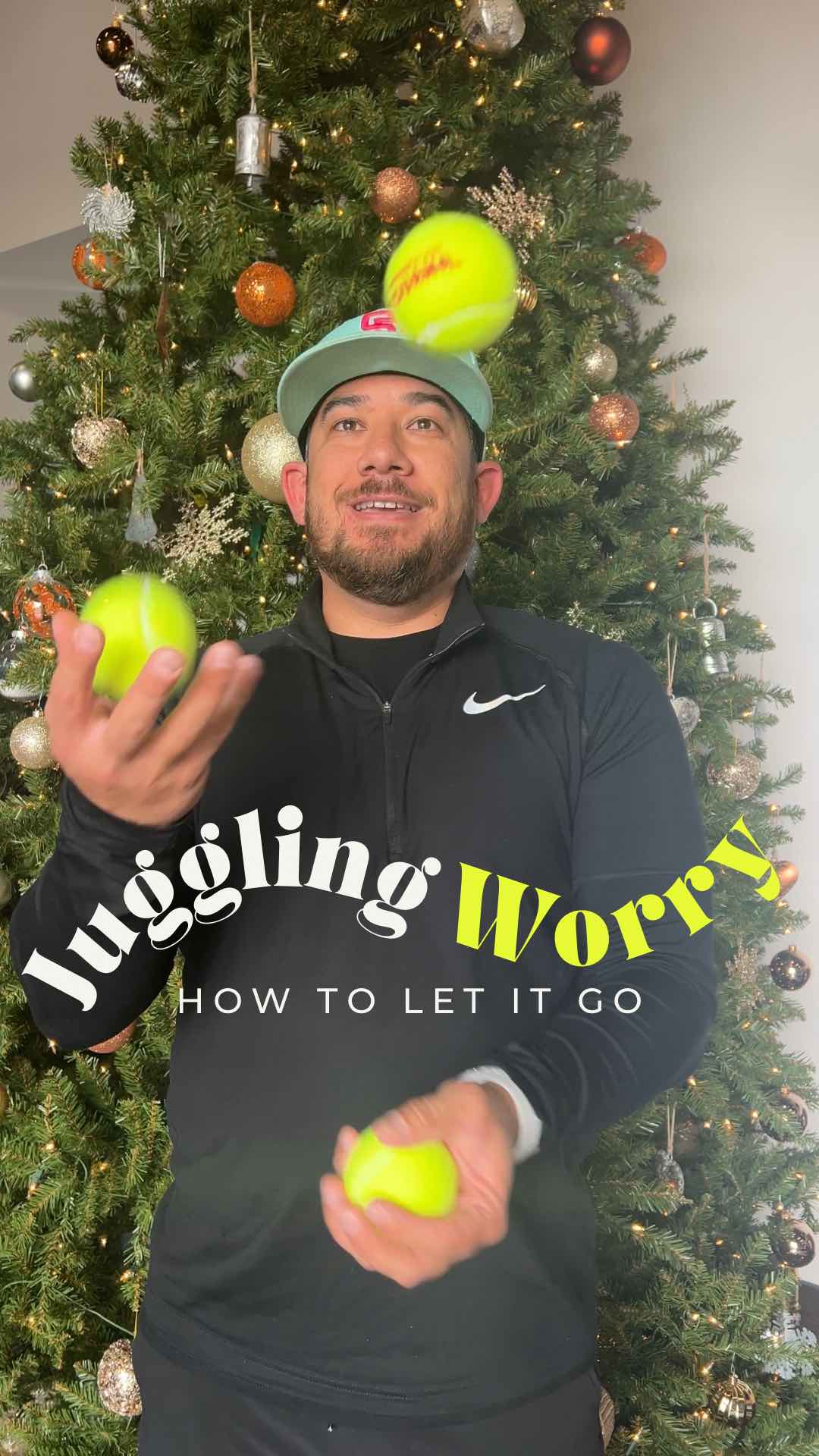
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<https://newbreak.church/wp-content/uploads/bb-plugin/cache/copperheadmountaincoaster-457-2.jpg-portrait-d26aea992c90a597118de603f9d7b4ba-w15apk2coy0q.webp>

1. <https://newbreak.church/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/bwktz4yvtma-1536x1025.jpg>

**Juggling Worry**



## Christmas is about peace, right?

**Christmas is supposed to be a season of peace. In fact, the birth of Jesus is announced as the “Arrival of Peace.” However, Christmas often times feels more like the arrival or worry and stress doesn’t it?**

[The Harvard Medical School](https://hms.harvard.edu/news-events/publications-archive/brain/holiday-stress-brain) recently found that 62% of people have “elevated” levels of worry during the holidays. We worry about our finances, family, food, fashion, fitness, and our future. These are all called worries of provision and all throughout scripture, we read that God knows what we need ([Matthew 6:31-32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt%206.31-32)) and promises that He will provide what we need in each of these areas ([Matthew 6:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt%206.33)).

## God provides what we need, not want.

When we don’t think that God will provide or don’t like the way He provides, we start to worry and spin out in each of these areas. More often than not you start to feel like you’re having to juggle so many different things that God never designed for you to juggle.

I think of worrying, kind of like juggling. I learned to juggle in 7th grade. My baseball coach told me to learn so that I could be a better infielder and increase my hand eye coordination. In order to juggle well, you have to focus on the items your juggling. The minute you take your eye off of what you’re juggling, you will literally “drop the ball.”

If you asked me to drive home from work, be an engaged parent, be a loving husband, mentor my staff, and do my job with excellence all while juggling tennis balls, I most likely wouldn’t make it home. Driving and juggling doesn’t work…

But even if I did make it home, there would be no way I could give my family, friends, and business my best because I’m focused on juggling the tennis balls. [[Watch Pastor Juggle some tennis balls on YouTube just to illustrate this point.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L0pK7wV5LDA)]

## Focusing on worry is unproductive.

In the same way, when we focus on our worries, we become less productive at work. Our kids wonder why we’re not playing with them. Our spouse doesn’t feel the love and connection we used to give. We become less generous because we are worried we won’t have enough. In essence, we can’t be all that God has called us to be when we’re focused on our worries.

Thus, Christmas feels like the arrival of worry, not the arrival of peace.

### **How do we exchange our worry for God’s peace?**

We have to understand that worry is natural, but peace is supernatural. You can’t experience God’s peace, without God!

## 5.<https://newbreak.church/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Robert-Wachs-scaled-web.jpg>

## [Robert Wachs’ Resignation](https://newbreak.church/robert-wachs-resignation/)

November 29, 2023

# **Robert Wachs’ Resignation**

When I first moved back to San Diego 23 years ago, I was introduced to this neighborhood church in Tierrasanta where people were authentically doing life together and serving their community in ways that were pretty radical for churches at that time. After hearing my first sermon from Pastor Mike at what was then Canyon View Christian Fellowship and attending my first life group, I knew that I had found my new church home.

A couple years later, Lisa and I were married at that same church and we made a point of moving to Tierrasanta so we could be fully involved in the life of Canyon View. We loved serving in any way possible – whether that was playing drums and keys on a worship team, or leading life groups, or serving as life group coaches or overseeing the diaconate. Even though we both had careers outside the church, there wasn’t a ministry where we didn’t serve.

In 2005, I was asked to join the staff as Executive Pastor. At that time, our oldest was just a few months old and we were already expecting our youngest. Our boys grew up in a full-time ministry family, and it was here at Newbreak that they were dedicated as babies, baptized as children, and where our youngest was buried earlier this year.

Over the years, I have been privileged to be a part of the life of this church as we grew from a single site to a multi-campus church. Along the way, we rebranded as Newbreak, but remained focused on serving communities throughout San Diego.

As Executive Pastor for 15 years, and as Lead Pastor for the past 3 years, I’ve had a front-row seat to so much life transformation and have been incredibly privileged to be a part of many of your stories. I’ve watched God work to restore marriages, to heal the sick, to reunite families, to seek out those who are hurting and in pain, and I’ve loved Newbreak’s commitment to building the Kingdom of God, both locally and around the world. I remember being in Egypt and seeing the difference our installing water filters made in bringing health and wellness to entire communities – – or going to South America and seeing the pure joy and excitement in the faces of young boys and girls who were able to participate in the after-school programs we funded. And I think about the first time Newbreak raised and gave away over a million dollars to our partners and projects throughout the world through [Kingdom Builders](https://newbreak.church/kingdom-builders/). None of that would have been possible without all of you!

As many of you already know, life for our family took a terrible turn earlier this year when our 17-year old son died unexpectedly and we were thrown into a season of the deepest grief we’ve ever experienced. Those of you who have lost a child know that it is one of the hardest experiences a human could ever have to endure. And to make it even worse, the pain and difficulties we faced didn’t begin with our son’s sudden death, but had actually been steadily intensifying over the three years prior to his passing. Ayden battled multiple severe mental health issues and it is no exaggeration to say that our primary focus for the last few years of his life was just trying to keep him alive.

At the same time, we were working incredibly hard alongside some phenomenal ministry teams to keep Newbreak alive as well, knowing that many churches throughout the country did not survive Covid. That was not a fate we wanted for Newbreak. Like most churches in America, Newbreak’s attendance has decreased from what it was before Covid and owing both to the lower attendance and the downturn in the economy, giving and financial support have also been reduced. That puts even more pressure on staff to carry out ministry activities with fewer resources.

Despite that, Newbreak has a tremendous staff and various ministry teams, all of whom have been working extremely hard the past few years to continue the work of connecting people with God through authentic relationships to serve communities. I’ve been so inspired by the dedication and commitment of all of [Newbreak’s staff](https://newbreak.church/about/" \t "_blank) during this season.

However, even the best staff and the strongest ministry teams cannot do it all and they need a fully engaged leader who is operating at maximum capacity in order to overcome the challenges of the past years. Despite my best efforts, between navigating our sons’ illness and grieving his subsequent death, I simply have not been as available as Newbreak has needed.

And so after a time of prayer and deep deliberation, the Newbreak Board of Trustees and I have mutually agreed that it would be best for Newbreak to have a change in leadership. Accordingly, effective November 27, 2023, I have resigned as Newbreak’s Lead Pastor.

Many of you have already heard me say that “God does not want us to waste our pain”. Over the past few months, Lisa and I have sensed that God may want to use us in new ways to help other families who are completely overwhelmed dealing with mental health challenges, addiction, unexpected death, and grief. While we do not yet know how God will use our story in this space, we know that as the God of redemption, He is always willing to use whatever we surrender to His purposes. While we look forward to whatever God has next, we are deeply saddened at having to say goodbye to all of you. We don’t just count you as fellow Newbreakers, but as dear friends.

We are confident, though, that under new leadership, Newbreak will continue to grow, not just numerically or financially, but more importantly, in spiritual health and capacity so as to build even more Christ-centered leaders who will change their world.

During this time of transition, I would ask you to please be committed to prayer. Your leaders need your support, particularly now as they navigate this change, and as they continue to provide leadership, support, and care to our community. Your faithfulness to hold Newbreak in prayer through this time will help make this transition as smooth as possible. I would ask you to also pray for Lisa and I and our son Corbyn as we seek the Lord for what is next.

Thank you so much for the privilege of serving all of you the past two decades. I still truly believe that Newbreak’s best days are ahead of her.

The best is yet to come!

Blessings,

Pastor Robert

6.

<https://newbreak.church/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/i0iarfzfjzm-1536x1024.jpg>

[**“God, Just Tell Me What to Do Next!”**](https://newbreak.church/holy-spirit-guidance/)

November 6, 2023

# **“God, Just Tell Me What to Do Next!”**

### **“When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth.” – Jesus (John 16:13, CSB)**

In the midst of giving his disciples some final words of encouragement before the events of the cross, Jesus spent some time talking about the coming of the Holy Spirit (see John chapters 14 through 16). The Holy Spirit does many things in us, but one of those is that he guides us. Said another way: He gives us direction to stay on course; to remind us where true north is.

Some of you might be thinking: “That’s great! That’s what I want! God, just tell me what to do and I’ll do it!”

Hey, I believe your sincerity because I know mine. If you are like me, we often get frustrated wishing the Holy Spirit’s guidance to be as explicit as the GPS (“in 500 feet, turn left”). But his guidance is hardly ever like that (sometimes but rarely.) Rather his guidance comes at the core level of our soul. What do I mean by that?

### **The Holy Spirit guides us by tilling and cultivating our character more than micromanaging every single choice we make.**

And this is actually brilliant. Why? Because if the Holy Spirit can lead us into truth—and conform us into the character of Christ—then we will make ***better decisions***.

We want easy answers and simple guidance, but Holy Spirit wants to do deep and abiding work that guides us while transforming us. The pace of his guidance often parallels the congruence of our character.

Here is what that means:

### **The more I walk in obedience—the more I walk in Christ-likeness—the more God can show me what He has next.**

Pay attention to see how your character formation is a catalytic factor to the clarity you are seeking in your everyday decision-making (big or small decisions). Clarity cannot be rushed. And often, God is not in a hurry. His guidance is to lead us into truth. When we are walking in his truth and in alignment with his heart, guidance will come on time.

Who the Holy Spirit is guiding you to become will inform what step to take next.

The Holy Spirit is eager to lead you. Enjoy the journey!

7. <https://newbreak.church/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/3kv48ns4wuu-1536x1024.jpg>

[**You Are Not Just Talented, You Are Spiritually Gifted**](https://newbreak.church/spiritually-gifted/)

February 11, 2023

# **You Are Not Just Talented, You Are Spiritually Gifted**

### **“I want to make a difference in the world.”**

And I am not that special for saying that. Most of us want to leave an imprint on the world that makes it better. Sure, maybe our ambitions are vastly different. Some of us dream of influencing the WHOLE world while some of us see OUR world as the people we aim to influence. Nevertheless, all of us want to make a good difference. And that’s a good thing! God wants that for us too.

For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. ([Ephesians 2:10, NIV](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph%202.10))

It is not unique to Christianity to talk about the ways in which we are wired. Whether we are talking about our innate personality, our cultivated talents, or our developing passions, we all are interested in seeing how we can make a difference in the world.

“God never wastes anything. He would not give you abilities, interests, talents, gifts, personality, and life experiences unless he intended to use them for his glory.” – Rick Warren

Yet there is a difference between all of those things and the ways in which we are spiritually gifted.

### **You are not just talented, you are spiritually gifted. Gifted by the capital “S” Spirit.**

Look at what Paul says.

Now about ***the gifts of the Spirit***, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed… 4***There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them***. 5There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

7Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. 8To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 9to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 10to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, r and to still another the interpretation of tongues. 11All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines. ([1 Corinthians 12:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Cor%2012.1), [4-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Corinthians%2012.4-11), NIV)

We are not talking about “spiritual” as some nebulous, impersonal energy. Rather, spiritual gifts come exclusively from the Holy Spirit. He is the source and sustenance of spiritual gifts. Having the Holy Spirit is a necessary prerequisite to unleashing our spiritual gifts.

Each of us is purposed to make a contribution in this life that echoes into eternity. This means that we each have an assignment, and we each need to see and accept that assignment if we are going to fulfill the calling of our lives. You and I can talk circles around purpose all day, but at the end of the day there is something crucial to understand.

### **We are united in purpose and unique in calling.**

There is unity in our singular purpose to glorify God and enjoy him forever (shoutout to the credible Westminster Catechism). We are teammates, working together to enact God’s plan of redemption in the world. Yet, we are unique in our calling. Our calling is the unique way in which God has wired us, equipped us, and assigned us to contribute to and advance his kingdom. This is not limited to our spiritual gifts, but it certainly includes them! And even in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul is not exhausting all the spiritual gifts, but using a few as an example to serve his point about how the body of Christ (you, me, we) works together.

“For those who lead and have a tendency toward pride and self-sufficiency, it may be humbling to know that God wants them to depend on and be built up by others with different gifts. For others, though, this will mean accepting what God has given them and then living and working in the community for the benefit of the body, knowing that this is their God-given and Spirit-enabled duty to the body. Just as there is no place for pride, so there is no place for false humility.” (Paul Gardner, *1 Corinthians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, 554.)

Our spiritual gifts are an essential part of our contribution to the kingdom of God. They are one of the primary ways the gospel works itself in our lives as we serve others. But how can we walk in them if we are not aware of them?

### **We need to know our Holy Spirit-given gifts if we want to walk in our full purpose and potential.**

Here are four action steps to take from here.

* **First**, take our [**spiritual gifts test by clicking HERE**](https://newbreak.church/spiritual-gifts/). It is not infallible, but it is a good tool to help you consider how God’s empowering presence (Holy Spirit) wants to work in and through you.
* **Second**, talk to some other Christians who you respect and who know you well. Ask them what spiritual gifts they see in you. Do not underestimate how someone else can see in you what you might not see in yourself!
* **Third**, study biblical passages on these things. You may have noticed we did not unpack the spiritual gifts in this blog post. It would take quite some time to do so! Plus, let’s give you some homework and ownership here. Pick up some commentaries on 1 Corinthians and read how scholars shed light on what Paul is saying about spiritual gifts (especially 1 Corinthians 12-14). The [Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on 1 Corinthians](https://www.christianbook.com/corinthians-zondervan-exegetical-commentary-new-testament/paul-gardner/9780310243694/pd/243690) is phenomenal, though at times it can be geared toward an academic audience. If you need a more lay-level commentary try the [NIV Application Commentary on 1 Corinthians](https://www.amazon.com/1-Corinthians-NIV-Application-Commentary/dp/0310484901/ref=sr_1_1?crid=2TZI7QH1CO4S0&keywords=1+corinthians+niv+application+commentary&qid=1675800424&sprefix=1+corinthians+niv+application+commentary%2Caps%2C134&sr=8-1) or [1 Corinthians For You](https://www.amazon.com/Corinthians-You-Gods-Word/dp/1784986232/ref=sr_1_17_sspa?crid=DWALOLXQUY5&keywords=zent+1+corinthians&qid=1675800244&sprefix=zecnt+1+corinthians%2Caps%2C448&sr=8-17-spons&psc=1&spLa=ZW5jcnlwdGVkUXVhbGlmaWVyPUExRk5MVThIMlNQNkdWJmVuY3J5cHRlZElkPUEwNTc1MTgwMkhDTFRRWFMwVVhLOCZlbmNyeXB0ZWRBZElkPUEwNTk1OTc2MjFaMUwxUVJHNTlQMyZ3aWRnZXROYW1lPXNwX210ZiZhY3Rpb249Y2xpY2tSZWRpcmVjdCZkb05vdExvZ0NsaWNrPXRydWU=).
* **Fourth**, but not least, put your spiritual gifts into practice!

### **The Holy Spirit does not give you these gifts for them to be like a trophy on a shelf. They are meant to be used for the sake of others!**

As we read what Paul said:

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given ***for the common good***. ([1 Corinthians 12:7, NIV](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Cor%2012.7))

You want to make a difference in the world, right? Learn and use your spiritual gifts!

8. <https://newbreak.church/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/ymtdjv7jkpi-1536x1024.jpg>

[**Pregnancy Loss**](https://newbreak.church/pregnancy-loss/)

April 4, 2023

# **Pregnancy Loss**

Why would God give and then take away?

We may never know the answer until we get to Heaven but while we’re in this fallen world, we’ll experience loss, including the loss of our most beloved little ones. Whether a miscarriage or a birth where the child is unable to survive on its own, it’s a sad part of life.

Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love. For he does not willingly bring grief or affliction to anyone. [Lamentations 3:32-33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lam%203.32-33)

It can be difficult to know what to say to someone who has just lost a baby. Here are a few thoughts from those of us who have experienced pregnancy or infant loss, as well as a comforting prayer for miscarriage to all those affected.

## What to Say to Someone Who Has Had a Miscarriage

* It’s best to express sympathy with simple words.
* “This is terrible and I’m so sorry.”
* “I’m sorry for what you’re going through.”
* “I know this hurts. I’m praying for you.”
* “Please know I’m here if you need to talk.”

Don’t try to assign reason or explain things. Someone in deep grief doesn’t want to hear explanations unless they’re from their doctor about why they lost their child. They need to know others care about what they’re going through, not that they might know why it happened.

### **Try to avoid saying these phrases:**

* “Everything happens for a reason.”
* “God won’t give more than you can handle.”
* “You’re still young. There’s plenty of time to have children.”
* “I can’t imagine what you’re going through.”
* “God knows what He’s doing.”
* “There was probably something wrong with it or it was probably for the best.”

### **Actions can speak louder than words:**

* Make an effort to show sympathy by attending the funeral (if there is one).
* Make yourself available in some other way. This can be powerful for the grieving parent.
* Allow the parent to share their story if they’re comfortable doing so in their own time.
* Use a prayer for miscarriage below to guide your empathy and lift up the hurting family.

As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formed in a mother’s womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things. [Ecclesiastes 11:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eccles%2011.5)

And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. [Philippians 4:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil%204.19)  
God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. Psalm 46 1:3

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations. [Jeremiah 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer%201.5)

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. [Psalm 139:13-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%20139.13-16)

Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” [Matthew 19:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt%2019.14)

#### **Prayer for Miscarriage: A Prayer for the Parents**

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for the parents of this precious baby. Heal their broken hearts and strengthen their faith through this storm. Help them find comfort not only in Your word but in the words of friends or family who’ve experienced the same pain. Draw them closer to You through this tragedy and reveal Yourself to them in their time of need.  
In the powerful name of Jesus, Amen.

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” [John 16:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%2016.33)

#### **Prayer for Miscarriage: A Prayer for the Family**

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for being with us during this devastating time. Our hearts are crushed. We don’t understand why we’ve lost this child. But we trust You to get us through it.

In the mighty and powerful name of Jesus, Amen.

The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit [Psalm 34:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%2034.18)

#### **Prayer for Miscarriage: A Prayer for the Baby**

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for this precious little one. Though our hopes for this child’s life were not realized, we know You’re in control of everything. Your thoughts are not our thoughts and Your ways are not our ways. It’s hard for us to understand but we know our sweet baby is with You in Heaven and one day we will be able to meet her face to face. We look forward to the time we can hold her in our arms and give her the love we’ve longed so deeply to give.

In the name of Jesus, Amen.

9. <https://newbreak.church/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/xqxjjhk-c08-1536x1024.jpg>

[**A Lesson in Reading the “Commands” of Scripture**](https://newbreak.church/reading-commands/)

January 14, 2023

# **A Lesson in Reading the “Commands” of Scripture**

The more you study Scripture, the more you see how important context is for understanding the meaning of a passage. This is especially important when it comes to seeing how the “commands” of Scripture fit with the truths that ground them. Or to say it another way:

### **Let the indicatives (truths) of Scripture set up the imperatives (commands).**

[Colossians 3:5-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col%203.5-11) provides a good example of this.

*5****Put to death****, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.* *6Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.* *7You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived.* *8But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.* *9Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices* *10and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.*11Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. ([Colossians 3:5-11, NIV](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col%203.5-11))

If we take this passage out of its immediate context, then this sounds like a negative and discouraging passage. Sure, the content is sobering and we ought to take seriously the call to resist sin. However, read in isolation, this sounds like a daunting or even impossible task!

[Colossians 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col%203.5) is a call to action: “put to death”; it is the command, the imperative.

### **Common to Paul’s writings, commands do not come out of thin air, they are grounded in a truth that he has already laid out. He presupposes his readers will read the imperatives in light of the indicatives.**

It’s easy to overlook the word “therefore,” in verse 5 (above), but let’s not do that. It is there for a reason! And its purpose is to link what came before with what is being said. To be purposefully redundant, the “therefore” links the imperative to the indicative; it links the call to action with the truth that has already been substantiated. So, where is the indicative? Where is that truth that is grounding this ethical call to action? Unsurprisingly, it is contained within the passage that came just prior.

*Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.* *2Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.* *3****For you died,****and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.*4When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. ([Colossians 3:1-4, NIV](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col%203.1-4))

More than one thing is going on in this passage, so for the sake of our discussion, I have bolded the part I want you to hone in on.

“Put to death” ([Colossians 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col%203.5)) is built on the previous assertion that “you died” ([Colossians 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col%203.3)). This fits with Paul’s overall portrait of how the Christian has undergone a significant change, having the death and resurrection of Jesus become vicariously efficacious for themselves as well (for example, [Colossians 2:11-12](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians%202%3A11-12&version=NIV)). For the Christian, to “put to death” the practices of the old and fallen world comes as a natural by-product of having died and no longer being under that order!

### **This call to “put to death” the old self is the living out of the victory that has already been achieved in Christ.**

Therefore, to “put to death” means to live with a recognition that one is already freed, by means of death, from the power of sin. This relationship between the imperative and the indicative affects the interpretation from simply “put to death,” with no referential context to “in light of having died with Christ, put to death anything that does not belong to the new life you have in him.”

Using Colossians 3 as a case study, we see that the call to “put to death” the old and corrupted practices is to be balanced by the recognition that Christ’s death allows such an imperative to be possible.

Why does this matter? Because if we are not careful, the New Testament’s many commands, prohibitions, and calls to action can (wrongly) be interpreted as a call to try harder on one’s own strength and ability. What does one miss with this interpretation? Well, the most important part. The imperative, without the indicative, has a exhoration without the empowerment to actually carry it forth.

Paul begins with the reality that we have died with Christ and risen with him, something that has immediate and future effects and consequences (more on that another time!). He then, and only after establishing that truth moves to a natural outworking of that reality. If we have died with Christ, then there are things in our life that ought to be counted as dead with him and that might mean we take them to the gravesite and bury them there where our old self was buried. See the power of the illustrative language?

10. <https://newbreak.church/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/abkeaojny0s-1536x1024.jpg>

[**You Were Loved Into Existence**](https://newbreak.church/loved-into-existence/)

January 7, 2023

# **You Were Loved Into Existence**

The beginning of the year is often a time of deep reflection. Our hope is that your thoughts are not only directed toward your resolutions but also about more profound existential questions. We will help you get there: our first two months of sermons are entirely directed toward the subject of purpose!

I’ve been part of many dialogues between Christians and Atheists, which often circle around whether everything (including humanity) was intelligently created. In essence, does humanity have a God-given purpose? Or are we merely an accident of the universe’s own chaotic doing? The question, however, has far-reaching implications, especially when it comes to love.

### **If God created us**(and he surely did!)**then we are loved into existence!**

We will unpack that. First, though, it is important to note how this is not just some novel philosophical idea. Rather, this observation is embedded in Scripture itself. We see this clearly in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians.

But **because of his great love for us**, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is **by grace** you have been saved. ([Ephesians 2:4-5 NIV](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph%202.4-5))

Prior to receiving Christ as Lord, the Ephesians grew up in an ancient Greco-Roman pagan background that told a drastically different narrative than Christianity. They were religious but they might as well have been atheists since their so-called “gods” did not care about them. Greco-Roman religion would never use language such as “Artemis loves you,” or fill in the blank. They served a purpose to the gods, sure. So they had a “purpose,” but it was not a purpose born out of love. Rather, their purpose was born out of utilitarian causes. Pagan religion taught that the “gods” created humans to serve them and do the grunt work they didn’t want to do, such as feeding themselves (via the sacrifices) and so on. The relationship was transactional: you do this for me, a god, and I’ll bestow some blessings on you.

### **Enter Paul, who introduces the Ephesians to a Trinitarian God of love and grace.**

We do not know what exactly was the catalyst for faith to be spurred on in Ephesus. Was it the miracles that demonstrated God’s power? Could it have been the hope of life beyond death and the future resurrection? Perhaps it was the logic and rhetoric of Christianity that outflanked their pagan philosophy. We do not know. But if I had to guess, I would venture to say that one of the main reasons the Ephesians were drawn to Jesus was because of love.

The God revealed in Scripture and who entered our world, died on the cross, resurrected from the dead, ascended to glory, and promised to come again is also the God who started it all. He is the Creator and the Redeemer. He is the one who fashioned humanity with purpose but lavishes humanity with his own love.

11. <https://newbreak.church/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/kpwrdhbq2qs-1536x866.jpg>

[**5 Things You Can Do TODAY to Improve Your Communication!**](https://newbreak.church/5-communication-tools/)

October 22, 2022

# **5 Things You Can Do TODAY to Improve Your Communication!**

“Okay.”

“I don’t care.”

“Whatever.”

Have you ever been on the receiving end of these text messages and wondered what the tone was? The phrase “I don’t care” could be a light-hearted way to concede to the preference of another, but it could also be a passive-aggressive way to respond to a question. All of this brings up an important observation:

### **Communication is tricky. And our intentions do not always produce the outcomes we desire.**

The first piece of advice is simply this… let’s not leave important conversations to text messages!

**Here are 5 things you can ask yourself to improve your communication today!** (These will apply to any and all relationships you have, though in different ways.)

### **1) Is this True?**

Truth should be the basis and first tier we think through before processing if something should be said. We need to be working with facts, not fiction.

Instead, ***we will speak the truth*** in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ. ([Ephesians 4:15, NLT](https://biblia.com/bible/nlt/Eph%204.15))

If it’s not true, then it does not need to be said, full stop! Yet, truth is not the final stop in discerning the best way to communicate with care.

### **2) Is this Helpful?**

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, ***but only what is helpful for*** **building others up** according to their needs, that it may **benefit** those who listen. ([Ephesians 4:29, NIV](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph%204.29))

Did you catch that? The communication filter given to us in [Ephesians 4:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph%204.29) is asking the two-fold question: “Does this build others up?” And, similarly, “Is this beneficial?” If not, our talk might be labeled as “unwholesome.”

The language of “building up” in the New Testament is a metaphor to see others as buildings under construction. We have the power to come into each other’s construction site and fortify and edify, or fracture and tear down. Words are that powerful! And that’s why it’s imperative that our communication should be marked with helpful words. That’s why even constructive feedback is just that, constructive, it seeks to build upward, not tear down.

### **3) Is this Immediate?**

In other words, is this a “now” or “not yet” conversation? Timing is key in a lot of things. For example, if you come home from a busy and/or stressful day of work and your spouse meets you at the door with a personal critique, well, it might not be received in the best manner. Why? Because our frame of mind affects how we receive communication. The same respect should go for how we communicate. When we want to address something, even if it is true and even if it is helpful, we ought to consider the immediacy and timing of it.

Everyone enjoys a fitting reply; ***it is wonderful to say the right thing at the right time!*** ([Proverbs 15:23, NLT](https://biblia.com/bible/nlt/Prov%2015.23))

The best thing might be to create a literal or mental note of it and wait for a better-timed moment to talk about certain things. 3 follow-up questions to help you here: Am I the right person to say this? Is this the right time to say it? Is this the right place to say it? Walk through these and you’ll be walking in far more wisdom than those who are too eager to say what they want to say when they want to say it.

### **4) Is this Necessary?**

This one takes a lot of discernment. The question of necessity is a question of weightiness or importance. This is not to say that we disregard saying what we are feeling or even our personal preferences. Rather, this is about taking into account the relational capital we have with someone. Sharing a personal preference in how your wishes could be better respected or how the relationship could be improved will likely be well received if talking to a friend of 5+ years. However, there are times we might need to bite our tongue and even forfeit certain personal preferences in a new or fragile relationship, whether that be with a friend or even a colleague. When you consider the relational capital you have with the person, you’ll better determine the necessity of what needs to be said.

***The heart of the godly thinks carefully before speaking***; the mouth of the wicked overflows with evil words. ([Proverbs 15:28, NLT](https://biblia.com/bible/nlt/Prov%2015.28))

### **5) Is this Kind?**

Having considered the truth, helpfulness, immediacy, and necessity of your message, if it is still worth sharing, then kindness is the manner that will package your message together. We can all think of the people in our lives who are not very kind with how they speak. Maybe their words are too brash, too abrasive, or too blunt. Whatever the case, I’m sure you have walked away wishing they were more kind. Granted, what they said may have been true (see point 1), it might have even been helpful, and so on, but if it was not kind, then the message gets lost. If the message is like a package, it is not received like a gift, but like a brick; it does not benefit, it bruises.