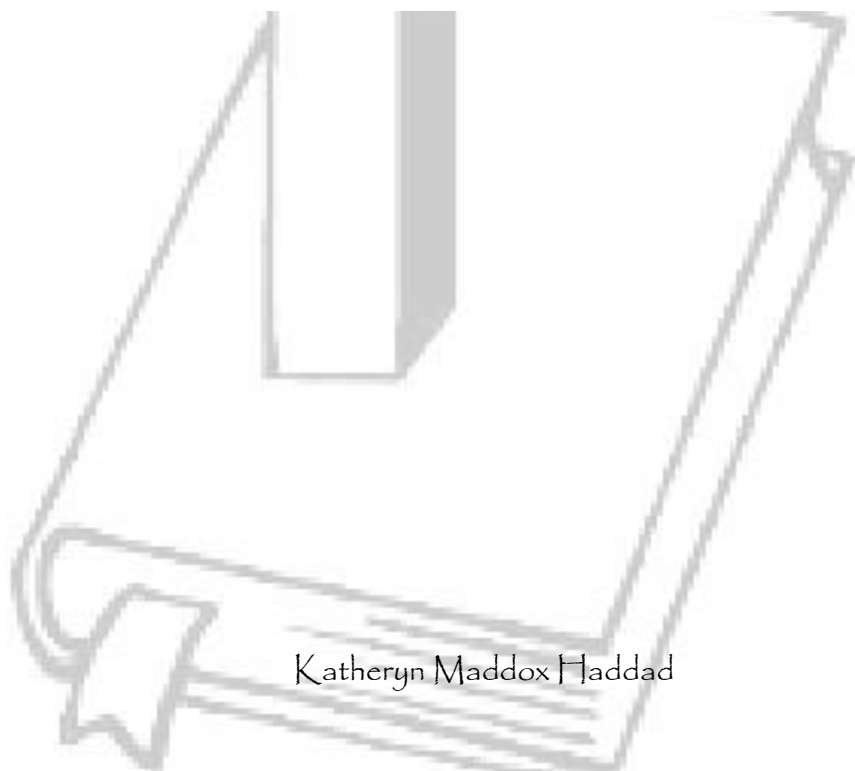


*365 Golden Bible Thoughts:
God's Heart to Yours*

Touching God Series 1



Katheryn Maddox Haddad

January

1st - The scripture for today, January 1 (1/1), is John 1:1f, 14a as found in the New Testament of the Bible:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."

Genesis 3:8 says God walked on earth in the Garden of Eden. When Jesus came, God once again walked with us. But when Jesus left, did he leave us with no one to walk with?

Jesus said in John 14:17 that he was going to send another Comforter ~ the Spirit of Truth. And in John 17:17 he said God's Word is Truth. So, just as Jesus was the Word that people could watch, the Spirit is the Word that people can read.

We do not have to guess what God is wanting us to do. We have it written down to read, and consider, and contemplate, and re-read as many times as we want.

If you have a Bible in your home, why not read it through in a year beginning today? There are suggested schedules on the internet. Or you could even divide up the number of pages in your Bible by 365 to know how many pages to read each day.

Just remember, every time you get out your Bible and read it, once again God is walking with you.

2nd - The scripture for today, January 2 (1/2), is 3rd John 1:2 as found in the New Testament of the Bible:

"Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well."

Your health may be bad, your finances in an upheaval, your home damaged by wind or water, your job about to be lost. But, amidst your frustrations and tears, you can still smile. You can still rejoice that your "soul is getting along well."

When problems come into your life ~ and they do ~ remember the most important thing is your soul. No one and no thing can touch your soul as long as you are safe in the arms of Jesus.

So, when problems do come, you can still with confidence rejoice that your "soul is getting along well."

3rd - The scripture for today, January 3 (1/3), is Jonah 1:3a as found in the Old Testament of the Bible:

"But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish."

Do you spend your life running away from the Lord? Do you do it with busy-ness, with resentments toward people, with anger that God does not make people stop being bad to you, with boredom at the thought of worshipping him, with refusal to believe he even exists?

Is it even possible to run away from the Lord? Eventually it is.

But for a long time, the Lord runs after you just as he did by causing a storm at sea where Jonah was on board his escape ship. He does things to get your attention too.

Perhaps there are storms in your life. Have you ever thought of them as God trying to get your attention? Perhaps you run here and there day after day, too busy to even think about God. But when disaster hits, do you suddenly remember God so you can blame him for your hardships?

Yes, perhaps you sometimes do blame God, but at least you're thinking of him. Perhaps it's been years since you have thought seriously about God.

He has big shoulders. Go ahead and blame him for a while, then remember how he loves you and just wants you back.

But don't wait too long. God only runs after you for so long. Eventually, he gives up. Don't wait so long that God gives up on you and treats you the way you have been treating him.

"God, I'm coming back. Help me."

4th- The scripture for today, January 4 (1/4), is **Philippians 1:4** as found in the New Testament of the Bible:

"In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy."

Are you sad about something? Do your prayers consist mostly of give me this, help me with that? Begin today to keep an on-going list of your prayer requests for the year, and another one of thanksgiving for when those prayers are answered. Begin today to tell God, "Thank you."

Also begin today to look around at your circumstances ~

whatever they may be ~ with joy. There can be some kind of joy in every situation if you look at it through eyes of joy.

The above quotation is from a letter to Philippi in northern Greece bordering today's Bulgaria. Here, a majority of the citizens were barbarian-looking warrior Thracians. But these rough semi-professional warriors also brought the world joy with their beautiful sculptures.

Philippians is a book about peace and joy. This is the book that says, "And the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (4:7)

This is also the book that says, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (4:13).

From now on, tell God, "Thank you," and in the process rediscover your joy.

5th- The scripture for today, January 5 (1/5), is **Colossians 1:5** as found in the New Testament of the Bible:

"...the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the Word of Truth, the gospel."

Does your faith have its ups and downs? Is it strong sometimes and weak sometimes? When things sometimes go so wrong you have trouble having faith in God, you can still hope. Do you grow angry at God sometimes? You can still hope. During such low times when faith does not come easy, you can still hope. Hope is the springboard of faith.

And stay close to the Word of Truth, for John 14:17 says the Comforter is the Spirit of Truth, and John 17:17 says Truth is the Word of God. Read when you don't feel like it. Ephesians is what I go to. David tells of his own faith problems in Psalm 42.

When your emotions are pulling you down and you feel only the darkness of confusion inside, rely for a little while on your logic, your intellect, until your emotions heal. Read things proving God exists. Read things about other people's love for God. Do not drop out of the church; you need your Christian friends. It may be hard for you to believe right now but someday you will heal.

So, keep on hoping ~ the springboard. Eventually, along the way, your hope will return to faith.

6th - The scripture for today, January 6 (1/6), is Titus 1:6f as found in the New Testament of the Bible:

"An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless ~ not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, nor pursuing dishonest gain."

This is quite interesting. God does not leave us to guess the qualifications of a church leader. We don't have to hold conferences or synods to decide on qualifications for this office, because God has already given them.

Something surprising here is that the word **elder** is used interchangeably with the word **overseer** (sometimes also translated

bishop). The word elder comes from the Greek word *presbyter*. The word overseer/bishop is from the Greek word *episcopos*. Elder and overseer and bishop all are the same in this passage referring to the same office!

Here's something else interesting about the elder/overseer/bishop: The word **pastor** comes from the Greek word for shepherd, *poiman*. In Acts 20:17, Paul sent for the **elders** of the church in Ephesus to talk to them. When they arrived, he said, "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers**. Be shepherds [**pastors**] of the church of God which he bought with his own blood." He called them by three titles.

Do you see the overlapping of the same office being called by different names? It's kind of like father and papa being the same.

Titus 1:6f uses elder and overseer for the same office. Overseer is the same in Greek as bishop. **Acts 20:17** uses elder, overseer, shepherd (pastor) for the same office.

In our daily lives we have different words meaning the same person; such as father, parent, dad, papa ~ all names for the same position in the family.

So, too, for the family of God ~ the church ~ all these words overlap as names for the same office! And the qualifications for this office are found in our scripture for today, Titus 1:6f. Indeed, how interesting!

7th - The scripture for today, January 7 (1/7), is 2nd Timothy 1:7 as found in the New Testament of the Bible:

"For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline."

Have you discovered some "new truth" in the Bible? Perhaps you have read it a hundred times but never noticed it before.

People fear the unknown. Do not fear it. Embrace it. Then share with others this new-found truth. The word "timidity" is sometimes translated "fear." Remind your friends of that "new truth" you discovered enough times that it is no longer an unknown and no longer something to be feared.

Do you fear reprisal among your church friends or leaders if you stand up for some "new truth" no one noticed before? God can help you. God can give you the courage to speak out with power, with love, and with self-discipline as you explain that new-found truth.

Then be patient. God said, "My word will not return to me void" (Isaiah 55:11).

Sth - The scripture for today, January 8 (1/8), is 1st Peter 1:8 as found in the New Testament of the Bible:

"Though you have not seen him, you love him! And even though you do not see him now, you believe in him! And are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy!"

Ah, the memories Peter had of being with Jesus when they all were young. Now he was old and people were dying out who had seen and heard Jesus in person.

After Jesus returned to heaven, it was the job of his Apostles to tell people about him and repeat his words. They spent the rest of their lives doing just that. What joy they found when people believed, even though they had not seen him. They not only believed, but they also loved him

Thank God, the Apostles wrote the New Testament so we would never have to guess what Jesus was like and never have to guess what his words were, even after the Apostles died. In fact, we have the advantage because we do not have to wait for an Apostle to come visit us and tell us. We can read about Jesus for ourselves over and over as many times as we like right in our home.

Yes, we have not seen Jesus. Yet, with his life and words before us, we believe! And we love him. What inexpressible and glorious joy!

9th - The scripture for today, January 9 (1/9), is **Joshua 1:9** as found in the Old Testament of the Bible:

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

Fear can paralyze. Just ask Joshua. He had just been given the job of conquering horrible people who practiced prostitution as a religion, self-mutilation and sacrificing their children to the fire god. Plus, his spies said those bad people were like giants and his army was made up of the children of former slaves with no experience.

Guess what God said. "Go anyway. Conquer anyway."

What do you fear? A few people fear spiders and night time and heights and such. A lot more of us fear changing a bad habit that has us in its claws and won't let us go. Even more serious, do you fear telling a neighbor, someone in a club, a relative about Jesus' willingness to save them from hell and get them entrance into heaven? To all this, God says, "Go anyway."

Some of you reading this live in countries where it is dangerous to be a Christian. Do you fear being arrested, tortured, killed for your faith? God tells you, "Be strong! Be courageous! Do not be terrified!" Why. Because "the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

What keeps the fear under control? "Perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18). Love yourself, love your neighbor, love God.

Today, whatever it is holding you back, "Go anyway, Conquer anyway."

10th The scripture for today, January 10 (1/10), is **Colossians 1:10** as found in the New Testament of the Bible:

"And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: Bearing fruit in every good work; Growing in the knowledge of God."

Are you always doing some good work for other people? Does it fill your thoughts and life? Or are you always delving into the Bible to gain more knowledge of God? Does it fill your thoughts and life? Good for you.

But we see here, we must have a balance. James 2:17 says faith without works is dead. On the other hand, Romans 10:2 says

certain people were zealous for God, but their zeal was not based on knowledge.

We have to add to our Bible-based faith, good works. We have to add to our zealous good works, the knowledge of God from the Bible.

It's hard to get out of a rut, no matter how good it is. Maybe it's time to examine yourself. Maybe it's time to add the other requirement to your life. Don't you want to be spiritually balanced?

1 1th - The scripture for today, January 11 (1/11), is 2nd Peter 1:11 as found in the New Testament of the Bible:

"And you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

How often do you forget that earth is not your home? As an old gospel song says, "We're just traveling through." Do you really believe that?

If someone told you tomorrow you were going to die, would you go into a panic? Would you beg God to let you live another ten or twenty years? Would you feel this was the beginning of the end?

To a true Christian, your dying is the end of the beginning. You have a whole "life" ahead of you in heaven. A never-ending life. Do you live like you believe it? Will you die looking forward to it?

Are you even a Christian yet? What is your life like? Do you even know what is in the Bible, God's messages to you? Does the thought of heaven sound boring to you? Do you even like God?

Stop and listen to the empty place in your heart (Ec. 3:11). Do you hear it? Shhh. Listen... God is calling you.

12th - The scripture for today, January 12 (1/12), is **James 1:12** as found in the New Testament of the Bible:

"Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him."

How loyal are you to God? Is your relationship up and down, depending on how your life is going at the moment? If you pray for something and don't get it, do you feel like God is punishing you? If everything seems to be going wrong, do you blame God instead of Satan? Do you pray over and over for God to relieve you of a particular burden, but relief hasn't come so you've decided to quit the church?

Quit grumbling! God has assignments for you. What kind of soldier of the Lord are you? Do you tell the general you don't like what he has assigned for you to do? Where you are today is where God wants you. Your job is to stay loyal no matter how difficult things get. Be brave. Hold fast. Stand your ground.

Why? To prove that love is stronger than hatred. To prove that good is stronger than bad. To prove that right is more mighty than wrong. To prove that God is stronger than Satan. Ephesians 6:12 says Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Determine today to thank God for whatever state you are in, even if you do it in tears because it goes against all your emotions. And,

even though you may feel helpless to do anything about it right now, in your helplessness, persevere!

13th - The scripture for today, January 13 (1/13), is **Habakkuk 1:13** as found in the Old Testament of the Bible:

"Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong."

This pretty much explains why no one deserves heaven. Going to heaven has little to do with doing so many good works God will feel obligated to admit you.

It's all about sin. Only sinless people can be in heaven, for God cannot coexist with sin and still be God. Of course, you cannot be sinless. If nothing else, you have sins of attitude and neglect.

For thousands of years, God let mankind try any way they could to be perfect. Some people he gave the Law of Moses to, and some people he continued to let try on their own. Neither worked. No matter how hard we tried, no one could get it right.

The wages you earn for sinning is death (Romans 6:23). Remember in the Garden of Eden God warned, "The moment you sin, you die." He was talking about souls dying and eventually bodies dying. Satan was now holding mankind hostage. Satan causes death, so sinners collect the wages Satan pays for following him.

But mankind was still being held hostage. He demanded the highest ransom imaginable: The death of God. Satan wanted to see God and this was the only way he could carry out his plan.

God held Satan off temporarily: He told them to kill an animal to

die in their place. Even collecting the wages of sin, Satan still held mankind hostage. Mankind had to have all the chances possible to be perfect. But after millenniums, mankind still could not.

Galatians 4:4 says, "When the time was come, God sent his son." Finally, when mankind understood everyone needed outside help, God sent Jesus. Hebrews 4:15 says Jesus lived the perfect life that was impossible for anyone to live; he was completely free of sin.

Then God seemingly gave in to Satan's ransom demand to free mankind. God offered his son ~ God in the form of mankind. Finally, Satan got his wish ~ the ransom he had demanded: The death of God.

So, Satan freed mankind from his prison of soul death. But Satan was in for a surprise. His gloating came to an abrupt stop. God tricked Satan. You cannot kill Life. God returned to that human body and came back to life.

It was too late. Satan had already freed mankind.

That done, God ~ who can only dwell with sinlessness ~ is now able to allow obedient, faithful believers in Jesus into his home, heaven. For, through Jesus, we become sinless. Glory of glories!

But something terrible happened after that. People began selling themselves back into slavery to Satan (Romans 6:15-23). No! No! This cannot be! So God, through people who have resisted Satan's lures of fun and riches, power and beauty, continually call out, "Come back! Come back to God! Come back. I miss you. God misses you...."

14th - The scripture for today, January 14 (1/14), is Hebrews 1:14 as found in the New Testament of the Bible:

"Are not all angels ministering spirits, sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?"

Have you ever wondered if the Bible really mentions guardian angels? Well, here it is. How wonderful! How reassuring! But the angels do not minister to everyone ~ just to the saved who will inherit salvation.

As much as they minister to us, however, we are not to worship them and we are not to pray to them. For a while ~ and still some today ~ it was popular to collect pictures and statues of angels. Some people were saying there is no God, but there are guardian angels. Some people who do believe in God bypass Him and ask angels to help them, kind of like going to the peasant instead of the king.

Where do they think angels come from? God created them to be the servant class. We are not to adore, worship or pray to angels (Revelation 19:10; 22:9).

So, yes, we do have guardian angels. Let us be grateful God loves us enough to send the angels to minister to us until we reach his home, heaven. Then, we and the angels will bow down together to the God of the universe and Him will we worship.

15th - The scripture for today, January 15 (1/15), is **Galatians 1:15f** as found in the New Testament of the Bible:

"But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles...."

Isn't this amazing? God knew before you are born what you can be doing for him later in life. He sets aside work for you to do, but he does not force you to do it. You may set aside a certain amount of money to spend on food but you end up spending it on clothing. Being set aside does not mean something will end up doing what it was set aside for.

God has given you certain talents and set you aside to use them for Him. Do you? Is your thinking even oriented on things that can endure through eternity? Or do you think only of the next day, or the next year?

You do not have to guess what God has set you aside to do. Read the scriptures. He has messages for you all through them. Find someone in the Bible with your personality and use that person as an example. Find advice in the proverbs. Find advice in Jesus' teachings, and in his apostles' teachings. It's all there. Pick one and do it.

If you are willing to follow God's advice and not man's, then decide today to accept the work God has set aside for you to do. Or maybe you're already doing it and don't realize it.

You may not think your life has been very exciting. You may be waiting for God to give you a big important job to do for him. But the truth is, you ~ in your seemingly mundane life ~ may already be doing what God set aside for you to do.

Never under-estimate yourself and what God can accomplish through you.

16th - The scripture for today, January 16 (1/16), is Ruth 1:16ff as found in the Old Testament of the Bible:

"Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me."

Although Ruth was talking to her mother-in-law after the death of her husband (Naomi's son), this can be and sometimes is quoted by the bride and groom at their wedding. If only it were quoted more often. Not only at weddings, but at anniversaries. At birthdays of children and parents. During arguments, and low times and hard times and discouraging times.

Even deeper, it could be said when Satan attacks us. Just change you to him. *Don't urge me to leave him or to turn back from him. Where he goes, I will go, and where he stays, I will stay. His people will be my people and God will always be my God.*

These are the words of love ~ deep genuine, unselfish love. Let us so love one another that deeply. Let us love our God that deeply.

17th - The scripture for today, January 17 (1/17), is James 1:17 as found in the New Testament of the Bible:

"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."

Do you sometimes feel slighted because other people get more gifts on special occasions (or even between special occasions) than you do? No

need to feel that way. Christians get the goods ones. Christians get the perfect ones. We get them all! And our heavenly Father will never stop showering us with those "good gifts," those "perfect gifts."

Ah, Lord God, my creator, my life, lover of my soul. With you, I am never hungry, I am never cold, I am never in pain, I am never in want. With you I have all that I need for my soul is filled with your love, I am warm in your embrace, everything is good within my being. You, who died in my place are even now waiting for me at your door. I will be there soon. And we will be together for eternity."

God's gifts are good and perfect because they are forever gifts. And what can be better than that?

18th - The scripture for today, January 18 (1/18), is **Isaiah 1:18** as found in the Old Testament of the Bible:

"'Come now, let us reason together,' says the Lord. 'Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.' "

When did this become possible? Revelation in the New Testament explains in 7:14 we make our robes white by washing them in the blood of the Lamb.

What lamb? John the Baptist introduced the world to the Lamb. When he saw Jesus walking toward him in front of a crowd, he announced, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

How did Jesus become the Lamb of God? Romans 6:23 says

the wages of sin is death. In the Old Testament era, God allowed us to kill an animal in our place whenever we sinned. So, for centuries, we would sin and sacrifice an animal, sin and sacrifice an animal and on and on, for we never could stop sinning.

Finally, God offered one last sacrifice for all times. This is what Satan wanted. In order to redeem us from our soul death, Satan wanted God to die. When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper (Communion), he did so during the Jewish Passover feast where they ate their meal of lamb. There is no mention that Jesus and his apostles ate the usual lamb. Instead, he passed around the usual wine and said from now on it represented his blood as the sacrificial Lamb. And he passed around the usual bread and said from now on it represented his body as the sacrificial Lamb. (Mark 14:12 22-25).

Then Jesus ~ God on earth ~ went out and paid our ransom by dying. Then he tricked Satan and came back to life on Sunday, overcoming death forever.

Sunday is the most special day of the week for Christians. Why? The early Christians under guidance of Jesus' apostles "broke bread" for the communion every first day of the week (Acts 20:7). May we always make this the central part of our worship on this special day.

It is snowing where some of you live. Look out your window or find a picture of snow. So white and pure and sparkling. So soft and quiet and peaceful. Oh, my Savior. You can make my soul this white? Whiter? I fall at Your feet and worship You.

19th - The scripture for today, January 19, is **James 1:19a** as found in the New Testament of the Bible:

"Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires."

There was a book published a few years ago entitled, *Hurt People Hurt People*.

Has anyone ever tried to console you by saying, "I know how you feel"? Did you lash back at them saying something like, "How dare you think you know how bad I feel!" or "How dare you think you understand the ordeal I went through!" or "How dare you treat me like that!" ?

Those are accusing words. And what do they accomplish? It's almost like bragging. "My hurt is so far above your hurt, you could never come up to my superior level."

You may feel justified in explaining how badly you were treated by someone. But, in reality, it makes the hurt keep going and going and going... Perhaps this is an accusing cycle you've been in for a long time with someone.

Which one of you is going to stop the cycle?

Satan is the accuser (Revelation 12:10). God is the forgiver. Even Jesus forgave his killers. When you have been hurt, be ready to listen to the other person's hurt instead of accuse. And in the process, "bring about the righteous life that God desires."

20th - The scripture for today, January 20 (1/20), is **2nd Peter 1:20** as found in the New Testament of the Bible:

"Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

Isn't this interesting? It's a definition of prophecy. Prophecy is Scripture. It isn't just telling the future. It's telling the mind of God. Sometimes in the Old Testament God warned his people that if they did so-and-so, this would happen, but if they did such-and-such, that would happen.

Still, ultimately all prophecy was telling people how much God loved them and wanted them in the long run to be happy. The Old Testament has much of that in it, and all the New Testament does. It is your Creator's Words.

1st Corinthians 13:8 says prophecies were going to cease and they did when we got the entire Word of God, the entire Bible. If someone prophesied today, it would be unfair to the rest of the world, for prophecy is scripture. The rest of the world would be cheated out of knowing the complete Word of God.

You are so blessed that you do not have to guess what is on God's mind. Many other religions have to guess ~ Hinduism, Buddhism, and so on. But you have God's very own words in black and white to read over and over whenever you like ~ prophecy which is Scripture.

Read it. Absorb it. Love it. It was written by the Lover of your Soul.

21st. The scripture for today, January 21 (1/21), is Job 1:21 as

found in the Old Testament of the Bible:

“ ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.’ “

Wow! Is he for real? Job had every reason to turn against God. In one day his entire wealth was stolen from him, nearly all his servants were killed by an invading army, and all his children died in a storm. Why hadn’t God protected him if he loved him so much?

Amidst tragedy, do you sometimes forget that Satan exists also? Job understood that whatever Satan does, God can undo.

Satan is the accuser (Revelation 12:10), but God is the forgiver. Satan can cause you to get sick, but God can heal. Satan can cause you to die, but God can bring you back to life. Satan can make you miserable in this world, but God can take you to a better world.

Shall you leave God to fight Satan alone? You were made in his image. And how do you fight Satan? The same way Job did. Romans 12:21 says, “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Romans 8:28 says, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him.” There’s more....

In all these things we are more than conquerors
through him who loved us.

For I am convinced that neither death nor life,

Neither angels nor demons,

Neither the present nor the future,

Nor any powers,

Neither height nor depth,

Nor anything else in all creation
Will be able to separate us from the
Love of God
That is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
(Romans 8:37-39)

How can you be “more than a conqueror” unless you have something to conquer? How can you have “victory in Jesus” unless you have something to be victorious over?

You have periodic assignments from God. What bad thing has happened in your life lately? That is your assignment.

22nd - The scripture for today, January 22 (1/22), is **Ephesians 1:22** as found in the New Testament of the Bible:

"And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way."

What makes this so interesting is that the church is the body of Christ. What else is the church?

Colossians 1:18 says...

the church has only one head on earth and in heaven ~
Jesus. (Some people claim to love his head but not his
body. Hmmm.)

Matthew 16:17-18 says...

the church is the kingdom of heaven.

Ephesians 5:25 & 32 says...

the church is his bride.

Revelation 21:2, 9-10 says...

the church bride is the new Holy City Jerusalem.

And what does Jesus think of the church? You already know this one. Ephesians 5:25-27 says he loved the church so much that he gave himself up for her, to make her radiant ~ no stains, no wrinkles, no blemishes.

Oh, that last part: I must have missed it before. Me radiant? Human, sinful me radiant? And no stains, Lord? No stains either?

23rd - The scripture for today, January 23 (1/23), is Romans 1:23 as found in the New Testament of the Bible:

"...and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles."

Well, the opposite has happened in our millennium. Instead of worshipping many gods, people are worshipping nothing. They declare God does not exist. They declare the existence of the universe just happened for no reason and that their minds have reason for no reason. One of their arguments is that they cannot see God.

Do you ever wish you could see God, touch God, look God in the eye? Everyone has. And we may wonder why we can't.

If this were the case, then God wouldn't be God. He wouldn't be omnipresent (present everywhere). He would only be able to listen to one prayer at a time, and the rest of the world's prayers would go unheard.

Besides, God is too big to see. It is like facing a building half an inch away. We have no way to know what the building looks like because it is so big. There are over two trillion galaxies out there, and God is larger than them all because he made them all. It is impossible to see God he fills the universe and beyond.

Let us be grateful our God is so great He cannot be limited. He is so great, he cannot be pictured or imagined. He is so great He fills our hearts and our souls.

24th - The scripture for today, January 24 (1/24), is **Jude 1:24** as found in the New Testament of the Bible:

"To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy ~ "

Yes, it is possible for Christians to fall because we have free will. But fall from what? God is perfect, and so cannot dwell with faults and imperfection. We have faults. Romans 3:23 says everyone sins. And Romans 6:23 says the wages we earn for sinning is death. Satan was holding our souls hostage in his realm of death. But God always has wanted us to live with him. What a dilemma!

God solved our problem at great expense. His Words descended to earth in a human body so he could live the faultless life for us. Then God offered Himself to die in our place, to pay the ransom to get souls out of Satan's death existence. Amazing.

But God wasn't through yet. He tricked Satan and came back to life. After that, God told the world He would consider us "without

fault" vicariously through Jesus. We even today have a choice. We can enslave our souls back to Satan("fall") or we can grab hold of our spiritual freedom, spiritual life and hang on to it.

Deep down, who have you chosen?

25th - The scripture for today, January 25 (1/25), is **James 1:25** as found in the New Testament of the Bible:

"But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it ~ he will be blessed in what he does."

A lot of people do not understand that there was the Law of Moses with over 600 commands in the Old Testament, and the Law of Jesus with very few commands in the New Testament. Religious leaders use the Law of Moses to justify adding fancy or fun things to worship or a separate priesthood or tithing, or whatever they like.

But they leave out stoning for adultery or disobeying your parents, killing someone who killed your relative, knocking the eye out of someone who knocked your eye out, giving a third of your income (not just a tenth), killing animals to sacrifice, etc. It's all part of the same Law!

Romans 7:4-7 says Christians have been released from the Law. Hebrews 8:13 & all of chapter 9 say the first covenant (testament/law) of Moses had regulations for worship but is obsolete in favor of the new covenant (testament/law). James 2:10 says if you try to live by the old Law but fail in just one point, you are guilty of all of it.

But how are you to know what was in the Old Law of Moses

besides the fancy or fun things today's religious leaders like? There is only one possible answer: Read it. Plow through Leviticus and all those minute codes. Then you will understand.

Let us truly let loose of the old Law of Moses and cling to the "perfect Law that gives freedom" in Christ.

26th- The scripture for today, January 26 (1/26), is **1st Samuel 1:26f** as found in the Old Testament of the Bible:

"And she said to him, 'As surely as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the Lord. I prayed for this child and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him.' "

Wow! Hannah prayed for a baby and God gave her a son! Then she told everyone. How often do you tell someone God has answered your prayer, big or little?

Or do you wander aimlessly from prayer request to prayer request, and let the answers drift away from you unnoticed? Or worse, do you ask others to pray for something, but after once or twice you stop praying for that thing yourself? A year later, someone tells you they are still praying for your something and you have completely forgotten it.

Begin today to keep a list of your prayer requests. Write down the date you first began to pray for each. If your requests are all about yourself, expand. Begin including your neighbors, your co-workers, people you attend church with, your relatives, schools, people in the newspaper.

Then begin a second list of your answers and the dates. You will be amazed how fast your Prayers Answered list grows. Do not let

the answers drift away from you unnoticed.

Notice them.

Claim them.

Tell others.

And spend the rest of your life telling others and thanking God over and over and...

27th - The scripture for today, January 27 (1/27), is **James 1:27** as found in the New Testament of the Bible:

"Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: To look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world."

A lot of people never lie, never cheat, never steal, never murder. Wow! That person deserves to go to heaven! Not! The greatest sin of most people who are "good" is the sin of omission. We are basically "good for nothing". We don't do the good things we should be doing.

Do you hear of someone whose relative just died? Do you call them? What about the person who is home sick: Do you send them a card? What about the person who needs a ride to the doctor: Do you give them a ride? What about the mother who sits in church with wiggly children and finally just leaves during the service out of embarrassment: Do you move over and sit with her? What about that children's home where the "orphans" would love a card, a gift certificate, a gift?

Oh, Lord God. I never thought. I have been heedless to their silent cries. I have traveled on the other side of the road from them so my

perfect life is not interrupted. Lord, open my blind eyes, open my deaf ears, open my hard heart.

28th- The scripture for today, January 28 (1/28), is **1st Chronicles 1:28** s found in the Old Testament of the Bible:

"The sons of Abraham: Isaac and Ishmael."

Are you a parent with a grown or nearly-grown child who is going in the wrong direction? Have you tried everything you can think of, and nothing is working? Do you know in your heart that you have been a good example and things shouldn't have turned out like they have?

Abraham has been called the Father of the Faithful. Yet he had one son who followed Jehovah ~ Isaac ~ and one son who followed idols ~ Ishmael. Certainly, Abraham tried everything he could to "talk some sense" into Ishmael. Certainly, he prayed earnestly for Ishmael. So, what went wrong?

Just as God has given each of us free will, our children also have free will. Just as God will never force us to follow him, we cannot force our children to follow God. You did not refrain from having your children because they may have difficulties in their life, and neither did God. And when our children rebel and break our hearts, imagine what God goes through when we rebel and break his heart.

Who knows? Perhaps your child will return to God some day in your old age, or even after you have died. If your child deep down has a good heart, that is enough for God to work with.

Keep hope alive.

29th - The scripture for today, January 29 (1/29), is **Colossians 1:29** as found in the New Testament of the Bible:

"To this end I labor, struggling with all His energy which so powerfully works in me."

Wow! Hyperactive Paul, Paul who preached even while in jail, Paul who went back to preaching after he'd been beaten and told not to, Paul with the "A-type personality" said he got all that energy from Jesus Christ (see verse 28).

Who provides your energy? It depends on what you are being driven to do. It depends on what consumes you. It depends on what you're spending your time doing and what is on your mind all the time.

Think about it today.

On what things do you use the energy of Jesus?

30th - The scripture for today, January 30 (1/30), is **1st Corinthians 1:30** as found in the New Testament of the Bible:

"It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us "wisdom" from God ~ that is, our...

...righteousness,

...holiness and,

...redemption."

Me? Sinful me? Considered right and holy? But I'm not right and holy. How can that be?

Let's look at these words of reassurance backward. When we are redeemed (bought back from Satan, our accuser and punisher), we gain God's holiness and God's rightness. But I am not holy and right. God, don't you understand this?

"Yes, my child," God answers. "But My Son knew how, and so became sinless for you."

I cannot let what He did for me drift by. Jesus traded. He took my sinfulness and gave me his sinlessness. He took my punishment and gave me redemption. Now, at least in the eyes of God, I am holy.

I think on this and the more I do, the more amazed I become. Me, Lord? Unworthy, sinful me? I am awed into silence and worship.

31st - The scripture for today, January 31 (1/31), is **Genesis 1:31** as found in the Old Testament of the Bible:

"God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning ~ the sixth day."

Oh, how God loves to spoil us! He didn't create a barren earth and then order us to get to work and plant something. He got everything just right. And then.... And then.... Then his crowning glory ~ he created us! Special us!

However, as perfect as he made earth, he left some joyful things for us to create ourselves, for he made us like him ~ creative. He left the jewels unmined, the buildings unbuilt, the songs unwritten, the

paintings unpainted, the ships unmade, the sculptures uncarved...

Here we are surrounded by everything we need to imitate one special part of God ~ his creative side. Today, create something!



