BE RIGHT WITH GOD.
BE RIGHT WITH OTHERS.
BE RIGHT WITH YOURSELF.
FIRST RESPONDERS SPIRITUAL FITNESS MANUAL

SPIRITUAL FITNESS:

“BE RIGHT WITH GOD.

BE RIGHT WITH OTHERS.

BE RIGHT WITH YOURSELF.”

—COL Tobin Green, U.S. Army

Spiritual Fitness Manual Introduction

Recently, I headed to the U.S. Naval Academy to give a biblical values award to a midshipman. While I was there I met a New York City firefighter. I told him about our project creating the First Responders Bible with The Spiritual Fitness Manual and how the Pentagon is doing research on spiritual fitness and has begun to implement programs to build spiritual fitness in military personnel.

I said to the firefighter that experts that study PTSD believe that the trauma that First Responders face each day is similar to the trauma a soldier faces in a war zone. The firefighter responded to me, “We don’t need something for POST-traumatic stress (his emphasis). We need something for the stress that we face every day.” That is why we created the Spiritual Fitness Manual (SFM).

I had the privilege of helping to publish the Military Bible with The Spiritual Fitness Manual in conjunction with the three Chief Chaplains of the United States Armed Forces. We created it to aid in the military’s efforts to help build spiritual fitness in the troops. We have created the First Responders Bible for the same purpose for law enforcement personnel, firefighters, Border Patrol agents and EMTs. Spiritual fitness through the Bible is the key to overcoming stress and trauma in your life.

READ Ephesians 3:15

God wants to build strength in your soul through the scriptures so that you can overcome any obstacle. First Responders face the stress of dangerous and cataclysmic events each day. The stress of these events can cause blunt trauma to the soul. The Spiritual Fitness Manual will help you build fitness in your inner being in order to counteract the stress of this daily onslaught. The First Responders Spiritual Fitness Manual has been written especially for you.
Study the articles and apply the biblical principles and concepts in it on a daily basis and they will equip you for life. On behalf of the National Bible Association and the Gallagher’s Army Fallen Officer Fund, I want to thank you for your work as a First Responder. The First Responders SFM is our gift of appreciation to you for your service of protection, aid, and rescue to the American people.
GOD HIMSELF WAS THE ORIGINAL FIRST RESPONDER

By Chaplain (LT COL) Mark Johnston (RET), US Army

The Psalmist asked, “What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?” (Psalm 8:4). Contemplating the vastness that surrounded him he felt insignificant. We too may be tempted to ponder the question asked on that starlit night. The Creator of the Universe can seem so far away. We are tempted to view ourselves as small and inconsequential.

The prophet Elijah was feeling very unappreciated and insignificant. He complained to God. God told him to go stand on a mountain because He was going to pass by him. There was a strong wind. Then came an earthquake. The shaking ground was followed by a fire. God was not in any of them. READ I Kings 19:13

In my own journey it has been in the silence that I have been able to know the intimacy of God. When the storms in my life have appeared overwhelming I had to learn to quiet the conversation in my mind. It is on those occasions that I have known “the peace that surpasses all understanding” (Philippians 4:7). It is then that I am able to commune intimately with the Almighty.

That peace comes not because all my questions, doubts and problems have suddenly been removed. READ Psalm 139:13-16

When my soul is filled with fear and anxiety the words of Jesus strengthen me. READ Luke 12:6-7. On those occasions that I feel inconsequential, lost in the vastness of the universe or the billions of nameless faces that share this planet with me, the inner voice of God lifts me. Jesus “calls his sheep by name” READ John 10:3.

The Lord God of the Universe knows my name! I am able to have an intimate relationship with God not because I completely understand the Creator. My intimacy with God is made possible because He knows me so very well.
God Knows Us Intimately

By Dennis Roy Maynard, D. Min


A pastor visited with a woman being overwhelmed by the storms in her life. She was filled with fear and anxiety. Her mind and heart were consumed with doubt about the very existence of God. The pastor attempted to reassure her but his efforts were falling on deaf ears. He then picked up a photo of a young girl that was sitting on the woman’s dresser. “Who is this?” He asked. “That’s my daughter.” The woman smiled. “So you love her very much.” The woman nodded. “There’s nothing that I wouldn’t do for her. There is no end to my love for her. She is the most important person in my life.” The pastor placed the photo back on the dresser and turned to face the woman. “God has your photo on His dresser. He loves you even more than you love your daughter.”

We are able to have an intimate relationship with God simply because our Father knows us so very well. When we sit quietly and read the words of His great love for us contained in Holy Scripture the restlessness in our souls is quieted. We can know Him because He knows us. We know Him intimately because He makes Himself known to us. He knows your name!

SCRIPTURES FOR REFLECTION

READ John 17:3

READ Ephesians 3:19

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

• What does it mean to know God intimately?

• What practical ways can you think of to develop this intimacy for yourself?
Meditating on the Word of God Part I

Don Finto, The Caleb Company

READ Psalm 1

READ Joshua 1:8

READ Psalm 119:97

We have lost the art and missed the blessing of meditation on the scriptures. We often live our lives in the midst of noise, crowds, and speed. Even in times when we are alone, we often tap into the airwaves that neither edify nor encourage.

On a flight in the Northeast, I picked up an airline magazine with a lead article on Transcendental Meditation. As I began to peruse the article, I realized that I was reading about a counterfeit, and that if there is a counterfeit, there is also a real form of meditation. So I set out on a path to find and experience godly meditation.

Here is what I found in the Bible: The Hebrew word for meditation means to mutter (speak to yourself), muse (reflect upon), prayer, imagine.

1. First try to quiet yourself. Find a place of solitude to read the Bible. God can speak to you through His word by spending time alone with Him.

2. Read the Bible slowly so that each word penetrates you.

3. Talk with God as you read his Word.

When reading through the Gospels, I began to change the pronouns so that I was talking to Jesus, not just about Him. “As [you] were on your way, the crowds almost crushed [you]. And a woman... came up behind [you] and touched the edge of [your] cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped” (Luke 8:42-44). “When [you] had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, [you] lifted up [your] hands and blessed them. While [you were] blessing them, [you] left them and [were] taken up into heaven (Luke 24:50-51).

4. Read the scripture prayerfully.

I would read about some miracle of the past, and paused to remember that, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever” (Heb. 13:8). If I was reading about a miracle of
Meditation on the Word - Part 2

Don Finto, The Caleb Company

1. An aspect of meditation is to agree with what God has said.

Paul says that all the promises of God are “yes” and “amen,” but that we speak the “Amen.” (2 Cor. 1:20) There are promises that God has given that will not be fulfilled for us until we verbalize our agreement with them and speak the “Amen”.

Read through His Word; place yourself into position to inherit those promises.

For years I have prayed Psalm 112. I call it my “family psalm.” “Blessed is the man who fears the Lord and finds great delight in His commands. His children will be mighty in the Land. The generation of the upright will be blessed. Wealth and riches are in his house... even in darkness, light dawns for the upright... Good will come to him who is generous and lends freely, who conducts his affairs with justice... he will have no fear of bad news... in the end he will look in triumph on his foes.”

I’ve prayed this psalm in all kinds of conditions. I choose to trust His Word more than I trust my own feelings. In the end I will triumph, because I am one of those who fear the Lord and delight in His commands! Perfectly? No. Only one is Perfect, but He is in me working out His will for me. As the psalmist says in another place, “The Lord will fulfill His purpose for me” (Psalm 138:8).

2. Another form of meditation is to memorize God’s word and then begin to turn it over in your mind by reflecting on what it each word means.

Here is an example of this:

“The Lord (the Ruler of the Universe, the King of Kings, the Creator of the Earth) is my shepherd (guide, caregiver, protector). I shall not want. (God will provide for me. God will meet my needs. I do not need to be afraid.) (Psalm 23:1)

3. King David put God’s Word to music and sang it. I encourage you to sing God’s Word back to him. This also is a form of meditating on the scriptures.

His Word is food. And life.

“May the words of [your] mouth and the meditation of [your] heart, be pleasing in [the Lord’s] sight,” for He indeed is our “LORD [our] Rock and [our] Redeemer” (Ps. 19:14).
Worship

READ John 4:23

Jesus spoke these words to the Samaritan woman, explaining how God wanted people to worship Him.

Worship is the act of giving homage and thanks to God. It is glorifying Him for who He is and for what He has done for us. It is voluntary and places us in our rightful position before God. The Bible is quite clear on how to do it and it is filled with scenes of worship from the time of the Patriarchs all the way through to the Book of Revelation, where we see the multitudes worshiping God in Heaven.

The Book of Psalms is dedicated to the activity of worship. The psalms were written as songs to be sung in the Temple.

1. WHY DO WE WORSHIP?

• It is commanded.

Worship is an integral part of our relationship to God. It is hard for some of us to wrap our heads around this because of our democratic culture. His universe is a monarchy. God is the King and monarch of the Universe, and as the Sovereign Ruler, He deserves such praise. Once we accept this and participate in it we find joy, purpose and peace. Worship helps us to find meaning in our lives in relationship to eternity.

READ Matthew 4:10 and READ Luke 24:53

2. WHEN DO WE WORSHIP?

• In good times

Giving thanks to God for what He has done for us helps us to recognize and remember how much God loves us. It also helps us to respond when things look bleak and we enter a period of great difficulty. READ Psalm 126:1

• In difficult times:

Praising God in rough times is tough but it is the acknowledgement and choice that God is in control and that the circumstances are not going to beat us.

READ Acts 16:23-25
3. HOW DO WE WORSHIP GOD?

- Worship is singing to God.

**READ Psalm 98:1-2**

- It is done in the form of praise.

**READ Psalms 135:1-2**

- We worship Together with others.

**READ Matthew 26:30**

- We worship with a heart of humility.

**READ Psalm 95:6**

4. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF WORSHIP?

- Worship builds spiritual strength.

**READ Nehemiah 8:10**

- Worship helps you stay humble before God.

**READ Psalm 96:9**

- Worship helps you to remember God’s goodness in your life.

**READ Psalm 136:1**
READ Mark 9:23. Norman Williams was flying on a 747. The plane stopped to refuel. While a dense fog rolled in, another 747 tried to take off. The pilot didn’t see Williams’ plane and collided with it killing everyone on that jet and many on the other 747.

A fireball began rolling through the cabin where Norman was sitting. He stood to his feet and remembered a Bible verse he had memorized as a child. Read Isaiah 43:2

Norman cried out, “I stand upon your word! I stand upon your word! Norman then looked up to see a hole in the fuselage. He says that he does not know how he got through it to the roof but moments later he found himself sliding down the side of the wing and the fiery plane. Not one hair on his head or his body was burned.

Through faith, Norman Williams escaped certain injury and death! So what does it mean to have faith in God? Faith can seem like a mysterious feeling that comes and goes but the Bible is clear on what faith is and how we can attain it.

1. The word “faith” in the Bible means, “to trust.” We need to give control of our circumstances to God and trust that He will work it out. Such faith is stronger than simply “believing.” I may “believe” that a chair can support my weight but when I sit on it I “trust” it.

To have faith or to “believe” in God means to “trust” Him. I rest on His power to support and sustain me just like the chair.

2. Faith is formed through our exposure to God’s Word. READ Romans 10:17

The Bible is a record of the work and promises of God for us. There are over 3,500 promises in it. He wants us to know these promises and trust that He will fulfill them. Just like in a car, where the engineers put a manual in the glove compartment, God has given us instructions in His manual, the Bible. Read the Bible and memorize the promises that are meaningful to you.

When you are having difficulty, find a promise that speaks to your circumstance and stand on it like Norman Williams did. Keep reminding God of His promise and thank Him for the answer that will come.
READ Hebrews 11:1

1. Faith receives the answer from God before we physically see it.

Dr. David Cho began his ministry with a handful of people who were very poor. Cho slept on the floor of his apartment and had no furniture or transportation. Knowing God’s Word promised to provide, Cho began asking God for a desk, a chair, and a bicycle to get around the big city of Seoul, South Korea, for his ministry.

One day he felt that God was going to do it. He also felt that God wanted him to tell his church that he had already received the items! The church went wild. Three young men told Cho that they had to see these items. Cho brought the young men to his empty apartment. Before entering, Cho asked them how long they had been in their mother’s womb. One answered that he was growing inside his mother for nine months. Cho explained that by faith he too was pregnant but with a desk, a chair and a bicycle! It wasn’t too long afterwards that Cho received the actual desk, chair and bicycle.

2. Faith requires our enduring patience and not our tendency to panic!

We need to resist the urge to take back control. It is difficult to fight against the desire to panic. During the process we will be tested by the reality we are experiencing. Our senses will tell us one thing and God’s Word will say another. Everything around us will be crying out for us to take back control. Don’t give in! Quote the word of God and remind yourself of His promises.

This is what David did before he slew Goliath. David heard about the promise of King Saul to reward any person who would slay the giant, and he believed that God would use him to kill Israel’s enemy READ 1 Samuel 17:30. But no one believed that David could succeed in a battle against a nine-foot warrior! In the face of discouragement, David’s faith was tested but he turned away and looked to others who could encourage him. Faith turns away from doubt and listens to the promises of Jesus. We might have giants facing us in our lives but God’s Word can strengthen us.

3. READ Matthew 6.34

Victory in faith comes only one day at a time.
THE POWER OF PRAYER - Part 1

By Chaplain Jesus Alvarez, US Border Patrol

READ Luke 18:1

Prayer is the most vital tool that the First Responder has in his relationship with God. This communication lifeline will help you develop the spiritual maturity you need to daily overcome the tremendous obstacles you face. But first, let’s take a look at what it means to be prayerful, spiritual, and religious. By praying, we are asking God to help us in our needs or to give thanks to Him.

Spirituality is your relationship with God. The developing closeness that happens as you spend time with Him much like in a growing relationship with someone you love. Religion is how you express that relationship.

WHY SHOULD WE PRAY?

God wants to hear our voice by praying. We call out to Him to help us in our needs. Frequent prayer establishes our dependency on Him. Prayer reinforces our faith in God. When asking for a spiritual gift or grace, remember that ultimately “God’s will be done” and not yours. Just as a parent would not give a poisonous snake to his child to play with, so our God and Father will not grant our prayer requests if they will do harm to us. He sees the entire picture. READ Mark 9:23. If God does not answer your prayers according to your desires it is because of His all-knowing love for you. Accept it and move on. READ Luke 11:11-12.

PRAYER IS A POWERFUL TOOL.

READ Luke 12:32 and Romans 8:2

We establish our need for God in every aspect of our lives by praying. We see signs of this when we ask for Holy gifts on our own behalf, or for the betterment of others. These prayers bring forth goodness in our lives and in the lives of those around us. Be patient in prayer and look for the fruits of what your prayers bring forth, they’re called blessings and they almost always are miraculous. Remember again to have faith when you pray, and know that God is anxious to hear your voice calling out to Him. When we establish a prayer dialogue with God, He hears us. Temper your prayers with patience and wisdom, patience to wait for an answer.
THE POWER OF PRAYER - Part 2
By Chaplain Jesus Alvarez, US Border Patrol

READ James 5:16

HOW TO PRAY

Prayer can be short and very to the point when entering a critical incident or crisis situation. Because time is of the essence, you can simply pray, “Jesus, please help us with this, let thy will be done” or “Jesus, please be with us.” I have recited these prayers many times when my Border Patrol unit is rolling up to a critical incident or situation. After I have finished the prayer I ask my team for an AMEN.

READ Matthew 18:20. Many times in your role as a First Responder, you will encounter the face of evil or immense human suffering. Whichever the case a prayer will protect your heart and mind and fortify you physically so that you can have God's power to overcome spiritually whatever task is at hand.

READ Mark 5:36

Afterwards, that same prayer can help you make peace with a critical incident or tragedy that you faced and maybe help you understand it better or to accept it.

During the times that I have asked WHY, I have found that prayer many times won’t give me all the answers. That is tough to accept but prayer does give me comfort and helps me to understand that I sometimes don’t need to know why some things happen. The bottom line is that whether I understand everything or not, when I pray it strengthens me and helps me to keep fighting the good fight with all my might.

"Honor First"

“I have been driven many times upon my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom and that of all about me seemed insufficient for that day.” -Abraham Lincoln

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

• What is the most difficult aspect of praying for you? What hinders you from doing it consistently?

• How can you resolve this so that you can strengthen your prayer life and your relationship with God?
BIBLE STUDY - Part 1

BY Dr. Peter A. Lillback, President, Westminster Theological Seminary

READ I Timothy 3:16

Commit it to memory. This passage is the explanation of how we received the Bible and what it is to accomplish in our lives as we read it, study it, meditate on it, and seek to obey it.

The Bible’s Central Message is the knowledge of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible is God’s Word to mankind. God committed His message to you in written form through inspired writers.

READ John 3:16.

Commit it to memory. This verse summarizes Jesus’ salvation message. It is the key message of the Bible. The Bible’s structure has two main parts. First, there is the Old Testament, the time when God prepared the world for Christ to come. Second, there is the New Testament. It tells of Christ’s life, teaching, work, death and resurrection, as well as the establishment and growth of the Church. The Bible provides Wisdom for all aspects of our live especially in Psalms and Proverbs.

Are you new to the Bible? Begin by reading the Gospel of John. Also, Read the Psalms and Proverbs to find wisdom and strength for challenges in your personal and professional life. Then read the rest of the New Testament.

Here are a few hints to help you to become an effective Bible reader:

1. Read the Bible daily - start with one chapter daily. Some find daily reading of a chapter, psalm, and a proverb to be a strong encouragement of their spiritual growth.

2. Prayer. Begin with prayer asking God’s Holy Spirit to open your mind to understanding.

3. Normal Meanings. Read the Bible in a normal manner. This means you should pay attention to the obvious meanings of words in their relationship to the words around them. Generally, the Bible itself will make it clear if the words are to be understood in a more literal or more symbolic manner.

4. Historical Context. Be aware of the Bible’s historical context. Are you reading in the Old Testament before Christ came, or in the New Testament after Christ came? Remember that the ancient Jewish world of Israel and the influence of the ancient empires around them were different. As you read, ask yourself what is still the same in the passage before you in spite of the differences of history and culture?
BIBLE STUDY - Part 2

BY Dr. Peter A. Lillback, President, Westminster Theological Seminary

READ Hebrews 4:12

Here are a few more hints to help you to become an effective Bible reader:

1. Literary Style. Are the words you are reading presenting a story, a fact, a promise, or a command? Are they part of a history, a prophet’s message, or a poet’s song? Knowing the style of literature helps you to understand the writer’s message more effectively. The four gospels in the New Testament tell the life of Christ. Paul’s writings are letters to churches. The final book of the Bible, Revelation, is a powerful message of the ultimate triumph of Christ’s Kingdom. It is filled with amazing images and messages of judgment and hope.

2. Always ask these questions,

   - What do I learn about God from this text?
   - What do I learn about Jesus Christ from this passage?
   - What does God want me to believe, to do, or to feel based upon this teaching?

3. Apply what you’ve read to your heart, your life, your family, your work, your country and your church. What directions are the Scriptures giving you to be more faithful, more loving, more wise, or more good in your thoughts, feelings, actions, duties, relationships and hobbies?

4. Consider keeping a written journal of what you’ve read and what thoughts and insights you’ve gained from your reading. This will also help you in your prayers and in sharing your thoughts with others. Looking back after a period of time will show you the progress you’ve made.

5. Share your insights with others through a Bible study, a Church fellowship group, a Sunday School Class, or with family and friends. Talk about the Bible with fellow first responders.

6. Deepen your study. Consider taking an online class or enrolling in a Bible-focused program. Read various Bible translations and compare and contrast their differing wordings. Ask your spiritual leaders for advice on other writings that might help you grow in the knowledge of the Scriptures. These could include items such as Bible commentaries, study guides, devotional literature, radio or television instruction programs, confessions of faith and practical and scholarly publications and books.

Examples of the Bible’s Wisdom for First Responders:

   Duty: READ Matthew 22:37-40
Attitude: READ Colossians 3:23-24

Honor: READ Revelation 14:13

Never forget the renewing power of God’s Word! READ Isaiah 55:10-12
READ Psalm 146. After 9/11, my wife and I found ourselves looking to God’s Word for comfort. As a lieutenant in the NYC Fire Department I knew firsthand the tragedy that this terrorist attack had created. We both had our Bibles open when suddenly my wife told me to turn to Psalm 146. She had been comforted by verse 9. She knew how many lives had been lost, how many people had lost loved ones and how many had been left fatherless and widowed.

God pointed me to Psalm 146:10.

That night, as I returned to work, I came to realize just how powerful and meaningful God’s Word is. I was assigned to work at what had become known as “the pile” at Ground Zero. I started working in the long lines of the bucket brigade, moving pieces of the pile so we could sift through it.

As the night went on, my company was called to go to what remained of the top of the World Trade Center. To get there, you had to scale ladders and cross an area that became known as “the pit,” a terrifying and dangerous place. After my team made it through this obstacle course of danger and reached the top of the World Trade Center, it only became more dangerous. To get to our objective, you had to cross a beam and literally walk through fire and smoke while standing on a 12-inch wide surface.

There was nowhere else to go. As I walked, being blinded and choked by the smoke, I came to realize that my human effort wasn’t going to get me through this. The fear of falling and death was real. The thoughts going through my mind were of my family, but I knew I couldn’t leave—I had a job to do. At that very moment, God brought to my heart the verse that I had read just the night before:

READ Psalm 146:10

It brought me great peace and strengthened me.

That night, our task was completed. We were able to bring two of our fellow firefighters’ bodies down and home to their families. As the sun rose and we left that position, all I could do was marvel at the power of God and how He used His word to help me.
Fellowship

By Father Joseph Tyrrell, Pastor, St. Peter’s Roman Catholic Church at The World Trade Center, NYC

GET TOGETHER

Fellowship is part of the earliest description of the Christians. It is found in The Acts of the Apostles:

READ Acts 2:42

They may have been afraid, but they came together. Without that they could not hope to fulfill Jesus’ prayer at the last supper.

READ John 17:21

St. Paul encouraged the people in Ephesus to fulfill Jesus’ prayer when he says:

READ Ephesians 2:19-22

Here are a number of excuses that we fall prey to in not fulfilling God’s command to be together with other believers. I already gave an hour on Sunday. The rest of the week is mine.

READ Romans 14:7

I can talk to God. I don’t need a group to hold me accountable.

READ James 5:16, 19-20

As long as I don’t break any of the big 10, I passed the test, right?

READ Leviticus 19:

READ Matthew 5:48

READ Luke 6:36

READ 1 Timothy 4:7-8

Only losers think they can’t make it on their own.

READ Ecclesiastes 4:9,12

Bible study? They should be happy I show up on Sundays.
READ Galatians 6:7

READ 2 Timothy 3:14-17

GO TO CHURCH

READ Hebrews 10:25

We come together to worship God as His people as St. Peter writes:

READ 1 Peter 2:9

When we go the church and offer ourselves as spiritual sacrifices we implicitly acknowledge that:

READ Romans 14:7-8

Now our lives have a context, our service of others has a reason. We are people whose lives have been purchased at great price. We no longer live for ourselves and are therefore free to serve others and offer our lives with Christ as an offering to God the Father. Here are a series of questions or excuses we use not to come together to worship God in church. When they tell us we have to go, they are treating us like children.

READ 1 John 3:1-3

Can’t I just stay home and pray by myself?

READ Hebrews 10:25

I believe in God, isn’t that enough?

READ James 2:19

The pastor/minister/priest speaks too long?

READ Acts 20:7, 11 (Count your blessings, it could be worse.)

We don’t make the children come, we are going to wait and let them decide for themselves when they are adults.

READ Joshua 24:15

READ Matthew 19:14, Mark 10:14, Luke 18:16
Marriage, Emotionally Shutting Down - Part 1

By George Faller, LMFT, Lieutenant, FDNY (RET)

READ 1 John 4:7.

“Man is the only creature that dares to light a fire and live with it. The reason? Because he alone has learned to put it out.” -Henry Vandyke, Jr.

First responders know the dangers they face and the need to train their bodies to head towards the threats. Resisting fear and the impulse to flee is earned by years of practice suppressing emotion and cognitively focusing on tasks. Emotional avoidance is a skill necessary to complete the mission and give the team the best chance of success. Unfortunately, for many first responders emotional constriction becomes a habit that is applied automatically across all settings, including their marriages. Success at work comes at a huge price at home.

In marriages there are typically two ways of dealing with stress: 1) trying to reduce the stress by turning down the heat and withdrawing from fights, and 2) turning up the heat by forcing the issue and pushing to talk and resolve fights.

God certainly has a good sense of humor because people who deal with stress by pursuing usually marry those who deal with stress by avoiding. This produces a predictable marriage pattern common among first responders.

For a simple example of this cycle, let’s look at a traditional marriage where the wife is the pursuer and the husband is the withdrawer. The wife, wanting to engage, initiates a conversation by asking questions. The husband assesses a threat in the questioning (usually a message he is doing something wrong) and tries to succinctly answer (yes, dear) and quickly get away to avoid further escalation of the conversation. The wife feels rejected (believes her husband doesn’t want to engage) and her resentment turns the questions into criticism (blames husband for her bad feelings). The reason the husband was reluctant to engage in the conversation in the first place is because it so often ends in criticism, and so it does again.

Each spouse’s way of dealing with stress becomes a self-fulfilling loop. A wife forcing negative conversations reinforces her husband not wanting to engage. A husband disengaging reinforces his wife’s desperation to talk. As both partners respond in ways that don’t work for the other, the distance in their relationship grows. What they need is a way to bridge the gap.

READ 2 Kings 22:5.
Learning to repair is crucial to maintaining a secure relationship. However, repair is unlikely if partners cannot shift the level of their communication from the content and triggers (sex, money, kids, etc.) to the underlying attachment emotions (longing to connect/fear of disconnection). Focusing on the content while ignoring the emotions guarantees that the most crucial part of the message is missed.

A pursuing wife, concentrating on her partner’s failure, is leaving out the essential ingredient: her own vulnerability and feelings of rejection. A withdrawn husband trying to escape the helplessness and feelings of failure resulting from fighting also closes the door to potential healing and closeness. Neither shares their deeper insecurities, all they show is their defensiveness and reactivity. Protection breeds further protection, and each partner gets lost in an endless loop of blame and denial. To become doers of the repair work, partners must learn how to plug into their emotions and share these softer feelings.

Emotions are just a signal from the body to pay attention; something good or bad is going to happen. Emotions tell us the problem and also the solution. If we are afraid, we need safety; sad, we need comfort; angry, we need to be understood; alone, we need connection; rejected, we need to be accepted; and if we are feeling unloved, we need to be loved. It is unwise to disregard the signals.

Although professional success requires “going up” into our head to fix things while emphasizing emotional suppression and performance, relational success seems to work the opposite; success comes from going down to our heart and sharing our emotional struggles. Listening to our emotions reveals our needs. Risking letting your partner into your needs is the surest path to either rejection or transformation.

Protection against disappointment by not risking provides immediate defense from rejection but also guarantees the needs go unmet. True connection comes by supporting each other in the broken places. As long as there is only room in our relationships for “getting it right,” then so much of our true selves are relegated to the darkness. The hope of all relationships, including our relationship with God, isn’t based on merit but on grace. To bring our whole being into the light of another, especially our vulnerabilities, is God’s blueprint for eternal existence.

READ 2 Corinthians 12:10
Marriage, Emotionally Shutting Down - Part 3

By George Faller, LMFT, Lieutenant, FDNY (RET)

READ Hebrews 5:8

“The most amazing fact about Jesus, unlike any other religious founder, is that He found God in disorder and imperfection—and told us that we must do the same or we would never be content on this earth” -Richard Rohr

It is clear that work and marriage operate under different rules. Marriage isn’t about winning or perfection. The biblical view of marriage is partners helping each other grow out of sin into new creations. Marriage is supposed to be vulnerable, hard work, letting each other into our shadow sides concealed from the world. Marriages need to work against entropy and avoidance if they are to stay alive and thriving. Spouses lovingly holding up a truthful mirror provide the best environment to foster change and join together to become part of something bigger than the self. Viewing falls, adversity and blemishes as blessings allows the emergence of a positive cycle where being vulnerable fuels further vulnerability. In secure relationships, every fight or miscommunication is an opportunity to get closer and know each other more intimately.

READ Ephesians 4:15

Flexibly tailoring when to emotionally engage or disengage depending on the circumstances is the key to healthy resiliency. It is necessary for many responders to change their mentality regarding emotional expression from an either/or into an and/both perspective. After years of conditioning to emotionally shut down, it makes sense how some responders may find it difficult to open up. True vulnerability is just sharing your truth, and not knowing what to do (confusion and helplessness) is a pretty good starting point. What works is authenticity, not trying to make men act more feminine.

Emotional engagement is sharing the feeling however the other person experiences it. Learning to give each other permission for this experience and choosing to compassionately come alongside the struggle is following the image of Jesus. God is inviting us all into an open relationship with Him where all that is necessary is our full presence.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

• Reflecting on this article, what ways do you see that you shut down emotionally in relationship to your spouse?

• Knowing that your job effects how you emotionally relate, what practical steps can you take to open up emotionally to your spouse?
Good Marriages – Part 1

By Pastors Andrew and Elena Williams, Trinity Church, Greenwich, CT

READ Ecclesiastes 4: 9-10,12.

Someone was heard to say, “Of course I love my wife. I told her that once about 30 years ago, and if I should change my mind I will let her know!” It is a critical part of the way God made us that we need to know that we are loved. So we have to be intentional about building a marriage in both our words and actions. When was the last time you told and showed your spouse that you love them?

Ecclesiastes 4: 9-10. Keep romance alive—plan to spend quality time together. Marriage is the closest intimate relationship of which two people are capable. Time together with our spouse will not just happen. Be proactive: set aside weekly, monthly and annual time where it is just the two of you—with the cell phone turned off!

READ Song of Solomon 2:16.

To forgive is an essential choice. Forgiveness is not approving of what was done, neither is it justifying, denying or excusing the act or omission. To literally “forgive and forget” is not realistic either. It is usually impossible to forget meaningful events in our lives—positive or negative. Love is always a choice and so is forgiveness.

What about when we just can’t find it within us to forgive? Pray—ask God to give you His grace to forgive. Ask someone to pray with you. Talk to someone who is five minutes ahead of you on his/her spiritual journey and/or seek counseling. Some wounds need processing—it is not that they can’t be forgiven; it is just that God knows that you are hurting and you need help.

READ Colossians 3:13

Don’t bear grudges: “Not forgiving is like drinking rat poison and then waiting for the rat to die” (Anne Lamott). Forgiveness is a release of bitterness. Bitterness is gone when there is no desire to get even or punish the person who has hurt us.
READ Ephesians 5.25 Be kind to your parents and in-laws, but your spouse must always come first.

READ Ephesians 5:31. When there are differences to be settled, don’t go to bed without first making peace. But that “peace,” in the first instance, may be that you agree to put some time aside to talk through this conflict. Heated arguments in the middle of the night very rarely resolve anything and can actually make the situation worse. There is no perfect time to have a disagreement but it is worth agreeing on the times to avoid!

READ (Ephesians 4:26). Understand and learn to cherish each other’s differences. Ask questions about the other’s activities concerns, interests, worries, hopes and plans. It is all too easy, under the pressures of life, to be become preoccupied with just our own cares and concerns. Find some time with your spouse and deliberately make it all about them—tell them, “Tonight, is about you. I just want you to tell me all about how you are doing?”

READ (Psalm 85:10). Get good at talking about how you feel. Write down three or four things that have happened to concerns, interests, worries, hopes and plans over the course of your day—and write down what you feel about them. Take this list to dinner with your spouse and use it as a conversation guide.

READ (Psalm 15:1-2). Seek first to understand—then to be understood. Listening is vital—as we openly listen to each other’s perspective, we begin to see a way forward. “Even if our partner’s words have hurt us we need to resist the desire to retaliate. Restraint is part of the cost of true love.” (Nicky and Sila Lee, “The Marriage Course.”)

READ James 1:19 Don’t idolize your spouse. It is a wonderful thing to cherish and admire our husband or wife, but nobody is perfect and nobody can live up to a fantasy idol. True love is to be able to know each other with all our idiosyncrasies and strange habits—and still love them for who they truly are.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

• In trying to resolve conflict with your spouse, what patterns continue to come up in the discussion that serve as roadblocks?

• What practical steps can you take to avoid these patterns?
Parenting – Part 1

By Joe White, President, Kanakuk Kamps

You as a parent are living in the most challenging and rewarding years of your life imprinting your very nature upon the heart of your child. Raising great kids is worth whatever the sacrifice and whatever the cost. Prayerful and intentional dedication to success may revolutionize your current family priorities and practices, but it’s worth it. I pray that these life lessons that I have learned along with my wife, Debbie Jo, in parenting our four kids and working with tens of thousands of teens for the last 35 years will help you travel down this often bumpy, often tearful, often mysterious road of parenting kids and walking hand in hand with our Savior.

1. THE RELATIONSHIP IS EVERYTHING!

The greatest single parcel of advice I received when my kids were small was simply this, “The relationship is everything!” It’s the common denominator of everything good that happens in your home as you parent your children.

A great friendship is the basis for healthy communication, fruitful spiritual training, successful teaching and even effective discipline. The best kids I’ve ever met almost always have one song that their heart sings throughout their life, “My parents really love me! They are my very best friends.”

2. KIDS SPELL LOVE T-I-M-E

Quality moments come when quantity time is invested in the relationship with your kids. Perhaps “The One-Minute Manager” works in some professional fields, but it never works at home. When a child needs a hug, a “best friend,” a shoulder to cry on, a kernel of wisdom, a course correction, or clarity in moral boundaries, the parent who has seriously rearranged his/her priorities to include vast amounts of time invested in the relationship will be the first name on your kids “go-to” list. Though the challenges will be many along the way, quantity time will produce a quality friendship that will literally last for a lifetime.

3. OFFER EMPATHY, WARMTH AND AFFECTION

There is an amazing tenderness in the heart of a caring parent. God gave it to us. It is one of a parent’s most admirable qualities. Jesus put a picture window into God’s heart when He told the story of one lost sheep whose shepherd left the ninety-nine in the flock to find the one who had lost his way.

READ (Luke 15:5). There is so much tenderness in His voice.
Parenting – Part 2

By Joe White, President, Kanakuk Kamps

READ James 1:19

1. A parent’s first response to a child of any age who reels with the pain of failure is to “lay him on his shoulders.” No big advice, no “I told you so,” no wise plan for remedy, no major solutions. The parent comforts, the parent listens, the parent’s heart bleeds. Kids trust their pain to the parent who listens.

READ (James 1:19).

Empathy opens the lock to a hurting little heart.

2. DISCOVER THE CHAMPIONS IN YOUR HOME

   After working, counseling, living and talking with hundreds of thousands of teenagers I have found that there is a champion in every one—if that child’s parents will only take the time to discover the vein of gold in their child’s heart.

Your kids are God’s treasured gift to you. Whatever age your children are... today is a great day to bring out the best in each of their lives.

READ (Psalm 127:3).

3. TEACH YOUR KIDS TO DREAM AND TO DREAM BIG

   Daddy taught me how to dream. He dreamed with me and he helped my dreams come true. Too many kids in America are not taught to dream. They feel like failures. Parents encourage your children to build big dreams for themselves.

READ (Matthew 19:26).

READ (Proverbs 22:6).

4. GIVE YOUR KIDS THE FORGIVENESS GOD HAS GIVEN YOU

The close-knit families I’m around aren’t made up of perfect kids or perfect parents, but they do have this in common: they are a team of professional forgivers.

READ Ephesians 4:32

Give your kids the forgiveness God has given you.

5. LIVE RIGHT
Your greatest opportunity to teach your kids the character qualities you want to see in their lives is in how you live your daily life. Children do give their parents room for failure, but in general they cling to what they see in their parents’ everyday lives. More than anything else, I want my children to see a father whose number one goal in life is to love God with all his heart, a father with the ability to ask for forgiveness. That integrity is more important than making a dollar. And finally, that their very average dad loves their very priceless mother with uncompromising dedication.

READ Corinthians 11:1.

“Each day of our lives we make deposits in the memory banks of our children.” –Chuck Swindoll
Forgiveness – Part 1

By Joey Hudson, President, Gallagher’s Army Fallen Heroes Fund

**READ Matthew 18:21-22**

We have all found ourselves with the sense of discontentment, restlessness, and uneasiness when we are at odds with others or ourselves. The same feeling happens when opening the refrigerator and trying to find something to satisfy a craving, yet we can’t find anything that would seem to fill this emptiness. We know there is emptiness—and we think it’s our stomach—but maybe it’s an empty soul instead. Maybe we need the food of forgiveness offered only by our heavenly Father.

**READ Matthew 6:14**

Forgiveness is a powerful feeling. Whether we ask for forgiveness for how we have treated someone or we forgive another for a perceived transgression against us, the mere act of forgiveness can affect how good we feel about ourselves and other people in our lives. Dr. Michael McCullough, professor of psychology at the University of Miami, conducted two different studies. The studies concluded that the act of forgiving someone made you feel better about yourself. If you were close to that person, or they apologized, the effect was even stronger.

Participants got a bigger boost in well being the following day after forgiving that person. The lesson, as the Bible teaches us, is forgive people if they do something wrong, especially if they are someone close to you.

If you have transgressed against someone, apologize for it. Chances are you will feel better the next day. Forgiveness is more than just a “feel-good” exercise. Forgiveness, and the lack of it, can have physical symptoms too. Many researchers have found that holding a grudge can have the same effects on our bodies as other stressful events: our blood pressure rises, muscles tense and we even begin to sweat. Some doctors suggest there is a correlation between forgiving someone for a betrayal and improvements in heart health by decreasing the workload on our hearts. In fact, a study published a few years ago in the journal “Circulation” suggests that angry people are three times more likely to suffer sudden cardiac arrest than their less-angry counterparts. Want to keep your heart healthy?

**READ I Corinthians 13:4-7**

The Bible is very clear on forgiveness. God forgive us and he actually forgets our sins. We’ve all heard the saying, “forgive and forget” because this is what God’s word teaches us.

**READ Isaiah 43:25**
Forgiveness – Part 2

By Joey Hudson, President, Gallagher’s Army Fallen Heroes Fund

READ Hebrews 8:12

With the frequency in which God tells us of His forgetfulness, it is clear He is serious about not only our forgiving one another, but also forgetting anything ever happened. But how do we do this and are humans actually capable of such an act? Often times we tell others, “This person has NO clue what they’ve done to me! They don’t deserve anything at all! Much less MY forgiveness!” The answer to this dilemma is simple: some would argue that those who killed Jesus didn’t deserve forgiveness, yet look at what He said just before dying on the cross.

READ Luke 23:34

Simply put, God loves us for who we are and not because of past or present actions. The ability to forgive is one of the many gifts we receive from God. God wanted a relationship with us so badly that He allowed His only son to die on the cross ... so that our sins would be forgiven. When we allow ourselves to fully understand what Jesus did for us, it’s much easier to extend that grace to others. Remember, we aren’t forgiving others for their benefit, but for our own well-being. Forgiving others allows the Lord to begin healing our souls, which leads to a closer relationship with Him. When we get closer to Him through prayer and the study of His word, forgiving those who have wronged us becomes more like the natural flow of Christ’s love, through us, to others.

“To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you.”

—C.S. LEWIS

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

• What is forgiveness?

• Must I forgive if the person offending me isn’t sorry?

• What if I forgive and not forget?

• How do I forgive myself?
Financial Excellence

By Dr. John Templeton, The Templeton Foundation

READ Luke 12:15

Money itself is never the measure of a person’s character. It is the use of money that reflects character. The Bible talks about money, business and possessions more than any other topics. How we deal with our finances tells a lot about our character. There is great virtue and success in following the directives of the scriptures concerning our finances and how we distribute them. Here are some of the things that my father taught me and that I have learned through the years from the Bible that will help you.

1. WORK HARD AT YOUR JOB AND GOD WILL BLESS YOU

READ Proverbs 10:4 and Proverbs 13:4

“Through good times and tough times, entrepreneur-type people will seek new frontiers to explore and to enhance. They will gladly accept any challenge, because through risk and challenge, we grow both in worldly wisdom and spiritual strength.” —Sir John Templeton

2. USE YOUR MONEY CAREFULLY; DON’T WASTE IT


“Beware of little expenses. A small leak will sink a great ship.” —Benjamin Franklin

“The prosperity of the Nation really must depend on the thrift of the people ... the sunshine of prosperity can always be depended upon when the people are thrifty.” —S.W. Strauss

3. DON’T GO INTO DEBT

READ Proverbs 22:7

In 1900, the average American saved 22% of his income and had no debt. By only just five years ago, the average American’s savings rate had eroded to a negative 3%! Each American household on average is $14,500 in debt, not including their mortgage.

4. SAVE PART OF YOUR INCOME REGULARLY

“He who gathers money little by little makes it grow.” —Proverbs 13:11
“Teach economy. That is one of the first and highest virtues. It begins with saving money.”

—Abraham Lincoln

5. BE HONEST IN ALL YOUR BUSINESS DEALINGS

READ Luke 16:10

“The life of a nation is secure only while the nation is honest, truthful and virtuous.” —Frederick Douglass

“In the end, no person and no nation can prosper who tries to ‘get something for nothing.’” —Anonymous

6. GIVE GENEROUSLY OF YOUR FINANCES

READ Luke 6:38

READ Proverbs 3:9-10

READ 2 Corinthians 9:7

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

• What area of finances are the most difficult for you to have a biblical attitude about?

• How has giving financially affected your life?
First Responder Self-Care—Avoiding Burnout: Part 1

By Reverend Hillary R. Bercovici, PH.D, Former NYC-EMS Paramedic, NYC Disaster Chaplaincy Services Volunteer

I was completely burned out. After less than three years on the streets of Manhattan’s East Side, the South Bronx and Harlem, I was ready to quit. I wasn’t alone. Several of the most highly skilled first responders I knew were questioning their own effectiveness. A number of my medic classmates were becoming bitter. Some had already left for other jobs.

As it turned out, nothing in my training or experience as a NYC-EMS Paramedic had taught me about self-care as the vital key to avoiding burnout.

Although you won’t find the term “self-care” in your concordance, the Bible is full of critically important guidance on this topic. Faithful, biblical self-care actually starts with accepting and receiving God’s care for us. Paul summarizes the heart of this love and care in this simple opening to one of his letters:

READ 1 Timothy 1:2

• Grace: All self-care begins with receiving God’s “amazing grace.”

READ Romans 5:8

–Even before we turned to Him in faith, much less in love, He loved us.

–God loves us for who we are and just the way we are!

READ 1 John 4:19

–The foundation of “self-care love” is God’s love for us.

–It’s “amazing grace” because it’s completely unconditional love.

• Mercy: Self-care also means accepting and receiving God’s mercy.

READ 2 Corinthians 5:19

–We stand completely forgiven because of the cross of Christ.
–In the great Book of Life, our account shows a zero balance.

READ James 2:13

–Instead of judging and condemning the world, God showed His mercy.
–God’s mercy toward us allows us to be merciful toward ourselves.

• Peace: Self-care rests and abides in God’s reconciling “Shalom.”

READ 2 Corinthians 5:20

READ Colossians 3:15

–Christ’s self-giving love has given us eternal peace with God.
–Our reconciliation has been won and needs only to be accepted.

READ John 15:4

–Deep acceptance of Christ’s love means deeply resting in Him.
–As we abide and rest in Him, He abides and rests in us.
First Responder Self-Care—Avoiding Burnout: Part 2

By Reverend Hillary R. Bercovici, PH.D, Former NYC-EMS Paramedic, NYC Disaster Chaplaincy Services Volunteer

So how does all of this apply to self-care and protection against burnout? Most of the general principles of self-care will be obvious. For just a few examples:

- Don’t treat yourself any worse than you would treat your patients
  - Patient care is actually “Job No. 2” after “Job No. 1”, self-care

- Take good care of yourself physically, emotionally and spiritually
  - Give yourself the same consideration you would give others

- Recognize early warning signs of exhaustion and burnout
  - Notice subtle changes in mood, energy and attitude and get rest

While these and many other widely available practical guidelines for self-care are important, they don’t address the equally important spiritual guidelines that will go a long way toward preventing burnout on the job. Here they are under three simple headings:

1. Acceptance: The key to accepting yourself is found in God’s acceptance of you.

   - God wants us to come to Him as we are. He sees all our imperfections, yet he wants us to approach Him and receive His love, acceptance and forgiveness.

   - Biblical love of self begins with the humbling task of accepting yourself with all your imperfections, just as God accepts you.

   - If you have not yet forgiven yourself for all that God has forgiven in your life, then you have not yet truly and completely accepted His forgiveness of you.

   - For those of us who have struggled with various forms of abuse or lifelong judgment from others, deepening self-acceptance will require a process of healing, but one that, with God’s help, is indeed achievable.
2. READ Colossians 3:15

- Take time to be intentionally grateful for all you have received and all you have to give to others.

- Be thankful to God for how He made you, and rejoice with God that you are His, both in this life and into eternity!

- Be grateful that God has a unique plan for your life that allows you the privilege of helping and serving others.

- Give thanks to God that you have a unique and high calling. You can touch and save lives in ways that many others will never have an opportunity.
First Responder Self-Care—Avoiding Burnout: Part 3

By Reverend Hillary R. Bercovici, PH.D, Former NYC-EMS Paramedic, NYC Disaster Chaplaincy Services Volunteer

Humility: READ Romans 12:3

- Come to God honestly and humbly, without defensive self-inflation or unnecessary self-degradation (neither represents true humility).
- Expect God to meet and bless you in that place of honest humility:

READ James 4:6

- Run your life as if it now belongs to someone else.

READ 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

- Be on guard for yourself and review your life regularly.

READ 2 Corinthians 13:5

- You are just as prone to wandering off on your own as anyone.
- Stay alert spiritually:

READ 1 Peter 5:8. Remember that you are just as prone to being led astray as anyone.

It goes without saying that very little of this can be sustained over time without a regular and fresh infusion of God’s Holy Spirit. Ensure you continue to receive the spiritual nourishment you need by faithfully seeking God in your daily quiet time, weekly worship and small group Bible study, as well as in a relationship of support and accountability with a mentor who really knows you.

Nonetheless, even with the best intentions, the grind of rotating shifts, unplanned overtime or even a small-scale disaster can easily shred your plans and make it hard to get back on track. As you work to reestablish your routine, give God every opportunity to refresh you. If you find yourself in a place of struggle, here’s a suggested prayer:

Gracious God, I know you love me. Lord Jesus Christ, I know you died for me. Holy Spirit, I know you are here with me. Holy Trinity, one God, have mercy on me in my weakness and revive my heart, that I may once again feel the joy of your grace, the power of your mercy and the depth of your peace that passes understanding in my life today. Amen.

May God answer that prayer and bless you abundantly as you continue to serve Him!
Seven years ago, my wife confronted me with something that was really hard to hear. She told me that I had a negative attitude. She was right and I knew it. I had been a Christian for over 30 years yet I was negative, critical and judgmental.

I chose that day to change my attitude. I wanted to become a better husband, father and man of God. I knew that the scriptures were the only real way to do it. A positive thinking course or a book might help a little with some mental exercises, but they all seem to build upon the wrong foundation: pride. I knew that only the Word of God had the power to transform me with the right emphasis about who I am. READ Romans 12:2.

I began studying the scriptures to see what the Bible said about a positive mental attitude and then over a period of time on a daily basis, I applied the principles.

Today, I can honestly tell you that they work. About four years ago, after I responded to my wife in a positive manner to a difficult situation that she was worried about, she turned to our daughter and said, “Can you believe the change in Father? He is so positive!”

Here is what I found out from the Bible. Apply these principles each day and you will develop a positive, healthy attitude that is God-centered.

1. You are a sinner, imperfect and will fail every day but God accepts you with all of your imperfections. Accept yourself because God does. This is one of the first building blocks of a positive mental attitude because you know who you are but you also know the potential of what He can do through you. READ Matthew 11:28 and Philippians 4:13

2. A positive attitude is like faith: it is a choice.

You have an opportunity each moment of each day to choose how you are going to view your circumstances and how you are going react to them. As the expression goes, “Is the cup half-full or half-empty?” Make the choice to be positive in your thinking today and get your thoughts and feelings in line. READ Joshua 24:15.
A Positive Mental Attitude - Part 2

By Richard Glickstein, President, The National Bible Association

1. A positive mental attitude is a foundation principle of faith in God. You must have a steadfast positive attitude about what God’s word says in order to trust him. Many times our circumstances, feelings, or logic tell us otherwise. The Apostle Peter maintained a positive mental attitude based on what Jesus said to him: “Come!” (READ Matthew 14:29) and he walked on the water. But when Peter looked at his circumstances, the wind, (READ Matthew 14:30), he let his attitude change and he became negative. The results? He sank. The key to a positive mental attitude is to choose to stand on God’s Word. READ Hebrews 11:6

2. You are what you think so think positively!

READ Proverbs 23:7

3. Having a positive mental attitude is a daily battle. Victory is achieved one day at a time.

READ Matthew 6:34

4. Love is always positive in its outlook: keep loving.

READ Corinthians 13:7

5. You can’t lose. No matter what the situation. God is for you and He is in absolute control. Stay positive. Don’t give in to your fears. God will make a way for you.

READ Romans 8:28 and Romans 8:31

6. God loves you and He will be with you in your greatest hour of need. Choose to believe it.

READ Deuteronomy 23:5

READ Isaiah 43:2
7. A positive mental attitude of praise will give you inner strength.

**READ Nehemiah 8:10**

8. Find something to laugh about in your circumstances each day and it can be healing for you.

**READ Proverbs 15:13**

9. A positive mental outlook about God and His Word will produce His peace in you.

**READ Philippians 4:8-9**

10. When all hope seems to be lost and destruction seems logically imminent, “Keep moving!” God will make a way.

**READ Exodus 14:9-15**

11. You are powerful in God; lay hold of that in your mind.

**READ Philippians 4:13**

12. Determine not to speak negatively about anyone. Don’t be critical or judgmental. You reap what you sow. **READ Galatians 6:7.**

Negative talk about others is like poison in your spirit. Forgive, forget and move on if you have been wronged. Don’t gossip about others. If you don’t have anything positive to say about someone, don’t say anything.

**READ Matthew 7:1 and Titus 3:2**