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TouchPoints

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CONTENTS

- | | | | |
|----|----------------|-----|------------------|
| 1 | Abandonment | 82 | Deceit/Deception |
| 3 | Acceptance | 84 | Decisions |
| 5 | Accountability | 87 | Depression |
| 8 | Adversity | 90 | Desires |
| 10 | Ambition | 93 | Doubt |
| 13 | Anger | 96 | Encouragement |
| 18 | Assumptions | 99 | Enemies |
| 20 | Belonging | 102 | Environment |
| 21 | Bible | 103 | Example |
| 24 | Bitterness | 105 | Excellence |
| 27 | Blessings | 107 | Excuses |
| 29 | Boredom | 111 | Failure |
| 30 | Brokenness | 116 | Faith |
| 32 | Call of God | 119 | Fear |
| 34 | Celebration | 121 | Forgiveness |
| 36 | Change | 125 | Friendship |
| 39 | Cheating | 128 | Frustration |
| 40 | Comfort | 130 | Giving |
| 44 | Communication | 133 | Gossip |
| 49 | Compassion | 135 | Grace |
| 50 | Complacency | 138 | Greed |
| 53 | Complaining | 141 | Grief |
| 54 | Compromise | 145 | Guidance |
| 56 | Confession | 147 | Habits |
| 58 | Conflict | 151 | Healing |
| 62 | Conscience | 155 | Help |
| 64 | Consequences | 158 | Honesty |
| 67 | Contentment | 160 | Hope |
| 70 | Convictions | 162 | Humility |
| 75 | Courage | 167 | Intimacy |
| 77 | Criticism | 169 | Jealousy |
| 79 | Death | 172 | Joy |

174	Justice	256	Rest
177	Listening	257	Risk
180	Loneliness	260	Safety
184	Love	263	Salvation
186	Marriage	268	Satisfaction
190	Mercy	270	Self-Control
192	Mistakes	273	Selfishness
196	Money	276	Service
199	Motives	279	Sex
202	Obedience	281	Singleness
206	Opportunities	283	Spiritual Warfare
209	Parenting	284	Stress
211	Patience	287	Success
215	Peace	289	Suffering
218	Planning	293	Temptation
222	Praise	297	Testing
224	Prayer	299	Thankfulness
228	Prejudice	302	Tiredness
232	Pride	304	Trust
234	Priorities	307	Truth
237	Purpose	310	Unity
240	Regrets	313	Will of God
245	Rejection	317	Wisdom
247	Repentance	320	Work
251	Reputation	323	Worry
253	Respect	325	Worth

ABANDONMENT

Does God abandon me during my difficult times?

PSALM 9:10 | *Those who know your name trust in you, for you, O LORD, do not abandon those who search for you.*

2 CORINTHIANS 4:9 | *We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed.*

God is always trying to get your attention. Are you aware of him? If you are sincerely seeking him, you are sure to find him because God will never abandon a seeking person. In fact, your difficulties can become the means to look more intently and see God, right by your side.

Does my suffering mean that God has abandoned me?

1 SAMUEL 12:22 | *The LORD will not abandon his people.*

1 PETER 5:10 | *In his kindness God called you to share in his eternal glory by means of Christ Jesus. So after you have suffered a little while, he will restore, support, and strengthen you, and he will place you on a firm foundation.*

Suffering does not mean God has left you. In fact, it is through suffering that you can experience God's comfort more than ever.

Does God promise to be with me at certain times but not at others?

MATTHEW 28:18, 20 | *Jesus came and told his disciples, . . . "Be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

JOHN 14:16 | *[Jesus said,] "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you."*

HEBREWS 13:5 | *Be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, "I will never fail you. I will never abandon you."*

God promises to be present with you, in you, and beside you in all circumstances.

Are there things I should abandon, even in these days of tolerance?

JOB 28:28 | *This is what [God] says to all humanity: "The fear of the Lord is true wisdom; to forsake evil is real understanding."*

EPHESIANS 4:31 | *Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior.*

Persistent sin will cause you to abandon God. Persistently obeying God will cause you to abandon much sin, which is important even in these days of tolerance.

Promise from God HEBREWS 13:5 | *I will never fail you. I will never abandon you.*

ACCEPTANCE

How should I accept others?

1 SAMUEL 22:2 | *Others began coming—men who were in trouble or in debt or who were just discontented—until David was the captain of about 400 men.*

ROMANS 15:7 | *Accept each other just as Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory.*

Welcome others in the spirit of Christ, not because of position, prestige, power, or personal gain that may come your way. David modeled this acceptance of others while he was fleeing from Saul. As a developing leader, David learned that it wasn't simply a matter of getting the best people but of bringing out the best in the people God brought to him.

What if people have committed terrible sin? Should I still accept them?

ROMANS 8:39 | *Nothing . . . will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Nothing can separate a person from God's love. In the same way, you should always love others, no matter how great their sin. This does not mean that you accept or condone their sinful actions or ignore the appropriate discipline but that you view and accept them as unique and special creations of God. It is only through love that you bring sinful people back into fellowship with God and others.

I feel so unworthy—does God really accept me?

GENESIS 1:27 | *God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.*

ROMANS 5:8 | *God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.*

EPHESIANS 1:4-5 | *Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.*

You are accepted by God because he made you and created you in his image. Nothing you can do will cause God to love you more because he loves you completely. And nothing you do can cause God to love you less. In fact, God accepts you and loves you so much that he sent his own Son to die for you, to take on himself the punishment for sin you deserve. He died in your place so you can be accepted into eternity with him.

What should I never accept?

2 CHRONICLES 34:3-4 | *During the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, Josiah began to seek the God of his ancestor David. . . . He ordered that the altars of Baal be demolished and that the incense altars which stood above them be broken down.*

ROMANS 6:12 | *Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires.*

Never accept or tolerate sin in your life. Never feel satisfied that you sin less than someone else. Everyone has a sinful nature, and everyone has certain sins to which he or she is particularly vulnerable. If you leave sins unchecked, no matter how small, they will begin to grow and spread like malignant tumors, affecting all you think and do.

Promise from God ROMANS 15:7 | *Accept each other just as Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory.*

ACCOUNTABILITY

How do I become more accountable?

PSALM 1:1 | *Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked.*

PROVERBS 5:13 | *Oh, why didn't I listen to my teachers? Why didn't I pay attention to my instructors?*

PROVERBS 12:15 | *Fools think their own way is right, but the wise listen to others.*

PROVERBS 27:6 | *Wounds from a sincere friend are better than many kisses from an enemy.*

To become more accountable, follow God's commands as outlined in his Word, the Bible. Part of being accountable is being a good listener and observer. You can learn much about your own behavior by observing others and listening to wise friends whom you respect. And choose wise friends to whom you can freely give an account of yourself.

What happens when there is no accountability?

GENESIS 16:6 | *Abram replied, “Look, she is your servant, so deal with her as you see fit.” Then Sarai treated Hagar so harshly that she finally ran away.*

JUDGES 17:6 | *The people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes.*

Left unaccountable, people will always lean toward sin, the consequences of which eventually hurt them and others and pull them away from God. This could happen to you, as well.

How can I choose the right people to hold me accountable?

1 KINGS 12:8, 10-11 | *Rehoboam rejected the advice of the older men and instead asked the opinion of the young men who had grown up with him. . . . The young men replied, “This is what you should tell those complainers: . . . ‘Yes, my father laid heavy burdens on you, but I’m going to make them even heavier! My father beat you with whips, but I will beat you with scorpions!’”*

Friends are not always the best advisers, especially if their counsel is not consistent with God’s Word.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:8 | *To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge.*

Choose people who are especially wise and godly, who will not hesitate to help you see when you need to realign yourself with God.

PROVERBS 13:17 | *An unreliable messenger stumbles into trouble, but a reliable messenger brings healing.*

Reliability in telling the truth is critical in those holding you accountable.

How can I effectively hold someone else accountable?

EXODUS 18:21-23 | *Select from all the people some capable, honest men who fear God and hate bribes. . . . They will help you carry the load, making the task easier for you. If you follow this advice, . . . then you will be able to endure the pressures.*

TITUS 1:7-9 | *An elder . . . must not be arrogant or quick-tempered; he must not be . . . dishonest with money. . . . He must love what is good. He must live wisely and be just. He must live a devout and disciplined life. He must have a strong belief in the trustworthy message he was taught; then he will be able to encourage others with wholesome teaching and show those who oppose it where they are wrong.*

Before you can help others be accountable, you must not only know God's commands but consistently obey them and always work to develop good judgment yourself. If you are going to minister to others by holding them accountable, you must be wise, honest, godly, trustworthy, and kind.

Promise from God PSALM 119:9 | *How can a . . . person stay pure? By obeying your word.*

ADVERSITY

Is God listening when I cry out because of my troubles? Does he really hear, and does he care?

PSALM 18:6 | *In my distress I cried out to the LORD; yes, I prayed to my God for help. He heard me from his sanctuary; my cry to him reached his ears.*

MATTHEW 11:28 | *Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.”*

God’s hotline is always open. There is never a busy signal, and he is never too preoccupied with anything—even managing the universe—to listen to your every need. God has both a listening ear and a caring heart.

Will being faithful to God spare me from adversity?

DANIEL 3:16-20 | *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. . . . But even if he doesn’t, we want to make it clear . . . that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up.” Nebuchadnezzar was so furious . . . he commanded that the furnace be heated seven times hotter than usual. Then he ordered some of the strongest men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace.*

ACTS 5:17-18 | *The high priest and his officials, who were Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail.*

The lives of believers in both the Old and New Testaments testify that being faithful to God does not eliminate adversity. When you believe in Jesus, Satan becomes your enemy. He will try to stop you from following God by sending you all kinds of adversity. Recognize that it may be a sign that you are being faithful to God.

NAHUM 1:7 | *The LORD is good, a strong refuge when trouble comes. He is close to those who trust in him.*

In most cases, the Bible doesn't say *if* trouble will come, but *when* trouble comes. No one has lived his or her life without some adversity.

PSALM 27:5, 7-8 | *He will conceal me . . . when troubles come; he will hide me in his sanctuary. He will place me out of reach on a high rock. . . . Hear me as I pray, O LORD. Be merciful and answer me! My heart has heard you say, "Come and talk with me." And my heart responds, "LORD, I am coming."*

Sometimes God does rescue you from adversity because of your faithfulness.

Is there any way I can avoid trouble and adversity?

JAMES 1:2-3 | *When troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow.*

Avoiding adversity may not be best for you. Though hard times may bruise you, they also can build you up and strengthen your faith.

PROVERBS 14:16 | *The wise are cautious and avoid danger; fools plunge ahead with reckless confidence.*

ROMANS 13:14 | *Clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And don't let yourself think about ways to indulge your evil desires.*

The consequences of sin often bring unneeded adversity into your life. By obeying God's Word, you can avoid many kinds of adversity you might otherwise inflict on yourself.

PROVERBS 17:20 | *The crooked heart will not prosper; the lying tongue tumbles into trouble.*

PROVERBS 21:23 | *Watch your tongue and keep your mouth shut, and you will stay out of trouble.*

Controlling your tongue can help you avoid adversity. Many times trouble can be avoided by using words wisely.

PROVERBS 11:14 | *There is safety in having many advisers.*

Following advice from godly people will help you avoid trouble.

Promise from God PSALM 46:1 | *God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble.*

AMBITION

When is ambition good?

PSALM 119:1-2 | *Joyful are people of integrity, who follow the instructions of the LORD. Joyful are those who obey his laws and search for him with all their hearts.*

The purest ambition of all is to pursue knowing God and to try to do what he asks.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:11-12 | *Make it your goal to live a quiet life, minding your own business and working with your hands, just as we instructed you before. Then people who are not Christians will respect the way you live.*

Ambition is good when it is directed at improving the quality of your character, not at promoting your accomplishments.

ROMANS 15:20 | *My ambition has always been to preach the Good News where the name of Christ has never been heard.*

A great ambition is to tell others about Jesus wherever you go, as Paul did.

When does ambition become destructive or sinful? What is the danger of ambition?

GENESIS 11:4 | *[The people] said, “Come, let’s build a great city for ourselves with a tower that reaches into the sky. This will make us famous and keep us from being scattered all over the world.”*

Ambition becomes wrong when its goal is to bring glory to yourself instead of the God who gave you your talents and abilities.

MATTHEW 4:9 | *“I will give it all to you,” [the devil] said, “if you will kneel down and worship me.”*

Ambition can become destructive if Satan uses it to lure you away from God. You can test your ambition by asking if what you want to do will lead you closer to or further away from God. If you’re not sure, then it is likely leading you away from him.

MARK 10:35-37, 41 | *James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came over and spoke to [Jesus]. “Teacher,” they said, “we want you to do us a favor.” “What is your request?” he asked. They replied, “When you sit on your glorious throne, we want to sit in places of honor next to you, one on your right and the other on your left.” . . . When the ten other disciples heard what James and John had asked, they were indignant.*

Selfish ambition can twist your friendships and service to God into trivial competitiveness.

How can I use ambition to glorify God?

1 KINGS 8:58 | *May [the Lord] give us the desire to do his will in everything and to obey all the commands, decrees, and regulations that he gave our ancestors.*

PSALM 73:25 | *Whom have I in heaven but you? I desire you more than anything on earth.*

Your motives signal whether your actions are based on selfish ambition or on godly ambition. When your greatest desire is to do God’s will, when loving and serving others is your greatest goal, and when you focus every day on praising and worshiping God, then you are pursuing the godly ambition of glorifying him.

Promise from God PSALM 119:1-2 | *Joyful are people of integrity, who follow the instructions of the LORD. Joyful are those who obey his laws and search for him with all their hearts.*

ANGER

Why do I most often get angry?

GENESIS 4:4-5 | *The LORD accepted Abel and his gift, but he did not accept Cain and his gift. This made Cain very angry, and he looked dejected.*

NUMBERS 22:29 | *“You have made me look like a fool!” Balaam shouted.*

ESTHER 3:5 | *When Haman saw that Mordecai would not bow down or show him respect, he was filled with rage.*

Anger is often a reaction to your pride being hurt. It is common to feel angry when you have been confronted about your own sinful actions, because you don't want others to think you have done something wrong.

1 SAMUEL 18:8 | *Saul [became] very angry. “What’s this?” he said. “They credit David with ten thousands and me with only thousands. Next they’ll be making him their king!”*

Anger is often a reaction of jealousy to what others have or to what others have accomplished.

What are the effects of anger?

GENESIS 27:41-43 | *Esau hated Jacob because their father had given Jacob the blessing. And Esau began to scheme: “. . . I will kill my brother, Jacob.” But Rebekah heard about Esau’s plans. So she sent for Jacob and told him, “Listen, Esau is . . . plotting to kill you. . . . Flee to my brother, Laban, in Haran.”*

Anger isolates you from others.

PSALM 37:8 | *Stop being angry! . . . Do not lose your temper—it only leads to harm.*

JAMES 1:19-20 | *You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires.*

Anger produces ungodliness and evil motives in you.

1 SAMUEL 20:30-31 | *Saul boiled with rage at Jonathan. . . . “As long as that son of Jesse is alive, you’ll never be king. Now go and get him so I can kill him!”*

Anger blinds you to what is really good and right. In its strongest form, anger can lead to murder.

PROVERBS 15:1 | *A gentle answer deflects anger, but harsh words make tempers flare.*

Anger leads to conflict and arguments.

What makes God angry?

EPHESIANS 2:2-3 | *You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil. . . . He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God’s anger, just like everyone else.*

God cannot wink at or tolerate sin, for sin is a deliberate violation of his righteousness and makes him angry.

JUDGES 2:13-14 | *They abandoned the LORD. . . . This made the LORD burn with anger.*

When people deliberately turn away from God and abandon him, it angers God because he created them for relationship.

MALACHI 3:5 | *“At that time I will put you on trial. . . . I will speak against those who cheat employees of their wages, who oppress widows and orphans, or who deprive the foreigners living among you of justice, for these people do not fear me,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies.*

God gets angry when people neglect or abuse the unfortunate and those in need.

Is God angry with me?

EXODUS 34:6-7 | *The LORD passed in front of Moses, calling out, . . . “I am slow to anger and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness. I lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations. I forgive iniquity, rebellion, and sin. But I do not excuse the guilty.”*

PSALM 18:26-27 | *To the pure you show yourself pure, but to the wicked you show yourself hostile. You rescue the humble, but you humiliate the proud.*

God cannot tolerate sin and rebellion against himself; therefore any kind of sin or evil angers him. But he is ready to forgive because he is kind and merciful. When you humbly confess your sin and turn to him in faith, you will receive God’s abundant love and mercy instead of his anger.

PSALM 30:5 | *His anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime! Weeping may last through the night, but joy comes with the morning.*

PSALM 145:8 | *The LORD is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love.*

1 THESSALONIANS 5:9 | *God chose to save us through our Lord Jesus Christ, not to pour out his anger on us.*

The Bible promises that God is kind and merciful and always ready to receive you, and all his children, with love. The “always-angry God” is one of the worst caricatures ever attributed to God. His anger toward us is conveyed with gentle discipline and is an expression of his love in action.

When I am angry, what should I avoid?

2 CORINTHIANS 2:5-7 | *The man who caused all the trouble hurt all of you more than he hurt me. Most of you opposed him, and that was punishment enough. Now, however, it is time to forgive and comfort him. Otherwise he may be overcome by discouragement.*

EPHESIANS 6:4 | *Do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them.*

Avoid punishing your children in the heat of anger. More often than not you will regret words you say and actions you take as you overreact to a situation.

JAMES 3:5 | *The tongue is a small thing that makes grand speeches. But a tiny spark can set a great forest on fire.*

Avoid “speaking your mind” when you are angry. You are bound to say something you will regret.

1 SAMUEL 19:9-10 | *As David played his harp, Saul hurled his spear at David. But David dodged out of the way, and leaving the spear stuck in the wall, he fled and escaped into the night.*

Avoid acting on impulse in the heat of anger. You are bound to do something you will regret.

We all get angry at times, so what should I do about it?

EPHESIANS 4:26-27 | *“Don’t sin by letting anger control you.” Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil.*

Stay under the control of the Holy Spirit through prayer, and try to resolve your anger quickly. Like a skunk in the house, anger permeates all aspects of your life. Don’t encourage anger to stay by feeding it. Get rid of it as soon as possible.

MATTHEW 5:21-22, 24 | *[Jesus said,] “You have heard that our ancestors were told, ‘You must not murder.’ . . . But I say, if you are even angry with someone, you are subject to judgment! . . . Go and be reconciled to that person.”*

Calmly confront those with whom you are angry in order to restore your relationship.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:5 | *[Love] is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged.*

Love is the mightiest weapon in overcoming anger.

Promise from God PSALM 103:8 | *The LORD is compassionate and merciful, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love.*

ASSUMPTIONS

What are some assumptions I should avoid?

JOHN 14:6 | *Jesus [said], “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.”*

Don't just assume you will go to heaven. The Bible says the only way to heaven is by accepting Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

ROMANS 5:8-11 | *God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's condemnation. . . . So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.*

Don't assume God doesn't care, for evidence shows he clearly does.

JUDGES 6:13-14 | *“Sir,” Gideon replied, “if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? And where are all the miracles our ancestors told us about? Didn't they say, ‘The LORD brought us up out of Egypt’? But now the LORD has abandoned us and handed us over to the Midianites.” Then the LORD turned to him and said, “Go with the strength you have, and rescue Israel from the Midianites. I am sending you!”*

Don't assume God won't help you or doesn't want to help you, for he has already done so in more ways than you know, and he will continue to do so. And don't assume you know better than God the best way through your problems.

ACTS 9:13, 15 | *“Lord,” exclaimed Ananias, “I’ve heard many people talk about the terrible things this man has done to the believers in Jerusalem!” . . . But the Lord said, “Go, for Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel.”*

Don’t assume people can’t change; you may miss out when they want to give their best to you. Like Paul (previously known as Saul), even the worst sinner can become a great Christian leader.

JOHN 3:8 | *Just as you can hear the wind but can’t tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can’t explain how people are born of the Spirit.*

ACTS 16:27-30 | *The jailer woke up to see the prison doors wide open. He assumed the prisoners had escaped, so he drew his sword to kill himself. But Paul shouted to him, “Stop! Don’t kill yourself! We are all here!” The jailer called for lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”*

Don’t assume that someone won’t respond to the gospel. In God’s hands, people can be transformed into godly heroes.

Promise from God 1 CORINTHIANS 4:5 | *Don’t make judgments about anyone ahead of time—before the Lord returns. For he will bring our darkest secrets to light and will reveal our private motives. Then God will give to each one whatever praise is due.*

BELONGING

Why is it important to feel that I belong somewhere—to a family, a spouse, a church?

PSALM 73:23-24 | *I still belong to you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, leading me to a glorious destiny.*

ROMANS 1:6 | *You are included among those . . . who have been called to belong to Jesus Christ.*

We all need a sense of belonging, for in belonging is security and acceptance. And when you belong to God, that security and acceptance can never be taken away—it lasts for eternity.

What happens when I belong to God?

DEUTERONOMY 28:10 | *All the nations of the world will see that you are a people claimed by the LORD, and they will stand in awe.*

God has claimed you.

ISAIAH 26:19 | *Those who die in the LORD will live; their bodies will rise again! Those who sleep in the earth will rise up and sing for joy! For your life-giving light will fall like dew on your people in the place of the dead!*

You are assured of eternal life.

JOHN 15:12-15 | *[Jesus said,] “Love each other in the same way I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one’s*

life for one's friends. . . . I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends."

You more fully understand how to love others.

How can I be sure I belong to God?

1 JOHN 2:3-5 | *We can be sure that we know him if we obey his commandments. If someone claims, "I know God," but doesn't obey God's commandments, that person is a liar and is not living in the truth. But those who obey God's word truly show how completely they love him. That is how we know we are living in him.*

1 JOHN 3:10 | *We can tell who are children of God and who are children of the devil. Anyone who does not live righteously and does not love other believers does not belong to God.*

Obedience to God is a reflection of love for him and belief in him. Since you are human, you will not obey God perfectly all the time. But what God looks for is a desire to please and obey him, as well as a commitment to make your best effort to do so every day.

Promise from God LEVITICUS 26:12 | *I will walk among you; I will be your God, and you will be my people.*

BIBLE

Can I truly trust the Bible as God's Word?

PSALM 18:30 | *God's way is perfect. All the LORD's promises prove true.*

2 TIMOTHY 3:16 | *All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.*

2 PETER 1:20-21 | *No prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet's own understanding, or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God.*

The Bible has stood the test of time more than any other document in human history. It has been faithfully preserved because it is God's very words to us, and he will not let them disappear from the face of the earth or be altered by human hands.

How often should I read the Bible?

DEUTERONOMY 17:19 | *[The king] must always keep [God's written instruction] with him and read it daily as long as he lives. That way he will learn to fear the LORD his God by obeying all the terms of these instructions and decrees.*

JOSHUA 1:8 | *Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do.*

The Bible is for regular reading and meditation in order to learn about God and communicate with him. If at all possible, this should be done daily. When God says "continually" study his Word, he doesn't mean reading the Bible just when you get around to it.

Why is it so important to read the Bible?

JEREMIAH 15:16 | *When I discovered your words, I devoured them. They are my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O LORD God of Heaven's Armies.*

God's Word shapes your heart, mind, and soul. It brings true joy and purpose to life. And it inspires you to live a life that reflects God's character and leaves a lasting spiritual legacy.

PSALM 119:9 | *How can a young person stay pure? By obeying your word.*

PSALM 119:11 | *I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.*

Reading the Bible is the way to know how to live a holy life before God.

ACTS 17:11 | *The people of Berea were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, and they listened eagerly to Paul's message. They searched the Scriptures day after day to see if Paul and Silas were teaching the truth.*

Reading the Bible helps you recognize true and false teaching.

DEUTERONOMY 17:20 | *Regular reading will prevent him from becoming proud and acting as if he is above his fellow citizens.*

Reading the Bible helps you keep a right attitude toward God and others.

PSALM 119:105 | *Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.*

Reading the Bible guides you in daily living.

PSALM 119:24 | *Your laws please me; they give me wise advice.*

PROVERBS 6:22 | *When you walk, their counsel will lead you. When you sleep, they will protect you. When you wake up, they will advise you.*

Reading the Bible provides good counsel for your problems.

PSALM 119:43 | *Do not snatch your word of truth from me, for your regulations are my only hope.*

PSALM 119:50 | *Your promise revives me; it comforts me in all my troubles.*

Reading the Bible gives hope for the future.

PSALM 119:52 | *I meditate on your age-old regulations; O LORD, they comfort me.*

Reading the Bible gives great comfort.

Promise from God LUKE 11:28 | *Blessed are all who hear the word of God and put it into practice.*

BITTERNESS

How do I become bitter?

GENESIS 27:41 | *From that time on, Esau hated Jacob because their father had given Jacob the blessing. And Esau began to scheme.*

ESTHER 5:9 | *Haman was a happy man as he left the banquet! But when he saw Mordecai sitting at the palace gate, not standing up or trembling nervously before him, Haman became furious.*

Bitterness grows as you allow anger and then hatred to control you.

2 SAMUEL 2:26 | *Abner shouted down to Joab, “Must we always be killing each other? Don’t you realize that bitterness is the only result? When will you call off your men from chasing their Israelite brothers?”*

Bitterness grows the more you retaliate for wrongs done against you.

2 CORINTHIANS 2:7 | *It is time to forgive and comfort him. Otherwise he may be overcome by discouragement.*

COLOSSIANS 3:13 | *Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.*

Bitterness comes when others hurt you and you refuse to forgive. Never stop forgiving and forgetting. Remember that God has forgiven you despite your continual tendency to sin.

HEBREWS 12:15 | *Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many.*

Bitterness comes when you forget God’s grace, which is showered on you each day.

How do I deal with my bitterness toward others?

MARK 11:25 | *When you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too.*

ACTS 8:22-23 | *Repent of your wickedness and pray to the Lord . . . [for] you are full of bitter jealousy and are held captive by sin.*

EPHESIANS 4:31-32 | *Get rid of all bitterness. . . . Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.*

Forgiveness is the antidote to bitterness. It lifts burdens, cancels debts, and frees you from the chains of unresolved anger.

PHILIPPIANS 1:12, 14 | *[Paul said,] “I want you to know, my dear brothers and sisters, that everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News. . . . Because of my imprisonment, most of the believers here have gained confidence and boldly speak God’s message without fear.”*

Paul was traveling the world spreading the good news about Jesus. Then he was thrown into prison for sharing his faith! That could have made him bitter. Instead, he was joyful because he saw it as an opportunity. He knew that God takes even the worst situations and, if we allow him to, brings good out of them. Paul couldn’t wait to see the good that God would bring out of his prison time. While in prison, Paul wrote many of the New Testament letters, which have brought countless millions to faith in Jesus.

Promise from God ISAIAH 26:3 | *You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!*