

YOU ASKED FOR IT

Part 3: How to Escape the People-Pleaser Trap
Proverbs 29:25

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Words of Encouragement Days 85-91



The Bible has much to say about the issues we deal with each and every day. **YOU ASKED FOR IT** is a series that looks at a few of those issues:

- **How to deal with stress**
- **Getting over what people think about me**
- **Learning to be who God wants me to be**
- **Recognizing God's voice**
- **Discovering my true identity in Jesus**

So what does the Bible say about us? It says we are created by God as complex, multifaceted, not easy to understand, and not easy to explain people. And with good reason! Layer upon layer, God made us unique. During this series, we'll take a deeper look at those complexities and **discover a sense** of who we were **made to be**.

YOU ASKED FOR IT sermon series is based on some of the most requested "How To" answers from God's Word for some of life's most perplexing issues.

This Week's Memory Verse:

***"Fear of man will prove to be a snare,
but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe."
Proverbs 29:25***

MEETING WITH GOD – Day 85

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." Galatians 6:2

HELP TO MAKE IT THROUGH

WHEN Ryan's Grandma died when he was in college, he said, "It's like I froze. My homework wasn't getting done—especially a huge research paper for social studies." But his friend, Taylor, got on the phone every night with him. He talked through the project little by little. "We brainstormed a topic, talked about research sources, went to the library together to check out books, and came up with a list of questions to ask the teacher when I got stuck. Taylor even helped me get the right format for my footnotes. I couldn't have survived that semester without his help."

When you lose a loved one through death—or you face any other life-altering tragedy—you need more than just comfort to get through the pain. You need *support*. Support is another type of help you can offer friends who suffer. It's a type of assistance many of us find easy to offer. So what is the difference between comfort and support? A good description is:

People supply *comfort* when they share your emotional pain.

People supply *support* when they help in practical ways.

Life doesn't stop after a tragedy. But the heavy emotions you feel often drain the energy you need to keep up with everything in your life. When you hurt, you usually need help for a while just to get normal tasks done. You need people to carry your burdens.

You might not like to admit you need help, but you shouldn't push away the support others offer. God put Galatians 6:2 in the Bible because he knows there are times we need the support of others. Whenever bad things happen, that is a time to let others help us—like helping with homework. It's one of God's great ideas for meeting our needs when we need it most.

So what if you need something and nobody steps up to help? Ask for help. There's nothing wrong with telling a trusted friend or a leader at church about our needs—and explaining exactly what kind of help we need. God did not design you to go through life's toughest moments alone. You cannot survive well without both comfort and support from others. After a while your needs will not seem as large as they do at first, but don't expect to dive back into life-as-usual right away. Let your friends and family care for you as long as you need it! And then you will be ready to care for others in their time of need.

TODAY'S PRAYER

Lord, thank you that I have people in my life who I can count on. Help me to reach out to those you have placed in my life to help when I need support and comfort. Prepare me so I can support people I know who are suffering from the pain of personal tragedy, and thank you for prompting me to reach out to them when they are in a time of need. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Love the way Jesus loves!

Pastor Steve

MEETING WITH GOD – Day 86

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law." Galatians 5:22-23

THE POWER OF LOVE

BEAUTIFUL Hollywood couples claim they're in love—but their love rarely lasts. TV commercials promise you a car you can fall in love with—at least until next year's model catches your eye. And you might be well-known for your affection for a certain frozen treat—whether you love a root-beer popsicle, a low-fat raspberry yogurt, or a double scoop of death-by-chocolate ice cream. These are all everyday ways we use the word "love", but Christ's love goes far deeper.

For the past few days, you've heard what Christ's love is like—and how you can demonstrate his love in all your relationships. In 1 Corinthians 13 the apostle Paul pulled all of this love-talk together in "the love chapter." This chapter helps us to learn more about Jesus Christ because love is perfectly wrapped up with his character. He is the ultimate example of love, so each of these qualities of love is also a trait of Christ's. Try reading 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (NIV), replacing the word "love" with the name of Christ. See what new insight you can gain about Christ's character:

Christ is patient, Christ is kind. He does not envy, he does not boast, he is not proud. Christ is not rude, he is not self-seeking, he is not easily angered, he keeps no record of wrongs. Christ does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. Christ always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Nothing in the world compares to Christ's love! What's amazing is that God wants to place the love of Jesus Christ in us. In fact, if you are willing to allow God's Holy Spirit to flow through you to others, you can receive the power to love as Christ loved. The Holy Spirit wants to live and love others through you. The more you allow him to remake your attitudes and actions, the more his love will become your love. In fact, try reading 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 again, only this time put your name in place of the word "love." Do this with each member of your family, then spend some time praying that God will fill each of you with his love. His power working in you will make it possible for you to love others like Christ loves them!

TODAY'S PRAYER

Thank you, Lord, for your amazingly awesome love. I want to love others the way you do. Grant me all that I need to show your love to others so they will see you in my life, and desire a relationship with you, the God who not only loves but is love. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Love the way Jesus loves!

Pastor Steve

MEETING WITH GOD – Day 87

"So humble yourselves before God. Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you. Draw close to God, and God will draw close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, you hypocrites." James 4:7-8

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

SO what do you want to do to get even closer to God than you are now?

- (a) climb in an SR-71 Blackbird spy aircraft and soar to 80,000 feet
- (b) climb Mt. Everest
- (c) have stilts permanently welded to your legs

Just kidding. Getting close to God has nothing to do with getting physically closer to the heavens. Your goal is to get closer relationally. That's a great desire. In fact, just being interested in getting up close and personal with God is a step in the right direction.

When you want to get close to God, here are three things to remember:

First, God loves you no matter what. There's not a shadow of doubt that God wants to be your incredibly close friend. Even more than you want to be near him, he wants to be near to you. So if you ever worry that God isn't interested in you, whack those thoughts right out of your head. They aren't from God. He loves you and will pull as close to you as you let him.

Second, spend time with God. That translates into the nitty-gritty activities of reading his Word and talking to him

in prayer. So open his book. Tell him about your fears and hopes. Thank him for loving you and wanting to be your tight friend. Confess your sin and ask him to help you stay close to him by doing the things that please him.

Third, spend time with people who like to spend time with God. You pull close to God through worship—singing praises to God with other believers, talking to him, thinking about him, remembering how much he loves you, recalling what Jesus did for you, and gaining insights into his Word by studying with other Christians.

Your key is found in James's simple words: "Draw close to God, and God will draw close to you" (James 4:8). With every step you take toward God, he takes a giant stride toward you. You can't get closer to God just by fitting a few "Christian" things into your life. But you can get closer to him by having a purpose-filled relationship with him and asking him to help you get to know him better!

TODAY'S PRAYER

God, thank you so much that you love me unconditionally, and thank you for making a way for me to have a relationship with you. Help me to make time to spend with you each day and fill my life with others who have a similar relationship with you. Draw me close to you so that, through my relationship with you, I may know you better. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Love the way Jesus loves!

Pastor Steve

MEETING WITH GOD – Day 88

"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen." Ephesians 4:29

TALKING DEEP

WHEN Brent was a kid, he loved the Wednesday night kids' club at his church. He played games like a maniac, memorized Bible verses faithfully, and paid close attention during Bible lessons. Yet when the club leader announced the kids would break into small groups for a few minutes each week for a time called "Care and Share," Brent said, "No way." He didn't hide his disgust. "Girls gab," he argued. "Boys don't."

Maybe you think you can make real friendships without ever talking about solid stuff. If so, you might as well try to make friends with a wall. Friendships need talk-time to grow. The deeper you go toward understanding one another's lives—talking about your feelings, favorites, and things that frighten you—the deeper your friendship grows. Listen to these ways we can talk—each step going a bit deeper:

- Level 1: Chit-chat talk. Your conversation starts and stops with "Dude, how's it going?" "Fine, how about you?" You never get beyond "Wassup?"
- Level 2: Fact talk. You swap information about shared interests—sports scores, clothing styles, school subjects, music groups, school events, etc. You talk about stuff that's "out there," not how you feel about it.
- Level 3: Opinion talk. You take facts a step deeper by sharing your thoughts and ideas about them. If your team

scores, you share about your favorite play of the game. If you discuss music, you share what you think about the lyrics of a song. You're getting closer to personal issues, but you're still basically playing it safe.

Here's where you head deeper. Do you ever get around to these levels of talk with someone?

- Level 4: Feelings talk. You share how you feel about factual matters. "When that happened, I was really scared!" "This has been the loneliest week of my life." "Since Nate told that lie about me, I've been totally sad." At this level, each person begins to see what goes on inside the other person.
- Level 5: Gut talk. You chat about your deepest feelings. You're completely open about your life. We all need friends whom we trust so completely that we can be totally open about ourselves. It's the only way to go deep—whether you're a guy or a gal!

TODAY'S PRAYER:

Lord, help me to learn how to go deeper in my relationships. Give me trustworthy friends with whom I can share the depth of myself so there is someone who can understand the true me. Grant me the strength I need to be vulnerable as I share those deep truths so I can learn to be completely open about my life. Thank you for giving good friends to me with whom I can share my deepest thoughts and feelings. Help me to be a trustworthy friend so I can encourage others to go deeper in what they share with me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Love the way Jesus loves!

Pastor Steve

MEETING WITH GOD – Day 89

If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.” Matthew 6:14

SUNDOWN IS COMING

IT'S quiz time. Think back to when you were young and think about this list of people who have wronged you. Vote for the folks you are willing to forgive:

- (a) The older brother who practices his batting swing in the middle of the backyard—and hits a grand slam into your forehead
- (b) The friend who breaks the ceramic mug you won as first prize in your school's art fair
- (c) The little sister who annoys you with her unending knock-knock jokes
- (d) The kid at school who teased you on the playground two years, five months, and three days ago

Here's some big news: Forgiveness isn't just for people you feel like forgiving. God says to forgive everyone who hurts you. Say that again? Yes, God calls you to forgive anyone who has angered, hurt, or offended you.

Knowing God's command to forgive, of course, doesn't make forgiveness any easier, especially when you feel like you've been walloped with a baseball bat. As tough as forgiving can be, God doesn't intend it to take forever. In fact, he wants us to give or receive forgiveness immediately. In Ephesians 4:26, Paul wrote, "Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry." And Jesus said that when we realize someone has a grudge against us, we should go solve the problem right away—even if that

realization dawns on us in the middle of worshipping him (see Matthew 5:23-25).

One cautionary note: We can run to God for forgiveness as soon as we realize we've done wrong. We can decide in our heart to forgive the minute after someone wounds us. But when it comes to dealing with real people over really hot issues, it's sometimes wise to let a situation simmer down for a few days before you meet them to forgive or ask forgiveness. You'll both be more ready to reason.

Forgiveness cuts both ways. You might be able to think of a pile of people who have wronged you. But you wrong others too. Here's a helpful phrase you can tape someplace so you'll see it daily: "When I refuse to forgive, I am burning a bridge that someday I will need to cross." Be happy to forgive because more often than you can imagine, you are going to need forgiveness from someone else!

TODAY'S PRAYER

Lord, bring to mind those people who I need to forgive so I can talk to you about making those relationships right. Also, bring to mind those people I have wronged and need to ask to forgive me so I can do so right away. No matter what side of the fence I am on, where pain remains, help me to let go of the pain and forgive so I can walk with you with a clean heart. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Love the way Jesus loves!

Pastor Steve

MEETING WITH GOD – Day 90

*“My child, if sinners entice you, turn your back on them!”
Proverbs 1:10*

THE FUN-GIVER

"OH, sure it is," Troy sassed. "Following Jesus is a blast. Church sounds soooo exciting. And being good all the time? That has to be loads of fun."

Most of the kids Evan invited to church said, "Yes." And many of them agreed church was a good place to be—and following Jesus was great! But Troy had an entirely different attitude. He assumed the only people interested in obeying God's commands were mean old hags with their hair pulled back too tightly into buns. Troy seemed to think God's biggest goal for the universe was to zap the fun out of life.

Maybe someday Troy will change his mind, but God knows who the real fun-zappers are. Just ten short verses into the first chapter of Proverbs—the Bible's book of wisdom—we learn sinful people are the folks who take the fun out of life. You probably don't know anyone who actually makes a habit of beating up innocent people like the bloodthirsty bunch described in Proverbs 1. But you'll notice a close similarity to what all sinners say as they try to drag you into sin. Check these smooth lines:

- "Come and join us!"
- "No one is going to get hurt!"
- "Look at all the great stuff we'll get!"
- "We guarantee you'll have fun!"

Those sinners aren't too bright. Their fun ruins their own lives and by setting out to destroy others, they wind up destroying themselves. Proverbs 1:18 says, "They set an ambush for themselves; they booby-trap their own lives!" Psalm 73 tells us how God handles people who think sin is the route to success: "Truly, you put them on a slippery path and send them sliding over the cliff to destruction" (verse 18). That doesn't sound like much fun!

God speaks through Solomon to give us some clear advice when people try to tell us that sin is a smart idea: "My child, if sinners entice you, turn your back on them!" (Proverbs 1:10). God isn't out to spoil your fun. His wisdom aims to show you the way to true fun. God isn't the fun-killer. He's the fun-giver!

TODAY'S PRAYER

God, thank you for the boundaries you put up to guide me to do what is right. Protect me, Lord, from the abuse and harm of people that entice me to do wrong. I know it is your desire to set me free—free from the hurt of others, but also free from my own sin and bondage in that sin. Help me to have eyes to see the wrong behavior around and inside of me . . . and give me the strength, courage, and resilience to break free from negative behavior and choose the path of life. Thank you for always protecting and guiding me, Lord. Thank you for always being good, gracious, kind, and loving. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Love the way Jesus loves!

Pastor Steve

MEETING WITH GOD – Day 91

"You have heard me teach many things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Teach these great truths to trustworthy people who are able to pass them on to others." 2 Timothy 2:2 (NLT)

DO THE MATH

THE task of telling the world about Jesus sounds, um, sort of big, doesn't it? It's enormous enough to make many Christians think, I'd love to help tell the world about Jesus. It would be really great to make disciples of all the nations. But how much can I really do? After all, I'm only one person. Well, you are only one person. That much is true.

But the following tidbit might help you see the enormous difference one person can make. Consider this job offer. You'll get paid once a week. The first week's pay is only a penny, but your employer will double your salary every week as long as you continue working. It doesn't sound very profitable, does it? But you'd be a fool to pass it up. In just over six months, you'll be a millionaire. After only a year, your salary will have reached \$22.5 trillion!

How can this be? The process starts with one tiny penny, but that single cent results in a fortune. It works because of the principle of multiplication. That principle works just as well in the kingdom of God. God, of course, isn't handing out job contracts that will make us zillionaires. But he has an even better offer. God gives us the opportunity to partner with him in reaching the world with his Good News. And he's planning on using the strategy of spiritual multiplication.

Here's how it works: Suppose you and four friends—five of you—each share your faith with three people. Then God works in the hearts of those fifteen people so that they

accept him. During the next year, you train the fifteen to share their faith with others. In the second year, the five of you and your fifteen trusted friends each lead three others to Christ. Here's where the math goes ballistic. Suppose you and the people you train keep up that practice year after year. In ten years, more than half a million will have been brought to Christ. And in fifteen years you could reach the whole world!

That's what Paul meant when he told Timothy to teach the truths of the gospel to "trustworthy people." He aims for us to share Jesus with people—and then help them grow to the point that they, too, can share Jesus with others. Just as a single penny can result in millions of dollars, God's spiritual multiplication can create a worldwide awakening to the truth of Jesus Christ. So why not let it start with you?

TODAY'S PRAYER

Lord, I want to reach out to others with the good news of a relationship with you through Jesus. I need your help to be your disciple. Forgive me for the times I have failed to show grace to my neighbors and for the missed opportunities when I have hesitated to share about you with them. Train me each day to see others as you see them, and help me to use your truth as a light to guide me, and your grace as a hand to hold the weary. Help me to refine these gifts you have given me so I speak with your voice and don't miss any opportunity you give me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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