



"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."—Romans 8:28

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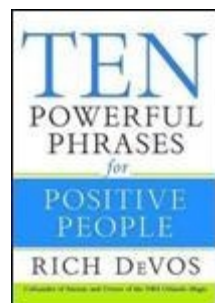


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Are You Protected by the Ultimate Security System?

By John LaBissoniere

We live in a dangerous world. Threats to our safety and security are growing. Is there a way to ensure that you and your family are always protected?



DEC. 18, 2009, Jefferson Township, Ohio: [WDTN TV reports](#), “The Montgomery County Sheriff’s Office arrested two men after a Jefferson Township woman called 911 as she hid in her bedroom from two men who were breaking in the back door. ‘They’re outside, but I can hear them banging,’ she told the dispatcher. ‘Are they trying to break in?’ he asked. ‘Evidently, but I’m hiding in my bedroom...hurry, please hurry,’ she said. The woman stayed on the line as officers rushed to the home. When they arrived, police said they found two men inside the home. ‘You never know what a person’s intention is. They might have just walked away, or they may have hurt her. You just never know,’ said Captain David Hale, Montgomery County Sheriff’s Office.”

Dec. 10, 2009, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada: *The Buffalo News* reports, “Niagara Regional Police are looking for four men who pulled off a home invasion robbery on Riverdale Drive Wednesday morning. Police said the four robbed residents of the home about 10:10 a.m., barging inside after ringing the doorbell. Two residents were found bound by the hands and feet when officers responded to a home intrusion alarm. An undetermined amount of cash was stolen and police said they believe the robbery was ‘not a random act.’”

Over the past decade, law enforcement officials have observed an increase in the number of home invasions.

A growing threat

The above are actual news reports describing recent “home invasions.” Over the past decade, law enforcement officials have observed an increase in the number of home invasions. This may be because many banks, convenience stores and fast-food restaurants, which have traditionally been targeted by criminals, have installed advanced security devices. As a result, outlaws are now targeting residential neighborhoods, as they are often less secure.

What can occur during a home invasion? Chris E. McGoey, a professional security consultant, discussed this subject on his [Web site](#):



“The most common point of attack is through the front door or garage. Sometimes the home invader will simply kick open the door and confront everyone inside. More common is when the home invaders knock on the door first or ring the bell. The home invader hopes that the occupant will simply open the door, without question, in response to their knock. Unfortunately, many people do just that.

“Home invaders will sometimes use a ruse or impersonation to get you to open the door. They have been known to pretend to be delivering a package, flowers or lie about an accident like hitting your parked car. Once the door is opened for them, the home invaders will use an explosive amount of force and threats to gain control of the home and produce fear in the victims...

“Some home robbers have been known to spend hours ransacking a residence while the homeowners are bound nearby watching in terror... A major fear is that the robbers might commit more violence like sexual assault or even murder...

“If you can delay a home invader at the point of entry then you have a chance of deterring them or have time to call the police... The weakest home security link is the home occupant who fails to lock doors or windows or who will open the door without question at the sound of a knock.”

Are you at risk?

Obviously, the thought of a home invasion or any crime is alarming. Could you and your family members be at risk? Becoming a crime victim is certainly a possibility. In the United States, for example, the Federal Bureau of Investigation estimated that 9,767,000 property crimes took place in 2008, resulting in \$17.2 billion in losses. Also, an estimated 1,382,000 violent crimes occurred that year, including murder, forcible rape, robbery and aggravated assault.

Are you protected by the ultimate security system? This system insures that no matter what trouble comes your way, you will be in good hands.

What can you do to make your home less susceptible to a home invasion? Security professionals encourage good safety habits and also advise installing solid core wood or metal outside doors with high-quality locks and deadbolt mechanisms. Additionally, many experts recommend using window alarms, motion-sensitive outdoor lighting, video surveillance cameras, interior motion detectors and a two-way voice activated security monitoring system.

Although these devices can help reduce your chance of a home invasion, they do not guarantee you will not become a crime victim. No matter where you live, you are at risk in a dangerous world. So what can you do?

It comes down to a simple question: Are you protected by the ultimate security system? This system insures that no matter what trouble comes your way, you will be in good hands. It is summarized in this statement by King David of ancient Israel: "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" (Psalm 118:6).

Absolute protection

While humanly designed security systems have their place and we should do what we can to shield ourselves from harm, complete protection can only come from God. Unfortunately, most people have rejected this critical security arrangement. Too often they have placed trust exclusively in humanly devised safeguards, which can and do fail.

So, is security even possible in this world? Where can we find the answer? A careful look into the Bible, God's instruction manual, gives us the decisive answer. Throughout the Scriptures we find that God offers His mighty protection to those who trust and obey Him. A significant number of passages confirm this important and comforting fact.

King David wrote of his profound confidence in God's pledge of security. "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust.'

"Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence. He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler. You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday. A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you" (Psalm 91:1-7).

Beyond the physical

Just as a mother bird instinctively covers its chicks during a threat, God carefully guards those who believe and obey Him. But does this mean that no evil will ever befall those who trust in God? No, it does not. Biblical passages confirm that God permits difficult trials to afflict His people.



David distinctly understood this reality. “For all day long I have been plagued, and chastened every morning” (Psalm 73:14). Yet, although he suffered, David knew God stood by him and would deliver him. “Nevertheless I am continually with You; You hold me by my right hand. You will guide me with Your counsel, *and afterward receive me to glory*” (verses 23-24, emphasis added throughout).

King David recognized that there was life beyond his physical existence. He knew “glory”—eternal, spiritual life with God in His Kingdom—awaited him. The truth is, physical security and survival is not a categorical biblical promise. It is not without exception. In fact, Jesus Christ carefully explained to His disciples that they would face harsh persecution and some of them would suffer martyrdom (Matthew 24:9). Just as did many of the prophets before Him, Christ Himself was viciously abused and then brutally murdered at the hands of malicious evildoers (Luke 23:33, 46; Matthew 27:26, 35).

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A future focus

The long history of God’s true servants is one of distress at the hands of Satan’s human instruments. The time just before Christ’s second coming will be no different. Although God offers protection to most of His people, He will allow other faithful brethren to be the focus of Satan’s fierce rage (Revelation 12:9-17). Indeed, some of God’s true believers will face the loss of their lives. But that prospect will not shake their faith! Why? Because their focus will be on their future, *spiritual* lifetime with God in His Kingdom rather than on this fleeting physical existence (Romans 8:18).

*What then is the
ultimate security
system? It is our
eternal salvation.*

Just like those who preceded them in martyrdom in previous ages, they, too, will be more attracted to the promise of an *eternal* reward than a desire to extend their physical lives a few more hours, months or years. “And they overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death” (Revelation 12:11). Although some will die physically, they will nonetheless be utterly victorious. They know that God’s promise of perpetual security is absolutely guaranteed (1 Corinthians 15:53-54).

Although God regularly provides physical security to those who trust and obey Him, the protection of our minds and hearts is His *foremost* motivation and objective. The apostle Paul wrote, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, *will guard your hearts and minds* through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7).

Although physical safety is important, our spiritual security ought to have significantly more meaning and value to us. “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory” (Colossians 3:1-4).

Rescued from death

What then is the ultimate security system? It is our eternal salvation. Salvation simply means preservation, deliverance and rescue. And from what are we rescued? From the peril and threat of eternal death. Jesus Christ “has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10). Through His suffering, death and resurrection, we have been given full access to never-ending life as spirit beings in God’s coming Kingdom (John 6:51; Romans 6:23).

This salvation, which is our unending security, is only accessible through repentance from sin and our full acceptance of the sacrifice of Jesus on our behalf (Colossians 1:14). Upon conversion we must diligently labor to bring “every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). We need to “fight the good fight of faith” in order to “lay hold on eternal life” (1 Timothy 6:12).

Our faith and obedience will be rewarded at the second coming of Jesus Christ. “And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work” (Revelation 22:12). That is ultimate security! The question is: are you protected?

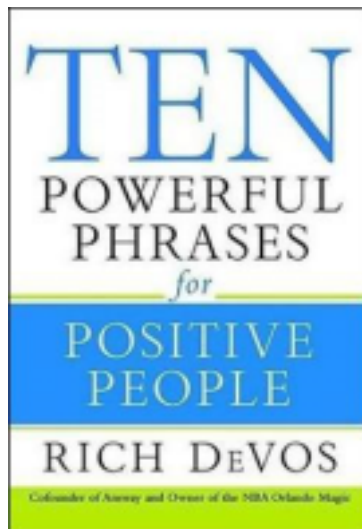
Further reading

To learn more about the conversion process that leads to salvation, see [*Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*](#).

Review: *Ten Powerful Phrases for Positive People*

By Mike Blackwell (reviewer)

These 10 “magic” phrases from the chairman of the NBA’s Orlando Magic, Richard M. DeVos, are valuable in business and in daily life (2008, ISBN-13 978-1-59995-098-3).



RICHARD M. DEVOS IS ONE OF TWO founders of the Amway Corporation and is chairman of the Orlando Magic National Basketball Association team. He is a successful businessman and author of several books on success in business. He is also a noted motivational speaker. He has a strong background in positive human relations. Now in his 80s, he has spent decades practicing and observing the impact of these traits.

The book was written in order to pass these “magic” phrases along to others—to show people how to be positive and encouraging in their lives. He motivates the reader with simple but life-changing practical lessons rooted in his real-life experiences.

DeVos summarizes the value of these phrases in his introduction: “Although people seem to need to vent and grumble at times, they are drawn to the positive and will follow those who blaze a positive trail... Finding fault is easy and a natural instinct. Maybe it’s because we’re taught to be skeptical. We know that if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is...”

The book was written in order to pass these “magic” phrases along to others—to show people how to be positive and encouraging in their lives.

“A positive attitude is a choice, like walking to the other side of a street to avoid trouble, or making a 180-degree turn when you feel you’re headed in the wrong direction. Once you decide to make that choice, being positive becomes a habit... Making the first move to be positive is a trait of great leaders... A simple line spoken in the right spot in the right way can change a person’s life.”

In regard to our need to focus on the good and the positive, DeVos cites Philippians 4:8-9 as very important to this perspective. “Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence

and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you” (New Revised Standard Version).

Citing this scripture as central gives you a very good idea about the basis for the book and what is coming. The concepts are all basic Christianity.

A separate chapter is devoted to explaining and illustrating the value of each phrase. While they are basic and might seem obvious, many of the phrases are all too often overlooked or underestimated.



(1) The first of the 10 powerful phrases is **“I’m wrong!”** It is put first because, according to DeVos (and experience verifies it), “It’s the hardest thing to say and genuinely mean. It’s hard to admit it to yourself, let alone to others.” Yet the phrase can serve as an example of our willingness to change and can inspire others. It is also the beginning of a healing process, where people have been wronged, or feel they have been wronged.

The reality of admitting mistakes is liberating for us and others; it is a mark of maturity. Wrongs are inevitable, so denying their existence only creates arrogance and strife. DeVos states, “Summoning the courage to say, ‘I’m wrong. You were right.

I’m sorry and please forgive me’ shifts our attitudes and opens us to healthy benefits as we look for ways to be positive.”

Try it! You’ll find it’s not as daunting as you might imagine and it will keep getting easier!

(2) The second powerful phrase is **“I’m sorry!”** In addition to saying “I’m wrong,” you have to be sorry for it. You have to let the person know you are sincerely sorry for what you did. It’s easier to try to defend our position, but it’s amazing how many problems disappear once we decide to say “I’m sorry!”

“I’m wrong” and “I’m sorry” are companions. They’re both truly healing phrases. But for most people, they have to be learned and are difficult to say. DeVos also points out that there are a lot of things you can be sorry about without being wrong about them too. “I’m sorry you are having a tough time on your job, in your marriage, etc.” Life is full of events where the phrase “I’m sorry!” can be powerful.

(3) Third on the list of powerful phrases is **“You can do it!”** Most people don’t have a very positive outlook on life or feel very positive about their ability to succeed. An affirmation that “you can do it (with God’s help)” is vital for success in a Christian life—and life in general. As parents, we need to create a positive atmosphere in our home. People need to know that they can be successful. God creates a positive atmosphere for all His children, which encourages them to succeed.

“A simple line spoken in the right spot in the right way can change a person’s life.”

(4) Closely connected with the third phrase is the fourth one—“**I believe in you!**” It is a more personal phrase than “You can do it!” We can demonstrate “I believe in you” through our actions as well as our words. Everyone has a tendency for self-doubt—doubts reinforced by negative comments. Negative opinions expressed by others have a detrimental effect on most people. It is a true saying that most people live up to—or down to—expectations.

Our children are very much in need of hearing “I believe in you.” Advising and mentoring sends a message that we believe in them. Instead of jumping all over them for a low grade, discuss why a grade might have dropped and how it can be improved. This shows you believe that they can do better and encourages them rather than discourages them. We show people we believe in them when we support their endeavors or causes. Belief in a person encourages him to try. A person never knows what he can do until he tries.

(5) Another very important phrase people hear all too infrequently is “**I’m proud of you.**” People will try to get the attention of and acknowledgment of those they look up to. Children will say, “Watch me, Mom!” “Look at what I am doing, Dad!” Probably the most powerful thing we can say to our kids, next to “I love you,” is “I’m proud of you!”

But “watch me!” is not merely kid stuff. Our need and desire to receive the recognition of those who mean the most to us goes on for a lifetime! Unrecognized achievement can quickly kill incentive and cause discouragement. Recognition encourages our God-given desire to do our best, to do more than we thought possible.

It’s amazing how even the smallest gesture of thanks has incredible power to make people feel needed and valued.

“I’m proud of you” is especially uplifting for people who typically don’t win the awards and rewards of life, who may doubt their abilities and have a tough time finding something to feel good about. That is why it’s doubly important for teachers, parents and pastors to find ways to say “I’m proud of you!” God even said it about Jesus Christ: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17).

(6) Sixth of the 10 powerful phrases is a simple “**Thank you!**” This is an acknowledgment of another person’s generosity. It recognizes the kindness and effort a person made to think of us. “Thank you” says we appreciate a job well-done and the time someone devoted to perform for us or provide a skilled service. It’s amazing how even the smallest gesture of thanks has incredible power to make people feel needed and valued. Saying or showing thanks are expressions of our love or kind thoughts about an individual.

Feeling thankful is great—but it isn’t enough. We have to express thanks in words or in gestures of appreciation. People not only like to be thanked—they need to be thanked. We’re often too slow to give thanks and too quick to complain. Thankfulness expressed is a key to a more positive family, church and society.

(7) Next on the list of phrases is **“I need you!”** Everyone has a deep need to feel needed. They need to know others consider them valuable. Think of all the people you need, who play an important part in your life. How often do you stop to tell them that you needed them? “I need you” acknowledges that each person has a vital part to play in life. As the apostle Paul said, every part of the body performs a vital function.

“There are two types of people—those who enter a room and say, ‘Here I am!’ and those who come in and say, ‘Ah, there you are!’”

When we know we are needed, we feel better, perform better and want to do even more. It is vital for leaders, especially in the Church, to be able to say or convey the message “I need you!” People who feel needed tend to get their minds off themselves and on helping others, which further aids in their growth and service.

(8) The eighth phrase states, **“I trust you!”** The success of any group depends on being able to trust its members to do a good job, to be honest, to keep their word. Trust is a key quality of leadership, being trustworthy, inspiring and honoring trust in others. Children need to know they can trust parents. Parents need to know they can trust their children. Trust is developed through experience. Without trust, the “wheels come off” any group, be it a family, congregation, church or nation.

(9) The ninth phrase is **“I respect you.”** Using the phrases in this book really comes down to showing respect for everyone we know and meet. Once we begin to look for the positive in everyone and seek out qualities we respect about each one, showing respect becomes a habit. You will find that respect is reciprocal. Earning and showing respect begins with listening to people.

DeVos says, “There are two types of people—those who enter a room and say, ‘Here I am!’ and those who come in and say, ‘Ah, there you are!’” We need to be the second type. Showing respect begins with simply forgetting about ourselves for a moment and being aware of the other person.

Respect is also at the heart of successful relationships, from marriage and family to the Church. DeVos makes this astute observation: “A business, relationship, or any organization without respect for its members is doomed to failure. An organization that changes from one in which members work together with respect to one of self-interest and internal squabbles is on a downward spiral.” Only a change in direction can bring it back.

(10) The tenth is simply **“I love you!”** This phrase encompasses all the others. It sums up what God is, and it should be what we are striving to become. Learning to express that love is harder than having it. DeVos points out that there are many ways to say “I love you” other than verbally. Some ways are a hug, a pat on the back or a gift.

It is especially powerful when expressed to children. Conveying love makes them feel secure. Unfortunately some cannot bring themselves to say “I love you” to their children or anyone else. They may not be able to bring



themselves to say what they feel, or perhaps they don't take the time to show it. The most important place to express love is within our own family, and the next most important is within our Church family.

The book is well-written. Its concepts are important and the practical advice it offers is worthwhile. Learning to use these 10 phrases well can make us all more effective in serving each other. "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver" (Proverbs 25:11).

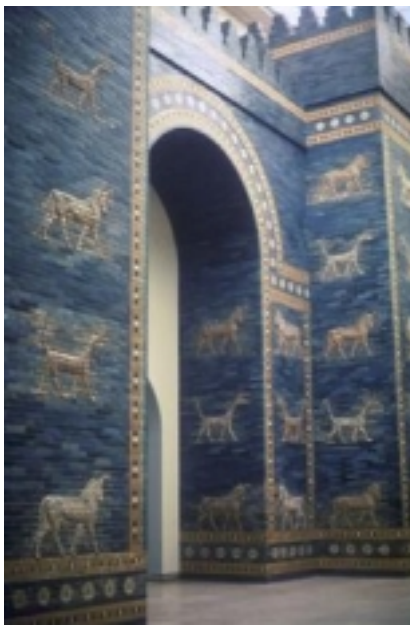
Further reading

For another helpful angle on this subject of communications and human relationships, see "[Ten Things You Can Say to Make Someone's Day](#)" from our sister publication [The Good News](#).

A Prophecy About Babylon Confirms the Accuracy of the Bible

By Ryan Foster

The history of Babylon was told in the Bible hundreds of years before it happened! How did the prophet Isaiah know the future?



ISAIAH WAS A PROPHET who began to prophesy the year that King Uzziah of Judah died, which was around 740 B.C. (Isaiah 6:1, 8). One of his predictions was about the city Babylon.

In the Bible, Isaiah 13:1 says, "The burden against Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw." At the time of Isaiah's prediction, Babylon was one of the largest and most important cities in the world. This is what God told Isaiah would happen to Babylon:

“Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, who will not regard silver; and as for gold, they will not delight in it. Also their bows will dash the young men to pieces, and they will have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eye will not spare children. And Babylon, the glory of the kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans’ pride, will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It will never be inhabited, nor will it be settled from generation to generation; nor will the Arabian pitch tents there, nor will the shepherds make their sheepfolds there” (Isaiah 13:17-20).

Isaiah claimed that God told him that Babylon would be completely destroyed.

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The Assyrians destroy Babylon

During Isaiah’s lifetime, the Assyrian Empire ruled most of the Middle East. The Assyrians controlled many foreign cities, including Babylon. After Isaiah made his prediction, Babylon rebelled against the Assyrians several times. When Sennacherib, king of the Assyrians, captured the city in 689 B.C., he decided to destroy the city forever so that it could never rebel again. Sennacherib made this inscription about his victory:



“I made its destruction more complete than by a flood. That in days to come the site of that city, and (its) temples and gods, might not be remembered, I completely blotted it out with (floods) of water and made it like a meadow” (Daniel D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, 1926-1927, Vol. 2, p. 152).

Isaiah’s prophecy was *not* fulfilled when Sennacherib destroyed Babylon. Isaiah predicted that the *Medes* would attack Babylon. But it was the *Assyrians* who attacked and destroyed the city first.

When Isaiah wrote his prediction, the Medes were weak. Most of the Medes were ruled by other nations, and the remaining Medes were not unified (*The Cambridge History of Iran*, 1985, Vol. 2, p. 80). It would have been impossible for them to capture or destroy the strong city of Babylon. Isaiah’s prediction appeared to be wrong. When the Assyrians destroyed Babylon in 689 B.C., Isaiah’s prediction appeared to be completely impossible. The Medes could not fight against a city that was gone!

Babylon rebuilt

Sennacherib thought that he had destroyed Babylon forever. But after Sennacherib died, his son Esarhaddon began to rebuild Babylon. Soon Babylon became an important city in the Assyrian Empire like it had been before.

In 626 B.C., Babylon rebelled against Assyria again. This time the Babylonians were successful. A local leader, Nabopolassar, became the king. He was able to establish Babylonia as a separate kingdom and Babylon began to grow in strength.

Nebuchadnezzar focused on expanding his empire and on expanding Babylon to become the greatest city in the world.

The Medes were also growing in strength at this time. Media managed to become independent from Assyria and expel the armies of the Scythians that had invaded their country (Herodotus 1.95, 106). In 612 B.C. the king of Media and the king of Babylon formed an alliance and fought together against Nineveh, the last capital city of Assyria. They captured the city and burned it. Within a few years the Babylonians and Medes had completely destroyed the Assyrian Empire. The Babylonians took most of the former Assyrian lands, and the Medes took what remained.

By 605 B.C., when Nebuchadnezzar became king of Babylon, the Babylonian Empire had become the leading empire in the world. Nebuchadnezzar focused on expanding his empire and on expanding Babylon to become the greatest city in the world. He built a beautiful palace, rebuilt and repaired the walls, improved the city streets and embellished the temples.

When Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 B.C., Babylon was truly one of the most magnificent cities in the world. Isaiah had predicted that God would destroy Babylon—but now Babylon was greater than it had been in Isaiah’s lifetime. However, Babylon’s greatness would not last forever.

The Medes grow in power

A few years later, in 559 B.C., Cyrus the Great became king over Persia, a region under the rule of Media. The Persians were a tribe of people closely related to the Medes. Cyrus’ father was a Persian prince, and his mother was the daughter of the king of Media (Herodotus 1.107, 122). In about 550 B.C. Cyrus overthrew his grandfather, the king of Media, and became the king of both Media and Persia. Cyrus quickly began to build an empire. In 546 B.C. he conquered the Greek kingdom of Lydia (in western Turkey). In 539 B.C., Cyrus’ army came to fight against Babylon.



Babylon was a very strong city. Two thick walls and a large moat protected the city, making it extremely difficult for an enemy to attack. However, Babylon was divided into two parts. The larger part of the city was built on the east bank of the Euphrates River, and a smaller part of the

city was on the west bank of the river. Babylon had strong walls, but it also relied on the Euphrates River and the moat around the city to protect it.

The Greek historian Herodotus, who wrote about Babylon about 100 years later, described how Cyrus' army captured the city. Part of the army went north of Babylon and dug a trench from the Euphrates River to a nearby marsh. When the army connected the trench to the Euphrates River, much of the water in the river flowed toward the marsh, while only a little water continued to flow toward Babylon. While the Babylonians were confidently celebrating a feast, the strong river and moat protecting the city became very shallow, and the Medes and Persians were able to enter the city (Herodotus 1.191). They captured the city without a battle, and Darius the Mede was put in charge (Daniel 5:31).

Isaiah's predictions fulfilled

Finally, nearly 200 years after Isaiah wrote about Babylon, *part* of his prophecy was fulfilled. God told Isaiah, "Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, who will not regard silver; and as for gold, they will not delight in it" (Isaiah 13:17). The Medes captured Babylon, just as Isaiah predicted. They captured the city without a battle and did not plunder the city. However, the other details of the prophecy had not happened yet.

But today, Babylon is still an empty city. In times of peace tourists can go see the partially rebuilt ruins of Babylon that have remained empty for almost 2,000 years.

Isaiah said that the Medes would kill many people: "Also their bows will dash the young men to pieces, and they will have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eye will not spare children" (Isaiah 13:18). This prediction was fulfilled several years later.

An inscription written on a rock cliff in Bisotun, Iran—made by Darius, king of the Medes and Persians—describes the event. In 521 B.C. the Babylonians appointed their own king and the city rebelled. Darius' army defeated the rebel army and captured Babylon. Then the rebel king and his main followers were impaled inside the city.

In about 482 B.C. Babylon rebelled against their Persian and Median rulers again. Xerxes the king sent his army to capture the city. The army destroyed the temples and took away the idol of the Babylonian god Marduk (Arrian, *The Campaigns of Alexander*, 7.17.2; Herodotus 1.183). Xerxes may have also destroyed the outer walls of Babylon.

After this punishment the city began to decline in importance. When Alexander the Great defeated the Persians 150 years later, much of Babylon was still destroyed (Arrian 3.16.4). However, many people still lived in Babylon. Alexander decided to rebuild Babylon's temples and make Babylon a marvelous city again, but he died before he could accomplish his plan.

Babylon abandoned

After Alexander's death, Seleucus I gained control of a large part of the Middle East, including Babylonia. He did not share Alexander's grand vision for Babylon. Instead he built a new city called Seleucia, nearby on the Tigris River. An ancient clay tablet shows that Seleucus' son ordered most of the population of Babylon to move to this new city in 275 B.C. (M.M. Austin, *The Hellenistic World From Alexander to the Roman Conquest*, 1981, p. 241).

After that time Babylon wasn't a major city anymore. About 250 years later the Roman writer Strabo wrote, "Seleucia at the present time has become larger than Babylon, whereas the greater part of Babylon is so deserted that one would not hesitate to say... 'The Great City is a desert'" (Strabo, *Geography*, 16.1.5). The city of Babylon was completely empty.



In 1899, German archaeologists went to the area in Iraq called Tell Babil, and they began to dig and uncover parts of ancient Babylon. In 1978, the president of Iraq, Saddam Hussein, began to rebuild some of the ancient buildings of Babylon. Some of the temples have been built again and also a palace, some walls and an amphitheater (Amatzia Baram, *Culture, History, and Ideology in the Formation of Ba'thist Iraq*, 1968-89, 1991, p. 47).

But today, Babylon is still an empty city. In times of peace tourists can go see the partially rebuilt ruins of Babylon that have remained

empty for almost 2,000 years. The city is exactly like Isaiah predicted: "It will never be inhabited, nor will it be settled from generation to generation" (Isaiah 13:20).

How could Isaiah know that the Medes, a weak tribe, would grow in strength and conquer the strong city of Babylon almost 200 years later? How could he know that one of the greatest cities in the world would be abandoned and remain empty for thousands of years? No one can make accurate predictions like these. The events in history show that the prophecies in the Bible really did come from God.

Further reading

For more confirmation of the accuracy of the Bible, see [Is the Bible True?](#)

How Can You Avoid Provoking Your Child to Anger?

By Linda LaBissoniere

The Bible warns parents of the problems of provoking their children to anger or discouraging them. Here are some practical tips for avoiding these parenting pitfalls.



CHILDREN, LIKE ADULTS, MAY BECOME ANGRY, embittered and even discouraged depending on how they are treated. In some situations, this anger stems from the treatment they receive from their parents.

Two scriptures in the New Testament explain how children can be provoked to anger by their parents. Ephesians 6:4 says: “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” Notice also Colossians 3:21: “Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.”

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The Scriptures clearly teach us that parents are responsible to train and correct their children (Proverbs 13:24; 22:6). However, if your child seems angry or discouraged, make sure that you are not provoking him or her as you teach and correct.

Here are some common ways that children are provoked by their parents.

Being harsh in punishments or overly strict

The Bible is clear that children need correction. However, some discipline can be overly harsh, with the punishment far exceeding the infraction. For example, a harsh punishment might be a month of no television viewing for forgetting to take the garbage out.

Parents should be careful to carry out punishments only when they are in full control of their emotions. Punishing a child while your emotions are raging from a child's actions could lead to excessive and harmful discipline.

When the punishment does not match the misbehavior in severity, children may come to feel that they are being punished because they have irritated a mean and vengeful parent, not that they are being corrected for their own good. Analyze the type of punishments you give and make sure that they convey the right message. Always discipline in love and never when you are angry.

Children can also be provoked if their parents are overly strict. While it is important to protect your child, parents should realize that older children and teens need gradually increasing freedom to explore on their own and develop independence in preparation for the day they will move out on their own. Overprotection may be viewed by your child as a lack of trust.

Teens will likely become frustrated that they cannot "test their wings." Parents need to allow their teens more independence by gradually "letting the rope out." Easing some of the restrictions on your teenage children or modifying the rules as they age will help them mature. It can be hard to do, especially with all of the possibilities of danger. However, if you are too overprotective, you run the risk of your child becoming angry, discouraged and even rebellious. The balance is in allowing more opportunities as your child successfully handles himself or herself.



Showing disrespect to your child

There are many ways that parents can be disrespectful toward their child. Obviously, name-calling and using abusive words, such as calling a child "stupid," is not respectful or helpful. Scripture encourages us to always edify when we speak. Notice Ephesians 4:29: "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers."

Unfortunately, if you were verbally abused as a child, you may tend to repeat the same mistake with your children. Focus on breaking this pattern of abusive behavior, so that your child will not have to suffer as perhaps you did. It may be helpful to think of how a coworker or a friend would react if you talked to him or her the way that you talk to your child. If you feel he or she would be hurt or angered, realize your child might feel the same. Then you can work on altering your tone and words.

Parents can also disrespect their children by humiliating them. This can be done by scolding them in front of others, making fun of them or discussing their weaknesses with others while they are present. Would you like your boss to reprimand you in front of other employees? What if he made fun of an idea or comment that you made, or talked

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negatively about you with other employees? You would probably feel hurt and angry. Similarly, your child will likely be hurt and angry if you humiliate him or her in these ways.

Comparing to others and practicing favoritism

It is very easy for a parent to compare one child to another or to have a favored child. Parents may mistakenly think that by evaluating the child against his or her siblings or other children, the misbehaving child will be encouraged to straighten up. However, this can actually cause lifelong feelings of inferiority in a child who is being negatively compared or not favored, and can ultimately cause him or her to become frustrated and embittered.

Discouragement and resentment can result if a child feels that his or her sibling is more loved or is favored by comparison. Each child is unique and should be loved equally. We should use God's standards of conduct and character revealed in Scripture as a guide for assessing our children as individuals.

Constantly finding fault and having unrealistic expectations

Successful parents require high standards of conduct of their children. However, unrealistic expectations can cause a child to become frustrated, particularly if he or she only feels loved if certain standards are met. Some parents crush their children's self-esteem, talents, dreams and confidence by pressuring them to achieve beyond their natural ability in academics, music or sports. Parents should encourage their children to do their best, but a child should never be punished or made to feel unloved because he or she is not strong enough, fast enough or smart enough.

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Focus on learning what to expect from your child given his or her age level. Children should always feel that they have their parents' unconditional love. If a parent brings up every fault a child has, it can be very discouraging. Focus on correcting the most harmful faults and behaviors at first, and later deal with the smaller ones. Be sure that you balance your correction with abundant praise for what your child is doing correctly. We all respond far more positively to encouragement than criticism.

Avoid a double standard



As children grow older they begin watching their parents' actions closely. Your child may become confused and angry with you if you do the same things that you have corrected him or her for doing. For example, if you punished your child for stealing a piece of candy and then later mention that the fancy new pen that you are using came from your office, your child may begin to think of you as a hypocrite. Likewise some parents correct their child for using the same bad language that they themselves often use. Your son or daughter may view you as a hypocrite if you act a certain way in public and a different way in private. In every area of your life ask yourself, "Am I

practicing what I am teaching?"

If you have been provoking your child to anger, humbly apologize to him or her. You may be surprised to find how much this can help the situation. Meditate on how to better discipline and instruct your child. You may even want to ask for advice from seasoned parents or your pastor. Develop a plan of action as to how you will deal with your children in a loving and respectful manner. Most importantly, pray for God to lead you to become a better parent, for with Christ living in us, nothing is impossible.

Further reading

For more parenting advice, see our free booklet [*Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*](#).

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When Bad Things Happen to God's People

By Jeremy Lallier

All things work together for good, right? But how?



ONE OF THE MOST ENCOURAGING PROMISES in the Bible is made by the apostle Paul, when he writes, “All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

But—how? How could that possibly be true? You and I have heard the prayer requests of those in the Church dying of some terminal illness—of young and old alike waging a losing battle against cancer—of slowly fading lives.

And more often than not, we hear of the person’s death. Of families bereaved of their loved ones. Of the pain and sorrow felt by those left behind. And we wonder—why?



I don’t believe that God ever does anything in our lives without a reason. I cannot accept that the same God who knows when a sparrow falls to the ground and how many hairs are on my head—the same God who hears our cries and holds us in His hand—would ever allow something to happen to His people because of an arbitrary whim or inattention on His part.

On the contrary, God has an amazing plan for each and every one of us. And in order to follow through on that plan, He remains acutely aware of and involved in the events of our lives. We can be sure of another of God’s promises, where He tells us, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5).

Still, we haven’t answered the question. When bad things happen to God’s people, how can we continue putting faith in His promise that all things work together for good?

What does God say?

In Isaiah 55:9, God tells us bluntly that “as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”

Elihu conveys something of the same thought in Job 33:12-13, when he says, “God is greater than man. Why do you contend with Him? For He does not give an accounting of any of His words.”

We can be sure of another of God’s promises, where He tells us, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5).

In other words, God doesn’t owe any of us an explanation. He has a plan for us, yes, but we can’t start thinking that we’re entitled to understand all the details every step of the way. There will be areas where we remain in the dark about things, unsure why we or loved ones are suffering.

At times like these, it can be difficult not to be frustrated or angry with our Maker. Withstand the temptation to do so. We are allowed to ask why, but if we don’t receive an answer, then our response should be simple trust. Even Job, in the midst of a trial that would destroy many of us, was able to say of God, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him” (Job 13:15).

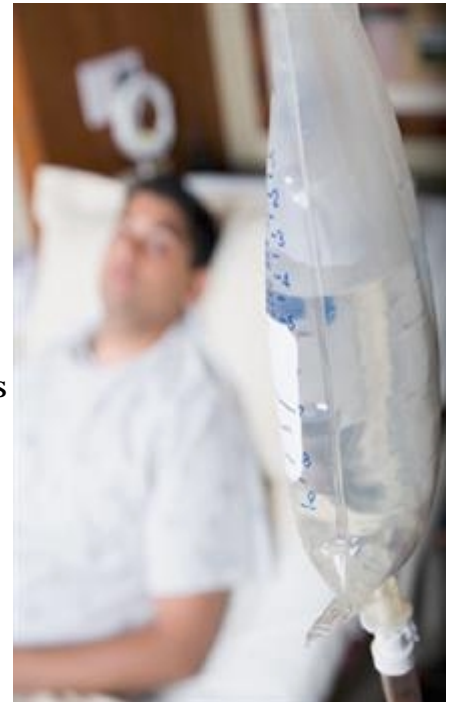
Faith, we are told, is “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Like Job, we can trust God—because we hope for and believe in something that goes far beyond this life.

The key

That is the key to understanding God’s promise in Romans 8:28—the knowledge that this life isn’t the end. God is preparing a Kingdom for those who remain faithful to Him—especially as they face dark times without knowing the cause. Some things won’t completely “work together for good” until the next life.

When we are tempted to accuse God of being unjust or cruel, we should take a minute and reflect that the one who suffered the most unjust and cruel fate was our Creator, Jesus Christ. We have all sinned and deserve death. But having committed no sin, He was nailed to a tree and endured one of the most painful deaths known to man—to give us the hope of eternal life.

This present life is a training ground. In it, we are being prepared to perform our duties as God’s kings, priests and teachers in the world tomorrow. Being purged by fire (Zechariah 13:9) is hardly comfortable and never easy, but we endure, knowing that these trials are “not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18).



For a purpose

Also worth keeping in mind are scriptures like James 1:2-4, which reminds us to “count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”

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Even trials themselves—whether or not we understand their purpose—are for our good. Sometimes we suffer as a consequence of our actions, helping us to understand that God’s rules exist to protect us, not hinder. Other times we experience trials, like Job, not as a punishment for wrongdoing but in order to come to a fuller understanding of God. At the end of his trial, Job confessed to his Maker, “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You” (Job 42:5).

Whatever their trigger, trials have one purpose: to make us better. To improve us. To bring us closer to the God who made us and wants a relationship with us.

Everything will be okay in the end...

There is a saying that goes, “Everything will be okay in the end. If it’s not okay, it’s not the end.”

This is the promise we have in God: that although we or others may face seemingly insurmountable trials in this life—and even death—God’s people will have a place in His Kingdom, where “He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:3-4).

Whatever their trigger, trials have one purpose: to make us better.

All things *will* work together for good. That is a promise.

Further reading

For a more detailed study of why God allows suffering, see the new *Bible Study Guide* on “[Why Does God Allow People to Suffer?](#)”