

# **CHRISTIAN LIVING**

**VOLUME 2** 



**TOPIC SERIES** 

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# CHRISTIAN LIVING

**VOLUME TWO** 

# TALKING TO GOD

Written & Compiled By
Stewart Kabatebate

### CHRISTIAN LIVING - Volume 2

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# **CONTENTS**

How Does God Speak To Us?	6
Why Doesn't God Answer My Prayers?	13
9 Things You Should Know When You Pray	21
3 Things To Do When You Are Desperate	25

# **INTRODUCTION**

Prayer is an important part of the life of every Christian believer.
However sometimes we have problems hearing God's voice and sometimes we do not know how we ought to pray.

In Volume Two of this Christian Living TOPIC SERIES, the aim is equip the Christian believer on how to communicate with God.

# How Does God Speak To Us?

Does God still speak today – and how does God speak?

If you expect God to speak to you, how do you expect Him to speak? Should He speak to you through visions, dreams or in an audible voice? Perhaps you are going through a challenge or a problem in your life and you're looking for answers. Perhaps you have difficulties in making the right choices in life and you seem to be failing to hear God's voice.

Below is an outline of various different ways in which God speaks to us today

### HOW DOES GOD SPEAK TO US?

. God Speaks Through The Bible (His Word)

The Bible is one of God's effective methods of communication. God speaks to His people through His word which was written by the inspiration of His Spirit. The Bible contains answers and solutions for every social, spiritual, political, economic and life situation. In the scriptures we find the mind and thoughts of God. We also discover the nature and character of God and the love that He has for you and for mankind. Therefore if you seek answers and if you seek to

hear from God, then you need to take the time to read His infallible word and without a doubt, you will find godly solutions.

**2 Timothy 3:16 NKJV** – All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

# 2. God Speaks Through Christ

There was a time, especially in the Old Testament period, before Jesus came to the world, when God spoke to people through prophets or priests. The prophet or priest would stand as a mediator between God and the people.

However, because of the finished work of Christ Jesus, God does not need to speak to us through a prophet or priest. God speaks directly to us through His begotten Son Jesus, who is the only Mediator between God and man.

Hebrews 1:1-2 ESV – Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world.

**John 14:23-24 NKJV** – *Jesus answered and said to* him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. 24 He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me."

1 Timothy 2:5 NKJV – For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Iesus

# 3. God Speaks Through The Holy Spirit One of the main purposes of the Holy Spirit is to GUIDE you into all truth. Therefore through the Holy Spirit, God will guide you so that you are

not led astray and so that you walk in God's will and plan for your life.

**John 16:13-14 NKJV** – However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. 14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.

Romans 8:15-17 NKJV – For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out," Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then

heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

# 4. God Speaks Through His Creation

There are skeptics and atheists who do not believe in God. They claim that there is no physical evidence of God. Yet everything in life has a creator / inventor / builder.

God's word says that even atheists are without excuse in relation to God's existence because the very nature and attributes of God are communicated through the things God has made. Even atheists agree with Christians that the universe had a beginning. However, skeptics & atheists will not acknowledge that God is the cause of the universe.

However, if we study creation itself, we will discover that the universe exists as a result of the hand and work of Someone far greater and more intelligent than we can ever imagine.

**Romans 1:20 NKJV** – For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse

# 5. God Speaks Through Other Believers

At times, God can use a friend, a pastor, a believer or even a total stranger to speak to you. The person God uses will speak directly into your situation. Perhaps you happened to attend church one Sunday and on that day the pastor preaches on the very issue that you are facing in your life. Or perhaps even this particular blog article itself could be an instrument that God is using to speak to you about specific issues in relation to how God communicates.

Therefore God is able to use other people to communicate with you His message for a specific situation or issue in your life.

The key thing about this type of communication is that it must always be tested and verified against the Bible. Because of the rise of false teachers and false prophets, whatever is communicated to you as advice or counsel by a pastor, friend, believer etc must be verified and aligned with scripture and properly interpreted. We should therefore take the example of the Bereans who after hearing the word from Paul and Silas, examined & verified the scriptures themselves to understand if what they were hearing was really true or not.

**Acts 17:10-12 NKJV** – Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. 11

These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. 12 Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.

# 6. God Speaks In Prayer

As you are praying God can speak to your mind and your spirit. The Holy Spirit may give you specific guidance on your issue and lead you. Your ability to know if it is God truly speaking to your mind and spirit depends on how deep your relationship with God is. However, whatever communication you believe to have received in prayer must again be verified and tested with scripture in order to avoid walking in deception. God will never tell you to do anything that is contrary to His word (the Bible). Even our personal feelings, opinions & perceptions must not be mistaken as being from God because feelings and opinions cannot always be trusted. We must take captive every thought & feeling and make it obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).

**Jeremiah 33:3 NKJV** – 'Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.'

**1 Thessalonians 5:21-22 NKJV** – Test all things; hold fast what is good.

**Philippians 4:6-7 NKJV** – Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus

So does God still speak to us today? Yes He does.

# LIFE QUESTIONS

- 1. Do you believe that the Bible is God's infallible word? Do you believe that the Bible is God's final authority on all matters of life? Why / Why not?
- 2. How best can we distinguish between God's voice and other voices?
- 3. Why did God choose to communicate His entire message through the Bible?

# Why Doesn't God Answer My Prayers?

Do you feel as if God is not answering your prayers? Should God say "YES; OK" to our every prayer request or petition? Does God answer all prayers? Or does He choose to ignore some of them?

# Jeremiah 33:2-3 NKJV

"Thus says the Lord who made it, the Lord who formed it to establish it (the Lord is His name): 'Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.'

God has promised to answer us if we call Him. However the fact is, many people (myself included) pray for God to do specific things in our life, and at times it feels like either God is taking too long to answer, or it appears as if God may never answer some of our prayers.

Therefore, when we pray to God and talk to Him concerning the many diverse issues of our lives, why does it seem as if He is so silent or so slow to respond to our prayers?

# REASONS WHY IT MAY SEEM AS IF GOD IS NOT ANSWERING ...

(1) You Need To Be Patient – God will answer you in His own time. God does not always respond instantly

to our prayers. He does not answer us according to our own timetable. Therefore whenever we pray to God, He will at times expect us to exercise patience and He will want us to wait patiently for His response.

**Romans 8:25 ESV** – But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

**Psalms 37:7 NKJV** – Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.

(2) Learn to Listen & Discern – It's important for us to listen just as much as we speak. Perhaps you are not listening. God might be speaking to you but perhaps you cannot hear Him because you do not recognize His voice. It might be that the answer you want or expect is not the answer that God is giving you. Sometimes we want God to answer the way we want Him to – but God does not always answer the way we expect. Sometimes when you have prayed for something specific, you might expect God to answer you with a specific outcome that you would have pre-determined on your own – but sometimes, God's plans are not our plans – and God's thoughts are not our thoughts (Isaiah 55:8 NKJV). Therefore how you expect God to answer you can hinder your ability to listen or discern God's voice if God is preparing to

answer or speak to you with a different outcome than the one you are expecting.

In the Bible in **1 Samuel 3:1-10 NKJV**, God called Samuel's name 3 times and 3 times, Samuel mistook God's voice for Eli's voice. He thought that it was Eli who was calling him when it was in fact the LORD who was calling his name. Samuel failed to distinguish between the voice of God and the voice of a man.

Therefore when you have prayed, it is important to be able to listen and to distinguish between the many voices that may speak to you so that you are sure to hear God and obey Him. There are many voices that will vie for your attention: the voice of man; the voice of the world; the voice of emotion; the voice of natural intellect and even from the voice of the devil – but it is important to discern and to know God's voice.

John 10:27 NKJV – My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

(3) Have A Relationship with God – If your best friend, your spouse or even your child were to call you on your cellphone, would you be able to recognize his/her voice via the cellphone? When you have a strong and close relationship with God, you may not be able to see Him, but it is possible to recognize His voice. It is however pertinent that our relationship with God is strong and sound. Unless you have a

genuine, one-on-one relationship with God it can be sometimes difficult to hear God's answers to your prayers. Therefore, the more you know God, the more you will recognize Him. It is important to note that in 1 Samuel 3:7, when Samuel could not recognize God's voice the scriptures say "(Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, nor was the word of the Lord yet revealed to him.)"

Therefore if you do not know the Lord or have a relationship with God, it can be very difficult to hear God's answers pertaining to various issues in your life and pertaining to your prayers.

Revelation 3:20 NKJV – Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come into him and dine with him, and he with Me.

(4) You Are Praying Amiss – Whenever you seek God's help, do you pray with the right motives? For example, as you pray are you seeking vengeance and damnation on other people, when in fact God wants you to pray for their salvation? Or are you praying for God to give you material things only when in fact God would wish that you would focus more on praying for the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit in your life?

In **2 Chronicles 1:7-11** Solomon became King and God asked Solomon what he wanted. Solomon then asked for wisdom & knowledge. God ended up

giving Solomon MORE than what he asked because Solomon had asked God with a pure heart and with the right motive. This is what God said to him after Solomon asked for wisdom and knowledge:

## **2 Chronicles 1:11-12** – Then God said to Solomon:

"Because this was in your heart, and you have not asked riches or wealth or honor or the life of your enemies, nor have you asked long life — but have asked wisdom and knowledge for yourself, that you may judge My people over whom I have made you king — wisdom and knowledge are granted to you; and I will give you riches and wealth and honor, such as none of the kings have had who were before you, nor shall any after you have the like."

Therefore if we are to hear God's answers to our prayers then we must pray according to His will and His purpose. We must pray God's will to be done on Earth as it is in Heaven.

James 4:3 NKJV – You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.

(5) You Are Not Adding Faith and Works to Your Prayers – God is not a magician or a wizard. Neither is He is genie. You can therefore not simply wish things into existence. Whatever God does, He does to glorify Himself. If we expect God to answer our prayers, then we must have faith in Him. And our faith must be

accompanied by action. For example, perhaps you are looking for a job with good remuneration. It is good to pray for a job, but you must also spend time sending your applications and CV to respective companies. You cannot just pray for a job but not make the effort to practically search for the job you want through the newspaper, employment agencies, internet sites etc. Or perhaps you want to give up an addiction such as smoking. When you have prayed for God to help you to overcome the addiction and temptation of smoking, you must then accompany that prayer with action and effort by avoiding to smoking cigarettes.

When you put faith and works together, you will then experience the God's practical answers to your prayers in your life.

James 2:17-19 NKJV – Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

(6) Spend More Time Reading His Word – God's word, the Bible has many answers to many issues and questions that we may have in our life. God is able to answer your prayers through His word. However you cannot receive or understand His answers unless you spend time reading His word. Many times God has answered specific issues in my own life simply by using His word.

In 1 Samuel 3:7 the scriptures say (Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, nor was the word of the Lord yet revealed to him.)

Therefore part of the reason why Samuel did not recognize the Lord or His voice was because the word of God was not yet inside him. It is therefore important for us to study and meditate God's word if we are to hear and understand God when He responds to our prayers. Hebrews 4:12-13 NKJV – For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

### CONCLUSION

Jeremiah 29:11-14 NKJV

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.

God loves us and He will not ignore us if we come to Him with the right heart. God is more interested in the condition of our heart and if we come to Him, He will listen to us.

You don't have to be perfect for God to listen to you. In fact, God will listen to you more so when you are flawed and broken.

**Psalms 34:18 NKJV** – The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit.

**Psalms 51:17 NKJV** – The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart — These, O God, You will not despise.

In conclusion: Does God answer prayers? Yes He does.

# LIFE QUESTIONS

- 1. What specific prayer requests or areas in your life do you feel as if God is not answering your prayers? Why?
- 2. What criteria can we use to know or distinguish whether we are praying amiss or not?
- 3. Why does God take His own time to answer prayer? Why does He not mostly answer or respond immediately to prayer?

# 9 Things You Should Know When You Pray

# Luke 11:1 NKJV

Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

The disciples clearly realized that Jesus while on earth as a Man, had a very close relationship with the Father. They realized that whatever Jesus prayed about, the Father would respond. The disciples also noticed the miracles that He did and they realized indeed that Jesus was a Man who knew how to pray.

Therefore the disciples wanted the kind of relationship that Jesus had with the Father. And they wanted to know how to speak to God; how to pray; and what to pray about.

Indeed when we come before God we must realize the following:

 God will never cast out anybody who comes to Him. (All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. – John 6:37 NKJV)

- 2. God knows what is best for your life. He has plans to prosper you and not to harm you. (For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. Jeremiah 29:11-12 NKJV)
- 3. We can talk to God about anything that is on our heart. He already knows what you need and what you are going to say in advance. ("... For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. Matthew 6:8 NKJV)
- 4. We must realize that God answers prayers according to His time, His choosing & His will. God's thoughts and plans sometimes are different from our own. However God's plans are always the best plans to follow. ("For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. Isaiah 55:8 NKJV)
- 5. God is not a genie who grants your EVERY wish. When we pray we must pray the will of God and not just our own will. God is sovereign. It is not God's duty to obey everything we tell Him, but it is our duty to obey Him. (Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Matthew 6:10 NKJV)

- 6. We cannot manipulate God in our prayers. God looks at our hearts and our sincerity. (Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. James 4:2-3 NKJV)
- 7. Your sins or flaws should not prevent you from coming to God in prayer. God is merciful. Even when you have sinned, God is always forgiving if you confess genuinely and truthfully. (If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9-10 NKJV)
- 8. God does not rejoice in anyone's suffering. God wants you to succeed. Therefore if you are going through a challenge in life and you are praying about it, God will guide you to overcome the challenge and in the process strengthen your character. (My brethren, 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. James 1:2-4 NKJV)
- 9. Pray with a humble heart. Confess your sins. Forgive those who have wronged you. **("And**

whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. – Mark 11:25 NKJV)

Prayer is a method by which we communicate with God. We strengthen our relationship with God. We get to know Him more in our lives.

# LIFE QUESTIONS

- 1. Why is it important to understand and know the character and nature of God in relation to prayer?
- 2. How can our misunderstanding of God's nature and character affect the way we pray?
- 3. Are there any barriers in your own life that are preventing you from praying to God? Why?

# 3 Things To Do When You Are Desperate

Have you ever been desperate for help in your life? What do you do when you have a problem, and every possible solution you try fails you? You have tried all you can do with your own strength but nothing works; You even try to get friends and family to help you with your problem, but nobody can help you through your trials and affliction. When in such a situation, it can be very easy to give up hoping that things will get better. It can also be very easy for one to give up on life.

However, the Bible talks of a woman who had a disease and who was desperate for help after having tried all that she could on her own and still failed.

# Mark 5:25-26 NKJV

Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years, and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse.

### The Condition of The Woman with the Issue of Blood

 It is believed that the type of illness that this woman had for twelve years was perhaps a type of chronic cancer or tumor of the uterus.

- Her illness had caused her to continuously lose blood and therefore she would constantly be in a weak, frail and overwhelmed state.
- She was socially alienated because of the custom / tradition at that time. Her issue of blood was perceived as being "unclean" and therefore most likely caused her to be constantly isolated from society and from family. (Leviticus 15:19-30 NKJV). Everything and everyone she touched became ceremonially unclean, so she would have been shunned by everyone, including her family and friends.
- Her illness had caused her much affliction.
   Therefore she was frequently in physical pain.
   Therefore whenever you are in a state of unending physical pain, this will begin to have some negative effect on your mental and emotional state.
- Her finances had suffered because of her illness.
   She had spent all the money she had on getting treatment from doctors but no physician could successfully help her with her affliction.
- Her problem grew from bad to worse. Clearly her illness was going to kill her.

In summary: Her health was failing; the experts had failed her; her finances had failed her; her friends & family had failed her; and society had failed her.

# Mark 5:27-29 NKJV

When she heard about Jesus, she came behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment. For she said, "If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well." Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction.

Despite the physical pain; despite the failures; despite the isolation from society; despite the financial meltdown; despite the mental and emotional anguish, during her 12 years of affliction, this woman did not lose at least 3 important key principles & characteristics that were pertinent to her receiving her breakthrough from her afflictions.

Even in her desperation she still showed the following 3 positive attributes from which we can learn:

1. **Don't Give Up** – This woman did not want to give up looking for a solution to her problem. She never resigned to the notion that her illness was not curable. All her doctors had failed to cure her for 12 years, and the doctors had probably given up trying to help her. This woman "heard about Jesus" and so therefore she was not going to waste an opportunity for Jesus to help her. There are some people in life who have "heard about Jesus", but whenever they have problems, they do not come to Jesus. They would rather focus on

resolving issues with their own strength and influence; There are some people who have "heard about Jesus" but they do not believe that Jesus can help them in their time of need. Even under desperate circumstances they don't believe that Jesus has the power to help them and so they seek help elsewhere or they give up hoping. When this woman "heard about Jesus", she wanted to go to Jesus; she believed that Jesus would fulfill her exact needs. (Read also Luke 18:1-8 NKJV)

2. **Be Bold & Courageous** – Remember that because of her issue of blood, this woman was considered to be "unclean" by society & by law and therefore she was not supposed to have any physical contact with anyone. She was supposed to be isolated from the public, because if anybody touched this woman, that person who touched her would also become ceremonially unclean (Leviticus 15:19-24 NKJV). This woman however showed boldness and courage by ignoring the potential backlash from the multitude of people that followed Jesus. When she saw Jesus, this woman did not feel embarrassed about her uncleanness but rather went through the multitude to approach Jesus so that she can receive her healing. As she went through the crowd to approach Jesus, she told

herself "If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well." Sometimes in our own lives, do we fear achieving our goals and doing the right thing because we fear what other people will say? Are we afraid of standing up for the right thing even if it is not the popular thing? Do you fear being ridiculed and embarrassed or are you bold like this woman who had the issue of blood? (Read also Joshua 1:9 NKJV)

3. Have Faith in God – This woman had faith that Jesus would heal her simply by touching His garment. Therefore despite being failed by money; despite being failed by doctors; despite being failed by society; this woman did not lose her faith in God. She believed that Jesus would heal her. She believed that Jesus would not fail her. This woman was going to die from her illness and she had lost many things in her life, but this woman was not going to give up her hope and her faith that God would heal her. (Read also Mark 11:22-24 NKIV)

Sometimes when we are in a desperate situation – we may not have the money; our friends & family may have failed us; the experts who could help us may have given up on us – however even under such desperate circumstances – the only thing that you can hang onto is

your FAITH in God. Your only choice is to have faith and let God do the rest.

### Mark 5:30-34 NKJV

And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched My clothes?" But His disciples said to Him, "You see the multitude thronging You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'" And He looked around to see her who had done this thing. But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction."

This woman was made well by her faith in Jesus. She finally believed that only Jesus would help her. Her faith in her finances failed; her faith in the doctors failed – but her faith in Jesus did not fail.

# LIFE QUESTIONS

1. Why should trusting or faith in God be an important part of one's prayer life?

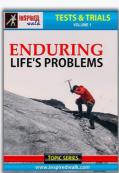
- 2. What are the reasons for why people are known to do some of the most horrible things during times of desperation?
- 3. In your life, how often do you trust or have faith that God will answer your prayers?

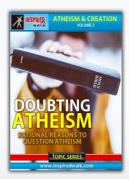
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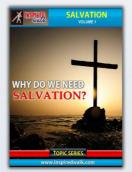




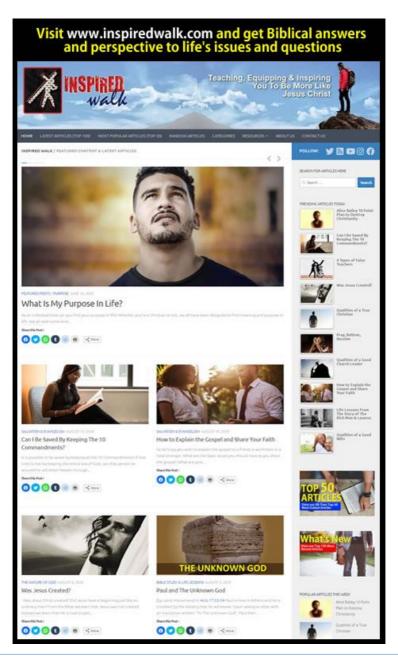












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