

Higher Praise Gospel Chorale

Black History Month

# Devotional Guide

February 2018



*Reflections on our favorite songs*

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Higher Praise Gospel Chorale Members

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# Introduction

Singing Gospel music is a powerful practice which in addition to singing, has many benefits such as improving reading and math skills, developing rhythm and harmony and most importantly memorizing scripture. Many often wonder why gospel songs are repetitive while each round of the chorus gets higher and more intense. Repeating the chorus not only deepens the meaning of the message but it remains with you for a while. So often we find ourselves singing the chorus of a song when we need help, guidance or comfort.

Higher Praise Gospel Chorale has enjoyed singing praises to God through gospel music for many years. Each year we have a Devotional Study for Black History Month. Last year we read daily Devotions based on Spiritual songs during February and we found it so uplifting, we decided to write our own reflections based on the songs that our choir sings.

Each day the devotions include the name of the song, some with lyrics, our personal reflection on that song and a prayer. It has been a labor of love and we invite everyone to join us in reading the daily devotions from the members of Higher Praise Gospel Chorale. We hope as you read each day something will touch you and remain with you.

We are sharing our Joy of glorifying God through gospel music.

February 1, 2018

## **“I’ll Trust You”**

*“I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.” Psalm 91:2*

You are my refuge. In you I’ll trust. Webster defines trust as “Assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something” Character: God never changes; His compassion never fails and great is His faithfulness. Ability: God can do anything. Strength: He holds the power of the world in His hands. One of my favorite scripture passages is Proverbs 3:5-6: Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths (NKJV). I am confident that God has assigned angels to watch over, guide, and protect me. Whatever comes my way is no surprise to him. He has already made provision for me to handle any situation and emerge victorious with the testimony that He did it once again. Maybe you’re facing sickness. Trust God for your healing. Are you depressed? Think of his goodness to you and know that he cares so much for you that He doesn’t want you in such a state. Trust God for every need in your life. Sometimes, in the middle of a situation, it may not be clear how He is moving and shaking things up for my best outcome, but I know that because of his love for me, when the matter is over, I can look back and reflectively trace his handiwork.

*Prayer: In Thee, Oh Lord, I put my trust.*

Stephen Key

February 2, 2018

## **“Yes, I Know Jesus”**

*I am asking on their behalf, I am not asking on behalf of the world,  
but on behalf of those whom You gave me. John 17:9*

Yes, I know Jesus, Yes I know Jesus for myself,  
Woke me up this morning, saw a brand new dawning,  
Yes I know Jesus for myself.

I have been traveling the New York Avenue corridor from my home in Maryland several times a week for years. Along the way, I see many of my homeless brothers and sisters leaving or going to the shelters, camped out under bridges or in the thoroughfares asking for money. My Mother is very troubled by persons living on the streets and feels, as I do, that everyone is entitled to safe housing. I am so used to seeing persons on the street that I often have a few dollars already out of my wallet to give to those who ask for help. One particular evening, I was stopped at a light, and a man wearing a cape made out of a blanket approached my car. I was already prepared with a few dollars and my usual “be careful out here” when the gentleman who approached my car told me that he did not want money but told me his name was George and asked me to pray for him. I was so taken aback by his request that I almost did not know what to say. Finally, I said that I would, and gave him the money I already had taken from my wallet. I was oblivious to the person behind me who continued to blow the car’s horn because I was holding up traffic. I am thankful that my divine assignment that evening was to pray for George and I was able to fulfil it. Since that day I have looked again for George, and have caught several glimpses of him from afar. I continue to lift him in prayer. Thanks be to God.

*Prayer: Lord, teach me to pray. Amen.*

Carol L. Travis

February 3, 2018

## **He's Been Good to Me"**

*"I will sing the Lord's praise, for he has been good to me." Psalm 13:6*

Webster defines "good" as: an adjective: of favorable character, suitable, fit, adequate, satisfactory. A noun: that which is morally right, righteousness

Character: It's not just what God does that is good, but it is who he is and who will never change. He's loving, consistent, all knowing and always present.

When I think of the goodness of the Lord and how good He has been to me, I'm filled with overwhelming joy and spontaneous praise. The Lord is ever faithful, on him I can depend. I give him thanks for the challenges and the joys along the way in this journey called life. It has built my Christian character and strength. I know that God is always present and when the journey seems heavy and too much to bear, I know He won't let me falter. I've been so blessed in my life when I consider what other possibilities could have been. My love, trust and faith in him and knowing that his promises are true gives me a sense of peace.

God's goodness is available to everyone who believes in him and wants a relationship with him. God wants that relationship with us. He always wants what is best for us. We must love God, trust and have faith in him. God is such a good Father. He is true to his word and ever faithful even when we get out of sync with him. God wants us not to just do good things but to be good to ourselves and most of all to our fellowman. Let us remember that when the storms of life are raging in our lives it's easy to forget how much God loves us and on him we can rely. If we live in an attitude of gratitude and count our blessings one by one, we'll see that He's given us so much more than what we deserve. Although we might not understand the circumstances that we are confronted with, we can take comfort in knowing that God is good. So, when you feel that you're alone, know that He's near. If you feel powerless, He's your power and strength. Thank God for his goodness even when circumstances look bleak. Romans 8:28 says, "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. (NKJV)

*Prayer: Lord, help me to never take your goodness for granted.*

Brenda Reid-Sanders

February 4, 2018

## **“I Almost Let Go”**

*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.  
Psalm 46:1*

They say the roles between child and parent reverse. The parent becomes a child and the child becomes the parent. That's the truth.

When I would make an appointment to get my eyes examined, I would also make an appointment for Mother. During one visit, the doctor discovered that my Mother's eyes were jaundice; she needed further testing. Jaundice is the yellowing of the skin and eyes. Jaundice itself is not a disease but it is a symptom of several possible underlying illnesses. We went to another doctor and Mother was diagnosed with a more serious illness. She was given 6 months to live, but she lived for 9 months. What do you do when you are given such a final judgment? You first cannot believe what you have heard. This must be a mistake. You ask God “Why me?” “What did I do to deserve such a fate?” You don't know which direction to go first. You just fall on your knees in despair, praying that God will spare your Mother from this dreadful disease. After my Mother transitioned, I did not know that I was walking around dazed and in a depressed state. Kurt Carr's song resonated with me when he wrote “Depression weighed me down. God held me close so I wouldn't let go.” I am here today because God is and will always be with me.

*Prayer -- Thank you, Lord, for your mercy and your grace, and being there when I needed you.*

Tawana C. Jackson

February 5, 2018

## **“Great and Marvelous”**

*I will praise Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;  
marvelous are thy works; and my soul knoweth. Psalm 139:14*

Worship through song is something you find throughout the Bible. God loves it when you're so overwhelmed by your gratitude that you praise him through song. As I reflect on my favorite song, “Great and Marvelous” during Black History Month, I think about how great and marvelous He really is, especially from our forefathers' perspective; to have brought us this far from slavery to where we are today. When I am experiencing many of life's personal challenges, I think about those before me and how they survived under extremely difficult oppressive circumstances when they sang those old spirituals to restore their faith. While “Great and Marvelous” was written well after slavery, I can hear the whispers of our forefathers singing how great and marvelous are Thy works.

“Great and marvelous are Thy works, Lord God almighty. Just and true are Thy ways Thou King of Saints. Your people laud you. With our hands we applaud you. Great and marvelous are Thy works, O Lord. Oh, Lord, we bless you. Oh Lord we bless you. Great and marvelous are Thy works Oh Lord.”

*Prayer: Lord, I am grateful and continue to praise and acknowledge your great and marvelous works.*

Michelle Jefferson Atkins

February 6, 2018

## "Let Your Glory Fill this Place"

*"How lovely is your dwelling place Lord Almighty?  
My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord..." Psalm  
84:1-2 NIV*

"In the presence of the Lord, you'll find liberty."

"In the presence of the Lord, your soul will be set free."

"Lord, we invoke your presence here today so let your Glory fill this Place."

Whenever Higher Praise Gospel Chorale sings this song, I am reminded of the importance of ushering in the Holy Spirit as we worship together. We yearn for the spirit of God to dwell among us especially during our time of worship so that we can be liberated from whatever is holding our souls captive and preventing us from experiencing the Glory of God. If we come to worship expecting to receive a word from the Lord, we must invite the Holy Spirit so that we can receive the joy that awaits us.

If you plan an event and do not send out an invite, would you expect people to show up? Likewise, when we gather for worship, it is imperative that we invoke the presence of the Holy Spirit so that our hearts and minds will be open to receive a word from the Lord however He chooses to deliver it.

*Prayer: Lord, as I worship you on Sunday morning and each day throughout the week, may I always seek your divine presence.*

Randolph Scott

February 7, 2018

## **“I Am Blessed”**

*“Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” Isaiah 41:10*

“When I woke up early this morning, I was clothed in my right mind. When I looked all around me, my family was doing fine. I want to thank him for how he kept me, thank Him, He never left me. I want to tell the world that I am blessed. I AM BLESSED!”

My life as a caregiver was filled with many challenges, worries and responsibilities when I first started caring for my parents. After receiving so much sympathy and advice I soon became overwhelmed and afraid that I may not be up to the task. In my daily prayers I asked God to show me the way because I was determined to provide the best care for my parents. Eventually the pressure began to show. I was constantly tired, losing weight and always rushing. Words of encouragement from friends and family changed to warnings – to take better care of myself. I was humbled when I realized how long I had been focused on trying to do it all alone instead of trusting God to take care of it all.

One day, my sister asked what happened to my sense of humor and I snapped back, “It’s gone. I don’t have time to laugh because I have too much to do.” That was actually a turning point for me. I shared my mother’s declining mental health with a family friend and she told me to not worry about what I’ve lost but appreciate what I still have. I should celebrate those rare moments when Mom recognizes me. I began thanking God for those special times.

I was given the solo in the song “I am Blessed” that had lyrics which resonated with me. Repeating the words helped change my thinking. Now when I wake up every morning, I thank God for another day. When I kiss Mom and she opens her eyes I know without a doubt that I am blessed.

*Prayer: Thank you Lord for another day. I know I am blessed.*

Sharleen Bradford Kavetski

February 8, 2018

## **“Lord Help Me to Hold Out”**

*“Wait on the Lord: be of courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.” Psalm 27:14*

“My way may not be easy. You did not say that it would be, but  
when it gets dark, can't find my way,  
You told me to put my trust in Thee.”

I like this song and suggest we, Higher Praise, continue to use it on a more frequent basis. This song also speaks to me about my Spirituality; that is "Why do I go to church"?

I go to church because I truly believe that after the six days are over and I have all of the things that are required and perhaps other things, I need a change of pace and perhaps I may have gotten a little off base, I need to be brought back to reality. If I have been a bit sinful, I need forgiveness. So I go to church to get something, but to get something, a person should give something.

So, the second reason I go to church is to give back. I give back to the church in the form of tithes. I am a tither. I also give back to the church by singing in several choirs that contribute to the Music Ministry. I am also an active member of the Men's Group in the church and the Group participates in the church Fellowship.

*Prayer: Dear Lord, Teach me how to wait on You.*

Tal Roberts

February 9, 2018

## **“A Singer’s Prayer”**

*“Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wondrous works.”  
Psalm 105:2*

Why do we sing? Why does singing matter in worship?

In a recent article about this subject, Dr. Peter Cockrell says that there are seven reasons why singing matters. When you sing, you obey. Note just a few scriptures that give us this command:

- Serve the Lord with gladness; come before his presence with singing. (Psalm 100:2)
- Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. (Col 3:16)  
When you sing, you dig deep roots in the Word. It gives us an opportunity to reaffirm our faith in song.

When you sing, you build others up. There is nothing like hearing testimonies of faith sung by soloists or by united voices.

When you sing, you make war. A singing heart is a heart at war with the evil and sin in the world.

When you sing, you are spiritually strengthened for trial. Look what it did for Paul and Silas in Acts 16.

When you sing, you walk a God-designed pathway to joy. James 5:13 says, “Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praises.”

When you sing, you glorify God. We know he is worthy of our praise.

We know that singing is a very important part of worship. It offers us a chance to reaffirm our belief in the Word; to build up others; to gain spiritual strength in our personal trials; and to glorify God. It is a form of praise; a form of prayer; and a form of proclamation. The songs that we lift up encourage us to be prayerful, generous, unselfish, joyful and faithful.

“A Singer’s Prayer” is a petition to God to “bless” our voices. We are asking him to show favor on us as we share this gift with others. We are asking him to “anoint” us and have his own way. In other words, we are asking him to purify our hearts so that we can use our talents in his service. And finally, we are asking him to accept this prayer in Jesus’ name. Since we know that if we believe, have faith, and ask, our prayers will be answered. God has graced us with the gift of singing. We should use it to praise and proclaim his mighty acts. We should give Him our highest praise since we are recipients of his blessings, mercy, and grace.

*Prayer: Dear Lord, Bless my voice that I may sing to your glory and give you the highest praise.*

Martrice Green

February 10, 2018

## **“For Every Mountain”**

*Taste and see how good the Lord is! The one who takes refuge in him is truly happy! Psalms 34:8*

When my husband and I were planning our fiftieth wedding anniversary celebration, I knew there was one song I wanted sung: “For Every Mountain” by Kurt Carr. That song fit the occasion perfectly. The opening words express how much the writer has to be grateful for and how those blessings continue day by day, or in our case, year by year. After a litany of blessings and thanksgiving, the chorus sings praise: “For every trial you’ve seen me through, For every blessing.” I am always moved by this song because during our fifty years of marriage, there have been many mountains. If you include the churches my husband has served as a pastor and the mountains and trials the members have faced, you might have a sense of what we have experienced together. But God is so good, as we have tasted and seen.

Sometimes couples ask me to participate and offer words of advice during their premarital counseling. I always tell the bride not to expect a fifty-fifty arrangement in which she puts in 50 percent. Somehow there never seems to be an equal effort. I advise her to be prepared to give 90 percent effort and to expect no more than 10 percent effort from her husband. I let her know that if she gives 90 percent and by chance her husband is prepared to give his 50 percent, they will have 140 percent working toward their success. Then, no matter what mountains they experience, together with God they will be able to climb over.

How can we taste and see that the Lord is good if we never face trials? We never know what trial each new day has in store for us, but we know that God is with us and will see us through. That is why we sing praises and shout, “Hallelujah!”

*Prayer: Lord, I am so thankful for the many blessings you have granted me. Help others to be blessed in the same way. Amen*

Marjorie L. Kimbrough

February 11, 2018

## **“King Jesus is Listening”**

*The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears,  
And delivers them out of all their troubles. (Psalm 34:17)*

Jesus is my comforter, my rock and my savior. He is always there for me through good times and bad times. I pray every day before I leave the house for my family, my dog and myself. I pray for my protection, for strength to go on each day and for help in making right decisions.

My dog is very dear to me and I can't imagine life without him. He is getting older though with health problems and I want to keep him comfortable for the remainder of his life. I'm not sure what is wrong each time he whines so I pray that God will show me what he needs.

I pray for my protection as I get older and I live alone. I knew God was with me when I had a terrible fall recently at home and I was able to get to my phone to call a neighbor. God helped me get up off the floor and I thank Him every day for protecting me. Sometimes I wonder how long I would have been on the floor if it weren't for Jesus staying by my side comforting me. I tell my co-workers if I don't show up for work to call my family so they can check on me. I don't walk around in fear but I am concerned that as I get older I should have a support system in place for emergencies.

Since the fall, I am very aware of how fragile life is and how much I need Jesus in my life. My faith is my emergency support system and Jesus is my comforter. He is always listening.

*Prayer: Lord, hear my prayer. Be with me always.*

Pat Crudup

February 12, 2018

## **“He’s Been Good to Me”**

*The Lord watches over the strangers.  
He upholds the orphan & the widow. Psalm 146:9*

I have been retired for 4 years. When I decided to retire, I made sure I would be able to sustain myself with my monthly annuity. Being able to pay bills, have food to eat and a roof over my head was my main priority. I stepped out on faith and with my faith in God, I knew that He would be my sustainer as long as I believed that nothing would be impossible. I have had a few ups and downs in the last years, but with faith in God, all has been well. When I arise in the morning, I give Him praise. When I sit down with my meals, I continue to give Him praise. When I leave the house, I ask God to dispatch His guardian angels to be with and protect me, and when I get home, I always say, “Thank you, Lord”. If you have faith then you know God is with you.

The rough times help increase my faith because I read the scriptures and pray constantly so doubt cannot take up space in my mind. Now I look back over the difficult times and I have to say “Thank you, Lord.”

I know who my sustainer is. God is my anchor and that anchor will hold me steady for all my days. Prayer is my connection to God; I talk while He listens then He talks and I listen. This helps me face the trials and tribulations that I know will surely come.

*Prayer: Thank you Lord for being my sustainer and always being there.*

Frances Neal

February 13, 2018

## **“God Is”**

*“God said to Moses, "I am who I am.  
This is what you are to say to the Israelites:  
'I AM has sent me to you.'” Exodus 3:14*

The summer of 1982 was the most difficult summer of my life. My beloved, younger sister, Valerie passed away suddenly. Before she passed, Valerie called me on the telephone. She explained that she needed some scripture. I quoted Romans 16:20 " And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." An hour later she had died. Her doctor reported that she died from Chronic Asthma. I was so grief-stricken, that I was walking around like a "zombie". I began to question God. At her funeral, Central Baptist Choir sang James Cleveland's song "God Is". The lyrics to that song comforted and consoled me.

A month later, my father died after suffering from cancer of the esophagus. My family and I had prepared ourselves for his death, but not for my sister Valerie's death. I prayed and asked God, Why? Why? God said to me: "Somethings you do not understand".

Later, in August of that same year, my son, Keith told me that in a vision, he saw my sister and my father walking arm in arm in heaven.

I was able to agree with the Apostle Paul when wrote in Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.

I can truly say "GOD IS MY ALL AND ALL".

*Prayer: O Lord, You're my everything.*

Kathleen Smith

February 14, 2018

## "God Has Smiled On Me"

*"May God be gracious to us and bless us and make His face to shine upon us." Psalm 67:1*

Whenever I hear and sing this song, it reminds me that God is gracious to me in so many ways, yet I often fall short of recognizing, embracing and appreciating all the good in my life. It's easy to say "I'm blessed", "I'm so thankful", "God has been good to me", but truly believing these words also means living these words.

I find myself in a somewhat discomfoting period of my life, as I fluctuate between the joy of having an amazing mother still living and loving life, despite the challenges of old age, and having wonderful friends and family; and the ever present anxiety of having an aging mother, a very ill brother, a very ill best friend, and just knowing that life is so fragile. This teetering between the joys of life, and the fears of anticipating grief and loss are not part of God's plan for me.

As I celebrate my dear Mama Mary's 97th birthday with family and friends, a milestone that she never imagined that she would reach based on the losses of all her siblings, sisters and brothers in law, and far too many friends, nieces and nephews, I find myself telling myself that I need to focus more on what I have now, not what I have lost or will lose, because that wastes time and takes precious time away from what's important. My belief that God has smiled on me, means that I need to do my work, the work of living, loving, caring, supporting, helping, serving, and enjoying life. Knowing that "God has Smiled On Me" and continues to do so, helps keep me focused on the now because I know God will be with me for whatever comes next.

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, please allow me to see your smile in the simplest of things. Amen*

Camille Harris

February 15, 2018

## **“You Alone”**

*“Exalt the LORD our God and worship at His holy hill,  
For holy is the LORD our God.” Psalm 99:9*

Interesting the things in life that we have, see and experience and the times that cause celebration, where we give accolades in places where man has appeared to have been the catalyst for something that has happened.

In God’s creation, He has gifted man with “things” (Colossians 1:16) and through those “things” situations are birthed. However as scripture reminds us, “all things have been created through Him and for Him”. It is unfortunate that man, because of the complexities of sin, has removed God from “His throne” in our lives. God has been forced out of His central shrine and “things” have been allowed to enter and within the heart of man these “things” have taken over.

The lyrics in “You Alone” are a poignant reminder that God alone, should be the first recipient of our thanksgiving – no matter the gift. “He (God) alone deserves ALL the praise” because, “...from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever! Amen.” (Romans 11:36)

As choral representatives in the Kingdom of God, I have found when we take into our bellies the words we sing and allow them to speak to areas in our lives, we are free to be better ministers to those we sing to. When we are free, the grip of our sin nature releases its hold and we are better able to understand that...

“God alone is our Strong Tower. God alone has all the Power. God alone is our Savior and Lord. So we lift our hands to love you, Lord we worship and adore you. No one else deserves the praise, You alone deserve our praise. No one else deserves the praise but You!”

*Prayer: I lift my hands in Total Praise to You. Amen*

Paula H. Mathis

February 16, 2018

### **“Jesus is a Friend”**

*A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. Proverbs 18:24*

I need Jesus every day to walk with me through life. There are difficult times that I call on him to stay with me and there are happy times when I know he is with me. I try not to worry over things or let life upset me. I read my Bible and pray a lot so I know I am protected every time I step out the door.

When I was hurt I talked to God constantly and prayed. So many people were kind to me and I know many were praying for me too. I could feel Jesus was with me and comforting me. It really helped me get through that difficult time. I never asked why or was angry. My faith in God carried me through.

As long as I keep God first in my heart, I can enjoy each day. That is what the commandments ask of us – Thou shalt have no other Gods before Me.

*Prayer: Thank you Jesus for walking with me in good times and bad.*

David Walker

February 17, 2018

## **“Trust in the Lord”**

*“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.” Proverbs 3:5-6*

“Trust me.” We have all heard these words – from a lender; from a car dealer; from a spouse; from a friend; from a significant other; from a stock broker; or from a contractor. And in most cases, what happened? Were they able to deliver what they promised? Did the terms or amounts change? Did the person tell an outright lie?

This is what happens when we put our trust in man, in things, or in institutions. But the song says to “trust in the Lord, lean not to your own understanding; acknowledge him and He will direct your path”.

The Dictionary defines trust as “having confidence, belief, faith, assurance, conviction, reliance in someone or something”. Do you know of anyone who fits this description? What about our Lord?

Think about what he has done in your life. If you have confidence in what he has done and is doing now in your life, you trust God.

We can trust our God because he has promised good things to those who believe and follow his instructions. When you feel he has forgotten you, He has promised to be with you at all times. When you have gone astray and sinned, He has promised to forgive you when you confess. When you are dissatisfied, anxious, fearful or facing a shortage, He has promised to take care of you. Because God keeps his promises, we can trust him.

Before you say yes; sign on that dotted line; spend a dime; or before you undertake any major decision; consult God. Do your research. Pray. Ask for guidance. Wait for an answer from God. Pray. Seek God’s direction. Listen. Follow his instructions.

*Prayer: I will trust in the Lord!*

Martrice Green

February 18, 2018

## **“Great and Marvelous”**

*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:10*

I have lived my life with God guiding me every step of the way. There have been a few challenges in my life that I thought I wouldn't make it back from but I knew my Lord and Savior would not let me fall. We can easily take life for granted until something drastic happens that makes you see who is really in charge. God is great and marvelous and all his creations too.

I've traveled the world for many years and I see how wonderfully made we all are no matter what country, culture or color. I've spent many hours in the skies appreciating the heavens and marveling at the wonder of it all. It isn't possible to see so much beauty around the world and not give God the praise He is due.

I've experienced many joys and sorrows but without God, they mean nothing. I gave my life to God many years ago and have grown so much in my love for Jesus that it leaves me speechless. I thank God for everyone in my life and for those who have passed on. My strong faith has helped me accept the fact that I may not understand the meaning of everything in my life, but I have put my trust in the One that demonstrates miracles every day by saving lives during treacherous weather, shielding children from terrorist attacks and in safely landing thousands of planes daily.

God does great and marvelous things in my life. I thank you, I applaud you, I adore you.

*Prayer: Lord, thank you for being in my life. Continue filling me with love for all of mankind and your creations.*

Kenneth Hall

February 19, 2018

## **“In The Word of God”**

*But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together. One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" And he said to him, "you shall love the Lord your God, with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Matthew 22:34-40*

On a daily basis, I have always tried to follow these two commands with the thought that if I live these two, the others will come automatically.

“In the word of God, I find it all in the word of God. Joy, peace, contentment, (and) so much more.” This song reminds us that these things and all that God is trying to tell us is right there in the Bible, His word.

“The word of God is a lamp unto my path and a light unto my feet. In the word of God I find everything I need. When my soul need consolation, I can read Genesis to Revelation”.

*Prayer: Lord, please help me hide your word in my heart that I might not sin against Thee.*

James Gary

February 20, 2018

## **“I Live By Faith”**

*Without faith it is impossible to please God. Hebrews 11: 6*

I used to believe that God rewards us for our faith, but it is faith that brings us into a right relationship with God.

Faith is the key that unlocks the door to God's blessings and flavor. We have the ability and willingness to trust God as our divine provider and promise keeper. Faith means being grasped by a power that is greater than we are. A power that shakes us and turns us and transforms and heals us. Faith is the victory.

Faith is a way of life. I believe that God supplies all of my needs. He knows what I need before I ask of it. We must build our faith not on a fading light but on the light that never fades. We must stand on his promises knowing that God will come through with all that we ask of him.

Lord, thank you for your protection. I stand on your promises with head and hands held high praising and worshiping You. As the song says: “I breathe, I move, I stand, I am, I live by faith. I live by faith.”

*Prayer: Dear Lord, Help me to have an unwavering faith.*

Charlyn Bachemin

February 21, 2018

## **“He Changed Me”**

*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” 2 Corinthians 5:27*

So apropos, to one's life, are many of the songs we have sung in Higher Praise Gospel Chorale. I recall how often I have taken from a choir rehearsal or a Sunday morning service, the lyrics from a song that has resonated in my belly, ministering to my spirit in a particular season of my life. I am poised to reflect on Jesus' words in John 10:27 “My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me”. It's as though the lyrics sung are in fact some instruction I needed right then. So as a Shepherd, protecting His sheep, Jesus spoke to me often, I heard Him and followed!

“Since I found the Savior, my life has been complete. I'm moving in another direction, I'm happy as I can be. Since the Savior came, nothing is the same. He changed me.” These words and the remaining lyrics of this song support what having a relationship with Jesus provides, just knowing who He is, is never enough. Having a relationship with Him, surrendering to Him, is where you become one of His sheep, you hear Him, follow Him, and are forever changed through Him.

My personal change required, of many things, a... ”Stripping away with nothing to wear and the chill did feel like death. But praise I give for nakedness for the cold did clean my mess. ...the stripping was your process Lord, to purge each part of me...” Through repentance and a lot of purging, reconciliation begins. Then the needed relationship with Jesus is birthed and the restoration of one's life begins. As the song continues, through Jesus, we are then...”No longer bound in sin because Christ now reigns within; filling our hearts with love, praises to God above...since the Savior came, nothing is the same – He Changed Me!”

*Prayer: Change my heart, O God. Make it ever true. Change my heart, O God. May it be like You.*

Paula H. Mathis

February 22, 2018

### **“I Woke Up this Morning”**

*“Those of steadfast mind You keep in peace – in peace because they trust in You.” Isaiah 26:3*

For the last several months, several times a week, I have awakened between 4 A.M. and 5 A.M., for what I thought was a bathroom opportunity. Normally, I am so used to them that I fall back asleep quickly. However, I began to see a pattern that during those times, I could not get back to sleep right away, I felt that there was something that needed to be done. So rather than check my iPad for the CNN news summary, I realized that God was calling me to be in prayer and conversation with Him. I needed no devotional, or pre-selected scripture. The first night, I was called to be on my knees which is difficult for me that early in the morning because of my arthritis. Normally, a warm shower later in the morning relieves the pain. I found that the more I prayed at that time, the pressure in my knees lessened, and almost went away. When the prayer time was over, I was able to fall back to sleep quickly.

I came to understand that this early time was a divine appointment with God. From this special time, I have learned obedience, faithfulness, and to be a better listener. I also discovered that I could be on my knees at 4 A.M. and rise from that position without a lot of pain. I still continue my regular devotion time using various methods: music, poetry, scripture, and maintaining a gratitude journal, but this early time is special to me. Thanks be to God.

*Prayer: Thank you God, that You woke me up this morning with my mind, stayed on Jesus. Hallelujah.*

Carol L. Travis

February 23, 2018

### **“Available to You”**

*For we are God’s handiwork,  
created in Christ Jesus to do good works,  
which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:10*

You gave me my hands to reach out to man, to show him your love and your perfect plan. You gave me my ears, I can hear your voice so clear, I can hear the cries of sinners, but cannot wipe away their tears. You gave me my voice to sing your Word, to sing all your praises to those who’ve never heard. But with my eyes I see your need for more availability. I see hearts that have been broken, so many people to be free; Lord, I’m available to You.

When I was a child I use to sit and talk to God a lot. We did not have a television in every room, only one in the living room to be turn on at specific times of the day. So, after I completed my chores and homework I would go to my room to read or pray and talk to God.

In my childlike way, I would ask Him questions, like why am I here in this great big world. What is my purpose? I could actually hear God laughing at me. Many years later, I received my answer through a friend.

My friend told me that God told her to tell me that I was in the body of helps. I took that to believe that God was using me an ordinary person to help his people that are in need of help. Help with whatever it is that I can do to help them. Then I reflected back how God used Mary an ordinary woman who was a virgin to bring Our Lord and Savior into the world. (Luke 1 – 32,34, 35)

Lord, my storage is empty, and I am available to You. Now I’m giving back all the tools You gave to me. My hands, My ears, My voice, My eyes so You can use them as You please. I have emptied out my cup so that You can fill it up. Now I’m free and I just want to be more available to You.

*Prayer: Thank You Lord for showing me my purpose in life.*

Margaret A. Carter

February 24, 2018

## **“I’ll Trust You”**

I often hear words of compliments, especially while in the different zones of grief, pain and sorrow. While the words, "you look good" are appreciated that often is not how I feel from within. There are periods of fear and being lonely. Disappointments from family and friends.

The prayers are hard to say. So I cry out the words Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. The song I will trust Him, "if only I will trust Him, He will fight my battles."

Fear becomes the victory; for fear eradicates faith and promotes doubt, dumbfounding and denial. The Lord will show me how there are others suffering and in more pain than myself. I am truly blessed and should stand tall and strong in my faith. The more the words of the song resonate in my heart and voice the stronger I feel. I am **ALIVE REJUVENATED RENEWED!** God Is He has **all power. All I need to do is trust Him and keep the faith.**

*Prayer: Thank you Father for reaffirming my faith in You. During the weakest and darkest moments renew and sustain my faith. I will only trust and believe in You who will fight all battles and never leave me. Hallelujah!*

Carol Arledge Clomax

February 25, 2018

## **“My Help”**

*“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from, all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.” Psalm 121*

Higher Praise Gospel Chorale sings “My Help” which comes directly from Psalm 121.

As I read the scripture I can hear myself singing and with passion because it means so much to me. For me, this particular scripture says exactly what it states. I know my help, in any situation, comes from God. He is always by my side.

When I found myself going to the hospital to have surgery, before I went into the operating room, my Pastor pulled out her Bible and to my surprise, read Scripture - Psalm 121.

As I was wheeled into the operating room, of course I was nervous, but when she read that scripture, Hallelujah, I was completely at ease. I knew I would be ok because all my help comes from my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God!

*Prayer: Thank you, Lord for being our help in ages past.*

Joette Nelson

February 26, 2018

**“Trust in the Lord”**

*To you, oh Lord, I lift up my soul. Oh my God, I trust in you.  
Psalms 25:1&2*

Trust in the Lord even when you can't trace him. Have faith in him even when you can't see him. Just know that he's right there by your side. Trust in the Lord.

Trust is defined as assured reliance on the character, ability, strength or truth of someone or something – one in which confidence is placed. One might say we are living in troubled times, times when it's difficult to rely on others. Times when so much is uncertain, times when we question the character, ability and strength of so many. So, what do we do, where do we go, how do we manage to make it from day to day. In my opinion, the only way to survive is to put full faith and trust in God's promises. He promised to never leave us.

When we don't understand why, just trust him!  
When we can't see our way out of a dilemma, trust his purposes!  
When health fails, trust his plan!  
When you lose a loved one, trust his goodness.  
When you're overwhelmed and about to lose all hope just trust him. God is able!

*Prayer: Lord, help me to understand that you are enough.*

Thelma Johnson

February 27, 2018

## **“Trust in the Lord”**

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not to your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.” Proverbs 3:5-6*

On behalf of God, I thank you! Or, I have responded, it wasn't me. I've used these responses many times after I've been complimented on singing a solo. I asked God to sing a solo for me because I may not have practiced what I was asked to sing and because of that I felt uncomfortable.

Many years ago, I did not think to ask God to be with me as I sang a solo. Big mistake! As I reflect over the past years, one moment in my life was when Rev. Fred Booker, Asbury's Youth Coordinator, gave me a solo part. I tried to learn my part but had difficulty in one section of the song. The first part of the words flowed well but when I came to the part where I had difficulty, the only thing that I remember singing was La! La! La! La! La! After that the words came very easy and I finished the song. I've had a few similar experiences since that time.

I will always ask God to sing my solos because my focus will be on Him not on the people who are listening to me sing. I feel His presence! A calm feeling comes over my entire body! Have you ever felt that way?

*Prayer: Lord, I will trust in you always. I will continue to lean on you*

Moretha Johnson

February 28, 2018

## **“I Am Blessed”**

*Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out. Deuteronomy 28:6*

Lord, Lord, Lord, You've been blessing me!

Growing up, I can recall hearing the “older saints” testifying about having a “reasonable portion of health and strength” so often that it seemed like a cliché, but as my years have begun to add up, I can so appreciate the strength and blessing of their testimonies. Often, I believe that we take the Lord's blessings for granted. Just being able to get up in the morning and have the activity of your limbs is a blessing for which many people continually pray.

For the provision of food, clothing, and shelter, I am sincerely grateful. I have family and friends in my life who love me and a purposeful life. Thank you, Lord. One night at bedtime, I counted my troubles and didn't even need all of the fingers on one hand. I started counting my blessings and fell asleep still naming them. Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. (Psalms 23:6).

*Prayer: Thank you, Lord. Your blessings continue to overtake me.*

Stephen Key