Let’s do some spring projects!

Spring is not only a time to feel warm temperatures and enjoy more of the outdoors, but it’s the perfect time to start (or finish) a project! If you’re like me, you already have a list of projects you’ve been waiting to tackle or new opportunities you’re excited to explore.

This spring issue of *Enjoying Everyday Life* is filled with how-to articles to help you take this truly amazing life God’s given you and do some great things with it! You can turn a bad day into a better one. You can partner with others to bring about needed change in the world. You can persevere through your trials and press on to the good things God has in store for you....

Before we get in to all that, I first want you to understand one thing: Your life is not a Do-It-Yourself project. Jesus said, *I am the Vine; you are the branches. Whoever lives in Me and I in him bears much (abundant) fruit. However, apart from Me [cut off from vital union with Me] you can do nothing* (John 15:5). In other words, God is our power source. As we develop a personal relationship with Him—spending time in prayer and studying God’s Word—we progressively grow and mature into all He wants us to be!

If you’ve received Christ as your Savior, you have the seed of everything God is inside of you—His righteousness, holiness, and all the fruit of the Spirit. Getting to know Him is the way to make it grow!

The apostle Paul intended to work with the believers until Christ was fully formed in them (see Galatians 4:12), and that’s what I want to do for you. More than anything, I want you to have the peaceful, joyful, overcoming life that Jesus died to give you. And I hope this magazine helps you get to where you want to be.

While you’re starting to tackle your household how-to projects, I’m praying you’re encouraged to jump into a how-to project for your heart.

**TO LEARN MORE** about Jesus and how to pursue a new life with Him, visit joycemeyer.org/KnowJesus
I have strength for all things in Christ Who empowers me...

— PHILIPPIANS 4:13
“I’m just having a bad day.” I can’t tell you how many times I’ve heard people mutter those words (or muttered them myself).

Maybe the faucet is dripping in the kitchen, your boss is in a bad mood or the car is making that noise again. Any one of those challenges can test our temperament, pollute our perspective, or hijack our joy. “Tomorrow will be better,” we say, subconsciously waving the white flag of surrender on today.

If you’ve ever given up today, waiting for tomorrow, I wrote 20 Ways to Make Every Day Better for you. I believe you can open any chapter at any time, and apply the principle in that chapter to immediately work for you!

You see, I don’t believe for one moment that you have to go through life held hostage by your circumstances. If you’ve accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior, you have the Spirit of God within you. Peace, joy, strength, patience…it’s all yours in Christ.

First John 4:4 says, …He Who lives in you is greater (mightier) than he who is in the world. It’s not about what happens around you…it’s about what is happening in you—and I am thrilled to tell you that you don’t have to just settle for a bad day! There are many things you can choose to do that will make your day better. Here are just a few tips from the book to show you how.
Let’s do a little exercise together. It’s going to require some imagination on your part. We’ll call it “The What If Story…”

What if you grew up in the middle of the United States—somewhere like Wichita, Kansas, and your dream was to live by the ocean—to breathe in the salty air, let sand sink between your toes, feast on fresh seafood and incredible scenic views. So you decided: I’m going for it! I’m going to follow my dream!

You make the necessary arrangements. Your friends all come over and help you pack. You’re on your way to the ocean. But as you drive away, you begin to dread moving such a long distance from home. And as you pass by the Mississippi River, you think: It’s not the ocean, but it’s nice. I’ll just settle here.

Here’s the life-lesson I want you to understand: Mediocrity is the midway point between two destinations. And anytime you set out for the ocean but settle for a river, you’re missing out.

The steps of a [good] man are directed and established by the Lord…

—PSALM 37:23

If you came home today to find your house had been infested with insects—I’m talking about large, disgusting, germ-carrying bugs—what would you do? Would you coexist with the gross insects? Or would you take steps to eradicate them?

I can tell you right now…I would take immediate and aggressive action.

You know, it’s interesting: We will go to great lengths to rid our homes of harmful, disgusting pests and yet we will allow our lives to be full of harmful, disgusting patterns. Why is that?

I want you to get this picture in your mind: dread, fear, anxiety, stress and worry—these are the emotional insects that are scurrying around the corners of our souls. Like bugs, these feelings of worry are unhealthy, unsightly and they prefer the darkness. Rather than co-existing with worry and anxiety, or just hoping they will go away, we should take immediate and aggressive action. We should say emphatically, “There is no way I’m going to allow my life to be overrun by worry!”

... Let us strip off and throw aside every encumbrance (unnecessary weight) and that sin which so readily (deftly and cleverly) clings to and entangles us....

—HEBREWS 12:1
When we are not having a great day ourselves, we rarely feel like helping someone else. Our tendency is to focus on ourselves, and that is actually the worst thing we can do because it increases our misery instead of eliminating it. Here’s an example I think you’ll understand.

What is the best part of Christmas morning or a birthday celebration? It’s not when you get to open your presents (as nice as that may be). The best part is when you watch with anticipation as the people in your life open the gifts you’ve given them. … There is just something wonderful about seeing the joy your gift brings to their faces.

Well, you can experience that feeling of joy and satisfaction more than one or two times a year. You can experience it every day! When you decide to help others, you’re not only going to improve their lives, you’re going to improve your own.

Another way to make every day better is to start dreaming again. Ephesians 3:20 says that God, who is at work within us, can do far more than we would dare to ask or think! I encourage you to dream big, bold, faith-filled dreams for your life. Dream about what the future can hold. Dream about the things you can accomplish with God’s help. Dream about the exciting, adventurous things He has in store!

How can this help you if you’re having a bad day? It’s possible that when you woke up this morning, what you saw was unfinished projects, and you became discouraged. But you can be a “Finisher”—someone who will finish what they start, no matter how long it takes or how difficult it is. Whatever it is that you are working on, or dreaming about, your life will be so much better if you will determine to see it all the way through.
Over the years, I’ve had many people ask me for the key to having a successful life. My answer is always the same—the Bible. Jesus says in John 6:63 that His words are spirit and life. As we read and study the Bible, God transforms who we are and gives us the desire and ability to be more like Him.

So, where do you begin? Here’s a couple quick tips...

**Use a Bible translation that you can understand.** I personally like the Amplified Bible (Classic Edition) because it expounds on the original Greek and Hebrew. However, the key is using something that works for you.

**Don’t get caught up in how much time you are spending.** I think some good advice is to just start somewhere. Begin by just taking fifteen minutes a day. If you want to form a habit of reading God’s Word, start small and go from there.

**Read and study the Bible with a specific need in mind.** For instance, if I’m having a hard time forgiving someone, then I look up scriptures on that subject and allow God’s Word to help me.

Perhaps you are at a point in your life where you are ready to begin studying the Bible. If so, I want to encourage you to take a moment right now and ask God to help you get started. As you do, you’ll find that the Word of God is one thing you just can’t live without.

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joycemeyer.org/study
For years, Joyce Meyer Ministries has been reaching out in many ways to women and girls all around the world. We are personally seeing the incredible impact God has made in their lives... and we know He is calling us to do even more.

That is why I’m so excited to tell you about a new initiative we are launching—we’re calling it Project GRL. It is something very close to Joyce’s heart, and it’s a way to bring the love and healing power of Jesus Christ into the lives of more women and girls than ever before.

So, what is Project GRL? Let me begin by sharing a quick story...
When we travel to share with you what God is doing around the world, I’m often with a small production team made up of a great group of guys and me—the only woman.

On one trip, while in a restaurant in a foreign country, the server took all of the guy’s orders and began to walk away. I told him I hadn’t ordered yet and he didn’t respond. Then one of the men told him the same thing, so the server returned and took my order.

When the food came, all of the gentlemen were served but there was nothing for me. Assuming that mine was still coming, we waited. In a while the server walked by and I asked about my meal. Without a glance in my direction he continued walking.

More time passed. The waiter came back to see how the guys were doing and I again asked about my order. The whole meal went by and I still had no food until one of the guys on my team said firmly, “She needs her food. You need to go get her food.” Finally, my meal was delivered.

Now, this certainly was not a big deal, but I was annoyed—in fact, I was angry. Not just because my meal came late, but what really struck me was the feeling that I was invisible. I wasn’t worth their time because I was a woman.

Then God reminded me that this annoyance was just the tiniest glimpse into the lives of many women and girls around the world. He began laying it on my heart to take a good look at the women around me, to really see what they’re facing and to look at the circumstances that we could help change.

Many women and girls feel invisible—or worse.
I’ve seen girls unable to attend school because they must spend full days walking to gather water; women looked upon as lower than the livestock they tend; and young women held captive and forced into sexual slavery.

I’ve seen brokenhearted mothers forced to give up their daughters, sacrificing to save their lives; and women of all ages so beaten down by the words of others that they cannot see how cherished they are by their heavenly Father.

As a mother of two daughters, these injustices make my heart ache and I am furious. And I’m reminded that it’s not enough to see the problem—we must take action to spark change.

Joyce Meyer Ministries and Hand of Hope have been reaching out to women and girls around the world for years. We’ve seen the impact that God can have in their lives, and we know that He is calling us to do even more.

That is why we are excited to announce a new initiative we’re calling Project GRL. Working to Guide, Restore and Love. And we are inviting you to join us as we help women and girls by providing education, feeding and fresh water programs, human trafficking initiatives and at the core of it all, sharing that they are precious daughters of the King.

This fight is especially near to Joyce’s heart. Because of the sexual abuse she experienced, she has great empathy for women being mistreated in any way. God has healed her shattered soul, and she wants the same for girls everywhere who are dealing with unimaginable circumstances.

Without a doubt, together we can change their lives!

If like Joyce, you have experienced the healing power of Christ deep in your soul...If like me, you have daughters and would do anything to protect them... If it breaks your heart to see the injustice women and girls are suffering, then join us.

Together, through Project GRL, we can do more than we have ever done before. Through word and deed, we will tell young women they have the freedom to dream and have a voice to change the world. We’ll tell them God has a great plan for them and created them in His image.

We will tell them they’re beautiful and that God loves them...and He created them to be a girl.

Ginger Stache is the Chief Media Officer for Joyce Meyer Ministries.

To learn more about our new Project GRL initiative, you can visit us online at joycemeyer.org/ProjectGRL
**NADIESTA**
Every day, Nadiesta and her children walked a dangerous path through the Amazon jungle to gather water until one day her daughter Rosa was bitten by a poisonous snake and miraculously survived. Today, Nadiesta is incredibly grateful for the freshwater well and church right in their village, sparing her family treacherous hours of walking.

**ANA (RIGHT)**
Ana hated who she was after suffering abuse. Joyce’s resources taught her the truth of God’s love for her and she is now free to love herself.

**NANDINI (LEFT)**
When she was born, her father was so upset she wasn’t a boy that he brutally beat her mother. He also threatened to kill Nandini. Today she is in a safe, loving environment in one of our children’s homes outside of Hyderabad, India.

**LYDIA, ANNA & GRACE**
These young best friends live in a culture that would force them into horrible sexual rituals and treat them as lower than the donkeys that carry their water. But they are free from these dangers because of a school built by Hand of Hope, offering them an education, knowledge of Christ and hope for a bright future.

**LINEO**
Lineo left home at the age of 13 and found herself a victim of sex trafficking. Today Lineo is free and restored, and her beautiful singing voice echoes through the beautiful Lesotho mountains.

**NADIESTA**
Every day, Nadiesta and her children walked a dangerous path through the Amazon jungle to gather water until one day her daughter Rosa was bitten by a poisonous snake and miraculously survived. Today, Nadiesta is incredibly grateful for the freshwater well and church right in their village, sparing her family treacherous hours of walking.
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IT’S TIME FOR MORE JESUS, LESS DRAMA

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IT’S TIME FOR MORE JESUS, LESS DRAMA
At Joyce Meyer Ministries, there’s always a lot happening. Articles are being written, testimonies followed up on, programs are being produced for TV and radio, not to mention the flurry of activity involved in social media. Sometimes however, a story comes along that’s so amazing, it literally stops us in our work, our mouths gaping open in astonishment.

At Joyce’s Denver conference in August 2016, we learned of a family of girls whose lives were dramatically impacted, after learning of children in Africa, who were getting sick from drinking dirty, diseased water.

Sherry Meade’s 10-year-old twin daughters, Brianna and Bethany, along with their cousin, 12-year-old Annabelle, were watching the Enjoying Everyday Life TV program and saw a story of two sisters around their ages in Africa, bathing in filthy water, and suffering from drinking that same diseased water. One of the sisters had passed away from waterborne illness, which was very impactful, especially to the twins, who couldn’t imagine losing their sister. Moved with compassion, the girls combined their savings, but soon realized they didn’t have enough to help much. Undeterred, the girls prayed for God to reveal a plan to make money for a water well in Africa.

God led them to start doing something they already enjoyed—making the popular rubber-band bracelets to sell. At first, they had trouble getting anyone to buy the bracelets, but they stayed faithful, emptying their piggy banks and contributing their own money to the wells fund. Soon, people began buying their bracelets. They collected nearly $200—a great start toward providing water for one of the African villages. Sherry said, “Once people saw they were serious and determined to raise the money, they started buying the bracelets. I think God also wanted to see that they were serious, and He blessed them, so they could be a blessing to others.”

Their efforts were rewarded when Sherry and the girls attended Joyce’s conference in Denver, and presented Dave Meyer with a box, bedecked in butterflies, containing enough money to partially fund the digging of a well. It was very exciting for the girls to see Joyce on stage, holding their box as she explained to the audience about how they worked to raise money for children they may never meet, this side of heaven.

The girls are not finished raising money for water wells in Africa. They are still making the bracelets and doing what they can to raise money. Their next goal is to fully fund the digging of a well, so that these parents and children can have clean water for drinking, cooking, bathing, or whatever they need.

As Joyce pointed out at the conference, “To God, the contents of their box is worth more than the largest offering, because He saw what went into it.”

“Moved with compassion, the girls combined their savings... prayed for God to reveal a plan to make money for a water well.”
We usually don’t get excited about going through difficult times. When trouble comes, it’s easy to have an attitude that says, Why is this happening? or This shouldn’t be happening to me!

However, when we truly understand the value of trials, we can learn to go through them with joy.

The Bible actually tells us that trials are good for us. James 1:2-3 says, Consider it wholly joyful, my brethren, whenever you are enveloped in or encounter trials of any sort or fall into various temptations. Be assured and understand that the trial and proving of your faith bring out endurance and steadfastness and patience.

When things get tough, our first reaction is to want to run from the pain. We look for ways to minimize our problems and the things that bother us. However, trials can do amazing things for us if we choose to not run away! They have the ability to develop patience and perseverance.

The Greek Dictionary says patience is a fruit of the Spirit that grows only under trial. In fact, the word patience comes from the root word hupone, which means to “remain under.”! Patience has to do with being steadfast, disciplined and committed—not running from difficult things, but sticking with them all the way through.

For instance, I’ll never forget the church my husband, Dave, and I attended in the early years of our marriage. There came a time when I desired to teach a church Bible study in my home. However, for whatever reason, the leadership didn’t want me to.

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ENJOYING EVERYDAY LIFE
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My first impulse was to say, “I’m out of here!” and run from the situation. But I knew in my heart that God not only wanted us to stay, He wanted me to maintain a good attitude regardless of how uncomfortable it was. God wanted me to “remain under” and grow right where He put me!

You see, patience is like a muscle: the more you use it, the stronger it gets. As you stick with God and allow Him to help, and strengthen you in the midst of your difficult circumstances, you will continue to grow stronger... and eventually find that the things that used to bother you aren’t so difficult anymore.

**TRIALS HELP US CHANGE**

Trials and suffering don’t originate from God, but He will use them to help us develop our faith and grow up spiritually. Sometimes He allows us to get into some uncomfortable situations because He knows it will eventually bring out the best in us.

Trials often cause us to see things about ourselves that we normally wouldn’t see. They force us to change and address the issues in our lives.

For years, I blamed my problems on everyone else. It was always Dave’s fault because he played too much golf; it was the kids’ fault because they didn’t help me enough around the house; or it was my dad’s fault because he abused me.

It wasn’t unusual for our house to be filled with strife and contention. I often say...
that I got along with everyone just fine...until they came home.

Thankfully, the Lord used my circumstances to help me understand that I was the reason for much of the turmoil in my life. However, before I saw the problem, I couldn’t make any progress!

God has a tremendous plan for each of our lives, and He wants to greatly bless us. However, He can’t bless our circumstances beyond the level of our maturity spiritually.

For example, I prayed for years for my ministry to grow. But if God would have given me everything I wanted before I was spiritually mature enough, it would have only hurt me. It may sound strange, but now I am so grateful for the hard times because they’ve helped bring me to where I am today.

When you feel like things aren’t happening the way you want, when you want, I encourage you to trust God’s perfect timing. He knows what you can handle, and He always has your very best interest in mind.

TRUSTING GOD THROUGH THE TRIAL

When trials and tribulations come, the greatest thing we can possibly do is trust God. When something’s not going our way, instead of getting upset, we can trust that He will ultimately work out the situation for good (see Romans 8:28).

Are you going through something difficult today? Is there a trial that threatens to overwhelm you? If so, I want you to meditate on Isaiah 41:10.

God says, Fear not [there is nothing to fear], for I am with you; do not look around you in terror and be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen and harden you to difficulties, yes, I will help you....

The good news is that Jesus is with you through every trial, and you are going to come out stronger on the other side.

God never promised us a trouble-free life, but He does promise to never leave us or forsake us (see Hebrews 13:5). In the hard times, we can take comfort knowing that God loves us tremendously. He has His eye on us, and He is already working behind the scenes to help us (see Romans 8:38-39; Psalm 33:18).

Remember, what you’re going through now isn’t going to last forever. When I’m going through a hard time, I like to remind myself, This too shall pass. In the meantime, you can choose to place your trust in God and allow Him to give you joy in the midst of what you’re going through.

After all, He’s the One Who loves you unconditionally...and He’s the One Who can turn your trials into something great.

The Book of James has so much to say about the value of trials, growing up spiritually, and enjoying a successful Christian life. Joyce’s new Bible study of the Book of James will help you walk through each chapter and apply it to your life in a meaningful way.

Build your faith.

Walk through James chapter by chapter with Joyce

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How do you respond when life gets difficult? When you truly understand the value of trials, you can learn to go through them with joy.

We all go through trials—they are a part of life! But it’s how we go through them that makes all the difference.

**DO YOU WANT TO MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR TRIALS?**
Then carry this promise from the Lord with you all along the way.

**Trials may not feel joyous, but we can consider them so if we know what they do for us after they have done their work in us.** A woman may have pain in labor while delivering a child, yet she simultaneously has joy because she knows the final outcome!

Have you ever gone through a difficult situation that eventually brought about something good?

**EXPLAIN.**

What trial or difficult situation are you currently going through? What is the outcome you are hoping for?

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"Don’t be afraid, for I AM WITH YOU ..."

—Isaiah 41:10
What does God’s Word say we should do during trying times? How can you put this into practice in your current situation?

Joyce’s article discusses several things trials can accomplish in our lives. In light of this, how specifically can God use your present circumstances to strengthen you and help you grow?

Trials are not evidence of God’s displeasure and anger. Even when we make mistakes and bring problems upon ourselves, the Bible says God will use them for our good as we trust Him!

READ: ROMANS 8:1, 18, 38-39; 1 JOHN 1:9

TRY THIS: The next time you feel guilty or tempted to think God is mad at you, simply and sincerely ask His forgiveness for anything you have done, then choose to believe what His Word says.

SAY ALOUD: “God loves me unconditionally, and there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

Remember:

“What you’re going through now isn’t going to last forever. It’s important to remind yourself, This too shall pass.” —Joyce

Don’t give up—keep moving forward!
Songs of joy and the rumblings of tiny dancing feet fill Mrs. Feziwe Mdoniana’s classroom. It’s a new school day and these children are beyond excited to eat their porridge and learn.

Each weekday, the preschoolers wake up early to walk the winding dirt roads that lead to their brand-new one-room classroom made from recycled shipping containers. That’s right: shipping containers that are repurposed as life-bringing, life-changing classrooms in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. This Joyce Meyer Ministries, Hand of Hope initiative—called Classrooms of Hope—provides a happy place of refuge for many children in this province, where poverty and crime abound and a good education is hard to come by.

The new, well-insulated classrooms are outfitted with doors and large windows, and replace dilapidated structures that leaked when it rained or were near collapse. Instead of students regularly getting sick because they were exposed to rain and cold outside, they are safe, warm and able to better concentrate on what they’re learning. They also serve as feeding centers, where the children will receive a nutritious meal provided by our friends and partners. And the most exciting part is that each Classroom of Hope is becoming a conversation point—a light for the message of Christ—for the surrounding communities and villages. We are seeing so many lives impacted for good as they see God’s love in action.

Before the Classrooms of Hope were installed in Feziwe Mdoniana’s village, she struggled to find a suitable place where she could hold preschool. Her previous schoolroom was an old mud structure with cracks in the walls, a weak roof and shaky metal sheets that covered the windows. In fact, one day, strong, windy weather stormed through the area and the building collapsed, leaving her moving from house to house in search of another teaching space.

Some people may have considered giving up after so much opposition, but not Mdoniana. “I was made by God to love children,” she says through tears. So she prayed for a safe place where she could nurture her little ones.

She remembers the very day God answered her prayer. “It was on a Friday... Everybody in the community was outside looking for those trucks (that were delivering the Classrooms of Hope),” she recalls. “My heart was so happy.”

Implementing a feeding program has also met a particularly crucial need in her village, and she’s seen an increase in attendance since that started. “It’s very important for them to get the nutritious food,” she says. “(For some children) there’s no food at home.”

For instance, when 5-year-old Ncubeko started coming to Mdoniana’s preschool, he was so malnourished he was almost not used to eating. He was much smaller than the other children and kept to himself. That’s because his...
CLASSROOMS OF HOPE

These amazing children in the Eastern Cape of South Africa now have a safe place to play, eat a nutritious meal and learn about the love of Christ.
Nothing says hope has come like smiling, giggling, playing and prayers of thanksgiving for their new classrooms. If a picture is worth a thousand words, we'll happily wait and see how these precious faces change the world!
grandmother has been caring for him since his mother died and she simply hasn’t had enough food to feed her family.

The Classrooms of Hope have made a huge difference in Ncubeko’s life. He’s now receiving the nourishment he needs from regular meals through the feeding program. He is growing stronger every day and has come to enjoy climbing on the jungle gym with the other children. He’s also hearing Bible stories that teach him how much God loves him.

Little Mbangatha goes to the same preschool. She was severely malnourished when she began attending. The sweet 5-year-old lives with her grandmother, who struggles with alcoholism and doesn’t have any income to feed her. She often comes to school without any food and had become an easy target for bullies because of her smaller size and tattered clothing.

But when Mdoniana saw how much the girl was suffering, she stepped in to nurse her back to health—feeding her twice a day until she grew stronger. Her health has improved drastically since coming to school, and she is even coming out of her shell and making friends.

“(Mbangatha) likes the school because she knows that she will get food here,” Mdoniana says.

In another village several hours away, we met Memory, a shy 6-year-old who was jumping rope with her friends. She has had an especially difficult year. This year, her mother became ill and died very suddenly, and her father—who is an alcoholic—has disappeared from her life.

Because of these horrible circumstances, Memory would have been on her own quite a bit. But a community of loving teachers has come around her to provide her with the attention and care she needs. Memory now attends one of our Classrooms of Hope, where she’s in a safe environment instead of being by herself at her house and potentially in danger. And her teachers are helping her work through her emotions so she can better deal with the loss of her mother.

Memory’s classmate, Akhana, wants to be a nurse when she grows up so she can care for the sick. She remembers the preschool’s former classroom well. "It was very cold," the 7-year-old says. “Especially in the winter, I had a hard time concentrating on my work. There were some leaks on the rainy days, and I could feel the wind coming in when it was windy.”

The new classrooms have really helped her focus on her schoolwork, and the regular meal she receives has helped her family. “It is a beautiful class and keeps me warm and safe,” she says.

These are just some of the many lives you are helping in the Eastern Cape through your partnership with Joyce Meyer Ministries, Hand of Hope. And there’s so much more to be done. In 2017, our goal is for 20 new classrooms to be completed, so that many more children will have the opportunity for a hope-filled future. Thank you so much for helping us provide a way to keep little ones safe. You are making it possible for them to learn to read and write, and you’re helping them understand that there is a loving God in heaven who has a great plan for their lives. We couldn’t do any of this without you!

JOIN US IN HELPING MORE CHILDREN & REACHING OUR GOAL OF INSTALLING 50 CLASSROOMS OF HOPE OVER THE NEXT 3 YEARS.

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That is how my wife, Tara, and I felt the day the doctor told us that our youngest son, Kaleb had autism. For several years we had noticed behavior that seemed extreme for a child of his age and with his upbringing. Don’t get me wrong. There were plenty of good things like the fact that at 18 months old he could form full sentences that made perfect sense. But there were also concerning things like severe tantrums that could happen for the smallest reasons. At times he would even lash out in physical violence. So when the doctor said “autism,” we realized this was not going to be a temporary thing; it was a lifelong thing for us. And we were scared.

Being a parent of a child with autism changes your life dramatically. You go from expecting that your child will grow up and do all the things that little boys and little girls do when they get older, to wondering if they will be able to live on their own as an adult or if they will develop the social skills required to even hold a job. You are concerned for their safety, because not everyone knows how to properly handle their sometimes difficult behavior. Not to mention the nightmare stories of some teachers and caregivers physically and verbally abusing special needs families and the church.

Hand of Hope Teams Up with Play Differently to Make a Difference

BY JASON DIEKMANN, Staff Web Producer

That is how my wife, Tara, and I felt the day the doctor told us that our youngest son, Kaleb had autism. For several years we had noticed behavior that seemed extreme for a child of his age and with his upbringing.

Don’t get me wrong. There were plenty of good things like the fact that at 18 months old he could form full sentences that made perfect sense. But there were also concerning things like severe tantrums that could happen for the smallest reasons. At times he would even lash out in physical violence. So when the doctor said “autism,” we realized this was not going to be a temporary thing; it was a lifelong thing for us. And we were scared.

Getting the diagnosis from the doctor that your child has special needs can feel like your world is falling apart. It can be scary. You are instantly thrown into a world that is unknown to you.
children out of frustration… and you realize your child may never tell you they were treated this way because they lack the communication skills necessary to explain the situation.

In the middle of all of this, you try to look to the good. We’re so thankful that there are many great programs and resources available for special needs children. However, these programs are typically not faith-based. They can give training, encouragement, and respite care but there is still something missing from these programs.

With that, church attendance for families with special needs children can become difficult. In some cases, church attendance becomes a special occasion. Some couples take turns going to church alone because they could not take their child with them to service. However, many families simply quit going to church.

Hand of Hope saw this need and partnered with Gateway:61 a church in Chesterfield, Missouri, to launch Play Differently, a ministry designed to give families with special needs children an opportunity to attend church together and a safe place for respite care. The staff volunteers are specially trained and some are even special education teachers in nearby school districts.

I had the privilege of attending the grand opening of Play Differently’s sensory and mobility rooms in October. As I spoke with the parents of the children that attended, I heard the most wonderful stories.

One such story is from Alisa. While fighting back tears, she told me how her 10-year-old daughter Olivia loves coming to Play Differently each week. Olivia tells her mom that it is her favorite thing to do and that she is excited to see her friends. This isn’t a typical response and hearing Olivia say this is really special to both of her parents and they will do anything they can to bring her.

I heard stories just like this from all of the parents while I was there. For the first time in their lives, these children were excited to come to church, to see their friends, parents were able to attend church without stressing that their children might be having a difficult time. They were at church...as a family.

The wonderful news is that programs like Play Differently are beginning to pop up at churches all over the nation. With the deeper understanding of special needs and implementation of programs like this in our communities, families like mine are finding places to worship with other believers. My family would not be where it is today without the support that we have found through these types of programs.

Relief in War-Torn Syria

Day after day, families in Syria are making the excruciating decision to flee their homes, because innocent lives are being lost and fear is running rampant. So we’re doing what we can to share the love of Christ with those in the middle of this horrible war and refugee crisis.

Recently, we partnered with a great organization on the ground in Syria, who is feeding thousands of men, women and children fleeing the country, as well as those fighting to survive in and around Aleppo and Mosul, Iraq. This effort joins our already established outreach to refugees with Heart for Lebanon.

They recently shared that “At the core of violence and conflict, is fear.” So we ask that you would pray with us that through these outreaches, God’s perfect love (see 1 John 4:18) would combat fear and bring a renewed hope to the people of Syria.

Home Groups Meet All Across India

An exciting new initiative, Joyce Meyer Ministries and Hand of Hope worked with local faith leaders to establish thousands of Home Groups all over India that teach families about the Bible and how to walk out their newly discovered Christian life.

Scott Norling, Director of our India office said this: “When people come to faith in Christ in households, the likelihood of them being discipled is very high and really energizes the church.”

Watch GOD WORK WONDERS

Join our humble band of wound-dressing, tooth-pulling world-changers! Volunteer for an upcoming medical/dental missions trip to Zambia, Brazil, Guatemala and Swaziland. Learn more at joycemeyer.org/MedicalMissions
ON SEPTEMBER 17, 1787, our nation’s delegates gathered in the Assembly Room of the Pennsylvania State House to sign a document that would forever change history—the Constitution of the United States of America.

Our Constitution was an entirely new form of government—a republic that placed the power in the hands of the people and safeguarded the godly principles of our Founding Fathers through a unique system of checks and balances.

Our Founders firmly believed the hand of God directed the writing of the Constitution and they had complete confidence that it embodied everything this country would ever need to succeed. And indeed, it has served the United States well for over two hundred years.1

However, a little more than a hundred years after its inception, a movement began that would attempt to revise the document’s original intent.

“Relative” Danger — Until the 1900s, our courts strictly adhered to the Constitution, fully embracing our Founder’s biblical philosophy. However, at the turn of the century, a new philosophy arose among many of our judges and educators—relativism. It would prove to be our Constitution’s greatest enemy for the next 115 years.

What is relativism? It’s the belief that “views are to be evaluated relative to the societies or cultures in which they appear and are not to be judged true or false, good or bad. There are no absolute standards... man is the measure of all things.”2

When applied in law, relativism is called “legal positivism” and is characterized by these four major tenets:

★ There are no objective, God-given standards of law.
★ Since God is not the author of law, the author of law must be man.
★ Since man and society evolve, therefore law must evolve.
★ Judges guide the evolution of law through their decisions.3

There was no greater advocate for legal positivism than Christopher Langdell. As Dean of Harvard Law, Langdell applied Darwin’s premise of evolution to the constitution. He reasoned that since man evolved, then his laws must also evolve—and judges should be the ones to make it happen.
As a result, Langdell introduced the “case-law study” method in which students would study judges’ previous decisions rather than the Constitution—a method eventually adopted by law schools across America.

In time, students who embraced positivism were gradually appointed to the Supreme Court, ushering in a new era. Perhaps no statement exemplifies this period more than the famous words of Charles Evans Hughes, who served as Chief Justice from 1930 to 1941.

“We are under a Constitution,” said Hughes. “But the Constitution is what the judges say it is.”

The Tipping Point — The United States now had two distinctly opposite ways of interpreting the constitution. The difference was summed up by U.S. Attorney General Edwin Meese:

"Under the old system the question was how to read the Constitution. Under the new approach, the question is whether to read the Constitution."

By the early 1960s, we had reached a tipping point, and legal positivism became the enforced standard. The new decisions being handed down by the Supreme Court reflected these standards and touched nearly every area of society.

In 1962, the Supreme Court took prayer out of public schools. In 1963, they then prohibited these same schools from having Bibles in their classrooms.

Combined with Judge Hugo Black’s 1947 decision that redefined the First Amendment and demanded a “separation of church and state,” these new laws branched into every area, slowly erasing God from American society.

Simultaneously, the recent teaching of moral relativism in our universities—rejecting the cultural and moral values of our past—had also reached a tipping point, leading to increased drug use, immorality and anti-American sentiment among our nation’s youth.

Together, these forces combined in 1962 and 1963 to create one of the greatest societal shifts in American history:

Teen Pregnancy — In 1962, the birth rate for unwed teenagers (ages 15-19) was at a decade low before rising sharply to a 50% increase in 1970...on its way to a 200% increase in 1993.

Violent Behavior — From 1951 to 1962, the annual number of violent crimes in America rose from 160,000 to 250,000. However, 1962 signaled an abrupt shift, with violent crimes rising to 750,000 in 1972 on its way to 1.9 million in 1993.

Education — In 1963, the average SAT exam score was 980, the highest it had been in more than a decade. It then significantly dropped each year after—plummeting to 920 in 1974, eventually down to 890 in 1980.

A Delicate Balance —
Certainly, there are occasions when governments do need to change and make social adjustments. The ending of slavery and a woman’s right to vote are perfect examples.

However, Article V of the Constitution clearly defines that these changes should originate from the people. It establishes the proper way for us to adjust or “evolve” our government through Congress and legislation—not through independent revisions by the Supreme Court.

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MEMORIAL DAY 2017

On May 29, our country will celebrate Memorial Day, honoring the more than 1.3 million men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice for this country. They made it possible for us to live in the most exceptional nation on the face of the earth.

WE WILL NEVER FORGET.

When the Supreme Court chose to evolve society through taking prayer and the Bible out of schools, it was more than a revision of our constitution—it was also contrary to the will of the people.

For instance, major polls taken by Gallup and other large news organizations show that three-fourths of the nation still approved of voluntary school prayer years after the decision was turned into law.8

Maybe worst of all, most Americans had no knowledge of these changes until it was too late.

Protecting America’s Destiny — Just as God has a specific destiny for each one of our lives, He also has an incredible destiny for America. However, protecting our destiny begins with protecting our constitution and the very foundation upon which it was built.

How do we do that? It all begins with knowing our true history—discovering who we are, where we came from, and the sacrifices that were made so we can enjoy freedom.

Benjamin Franklin said, “A nation of well-informed men who have been taught to know and prize the rights which God has given them cannot be enslaved. It is in the region of ignorance that tyranny begins.”

We have already begun to see this come to pass. In recent years, many of our rights have been stolen due to ignorance and simply not knowing what to do. That’s why it’s so important to educate ourselves about America’s past, because history defines our rights and reveals our responsibilities.

In short, when we educate ourselves, we not only discover what to do (our responsibilities), but we also receive the passion and motivation to do it!

Our founders often used the phrase “eternal vigilance.” It describes the constant readiness to protect what God has given us and defend it at any cost. Yes, God is our Protector, but we also have a major part to play.

I often say that God has a part and we have a part. We can’t do God’s part, and He will not do our part. However, as we take appropriate action to defend what the Lord has given us, He will do His part to lead, guide, protect and bless this nation.

This is a special time in history. America is at a crossroads, and the direction it takes is up to us. I believe we can begin to take back what has been lost, but it’s going to require understanding our responsibilities and taking action. I encourage you to:

★ Participate in civil government as opportunities allow.
★ Vote for godly leaders who want to protect our Constitution.
★ Contact your representatives to promote policies that are constitutional.
★ Pray for God to change the hearts of our leaders and the American people.

Will you join me? Together, with God’s help, we can preserve the true foundation of this country. We can protect this national treasure before it’s too late. ★
When we attended the 10-year anniversary celebration of Mercy Multiplied (a Christian organization that helps young women break free from life-controlling behaviors) in the St. Louis, Missouri area, one of the young ladies who graduated from the program shared an eye-opening testimony. She said that her father committed suicide when she was a teenager and the pain of that situation led her to start drinking and taking drugs. When she realized her life was falling apart, she went to Mercy Multiplied for help.

The thing that really struck me was when she shared that as she went through the program, she came to realize that her problem started at the time her father committed suicide because it made her angry that he took his life and left their family—that was the root of it all. And she couldn’t get well and overcome her addiction to drugs and alcohol until she got over being angry with him.
Many times we have issues in our lives because we’re angry about something but we don’t know it. I believe that for many people, the root of their problem is due to the fact that they are angry at God because their lives haven’t turned out right, or they are angry with someone who has hurt them. They may even be angry at themselves for some reason.

The word “anger” is one letter away from “danger.” Benjamin Franklin is quoted as saying, “Whatever is begun in anger ends in shame,” and “Anger is never without a reason, but it seldom has a good one.” It’s so important for us to be aware of any anger issues we have because they can become dangerous and create damage in our lives.

Our Anger Epidemic  We live in an angry society, and we see the effects of it in problems like road rage, which has surged over the last few years. I recently researched statistics on anger and discovered that an estimated 1 out of 5 Americans has an anger management problem. According to an article I read in Newsweek, people are coming out in droves asking for help with anger management. Enrollment in anger management classes is booming and the demand for counselors is at an all-time high.

While there are helpful resources people can find, like anger management classes, we need to understand that the Holy Spirit is the ultimate anger management Counselor! Jesus says in John 14:26 (AMP), *But the Helper (Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor—Counselor, Strengthener, Standby), the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name…He will teach you all things…* We can be confident that when we go to God, He will give us the help we need to face the truth about ourselves and overcome our problems.

What Anger Looks Like  Dallas Willard, who was a professor of philosophy at the University of Southern California for 47 years and a bestselling Christian author, defines anger as “a feeling that seizes us in our body and immediately impels us toward interfering with, and possibly even harming, those who have thwarted our will and interfered with our life.” He also says, “Anger will evoke anger on the other side.” In other words, one person’s anger feeds another person’s anger.

We all get opportunities to be angry. You may not be the kind of person who gets road rage, but you may still get angry over what the Bible calls trifling (ill-informed, unedifying, stupid) controversies over ignorant questionings that foster strife and breed quarrels (2 Timothy 2:23).

I wasted so many years of my life being angry about things that didn’t really matter and trying to control people I was never going to be able to control. The truth is, there is nothing better than peace! And God’s peace in our souls equals power in our lives.
If you want more power and energy in your life, you can’t be angry all the time.

**TYPES OF ANGER** There are different kinds of anger and ways it is expressed. For example, one type blazes up suddenly and then subsides just as quickly. This happens when you’re at the grocery store and someone bumps into you with their cart. You are instantly irritated but then get over it in a moment and move on.

There’s also a kind of anger that is more settled in your soul; it’s an abiding condition in the mind, frequently with a view toward revenge. This type takes root in you when you think about something someone has done to you over and over and over... The more you think about it, the bigger it becomes until it’s blown out of proportion. The result is a big mountain of anger over something that wasn’t that big of a deal to begin with but is now a controlling factor in your life.

Sometimes we’re provoked to take action, expressing anger verbally or physically. There was a time when, if I was angry, I would withdraw and avoid the person I was mad at as much as possible. For example, if I was mad at Dave, I’d sleep as far away from him on the bed as I could get. My attitude was, *Don’t touch me!* And I refused to ask him to do anything for me. It was so ridiculous because there were nights when he had the cover and I was cold all night because of my foolish anger.

A deep root of resentment can cause us to say negative, insulting, unkind things, and sometimes we do this, acting like we’re just kidding. In reality, it’s what the Bible calls “course jesting” (see Ephesians 5:4). When people are angry with themselves, they say downgrading things about themselves or they take it out on others. Oftentimes, this behavior is tied to a root of guilt about something they’ve done or are doing, but instead of facing it, they put the blame on everyone and everything else.

**FIND FREEDOM FROM ANGER** In order to be free from anything, we have to face truth and take responsibility for our behavior. Blaming other people or circumstances and making excuses never changes anything.

John 8:31-32 teaches us that if we abide in Christ, continually obeying His teachings, we will know the truth and the truth will set us free! I want to encourage you to go to God first when you are angry. Tell Him honestly how you feel and make a determined decision to forgive. There is no sense wasting your life being angry about something that happened years ago—or even something that happened earlier today.

Take a few moments and pray something like this: “I need Your help, Lord, to deal with my anger. I thank You that because of Your love, grace, mercy and the power of the Holy Spirit in my life, I don’t have to act on those foolish feelings that can cause problems in my life and hurt me and others.” Spend time quietly waiting on God with an open heart to hear what He has to say to you. Study what His Word says about anger and being angry. And trust Him to make some positive, healthy changes that will bring more of His peace and power into your life.


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MICHAEL W. SMITH is a Grammy and Dove Award-winning artist, who has sold more than 18 million albums worldwide. For more than 35 years, he has used his music to uplift and inspire people with the message of hope in Christ.

We recently connected with Michael to discuss music, ministry, family...and joining Joyce this September to lead worship at her 35th Anniversary Love Life Women’s Conference.

You’ve written literally hundreds of songs throughout your career. What makes a great song?

I’d first say great songs are hard to write! There are a lot of “good” songs out there (and let’s be honest, some not-so-good ones, too), but there are few of what I would consider GREAT songs.

The late great American songwriter Leon Russell said every songwriter has one great one in them, and if they can get that right they’ve really accomplished something.

A truly great song has a long shelf-life—it sticks around for a long, long time. It moves people, it changes them, it can impact their very mood or spirit. They are indeed few and far between, but they are certainly special.
So many of your songs address relationships and loving those around you. Why is it important for love to begin at home?

Well, there is an amazing quote from Mother Teresa that says, “If you want to change the world, go home and love your family.” As they sometimes say here in the South: “That’ll preach!”

What role does your family play in your music and ministry?

They have EVERYTHING to do with my music and ministry. They motivate me, they inspire me...and they’re the reason I can’t wait to get home after a run of concert dates!

You’ve been a big advocate for reaching the mission field “all around us.” What are some practical examples?

I think having a global mindset is important and it’s our responsibility to help those less fortunate than us, regardless of distance. But I think it’s also important to remember there is a tremendous mission field in our own backyard.

Most of us are set in fairly predictable routines—we go to the same grocery store or office week after week. Think about the route you take every day. Is there a homeless man sitting in the same spot week in and week out? Do you see the same young person standing on the corner?

There are opportunities all around us every day to be the hands and feet of Jesus to someone in need. It might be your next door neighbor; it might be the son or daughter of a close friend. All around you, there are people who need compassion and need to be introduced to Jesus.

How has serving others impacted your life—whether it’s through music, missions, or day-to-day life?

If you know much about me, you probably know I started a teen club called Rocketown. Rocketown serves as a safe haven for kids that might otherwise fall to drugs, gangs or just hopelessness.

Since we opened, we have literally had over a million kids walk through our doors. And for the staff at Rocketown, that is their mission field. What a privilege to have the opportunity to share Christ with kids that might otherwise never hear the Good News.

You’ve played at a lot of men’s conferences. How does it feel to know you’ll be leading worship for a stadium full of women at Joyce’s conference this Fall?

Oh, I’m really looking forward to that night! I have tremendous respect for Joyce and the impact she’s had on countless people.

I really look forward to being in St. Louis with her. From what I have heard about her conferences, the crowd will be ready to worship and I am so excited to be a part of it all!

What’s next for you? Are there any new projects we should look forward to?

I am in the studio now working on a new project, but I’m not totally sure what that looks like at this point. I feel like something is stirring inside of me that could be different than anything I have ever done so far. No parameters—a leap of faith. At the end of the day, you just have to be who you are. Let the adventure begin!

1. **WHERE DID YOU GET THE NICKNAME “SMITTY”**?
   I’ve had that nickname as long as I can remember! All my friends that I played ball with started calling me Smitty at a very young age.

2. **WHAT’S YOUR PERFECT DAY?**
   Breakfast with my wife…a walk around Radnor Lake with my mentor and pastor Don Finto…some alone time in the studio…an evening with my wife and kids and grandkids.

3. **WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE IF YOU WEREN’T A MUSICIAN?**
   I had dreams of playing professional baseball. And hopefully being a very hip youth pastor.

4. **WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST JOB?**
   Bagging groceries.

5. **AN INSTRUMENT YOU WISHED YOU COULD PLAY:**
   Electric guitar, like Stu G (of Delirious?)

6. **WHAT’S SOMETHING MOST PEOPLE DON’T KNOW ABOUT YOU?**
   I am an introvert...and a people person at the same time.

7. **WHAT DOES THE “W” STAND FOR?**
   Whitaker! It’s a family name.

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**THESE CONFERENCES ARE MADE FOR YOU!**

**DO IT AFRAID!**
“God moved fear out of me to drive the 2 hours from Baltimore. Now I will make this journey every year with my daughters... to bring us even closer as a family and to God.”
— Justina, Hershey, PA

**FUNNEL GOD’S LOVE**
“God was definitely in the building... We’ve laughed, we’ve hugged and we’ve even cried. The love of God is awesome!”
— Sarah, Dallas, TX

**MAKE A DREAM COME TRUE**
“Attending this conference was on my bucket list! Not only did I get to go, but twice was able to sit second row front and center!”
— Laura, Minneapolis, MN

**GET Schooled BY JOYCE**
“Had a wonderful time and so blessed! Took my mother on Thursday evening and you hit it on patience for her... Hahah! And of course me, u know like mother like daughter... I really enjoyed coming and listening to you, Joyce, and got a lot out of the teaching.”
— Mandy, Oklahoma City, OK

**BRING FRIENDS, LEARN TOGETHER**
“Had an amazing time at the conference! The music lifted my heart, and Joyce’s preaching brought me even closer to the Lord. I went to all 4 sermons, and brought 3 friends and my husband on different days, and they were also edified by the Word.”
— De Vietz, Minneapolis, MN

**BE OPEN TO GOD’S PLAN**
“Today was going to be all about me and seeing Joyce Meyer. However, God had other plans. I happily spent the day with others, for others. And because of that I was unable to attend early or even on time. However, when I walked in through the curtains, Joyce walked on stage. Praise the Lord, how He loves me.”
— Evelyn, Cleveland, OH

**DECIDE TO BE CHANGED**
“Living a Life That You Love” was a message that I will never forget. Over several years, I’ve lived my life just liking it and living it halfway. I’ve decided today to love my life and live it to the fullest!”
— LaMicka, Tampa, FL

— Heather, Cleveland, OH

How to... **ROCK A CONFERENCE**

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Join Joyce as she walks with you through this chapter by chapter and verse by verse study. Complete with personal study guide for recording what God shows you on this journey.
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