

**LN**  
**LIFE NOW!**



FALL/WINTER 2005



## LOCAL TELEVISION LISTINGS

Atlanta	WSB-TV2	6:00 am
Atlanta	WAGA-TV5	8:00 am
Austin	KTBC-TV7	8:00 am
Baltimore	WBFF-TV45	10:00 am
Birmingham	WBRC-TV6	10:00 am
Charlotte	WCCB-TV18	10:00 am
Chicago	WCIU-TV26	9:00 am
Cleveland	WEWS-TV5	7:30 am
Corpus Christi	KZTV-TV10	10:30 am
Dallas	KDFW-TV4	7:30 am
Denver	KWGN-TV2	9:30 am
Detroit	WDIV-TV4	7:30 am
Houston	KRIV-TV26	7:30 am
Houston	KTBU-TV55	9:00 am
Houston	KHOU-TV11	10:00 am
Indianapolis	WRTV-TV6	9:00 am
Jacksonville	WTLV-TV12	10:00 am
Los Angeles	KTLA-TV5	8:30 am
Miami	WSVN-TV7	10:00 am
New York	WPIX-TV11	7:30 am
New York	WNYW-TV5	9:00 am
Orlando	WOFL-TV35	8:30 am
Paducah	KBSI-TV23	7:30 am
Paducah	KFVS-TV12	10:00 am
Philadelphia	WTXF-TV29	7:00am
Phoenix	KPHO-TV5	7:30 am
Pittsburgh	WPCB-TV40	6:30 am
San Antonio	KSAT-TV12	10:00 am
San Francisco	KTVU-TV2	8:00 am
Tampa	WTSP-TV10	8:30 am
Washington, DC	WTTG-TV5	10:00 am

## NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL LISTINGS



Sunday 7:00am (CT)



Sunday 8:30am



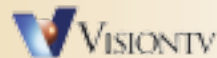
Sunday 7:30am (CT)



Sunday 10:00am



Sunday 11:00pm (CT)



Sunday 9:30am



Sunday 12:00pm (CT)  
*Special One-Hour Program*  
Tuesday 9:00pm (CT)



Sunday 10:30am



Sunday 7:00pm (CT)  
Monday 11:30pm (CT)  
Friday 8:00pm (CT)



# INSIDE LN LIFE NOW!

A publication of Joel Osteen Ministries

**VOLUME 2 NUMBER 4**  
**FALL/WINTER 2005**

Come Join Lakewood Church as they  
celebrate the holidays in any one of  
their 5 weekly services!

Saturday 7:00pm

Sunday 8:30, 11:00am

Español 1:30pm

Wednesday 7:30pm

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**JOEL**  
OSTEEN  
MINISTRIES





# The Gift Everybody Needs

BY JOEL OSTEEN

## As the holiday season gets busier,

most of us search high and low hoping to find the perfect presents for the special people in our lives. We spend our hard-earned money and many hours of precious time to buy things for people who may not even want, need, or appreciate the gifts we are giving. But one of the best gifts you can give costs very little, takes very little time, and you can be sure everyone will appreciate it.

What is it? A blessing. You can profoundly influence the people around you simply by blessing them with your words or blessing them by doing something nice for them.

As a business owner, you can help set the direction for your employees by speaking well about them. As a husband, wife, or parent, you can set the tone for your entire family by speaking positive words to them and about them. With our words, we have the ability to help mold and shape the future of anyone over whom we have influence.

That doesn't mean we will never disagree with them or that we shouldn't confront and correct them when we know they are in the wrong. But the general tenor of our words to them and about them should be positive.

A well-meaning mother was constantly nagging her teenage son. "You're so lazy; you're never going to amount to anything!" Those kinds of negative words can destroy a person. You cannot speak negatively about someone on one hand, then turn around and expect that person to be blessed. If you want your son or daughter to be productive and successful, you need to begin declaring words of life over your children rather than predictions of doom and despair. The Scripture reminds us that with our words we can bless people or we can curse them<sup>1</sup>.

In the Old Testament, the people clearly understood the power of the blessing. As the family patriarch approached senility or death, the oldest sons gathered alongside their father. The father would then lay his hands on each son's head and speak loving, faith-filled words over them about their future. These pronouncements comprised what was known ever after as "the blessing." The family realized that these were more than Dad's dying wishes; these words carried spiritual authority and had the ability to bring success, prosperity, and health into their future.

Many times, children even fought over the father's blessing. They weren't fighting over money that they might inherit. Nor were they arguing over the family business. No, they wanted those faith-filled words. They realized that if they received the father's blessing, wealth and success would be a natural by-product.

One of the first things I do when I see my little boy, Jonathan, in the morning is to say, "Jonathan, you're the best, man." I'm constantly telling him, "Jonathan, you are God's gift to Mother and me. We love you. We're proud of you. We'll always stand behind you." Victoria and I tell our daughter, Alexandra, the same sort of things. We constantly tell our children, "There's nothing you can't do. You have a bright future in front of you. You're surrounded by God's favor. Everything you touch is going to prosper."



*Let's not forget that we are blessed*

*so we can be a blessing.*

We believe that we have an opportunity and a responsibility to speak God's blessings into our children now, while they are young. Why should we wait till they are teenagers, or in their twenties and about to get married, to begin praying for God's blessings in their lives? No, we're declaring God's blessings over them all the days of their lives. And we are convinced that our words will impact our children long after they are grown and have children of their own.

Funny thing about blessings, though: A blessing is not a blessing until it is spoken. Your children need to hear you say words such as, "I love you. I believe in you. I think you're great. There's nobody else like you. You have the favor of God." They need to hear your approval. They need to feel your love. Quit criticizing your child and start declaring the great things that are in store for his or her future.

## A blessing is not a blessing until it is spoken

Use your words to speak blessings over your friends, family members, and co-workers, too. We should never speak negative, destructive words toward anybody, especially toward people over whom we have authority or influence. Just because you have your own business or supervise a large number of employees doesn't give you the right to talk down to them and make them feel badly about themselves. Quite the contrary! God is going to hold you accountable for what you say to those individuals under your authority, and He is going to judge you by a stricter standard. You should go out of your way to speak positive words that build up and encourage.

Similarly, it is important for a husband to understand that his words have tremendous power in his wife's life. He needs to bless her with his words. She's given her life to love and care for him, to partner with him, to create a family together, to nurture his children. If he is always finding fault in something she's doing, always putting her down, he will reap horrendous problems in his marriage and in his life. Moreover, many women today are depressed and feel emotionally abused because their husbands do not bless them with their words. If you want to see God do wonders in your marriage, start praising your spouse.

Every day, a husband should tell his wife, "I love you. I appreciate you. You're the best thing that ever happened to me." A wife should do the same for her husband. Your relationship would improve immensely if you'd simply start speaking kind, positive words, blessing your spouse instead of cursing him or her.

You must start declaring God's goodness in your own life, as well. Start boldly declaring, "God's face is smiling toward me, and He longs to be good to me." That is how God says we're going to be blessed—when we start declaring His goodness.

Let's not forget that we are blessed so we can be a blessing. We should get up every day looking for ways that we can be a blessing. If I meet other people's needs, God will always meet mine. If I make somebody else happy, God will make sure that I'm happy. Every day—not simply during the holiday season—we should look for opportunities to be good to people. Maybe you can buy somebody's dinner, give them a ride, or baby sit their children. Get in a habit of doing good, and don't make the mistake of living selfishly. Self-centeredness is a prison of your own making, and it is one of the worst dungeons that you could ever live in. You were not created to be in-grown, focused on yourself. You were made by Almighty God to be a giver.

To be truly fulfilled, you must get your mind off yourself and start reaching out to others. Start doing good to somebody else. Get up in the morning and have the attitude, Who can I be a blessing to today? Who can I encourage? Where is there a need that I can meet?





# The Gift Everybody Needs

Remember, your actions often speak much louder than your words. I can say "I love you and I care about you," but true love is seen in what I do. If I love you, I'll go out of my way to help you. If I love you, I'll give you a ride even though I have to get up early to do so. True love takes action.

And not just in the big things. Learn to be good to people in your everyday life. When you stop to get a cup of coffee at work, bring your coworker back a cup, too. When traffic backs up on the freeway, let that car into the lane in front of you. At the grocery store, when you have a bunch of groceries and somebody behind you has just a few, let them go ahead of you. Or how about in the parking lot, when you pull up to that last front row parking space at the same time as another car? Why don't you back up and let them have that space?

## Learn to be good to people in your everyday life

"But, Joel," you may be saying, "I thought that was God's favor helping me to beat that other car to the spot." No, that's your old selfish nature wanting to be first. If you will be good to people, you will have more of God's favor than you'll ever need.

Do you want another simple way of blessing someone? When you're at a restaurant, be a good tipper. Don't leave that server a dollar bill when you just spent thirty dollars to eat.

"Well, I shared my testimony," one person said. "I invited our waitress to church."

That's fine, but don't cancel your testimony by your miserly tip. God's people believe in being good to people. We believe in showing God's kindness wherever we go.

When I tip people, I tell Victoria, "We're going to sow a seed into that person's life. Here's an opportunity to bless someone with our words and our money." When I leave that place,

I want that server to be able to say, "That couple sure is generous. They are good to people." Friend, love is seen in our actions. This world does not need to hear another sermon nearly as much as it needs to see us being good to people.

Keep in mind this holiday season, you're never more like God than when you give. Learn to give your time, your money, or an encouraging word. When you show love, you are showing God to the world. And don't worry if you don't get any credit. When you let somebody in traffic in front of you, you may never see that person again. When you give somebody twenty dollars because you had compassion in your heart, you may never hear back from them, but let me assure you, God is keeping the records. He's seen every time you've been good to somebody. He's heard every encouraging word you've spoken. God has seen all the times you went out of your way to help somebody but they never even said thank you. The Scripture says when you do things in secret, when you do things without getting any credit, when nobody thanks you, God sees it, and you will even receive a greater reward.

## God is keeping the records... He's seen every time you've been good to somebody

It's one thing to make a big splash and let everybody know how generous you are, but if you really want to be blessed, do something good for somebody and don't tell anybody about it. Leave some cash in an unmarked envelope on the desk of that coworker that's struggling to make ends meet. At the restaurant, buy somebody's dinner and remain anonymous. Clean up the kitchen at the office and don't tell anybody that you did it. When you do things in secret and you don't get any credit, you are sowing a seed for God to do great things in your life.

I read an article talking about some people going through the toll booth at a busy section of the freeway. Instead of just paying the normal one dollar toll, they gave the clerk five dollars and paid for the next four cars behind them. When that next car would pull up, the clerk would say, "Your toll has already been paid by somebody in front of you."



# The Gift Everybody Needs

What was that? That's just a person wanting to be good to someone else. That's just somebody doing good and not needing to get the credit. That says someone cares; it says this world is not such a bad place to live in. It's amazing how just one little act of kindness can brighten somebody's whole day.

I wonder what our world would be like if each of us would find someone to be good to every day. What would our city be like? What would our offices be like? What would our schools be like if we made it a priority to brighten somebody else's day? Scripture teaches "Every opportunity we have we should do good to people"<sup>2</sup>. That means we need to be on the lookout. We need to be proactive. Who can I bless today? For whom can I do a favor? You can't just sit back and wait for the need to come to you. You have to go after it.

Be sensitive. Pay attention to the people around you. If you see one of your friends wearing the same clothes all the time, why don't you step up to the plate and say "Let me buy you a new suit or two." Or, "Take this gift certificate and go get yourself some new clothes." Don't miss that opportunity to do good.

Or maybe you overhear one of your coworkers saying, "Next week I've got to take my car in the shop. I don't know what I'm going to do. I don't know how I'm going to get to work." Why don't you tell her, "Let me swing by in the mornings and pick you up."

"Oh, no, that's too far," she may protest. "It's out of your way."

You can say, "It's no big deal. I'll be glad to do it."

**Listen to what people are saying around you.  
And look for opportunities to bless them.**

A while back I had a friend over to help me on a project. I had just bought a brand new computer monitor, one of those flat screens, real large, real easy to see. My friend said, "Joel, I love your monitor. It's so easy on our eyes."

I picked up on that. I said, "It sure is. What kind of monitor do you have?"

"Oh, just an old piece of junk that I've been using for years," he said.

I thought, Here's a great opportunity to be a blessing. A few days later, my friend had one of those new flat screen monitors show up on his doorstep. That was too good of an opportunity to pass up. I realize we can't do that all the time. We can't spend all our money like that. But we should be doing something good for somebody else. The Scripture says people will know true Christians by their fruit<sup>3</sup>. They're not going to know us by how many scriptures we quote. They're not going to know us by how many Christian bumper stickers we have on our car. People are going to really know that we're believers when we're helping other people, meeting needs, doing good works, when we are blessing people with our words and our actions.

Jesus said. "When you do it to the least of one of these, it's like you're doing it unto Me,"<sup>4</sup>. Proverbs 19:17 says, "He who is gracious to a poor man lends to the LORD, and He will repay him for his good deed." When you give to the poor you are lending to God. And God knows how to pay you back—with interest! You may not be able to give money, but you can baby sit that single mom's children. Why don't you give her a break one night? Tell her, "You go do something special for yourself. Here's a gift certificate. You go up to the mall. You go get your nails done. Our family is going to keep your children tonight."

Maybe you and your family go out to eat every Sunday after church. Why don't you take a single parent family along with you? Or better yet, be a mentor to one of those young children. That doesn't take a lot of money. It just takes time and love. That just takes somebody that cares, somebody that's willing to make a difference.

The Scripture says that in the last days the love of the great body of people will grow cold<sup>5</sup>. That simply means that people will be so busy, they'll be so focused on their own needs, they'll be so caught up in their drive for success that they won't take time to make a difference.



# The Gift Everybody Needs

Friend, all around us are hurting people who need our love and encouragement. Don't miss the miracle of the moment. Don't be too busy, or insensitive to the needs around you. Be willing to be inconvenienced.

Sometimes it's easy for us to get so caught up in our own little world that we're focused only on ourselves. "I've got my plans. Don't get me off my schedule." "I'd love to help you out with some work around your house, but I'm sorry, this is football season. I just don't have the time."

No, don't live selfishly. Take time to make a difference in somebody's life. John Bunyan, author of the classic Pilgrim's Progress said, "You have not lived today until you have done something for someone that cannot pay you back."

"But, Joel," I hear you saying, "I want to find out how I can get blessed. I want to know how I can get my needs met."

Friend, you are never more like God than when you give. You're never more like God than when you take time for people, than when you do something to bless someone else. This holiday season, don't get sucked into this society's way of thinking that it's all about me, Me, ME!

You will never be happy that way. Why don't you make a decision with me that you're going to start being good to people? Pay attention to those around you, your friends, your coworkers, your relatives. Listen to what they're saying. Be sensitive and don't miss any opportunity to do good.

Learn to speak blessings over your life, your friends, your future. Remember, a blessing is not a blessing until it is spoken. If you'll do your part and start boldly speaking blessings over your life and the lives of those around you, God will provide everything you need to live the life of abundance He wants you to have.

## ...don't get sucked into this society's way of thinking *that it's all about me, Me, ME!*

Friend, this is exactly how it happens. You've got to sow a seed. If you will meet somebody else's needs, God will meet your own needs. What you make happen for others, God will make happen for you.

Maybe the reason you don't have any real joy is because you've become ingrown. You're focused on yourself. If you want to get your joy back, if you want to get your victory back, get your mind off yourself, and go out and do something good for somebody else. One thing I like to do when I'm feeling down is to go up to the hospital and pray for people. I find when I start giving encouragement, when I start giving people hope, my joy quickly returns. It changes my focus.

I heard a story about a young boy that lived in the inner city. He was about eight years old and was very poor. One cold day, he was looking in the window of a local store admiring a pair of tennis shoes. As he stood there, cold and barefooted, a lady came along and asked, "Young man, what are you doing staring so intently in this window?"

Shyly he said, "Well, I was just sort of praying and asking God if He'd give me a new pair of tennis shoes."

Without hesitation, the lady took him into the store and very gently and lovingly washed off his cold dirty feet. She put a brand new pair of socks on his feet. Then she told him to pick out three new pairs of tennis shoes.

The boy couldn't believe it. He was so excited! He had never owned a new pair of shoes. He'd always just worn old hand-me-downs. After she had paid for the purchase, the woman handed the shoes to the child. "Enjoy your shoes, son," she said.

The little boy looked at her in amazement. Nobody had ever taken that kind of interest in him. As serious as could be, with tears running down his cheeks, he said, "Lady can I ask you a question? Are you God's wife?"

And remember, true love is always backed up with our actions. People are watching us, and one of the best witnesses we could have is simply by being good to people. If you'll get up every day and focus on how you can be a blessing and not just on how you can get blessed, I promise you this, you will give the gift that everybody needs. God will meet all your needs in abundance, and you'll experience the life of victory that He has in store for you.





# Bless



# Your Children

by VICTORIA OSTEEN



Together with her husband Joel, Victoria brings a positive message of hope that extends far beyond Lakewood. Their television ministry reaches over 200 million households throughout the United States, and is seen throughout 150 countries worldwide. Recent Nielsen media reports rank the Osteen broadcast as the number one inspirational program in America, and their traveling worship tours, "An Evening with Joel Osteen," has sold out arenas across the U.S.

As parents, we can profoundly influence the direction of our children's lives by the words we say to them. Yet many parents fail to do so. "Oh, my kids know that I love them," a lot of parents say. "They know that I pray for them."

Maybe so, but your children need to hear those words of blessing in their lives. And the good news is that it is not difficult to change the tone around your home. You can begin speaking positive truth into your children's lives any time you want. Joel and I try to speak God's Word into the lives of children in our natural, ordinary, "everyday" circumstances of life. For instance, when I drop our kids off at school, before they even get out of the car, I remind them, "You are blessed today. You have the favor of God."

Parents, you can do something similar. Speak God's Word over your children every day before they go to school or go out to play. You don't need to preach a sermon; just say something like, "God's Word says that He loves you, and He has something special in store for you today!"

Or pray, "You promised me in Psalm 91 that You will give Your angels charge over us and that no evil would come near our household. So I thank You that my children are supernaturally protected, and You are guiding them and watching after them. Father, You said that we're the head and not the tail, and You will surround us with favor. So I thank You that my children are blessed, and they will excel at whatever they put their hands to do."

*our words affect our children's future  
for either good or evil*

Whether we realize it or not, our words affect our children's future for either good or evil. We need to speak loving words of approval and acceptance, words that encourage, inspire, and motivate our children to reach for new heights. When we do that, we are speaking blessings into their lives. We are speaking abundance and increase. We're declaring God's favor in their lives.

*You have the responsibility to bless your children*

*With authority comes responsibility*

All too often, parents slip into being harsh and critical with their children, nitpicking, and easily finding fault in whatever the kids are doing. "Why can't you make better grades? Go clean your room—it looks like a pigpen! Can you do anything right?"

Such negative words will cause our children to lose the sense of value God has placed within them. Certainly, as parents, we have a responsibility before God and society to train our children, to discipline them when they disobey, to lovingly correct them when they make wrong choices. But we should not constantly harp on our kids. If you continually speak words that discourage and dishearten, before long you will destroy your child's self-image. And with your negative words, you will open a door, allowing the enemy to bring all sorts of insecurity and inferiority into your child's life.

Remember, if you make the mistake of constantly speaking negative words over your children, you are cursing their future. Moreover, God will hold you responsible for destroying their destiny. With authority comes responsibility, and you have the responsibility as the spiritual authority over your child to make sure that he feels loved, accepted, and approved. You have the responsibility to bless your children.

Besides, we all want good things for our children. We want our kids to be blessed. Why not put those thoughts and feelings into words? As Joel likes to say, "A blessing isn't really a blessing until it is spoken." Say those words aloud that will bless your children: "You are a child of God. God has good things in store for you. You are blessed and cannot be cursed!" Then watch to see how your child begins to thrive, how his attitude about himself will change, how her actions with others will improve, as the blessings of God begin to take root in the lives of your children.

B L E S S I N G S  
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God's Love  
God's Love





# MARLON ANDERSON

## NEWYORKMETS



Mets Infielder  
calls Lakewood  
Church home

New York Mets second baseman Marlon Anderson is a baseball journeyman who has found his spiritual home at Houston's Lakewood Church. Before joining the Mets for the 2005 season, Anderson went to the World Series with the St. Louis Cardinals – proving himself as one of the National League's best pinch hitters along the way.

While Anderson admits that the life of a professional baseball player is not necessarily conducive to regular church attendance, he says Joel Osteen's preaching drew him back to the Bible, and to a deeper commitment to God: "I grew up in church – my family was always going – and I was always playing ball. When I was ten I decided I wanted to play major league baseball, and after three years at the University of South Alabama, I was drafted by the Philadelphia Phillies. But once you get into pro ball it's easy to be distracted, so for a while I stopped going to church and sort of lost contact with God. Even though I wasn't in church, every Sunday night I watched Joel. That was my church. Hearing Joel got me into reading the Bible more, and learning how to pray again. At first I was just asking God for direction, and for the things I wanted. Then I got to the point where I turned it all over to Him: my life, my marriage, being a father, playing baseball – everything. I asked Him to lead me and show me what He wanted."

### *I've learned to let God take control*

Marlon's 2004 season with the St. Louis Cardinals tested his faith, and strengthened his prayer life, although he jokes that perhaps he might have prayed more specifically: My wife and I prayed about where we would go and where God would lead. From April on, we believed we were going to the World Series, and we prayed to get there. After it was over I realized we never said anything about winning the World Series – just about going!" (The Boston Red Sox swept the St. Louis Cardinals in four games to win it.)

Today Marlon is active in the men's ministry at Lakewood, making friends and making it his family's home base. "I've learned to let God take control and send me the places He wants me to go, to do the things He wants me to do," Marlon says. "It's good to have that free-flowing spirit about you that says 'God is in control.'"



*It's good to have that  
free-flowing spirit  
about you that says  
"God is in control."*



CELEBRATE THE SEASON!



JB002

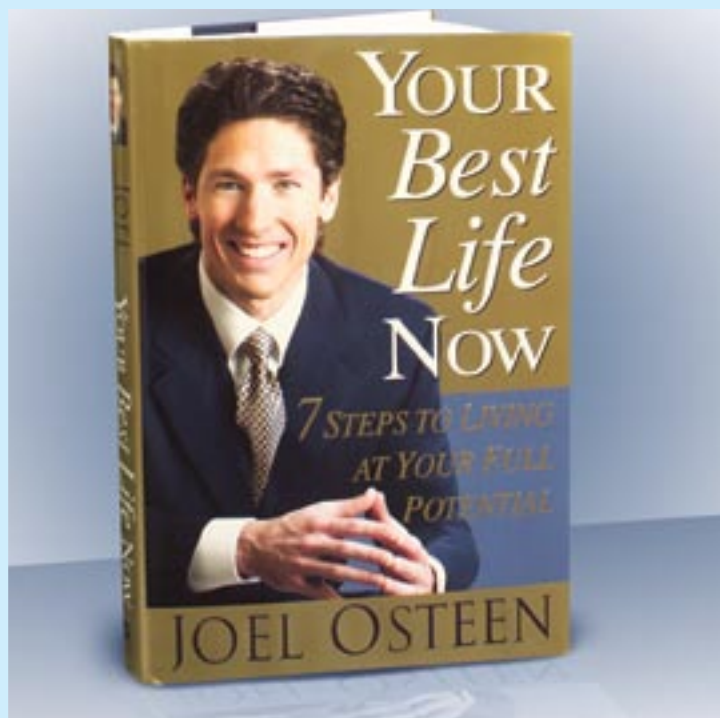
Hardback Book

## Your Best Life Now!

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JB004

## Journal

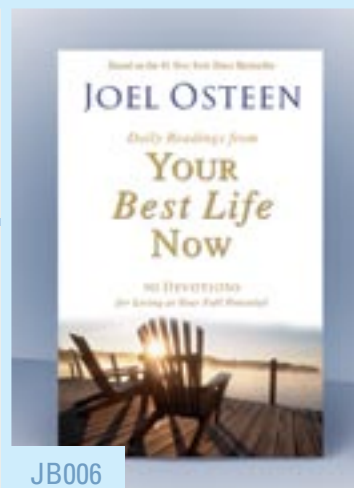
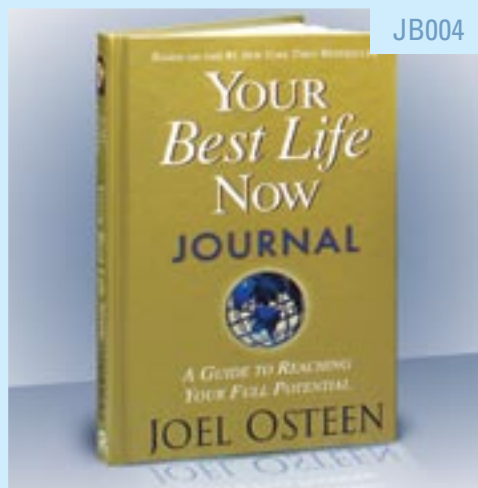
This journal is the perfect companion to give you daily inspiration and enable you to keep account of all the blessings that God pours out in your life!

**\$9.95**

## Devotional

In this devotional, Joel prepares us to embrace the life God intends us to enjoy. Joel's 90 days of motivational thoughts, inspirational messages, and helpful Scripture verses will strengthen our faith - in God, in others and in ourselves.

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JB006

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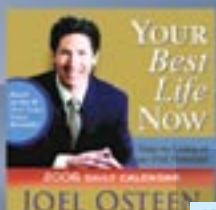
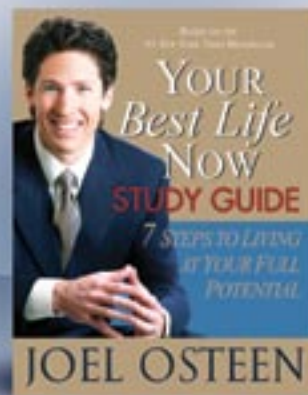
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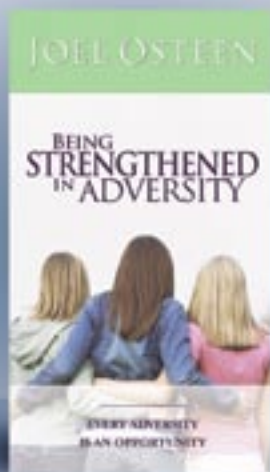
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GIVE THE GIFT OF JOY!

*lakewoodlive*



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**Dodie Osteen**

# Give Thanks and Bless His Name

## **Psalms 100:4**

*Go through his open gates with great thanksgiving; enter his courts with praise.  
Give thanks to him and bless his name.*

I believe it makes a difference when we pray with grateful hearts. The Bible tells us to come into God's house with thanksgiving on our lips – in an attitude of praise. We have much to be thankful for! First Timothy 2:1-6 tells us to pray for others, pleading for God's mercy upon them, and giving thanks for all He is going to do for them.

I bless the name of the Lord Jesus Christ with every fiber of my being. I rejoice in my salvation and my healing, and I am thankful for my family, our staff, and our church family at Lakewood.

What are you thankful for? Do you demonstrate your gratitude to God on a daily basis? Think about what you would do if God decided to remove from your life all the things for which you haven't been thankful? Would you be in trouble? Most of us would be, because we often take our many blessings for granted.

During this season when our country sets aside time to reflect on our many blessings, remember some of the things the Lord has done for you. Look around and give honor and glory to Jesus. He's worthy of your praise.

*I give You thanks today, Lord, with a grateful heart for all your loving-kindness and generosity to my family and our nation. Thank You for the salvation, healing, redemption, and abundance we enjoy. I praise You for all those today who are in authority in this land of freedom. Bless our nation with peace... and we bless You for it, Father, in Jesus' name.*

Together with her husband, the late Pastor John Osteen, Dodie Osteen founded Houston's Lakewood Church on Mother's Day, 1959. Since the death of her husband, Dodie has remained an integral part of Joel Osteen Ministries, ministering alongside her son Joel and two of her other children. Dodie was miraculously healed of metastatic cancer of the liver in 1981 and has a ministry of praying for sick people. Her book *Healed of Cancer*, published in 1983, has given people hope, and shown that Jesus Christ is still the same yesterday, today and forever. She also is the author of *Choosing Life – One Day at a Time*, a daily devotional published in 2001. Dodie Osteen is a registered nurse, but her most prized treasure is her five children, all of whom are in the ministry.



## What are you Thankful for?





by Lisa Comes



# DAILYPOWER!

The oldest daughter of John and Dodie Osteen, Lisa was healed at birth of a crippling condition similar to cerebral palsy, and as an adult, she miraculously survived the explosion of a pipe bomb in her office at Lakewood Church. Actively involved in outreach ministry since 1983, Lisa has been a Bible teacher for over 20 years. She is a graduate of Oral Roberts University and is married to Kevin Comes, Administrator of Lakewood Church. Lisa and Kevin are the parents of three children: twin daughters Catherine and Caroline, and son Christopher.

## The Blessings of

## Righteous Living

A college friend of mine often tried to persuade me to join her in partying, drinking and immorality. She said she was just "having fun," and only wanted me to be a part of that fun. One night she invited me out to dinner, but instead of going to a restaurant, she took me to a bar where a group of her friends met up with us. I didn't want to stay – and I told her so.

"Come on, Lisa," she coaxed, "it won't hurt anything." I liked her, and didn't want to offend her – but I stood my ground. "No," I said, "If you won't take me home, I'll call someone to come and get me." She finally relented, and took me home. I ultimately lost her friendship, but today I am grateful to be living under the blessing of God. I am sad to say that my former friend spent a number of years suffering because of unwise decisions she made in pursuit of "fun."

The Bible has much to say about the sinful life versus the godly life – especially in the book of Proverbs. Proverbs is a practical book full of wisdom for every day living. And it clearly shows that it pays to live a godly, righteous life. In fact, the wisdom of Proverbs could have been directly applied to my situation in college, and to many situations after: "My son, if sinners entice you, do not give in to them. If they say "Come along with us..." do not go along with them, do not set foot on their paths; for their feet rush into sin, they are swift to shed blood."<sup>1</sup>

You and I have to be strong in the face of temptation – and make no mistake, we have an enemy, Satan, who tries to get us to fall into his sugar-coated trap. He never shows us the ugly outcome of disobeying God; he only tries to lure us with pretty pictures of sin's temporary pleasure. His motive may be hidden, but it is sure: he means to steal, to kill and to destroy. But God means to give us life! You see, God knows what is best for us. He loves us, and doesn't want us to live in darkness or despair. He has a better plan for our lives – a bright future and a hope.<sup>2</sup>

*He has a better plan for our lives –  
a bright future & a hope*



The person who lives a godly, righteous life is not a perfect person who never sins. No, he or she is simply someone who serves the Lord, seeking to do His will and obey His word. The righteous person feels remorse when he sins. He repents, and asks for God's forgiveness, quickly turning around and getting back on the right path – because he knows that the righteous life is the path to blessing. Proverbs 4:18 says "The path of righteousness is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day." In other words, when you and I serve Jesus and follow Him, our path gets brighter and brighter! When we honor God, His blessing will be upon our children and our home.

If you are a parent, choose life today for your family by obeying God and honoring Him in your decisions. Declare like Joshua, "But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."<sup>3</sup> Train your children in faithfulness and be faithful yourselves. When you do, you will live under the blessing of God. Single men and women, choose to live a pure life before the Lord. Choose to obey Him and resist the lure of a godless culture. When you do, you will live the blessing of God.

*When we honor God,  
His blessing will be upon our children & our home*

I thank God daily that my parents chose life and blessing for our family. They taught us how to live a godly life. They showed us how to honor God and put Him first in our lives, and because of that, we saw the blessing of God. We witnessed His healing power. We experienced His protection. We knew financial well-being. We had peace in our home – and we even had fun in our home! We lived a supernatural life because the blessing of the Lord was on our home – and today, each of our families can say the very same thing.

DP

Remember, "He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones."  
Proverbs 2:7-8

# GOD'S FINEST HOUR



## PAUL OSTEEN, M.D.

Paul Osteen, M.D. had a busy practice in general and vascular surgery in Little Rock, Arkansas for many years. In July 1999, he moved to Houston to work full-time in the ministry at Joel Osteen Ministries. Currently he provides oversight to the pastoral and discipleship ministries at Lakewood. He speaks at the Wednesday night service twice monthly and teaches the new convert class every Sunday night. Paul and his wife Jennifer have 5 children: Matt, Georgia, Olivia, Sophia and Jackson.



The lives of great men and women are often recalled by a single moment that defines them – a snapshot that captures their special passion and typifies their most lasting contribution.

We remember Abraham Lincoln for his brief but powerful Gettysburg address, where he envisioned a nation “of the people, by the people and for the people.” Theologian Martin Luther will be forever immortalized for nailing his 95 theses to the door of Wittenberg’s All Saints Chapel, ushering in the protestant reformation. Michelangelo considered himself a sculptor, but perhaps his best known and most lasting work of art was done from atop a high scaffold, painting the ceiling of Rome’s Sistine Chapel. Winston Churchill captured the hearts of Britain and the world when he boldly declared, as bombs fell on his beloved London, “This will be our finest hour.”

Single snapshots like these can sum up the greatest moments of great lives.

I wonder, if we were to consider our all-powerful, all-knowing, supreme God, what his finest hour would be. Would it be His creation of the heavens and the earth by the very power of His spoken word? Or the dazzling creativity He displayed in the crafting of every living thing on the earth? Some might argue that God’s greatest hour was the creation of man from the dust and of woman from man – but I would suggest that there was something even greater than that.

As we celebrate this season the coming of God in the form of a baby born in Bethlehem, I believe that God’s finest hour began with the birth of His Son, Jesus Christ.

If we are honest with ourselves, each of us would admit a deep longing that cannot be satisfied; a deep inner pain and emptiness that will not go away. Education can’t satisfy it, career and money can’t quiet it, relationships can’t fill it and drugs or alcohol can’t make it disappear. It’s always there because we are made by God and for God, and because of sin we are separated from Him. We know we need Him, and we long to be made right with Him – we just don’t know how.

*I believe that God’s finest hour  
began with the birth of His Son,  
Jesus Christ*

The coming of Christ was the beginning of God's finest hour because it addresses this awful separation. God loved us so much that He didn't leave us separated from Him, trapped in our own sin and its devastating effects. He loved us so much that He came to us! God Himself came to a virgin named Mary and placed His life inside her womb. And that child who was born of Mary – the one born in a manger in the little town of Bethlehem – that child was called "Immanuel," which means "God with us." And it didn't stop there.

## *He loved us so much that He came to us!*

The apostle Paul wrote of Jesus, "He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on by the world, was taken up in glory."<sup>1</sup>

Jesus Christ was God's finest hour. He was born to us in the flesh, lived a perfect, sinless life, then went to the cross and suffered and died in our place. God placed on Him every sin that will ever be committed, and Jesus willingly took our punishment. Then three days later, the Spirit of God raised Jesus from the dead, breaking forever the power of sin. In Jesus, the price has been paid. In Him, we have forgiveness, and through Him, we are welcomed back into fellowship with Holy God.

So is there a "snapshot" of this great, great hour? I believe there is – and it lies in a story Jesus Himself told: the story of the prodigal son. It's recorded in Luke 15. A wealthy landowner had two sons, and the youngest demanded his inheritance while his father was still living, left home, and squandered every cent on wild living. When he was at his very lowest, he remembered that even the slaves in his father's house were well cared for, so he decided to return home, not daring to hope he might be received back as a son, but planning to beg to be allowed home as a slave.

When he returned, his father recognized him from a long way off, and before the son could apologize and plead for charity, the father ran to him, embraced him, smothered him with kisses and said "all is forgiven!" Many, many wrongs had been done by this wayward son, but all the father cared about was his return.

If you could hold in your memory one snapshot of God's finest hour this season, will you hold this one? The God of the universe loved you so much that through His Son, Jesus Christ, He has made a way for you to come back home. And when He sees you coming, He will run to you, wrap His arms around you, and welcome you home, making His finest hour your finest hour.



# WELCOME HOME



# WHAT GIFTS DO YOU BRING?

The holiday season, my favorite time of year! Thanksgiving is present in the shopping mall before Halloween has passed, as the retail decorations go up weeks before the actual holiday arrives and everyone begins to feel the "Hustle And Bustle" coming on. Before you know it Santa is ready for pictures with the kids and you've barely had time to swallow your turkey dinner! Ain't it great!? Of course we can't forget the panic we feel laying down on the night of Christmas Eve when we finally remember who it was we had forgotten on our shopping list. Awesome! Seriously...we can chuckle about how crazy the season can become but most of us can look to the holiday season with joy. One of my favorite things is to join the men in my family (and some of the girls) and watch a good college football game on television as the fireplace is crackling and the smell of Nana's cooking is in the air. Maybe you love going to pick out a Christmas tree, the crunching of snow under your feet and the strong smell of pine. Or the feelings of accomplishment as you purchase the perfect gift for the one you love. It is wonderful how the holiday's mean different things to different people and how they bring hundreds of memories flooding back every year.

## *If you have done it unto the least of these you have done it unto me.*

One of my fondest memories in particular was when I was very young and the church where my Dad was pastor did a drama of the Christmas story. I was so excited that I had been chosen to be in the cast and got to stand in the baptistry that had been decorated like heaven as one of the angels. I had a birds' eye view of all that went on. Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus were the center of attention. The songs of celebration were sung as the shepherds made their way down the aisles of the church to the altar where they would honor their King. Then... came "the wise men." They were always dressed more beautifully than the rest of the humble cast, depicting their nobility. Velvet robes and brocade trim, lamé turbans wrapped their heads and the gifts in their hands seemed almost magical. Probably because at that time as a six year old I didn't really know what gold, frankincense and myrrh were. Ha! Yet as they walked toward the baby Jesus with such strength and purpose, finally, to kneel before Him they adored Him with such humility and laid their precious gifts at His feet.

A gifted performer and writer, Cindy Ratcliff became the youngest-ever ASCAP licensed songwriter at the tender age of nine. With an Album of the Year Dove Award and Songwriter of the Year nomination under her belt, she has written and produced over 100 recordings, including *We Speak to Nations* and *Cover the Earth*. Today she serves as Director of Music and Worship for Joel Osteen Ministries and Lakewood Church. Cindy is married to Marcus Ratcliff, and they are the parents of a son, Windsor.



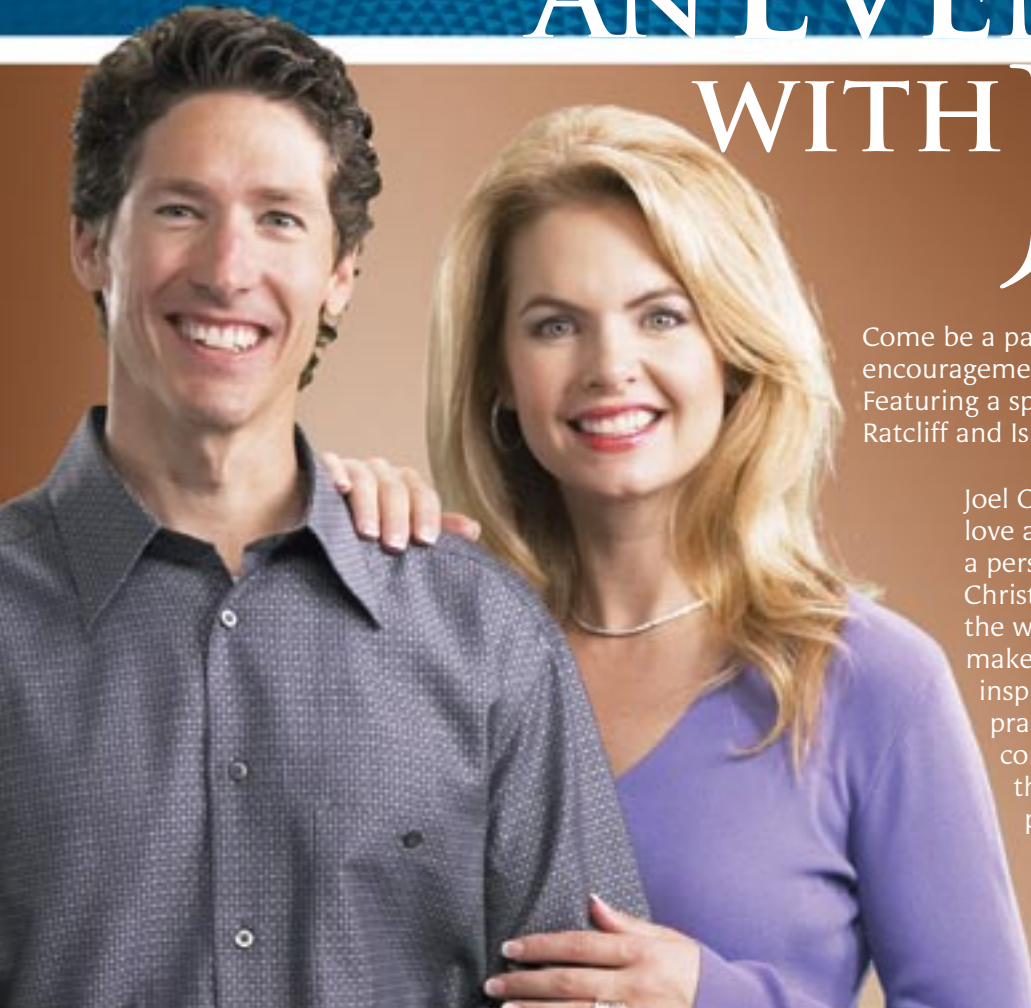
**CINDY RATCLIFF**  
Director of Music  
Lakewood Church, Houston, TX

The Three Kings honoring the King Of Kings. These men of royalty worshiped the child recognizing His supernatural royalty. That picture of gift giving had such a profound effect on me that to this day I remember it vividly.

I have one question for you today. What gifts do you bring the King? You may think to yourself, "I have nothing of value to give." My answer to you would be... you have yourself to give and there is nothing more valuable than that. If you haven't given your heart to the Lord Jesus, that's the greatest place you could begin. Honor the King today by placing your most precious possession, your heart, into his hands. If you have already made Jesus your Lord then I would encourage you to give of yourself. I know so often the simple act of worship is overlooked as a gift, but it could be one of the most important. When our relationship with the Lord is strengthened it causes every other area of our lives to grow stronger. Opening your heart to the Lord in a fresh way, a way you may have never done before, renewing your love for Him is an awesome way to give to Him. There is another way to give to the Lord and that is to give to others. Maybe there is a family less fortunate and you could bless them with food or clothing. There might be a teenager who needs a good role model to encourage them. It could be you haven't taken the time with your own family to show them how much you value them and love them. Jesus said in Matthew 25:40 "whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." This holiday season, make some new memories, give from your heart. Bring your gifts to the King.



# AN EVENING WITH JOEL



Come be a part of this night of inspiration and encouragement with Joel and Victoria Osteen. Featuring a special time of worship with Cindy Ratcliff and Israel Houghton!

Joel Osteen is taking the unconditional love and unending hope found in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ to millions of people all around the world. Pray for these events and make plans to join us for a night of inspiration, encouragement and praise. Be sure and check [JoelOsteen.com](http://JoelOsteen.com) for up-to-date information on these events and how tickets can be purchased for reserved seating.

## 2005 - 2006 TOUR SCHEDULE







# God's Type of MAKEOVER

BY TINA UNDERWOOD

Have you noticed that makeovers are the "in" thing? People from all walks of life are trying to look better. Millions are spent each year on cosmetics, exercise paraphernalia, and plastic surgery. Makeovers are so popular that a TV show even features makeovers of houses! God does want us to be our very best, but He has His own way of making over his people, and it even affects the way we look.

The exciting thing about the Lord's makeover is that He can change us from the inside out. I believe the main thing that changes us from ashes to beauty is knowing His love for us. Have you seen what someone in love looks like? It's easy to recognize; there's a glow about that person; something coming from deep down inside. I've known people whose very countenance changed as they grew closer to the Lord.

HE CAN CHANGE US  
FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Years ago I had a friend who didn't wear any makeup, didn't care much about her clothes, and had nothing spectacular about her features, and yet she was beautiful. I remember talking with my husband one day about her, and we concluded the reason for her beauty was that she just loved Jesus. She was so filled with His love for her that she radiated beauty.

When you truly come to know the love of God, the height, the depth and the breadth of it<sup>1</sup>, you will be changed forever. Love is the one thing that changes everyone for the better. Love motivates us to change. When someone loves us we want to be good to them in return; we want to look better and be kinder. Love can soften the hardest of hearts, but without love, hearts become hard and unhappy.

LOVE IS THE ONE THING  
THAT CHANGES EVERYONE  
FOR THE BETTER

That unhappiness or sadness in our souls changes us on the outside. People can see it in our faces, even if we try to cover it up. You know the kind of people I'm talking about; life's dealt them some hard things and they've grown sad or bitter. There's an obvious difference in the countenance of people that know they're loved, and those that don't. The more unhappy the face, the less people want to be around us, and the sadder we become.

God never meant for His people to live in sadness, depression and low self-esteem. When Jesus went to the cross, He died not only to give us salvation, but also the abundant life. Jesus said, "The thief comes to steal, kill and destroy but I have come that you might have life and life abundant"<sup>2</sup> Jesus is not just talking here about money. He's talking about that abundance in our souls that can only come from knowing God. The abundant life Jesus died for us to have is only ours if we know that it is meant for us, and know how to obtain it.



Love



For a makeover that endures, we must start on the inside by letting go of all of the past hurts and wounds, and allowing the love of the Lord to do its work. We must put aside the negative thoughts and words spoken about us – by ourselves and by others – and look into the Word and find out what God thinks of us. When we do, an amazing thing happens; God's love changes us on the inside, which in turn changes the outside.

**GOD'S LOVE  
CHANGES US  
ON THE INSIDE  
WHICH IN TURN  
CHANGES THE OUTSIDE**



It's hard for us to comprehend how much God really loves us – that He would send His son to die for our sins, and to give us the abundant life. God loves us and wants to be involved in the tiniest details of our lives. He cares about your child that's wandered away. He cares about the heartaches you've had since childhood. He cares that you need a job. We must let Him enter into those places and repair the damage with His love. God alone can love us through those hard times. When you take God at His Word, and really meditate on His love for you, it will change you!

God's kind of makeover is truly extreme. It takes the very worst of who we are, and heals and restores us so that we can be His children on this earth. God's way cuts deep into our souls and changes us for the better. We can trust our Father because He's faithful to finish what He has begun. If you don't like the way you look on the outside, ask the Lord to show you what's going on inside that's keeping you from being all you were called to be. He'll be faithful to show you! Let Him love you, because that is what will ultimately change you from the inside out.

# *God has Great Things In Store for You!*



*"Eye has not seen nor ear heard, nor mind has conceived what  
God has prepared for those who love Him."*

***1 Corinthians 2:9***

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