

# Never alone

"You are not alone, I am here with you. Though you're far away, I am here to stay." Touching are the words sang by Michael Jackson years ago. They could almost be mistaken for verses picked out of the Psalms or Isaiah. I believe that is because there is a recurring theme in the Bible of God wanting to be close to his children. One of God's highest values is communion. Can He make good on His promise to never leave us alone? Join us as we explore and experience the promise of being "Never Alone."

## **1) Read Matthew 28:16-20**

Did you see what I saw? We are in the last chapter of Matthew. Jesus is saying His goodbyes, and the Bible tells us that "some doubted." They have seen miracle after miracle yet they doubted. Jesus still finds it within His heart to say "I am with you." Have you ever felt God with you, even while you doubted Him? Tell us about it here at *Message* using **#MessageMag** on Social Media.

## **2) Read Joshua 1:1-9**

The disciples were not the first to doubt. Can you imagine becoming the CEO of a company that has been in turmoil for more than 4000 years, and the previous CEO turned things around only to be forced to pass it to you. Can you feel the pressure? Do you think you can do it? What would God's words have meant to you in a time like that? Tell us about it here at *Message* using **#MessageMag**.

## **3) Read Isaiah 41:10; Deuteronomy 31:6; Zephaniah 3:17**

The most common command in the Bible is some form of "do not be afraid." Without fail this command is accompanied by the assurance that God will be with you. Have you finally come to the place in your relationship with God that His presence is enough to get rid of stress and anxiety? To what can God's presence give peace in your life? Share it with us here at **#MessageMag** so we can pray for and with you.

4) If you have children, you may know that getting them to sleep in their own bed when they are young can be a struggle. I believe it is because they sense the security of being in close proximity to their parents. It's natural. We are God's children, and I want you to take a moment, wherever you are to close your eyes and imagine being in the presence of God. Little do you know, you are!

5) May I give you a homework assignment? When was the last time you had a memory verse? We at *Message* would love to see a video of you reciting Romans 8:38-39. It's fitting to know that nothing keep you from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. Post it to Social Media and tag **#MessageMag**.

## **6) Matthew 28:16-20; John 14:18;**

### **John 20:17; Romans 8:34**

Yes, the disciples doubted, but that didn't stop Jesus from letting them know that they wouldn't be alone. Jesus was going to the Father on our behalf, and He ensured that God would not just be with us, but in us. The disciples would face much but they would face it all with God. Do you really believe that you face every day with God? Don't share. Just meditate on the promise that you can face the world with The Most High on your side.

7) The disciples would set off a chain reaction that resulted in countless people over the next 2000 years believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Amid the peaks and valleys, suffering or success, for those who chose to follow

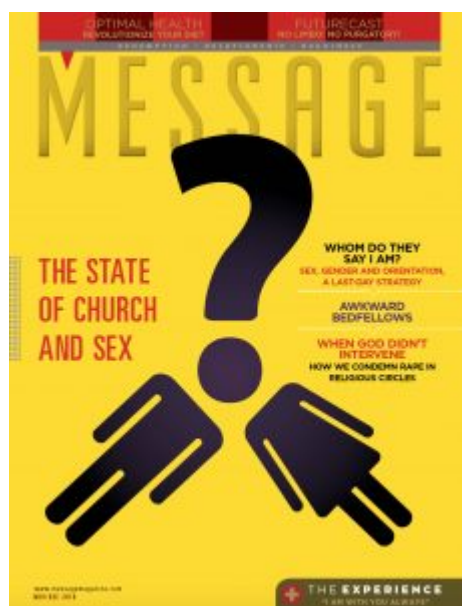
Christ, one thing always rang through and true. It was the promise that His children were never alone.

**Call us if you find you have questions, want to talk, or want to pray with someone: 1-855-463-2273, or, 1-855-God Cares.**

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Rashad Burden is the pastor of the Mount Olive and Shiloh Seventh-day Adventist Churches in Southern Alabama.

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## Here and Now

William Miller, Harold Camping, James Harmston. What do all of these men have in common? They all thought they knew the exact day that Jesus coming back. Many of us grew up hearing that Jesus was coming “soon,” yet here we are,

living life. So what was it that Jesus meant when he said that “The kingdom of heaven is at hand?”

**1) Read Matthew 4:17**

Jesus makes a bold claim and command: “Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near” (Matthew 4:17, NLT). I wonder if the people of that time had heard that before as we have? If you knew that Jesus was coming to tomorrow would there be anything you would do differently? What would it be? Let us know here at *Message* on Social Media using **#MessageMag**.

**2) Read Matthew 4:17, 1 John 1:9**

Why would Jesus begin this statement with a call to repent? I’ve made some mistakes in my life but I’m not a bad person and I bet you feel the same, right? If the Kingdom is at hand, does that really mean I have to say sorry for all I’ve done? What do you think? Let us know online using **#MessageMag**.

**3) Read Matthew 4:17, Matthew 6:33**

Not long after He declared that “the kingdom of God is at hand,” (KJV), Jesus went up on a mountain and preached a sermon. In the midst of that sermon He elaborated on the concept of His “Kingdom.” He also said that His Kingdom and “His” righteousness should be the priority in our searching and seeking. Why would He call a place a “he”? Give us your thoughts online using **#MessageMag**.

**4) Read Matthew 4:17, Luke 2:36-38**

Is it possible that the Kingdom that Jesus spoke of wasn’t a place, but rather a Person? Even before Jesus started His ministry and preached about the Kingdom the Holy Spirit led several seekers to the Kingdom and the grace for which they had been waiting. What could this mean? How could people look at a child and see the Kingdom of God? Share with us your opinions using **#MessageMag** on Social Media.

**5) Read Matthew 4:17, Matthew 2:1-5**

How sad it would be for the Kingdom to have shown up and yet the people who were waiting for it, miss it. It seems that’s what happened when Magi came to Herod. They were looking for a King and Kingdom but no one else was. The King had come and no one knew but a select few. How could this happen? Is it possible it could happen again? What do you think? Let us know using **#MessageMag**.

**6) Read Matthew 4:17, Luke 17:20-21**

Jesus implied several times that the Kingdom of Heaven is not just on its way, but rather it is already here. He said this in or around AD 30. It is now 2018. What is going on? Did we miss it? Were we not ready? Has God forgotten about us? What answers can you give us? Share using **#MessageMag**.

**7) Read Matthew 3:1-2, Mark 1:14-15, Mark 14:25, John 14:1-3**

The Kingdom of Heaven is Jesus. Yes, there will be a place where that He has prepared for us, and will take us, but His Kingdom is available to us now, in Him. Let us not be like the people of old who were so focused on the Kingdom coming that we miss out on the Jesus that is right in front of us here and now.

**Call us if you find you have**

questions, want to talk, or want to pray with someone: 1-855-463-2273, or, 1-855-God Cares.

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## It's Going to be Alright

When it rains, it pours. Whatever can happen, will happen. You win some, you lose some. Sometimes the unexplainable happens and these are some of the phrases we use to assure ourselves things aren't as bad as they seem. You ever had a day in which everything went wrong? Some might feel they have had a life where everything went left. You are not alone in this feeling. Journey with us as we find out if "It's going to be alright".

**1) Read John 20:19; John 14:1-3; Luke 4:28-30**

Shock is what I can imagine the disciples are experiencing. Jesus had been crucified. How could He have allowed that to happen to Him? People had tried

to kill him on multiple occasions. What made this time different? Why did He let them do it? Why does God let the things happen that He does? Have you ever wondered that? What has happened in your life that has made you question God? Tell us using **#MessageMag**.

**2) Read John 20:19; John 14:27; Mark 4:35-41**

I'm sure the disciples were gripped by fear. If the Jewish leaders did what they did to Jesus, what was going to happen to them? Gone were the days of jubilee, entering into Jerusalem amid praise and adoration as Jesus had done only about a week earlier. Now the door was locked so that no one could barge in and drag them to their doom. I wonder if they began to reflect on other times when their lives were on the line because of Jesus. Has there been a time that your following Jesus has put you in a compromising position? Tell us about it on social media using **#MessageMag**.

**3) Read John 20:19; Mark 9:26-29; Jeremiah 10:6-10; John 20:11-18**

With the emotions already running high there are those among them who are claiming that Jesus isn't actually dead! Can you imagine the awe? The disciples and others had seen the impossible become possible for more than three years, but this? Could Jesus actually have done it again? When you've had God work in your life He will challenge you to believe in His infinite ability. Has He ever had you in awe because He has done something beyond what you could imagine? Tell us about it on social media using **#MessageMag**.

**4) Read John 20:19; Philippians 4:19; 1 Samuel 16:7**

Jesus appears to them, and fittingly His first words to them are "Peace be unto you." It is worth taking time out to meditate on the fact that God knows exactly what you need. He could have just said "I'm alive!" Or, "You're not going to die!" Instead, Jesus goes to the root of their hearts' longing, and says "Peace be unto you." Has God ever given you what you need when you didn't know you needed it? Was He able to see through your problem and analyze your heart and give like no one else? Tell us about it on social media using **#MessageMag**.

**5) Read John 20:20; 2 Corinthians 4:17; Proverbs 3:12**

The comfort given is interesting to say the least. Jesus doesn't perform a miracle, but shows the disciples the holes in his hands and wound on his side. It is almost as if what He had been through was proof of who He was. We can tell that this was enough because the disciples were overjoyed. We are children of God and I want you to consider the possibility that what you've been through wasn't meant to destroy you, but rather to prove who you are. If you are able, find and listen to a song called "Pure Gold" by the Clark sisters on **YouTube**.

**6) Read John 20:21**

Honestly, this would have disturbed me. Maybe that is why Jesus had to reiterate the peace He had just imparted. Jesus had been through a lot! Now He says the same God that sent Me is sending you. The assurance is this: a Man who was dead is now standing in front of you, alive! Do you want peace as you're moving from this side to that side? We at *Message* want to support you in your experience with Jesus. Give me a call at **614-266-9568** and I would love to pray with you.

**7) Read John 20:22**

This is epic. When Jesus stepped into the emotional storm the disciples were in, He called for peace, changing their sorrow into joy. Peace is what they needed. And, they will need a lot of it because they are being sent out, just

as Jesus was sent by the Father. The next action is mind-blowing (no pun intended). Jesus breathes on them and they received the Holy Spirit. They weren't going to be doing this by themselves, God was going to be with them. Do you want God to be with you as He sends and uses you where you are? Just ask Him, and it is done. I assure you the Holy Spirit will. Jesus said, "Peace be unto you." You have to know, it's going to be alright.

**Call us if you find you have questions, want to talk, or want to pray with someone:  
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## Is it Really Done?

Past, present, and future. We all know that they have influence and matter. We learn from our past so that we can do better in the present, to hopefully enjoy a better future. So how can the death of a Jewish man over a thousand years ago impact us now? Christian churches make so much of this Man from a

place called Galilee having died on a piece of wood. When He (Jesus) was about to die, He uttered these words, "It is finished."

I invite you to investigate for yourself whether it is really done?

**1) Read Isaiah 53:7-10; Psalm 22:15;**

**John 19:1-28**

What did Jesus know? How could He be thinking about anything other than the pain that He's currently dealing with? Why not think about the betrayal or abandonment He's experienced? For some reason Jesus insists on remembering that He is on a mission and there are still prophetic passages in the Bible He has to listen to. Have you ever read a text that came to your mind in a rough time and you knew you had to obey? Tell us what it was on social media using the **#MessageMag**.

**2) Read John 19:28**

The humanity of God in this moment is striking. Jesus the one who fed the five thousand with barely a basket of fish and chips, needed a drink. The same One who spoke to drink and made the composition of drink change dramatically, now needs drink. It is worth noting that it is ok to need in life. If Jesus needed from time to time, how much will we need? Take time to define what is a need for you. Then evaluate if you are ok asking for what you need and what stops you from doing so.

**3) Read John 19:28-29; Psalm 69:21**

It turns out that this cry for His thirst to be quenched was not just out of bodily necessity, but of divine mission. Jesus was so in-tune with His Father and the Word that He knew that there was something that needed to be handled. A distant whisper from a king long ago who held a special place in His heart. Have the old stories with old words in this old book we call the Bible ever whispered to you in hard times? Do you believe the Bible still matters in 2018?

Let us know what you think on social media using **#MessageMag**.

**4) Read John 19:30**

Before we dive into anything remotely deep, let me just pass on to you a thought worth pondering. Is it possible that the reason Jesus asked for drink wasn't just because He was thirsty or wanted to fulfill the words of His friend David from years ago, but rather He had something important to say and wanted to clear his throat so he could say it clearly? Just a thought.

**5) Read John 19:30; Matthew 27:50-51; Mark 15:37-38**

The words that are spoken are an interesting choice. The writer, John, was himself at the cross. So, to read what he heard, and then see that other writers were only able to record that Jesus made a loud cry, makes the words even more compelling. Jesus said "It is Finished" and hung his head and died. If that's all that happened, maybe we could say it wasn't that significant. We find that there was a ripping of a veil that wasn't even near the site of Jesus' death, an earthquake, and the splitting of rocks. It is as if the very earth knew something had happened. What do you make of this? Let us know on social media using **#MessageMag**.

**6) Read John 19:30; Matthew 27:27-31; Genesis 3:15; Psalm 22:16; Psalm 31:5; Isaiah 50:3-6**

This moment was the culmination of years of preparation, prophecy, and providence. Jesus, the Son of God was on a tree dying for the sins of the world and cries out "It is finished!" We must continually absorb the fact that what was finished, what was laid to rest, what was settled was the

question: Is God really love? Could He, can He, truly love an un-loving people? Now the conversation was rendered mute, the disagreement became null and void. It was finished. Jesus' cry wasn't one of desperation, but rather of firm declaration. It is finished.

**7) Read John 3:16-17**

Is it really done? Well, what that means for you is that you can be done wondering if your addiction has more power than God in your life. It is finished. The guilt of the bad decision you made all that time ago that still weighs you down? It is finished. The anger that fills your thoughts because of what that person did? It is finished. The stress that greets you in the morning before you even show up at your job? In Jesus, it is finished. All of this was handled once and for all on the cross for those that believe. So the question now is are you really done trying to do it yourself?

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## How low can you go?

Greatness. In the world in which we live, it seems as though everyone is after his or her own piece of greatness. Greatness at work. Greatness in family. Greatness in finances, and most of all greatness in the eyes of others. There is an innate yearning to be highly regarded in the minds of other people, yet, when I read the Bible, Jesus operated without regard for that kind of regard! The question is now, "How low can you go?"

**1) Read John 13:1-5**

You don't have to know anything about the Bible, God, or Jesus to realize that something crazy is going on here. After reading that "Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power" (NIV), we see Him stoop to serve, like a slave. When you envision God, do you perceive Him as a slave?



As a janitor? How does this imagery make you feel about God? Let us know on social media using the **#MessageMag**. We'd love to hear your thoughts. .

**2) Read *Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:16; John 13:6-8***

Peter reacted in a way that many of us might: "Umm, God? You don't have to do that." Jesus knew and knows more than we can ever think. What is crazy is that Jesus didn't mind getting on the floor and cleaning off the disciples' feet—the feet of the humanity that He made eons before. What is humility? Tell us your personal definition on social media using **#MessageMag**.

**3) Read *John 13:8***

There had to be a level of discomfort in what the disciples were experiencing. Someone they had seen perform miracles is getting the dirt from between their toes. When challenged, Jesus says "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." It's almost as if this uncomfortable situation is supposed to bring them comfort. Jesus is trying to help them experience peace. Has peace ever come to you out of distress? If you are willing to share, we are willing to listen. Share with the **#MessageMag** on social media and tell us your experience.

**4) Read *John 14:27***

Here Jesus speaks strongly about His personal brand of peace. This peace is one that is experienced when you allow Jesus to love and serve you. He lovingly sacrificed His life to give us a real option of salvation, and He wants, yes, He desires that we serve others in His name. His expectations of us come after He offers us His peace. Does this makes sense to you? If so, share something with us about the peace He has given you. If it does not make sense, we would love to help you understand His offer and how to get it. Reach out to us using **#MessageMag**.

**5) Read *Luke 22:14-20***

Jesus breaks bread and shares drink with the disciples after washing their feet. Nothing is His own. He has given His time, His service, and His effort. He doesn't stop there. He concludes with giving a representation of His body and His blood. What more can Jesus give? Well, He would eventually give His life. Since Jesus has given everything, what should we hold back from giving? What do you have that is hard to sacrifice? Tell us using the **#MessageMag**.

**6) Read *Luke 22:21-24 John 13:21-23***

While Jesus is serving, giving peace, and displaying love, there is someone at the table who has decided to betray Him. If that's not bad enough, the next conversation the disciples decide to have focuses on which among them would be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. Yet, Jesus knowing all that was in their hearts decided to not only eat with them, but wash their feet. Could you do it? Could you sit at the table and show exceptional hospitality to people who are going to betray you and undermine your mission? What about take your life?

**7) Read *Luke 22:25-27***

Jesus ruins what everyone believed to be greatness. He shoots down the idea of yearning to build a reputation for yourself. He destroys the pursuit of promotion by pulling others down. He says, in essence, if you want to be high in the Kingdom of Heaven, find out in your actions how low you can go.



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## Lost & Found

I remember when I was in Kindergarten, in the principal's office there was a box. In this box was a collection of some of the most random objects you could imagine. Everyone in the school knew about this box and what its purpose was. It was the lost and found box. It was the place where hope was realized and disappointment turned to joy. Things that were misplaced or forgotten were often reunited with their owner. It seemed like the more valuable the item that was in the box, the more the owner appreciated having it back. Join us as we explore what it was like to lose and find that which is most valuable.

### **1) Read Luke 2:41-43, Isaiah 7:14, Micah 5:2**

Imagine you've been waiting for something your whole life. You've consistently lived in such a way that showed you were waiting for something to happen that would alter history. Then imagine what you've been waiting for shows up and you have no idea. Jesus the One the Jews had been waiting for shows up as a 12-year-old boy and no one knows! Is it possible that He has given us exactly what we most deeply desire and we don't realize it? Are you willing to give God a chance to do it? Share it with us here using **#MessageMag**.

### **2) Read Luke 2:44, Matthew 13:45-46, Mark 10:17-27**

How crazy is it to think that a child who was born of immaculate conception, had shepherds worship Him at birth, and Magi brought Him gifts as a toddler, is allowed out of his parents' sight for around 24 hours? Imagine the panic that overcame Mary and Joseph. Have you ever lost something valuable? How did you deal with it? Share your experience with us using **#MessageMag** on Social media.

**3) Read Luke 2:45-46, Luke 15:1-10**

They lost Jesus for about three days! If we take the words of the text for what they are it suggests that they were so sure that Jesus was close that they ruled out that He could have been left behind. What a sobering challenge to having relationship with the Lord. I invite you the pray with us as we dismiss the temptation to assume Jesus is always with us. We would love to read your prayers on social media. If you share, use **#MessageMag**.

**4) Read Luke 2:44-45, Joel 2:25**

Sometimes we're tempted to think our best days are behind us. If you think this is true for you, why not go back and get them? Impossible, you say? Nothing is impossible for and with God. Mary and Joseph had to go back to where they came from to get the greatness they left behind. Maybe we have to resolve to do the same from time to time. Is there anything in your past you desire God to give you strength to get back? We want to pray for those things with you. Give us your prayer request on Social Media using **#MessageMag**.

**5) Luke 2:47-49, Proverbs 3:5,6 Romans 8:28**

No matter your spiritual preference, trust is an indispensable ingredient in growth. Here a young Jesus is found doing what He would be doing the rest of His life. Do we trust that how things go are the way they are meant to go? What does it mean to trust? Tell us on Social media using **#MessageMag**.

**6) Read Luke 2:50**

It wasn't only Jesus who was lost in this story, but His parents also. They didn't understand that Jesus couldn't be lost because He was the one throughout human history who searched out those without direction. While we search for Jesus He's always where He needs to be. Has He ever been in an unexpected place for you at just the right time? Tell us about it using **#MessageMag**.

**7) Read Luke 2:51-52, Psalm 139:7-12**

Jesus was lost and then found. He has forever specialized in seeking the lost and redeeming the found. I pray that you never leave Him behind but if you do, remember when He found you in the box with all the other trinkets and was overjoyed for you to be back with whom you belong.



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# Liberty and Justice for All

Many people know and believe that Jesus came to set us free. What He sets us free from can vary from person to person. One will say He came to set us free from ourselves. Another will say He came to release us from the bondage of sin. Yet another will assert that He frees us from our personal vices. These all are true in their own right, but I wonder if while Jesus walked this earth He had some other liberties he wished to relay to humanity? Join us as we see if Jesus truly wanted Liberty and Justice for All.

## **1) Read Luke 5:1-14**

I don't see it as coincidence that Jesus goes back into Galilee "in the power of the Spirit" after having gone through what He just did. I hope you don't get offended, but when was the last time you fasted so that you would be able to live in the power of the Spirit? When was the last time you fasted for anything? Maybe it was recently, but maybe it wasn't. I invite you to fast from what God puts on your mind to do. If you would like someone to pray with you during this time feel free to call me at **614-266-9568**.

## **2) Read Luke 5:16-19, Isaiah 61:1-3**

You just read the scripture that Jesus read from so that you can see the cliff Jesus left those in the synagogue on. Did you notice where Jesus stopped reading? What was left out of his reading that Sabbath? Let us know using **#MessageMag** on social media. We would love to hear from you.

## **3) Read Luke 5:20-22**

Jesus rolls up the scroll at what many believe is an intentional place. But, instead of just receiving His gracious words, the people cannot believe this is Someone they know, or at least, someone with whom they are familiar. Have you ever seen this happen? The very fact that everybody knew them blocked their progression or a positive reception. This community, like many today, had a problem with someone elevating in influence and authority. Tell us if this is familiar to you and how, by using the **#MessageMag** on social media.

## **4) Read Luke 5:23-27**

Jesus went too far. Or at least those in church that day thought so. He had the audacity to say God blesses those who are not the "remnant." He implied that God sends his favor to those who have wandered away from the truth, and even are against God's chosen people. Is Jesus in left field or have you personally seen Him do things in a way you would never expect? Share your experience on Social Media using **#MessageMag**.

## **5) Read Luke 5:28**

Why would it make people so mad that Jesus was saying God cared about more than just those who went to church? I submit that if you or I were to make a public stand or take a knee to suggest that there are those who have been marginalized, profiled, and systematically deprived of privileges, that we would receive a similar response. It is hard to be aware, vocal, and active in a community where many have been programmed to focus on self-preservation. Any message of liberation that is not focused on them is infuriating, especially from one of their own. Have you seen this? Do you agree or disagree? Let us know using **#MessageMag** on social media.

## **6) Read Isaiah 61:3**

Jesus was talking to a people who were in bondage themselves. The Jews were currently under Roman occupation and had to answer to Pilate, and ultimately Caesar. When He stopped reading at verse 2 of Isaiah 61, and then proceeded

to talk about how God goes to others, it was a slap in the face because everyone wanted the glory of verse 3 without the true responsibility that preceded it. God is looking for the chosen to be more than hopeful. He is looking for them to be conscious. Has He led you to this mindset? If so, tell us about it on social media using **#MessageMag**.

**7) Read Luke 5:29-30**

Jesus spoke up about people in distress and it almost got Him killed. There is no logic to what Jesus did when the people went to throw him off the cliff. I just see that Jesus stated that a major part of his mission was to bring liberty and justice to all and His work wasn't done. Our work isn't done, and I'm convinced that whatever opposition is met, God will give power to go through.

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Rashad Burden is the pastor of the Mount Olive and Shiloh Seventh-day Adventist Churches in Southern Alabama.

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## **He is Not Done with Me Yet**

How much happens in a day? How much happened in your life over the last year? How much have you experienced in your life? What if I told you that there is not one detail about which God is not unaware? He is able to have everyone in the whole world in His hands, and still focus on the specifics of your life. Join me in this experience that shows us how focused a Lord and Savior we have.

**1) Read John 6:1-4**

Jesus is popular. He has done things people had never seen and it caused them to want to go wherever He went. You would think that this would be a completely positive thing, and it mostly is, but what if Jesus was looking for some time alone? Have you ever seen in your life that responsibility is a byproduct of blessing? Tell us about a time that you received favor but also took on duty using the **#MessageMag** on social media.

**2) Read John 6:5-7**

It's easy to be hard on Philip. All he was doing was what many of us do on a regular basis. He was focusing on the tangible. He was crunching the numbers and counting the cost. The only thing was that Jesus "already had in mind what He was going to do." Has this ever been the case for you? You thought you knew best, but God had other plans? Tell us about it here at Message using the **#MessageMag** on social media.

**3) Read John 6:8, 9**

Take some time today to slow down and meditate on the words of this refrain and allow God to show you times in your life where He has shown them to be true.

"Little is much when God is in it!  
Labor not for wealth or fame;  
There's a crown, and you can win it,  
If you go in Jesus' name."  
(Kittie L. Suffield, 1924)

**4) Read John 6:10, 11**

I personally appreciate the details given here by John. He says that after Jesus had His disciples sit down, “he took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed...” Isn’t it curious that He gave thanks before the multiplication of the food? Jesus gave appreciation before the manifestation of what was hoped for. How challenging is it to truly be thankful before you get what you desire? Take some time to consider James 1:2; Philippians 4:4, and Philippians 4:19, and tell us why Jesus would give thanks at the time He did. Share it with us on social media using #MessageMag.

**5) Read John 6:12, 13**

There are a lot of things for which we can be thankful. More than I can list, and more than would come to someone’s mind. If you are reading these words, more than likely you are in a situation where you have been shown favor to have some level of comfort. It may not be what you want, but at least you have something. There are people in this world who don’t have a roof over their head, and barely any food to eat; yet, God has allowed others to have more than enough. Take time to pray about having God open your eyes to see what you do have and how you can help others, rather than what you don’t have.

**6) Read John 6:14, 15**

The people were so in awe of what they saw and had experienced that they began to plot the next move without consulting Jesus. After literally tasting and seeing how good the Lord had been, they wanted to put Him in the place they thought He should be. There was only one problem; Jesus was nowhere to be found. It may seem like a crude question, but has it ever seemed like God has walked out on you when you were expecting Him to be there? Tell us about it here at Message using the #MessageMag.

**7) Read John 6:15**

The Bible tells us that the reason Jesus was missing was because He knew that they were going to attempt to make Him king. Wasn’t He supposed to be king? Wasn’t He already King? I want to encourage you in times when it seems like God isn’t doing what you want Him to do, just know He is simply on a different schedule. It doesn’t mean He’s not loving, compassionate, or able. It could be that He is tending to something that will maximize the moment when everything comes together. It wasn’t time for Him to be crowned King because He wasn’t done yet.

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## **WHAT ABOUT THE CHILDREN?**

Jesus loves children. He did when He walked those dusty streets when He was here on earth, and He still does now. Sometimes children, at a young age, can seem uninterested in the things of God. This should not be used to conclude that God is uninterested in them. I believe the Old and New Testaments are riddled with proof that God is intentional about caring for the precious young ones in our lives. Join us as we explore when God answers the question, “What About the Children?”

**1) Read Matthew 19:14**

Jesus lets his disciples know to simply not get in the way of children coming close to Him. It may seem elementary, but how often do we get in the way of children, either literally, or spiritually, getting close to Jesus? Do you remember being a child in the faith? Had you ever experienced anyone hindering you from getting closer to God? Let us know on social media using #MessageMag.

**2) Read Joshua 3:15-17**

Is it just me or do the most hindering things in life seem to always come when we're close to what God has in store? It's the stress before peace, trouble before blessing, Jordan River before the Promised Land. Have you known you were close to what God promised, but there was something you still had to overcome? Let us know using #MessageMag.

**3) Read Joshua 3:17**

See it with me. The priests step into the Jordan River and the water doesn't even touch their ankles before the miraculous begins. The water curls up onto itself in the direction it was coming from. It begins to empty in the direction it was going until there is nothing but riverbed in sight. I can only imagine the awe the Israelites had. Has God ever shown you something that is literally awesome? Let us know and use #MessageMag.

**4) Read Joshua 3:1-4**

Can you still see the scene? For some reason people were told to stand at a distance from the Ark of God. Through their eyes, on one side, there was no river where there was supposed to be a river. They were walking on dry ground. Then on the other side they could look and see the Ark, but if they looked passed the Ark they could see the river piling up on itself ready to wash them away. How many times has God stood in the gap and stopped what was supposed to wash us away? Has he done it for you? Let us know using #MessageMag.

**5)**

Some people may wonder if God still does amazing things like this in this day and age. I know that the answer is a resounding yes! Is there a miracle that God has worked in your life or the life of someone around you? Let us know here at message on social media using #MessageMag. I'm sure someone will be encouraged and inspired by your experience.

**6) Read Joshua 4:1-7**

God gave an interesting directive after the people had crossed over the Jordan. He said get 12 stones and when you camp, set them up. They were to remind the people of what He had done, not only at the Jordan but also at the Red Sea. Finally God said to let the children know, when they asked, what that meant. Do we pass down the testimony of how we made it over? I wonder if our youth are at a distance because we haven't shared how God has come close in our situations? I invite you to pray for God to give you an opportunity to share with a young person what He brought you through.

**7) Read Joshua 4:20-24**

I truly believe that our young people need to know what God has brought us through. They need to be able to ask questions about why things are the way they are. We should all have our own personal Gilgal where all will know that God has been powerful in that place. We need to be open with our youth that God has to take us through some things that were the results of our bad decisions. I think this will help keep us from having to ask, "What About the Children?"

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## A SLAVE IN FREEDOM

Trapped. Stuck. Imprisoned. I don't know too many people who are comfortable in those circumstances. No one likes the feeling of his or her freedom being limited. That is just what sin does to us though. It corners us in a cell of selfishness that seems impossible to escape. That is why what Jesus did for us on the cross is so amazing! Because of His life, death, resurrection, and glorification we have been liberated. Even so, I'm convinced that the enemy still wishes to keep us captive. Let us eavesdrop on what Jesus does when He meets a slave in freedom.

### 1) Read Matthew 8:28, Mark 5:1, 2

Here we see that the two authors have two different accounts of the same incident. Don't be distracted by the differences, but rather focus in on the similarities. Does it strike you as odd that someone who is demon-possessed runs toward Jesus rather than away from Him? Isn't the grace of God amazing in that when you think you're far, He's so close? Tell us about a time when you ran into God in an unexpected place. We would love to hear about it here at Message on Social Media using #MessageMag.

### 2) Read Matthew 8:29, Mark 5:7, 8

Do you see the ownership that the demons proclaim over the ones they possess? I can't sugar-coat the reality that evil is contagious. It spreads without permission. I once heard a preacher address how one could possibly get thousands of demons in them. His answer was simple. "One at a time." Maybe demon possession is more extreme than your current predicament. We all can admit that doing wrong has a tendency to get out of control quickly. Is there a song, scripture, poem, or anything that you refer to when it seems life is getting out of control? Tell us about it using #MessageMag on Social Media.

### 3) Read Mark 5:3, 4

I want you to take your time reading and meditating on this particular portion of the story. Take some time to ask God for His Spirit's guidance in seeing yourself in this man. Pray. If you want someone to pray with you e-mail me at [pastor.rashad.burden@gmail.com](mailto:pastor.rashad.burden@gmail.com).

### 4) Read Mark 5:3, 4

This man is not just demon-possessed, but it seems that people have tried to either help him or themselves by putting chains on him. We see that he hurts other people and himself, and someone thought the solution was chains. Clearly, though, external boundaries proved insufficient. Don't we have a tendency to do the same thing? We sometimes think that if we put enough rules, laws, and constraints into place that we can change people and maybe ourselves. Have you ever tried to use rules to change who you are to no avail? Share your experience with us using #MessageMag.

### 5) Read Psalm 51

David knew something that we need to know. Our actions are more about the internal than the external. Read his words and think about how people tried



to handle the man who was demon possessed.

**6) Read Mark 5:3, 4**

I want to bring your attention to the fact that though the man was chained, he exercised supernatural strength to break the chains, yet he was still demon-possessed. He was able to get an appearance of freedom, but at the end of the day, the devil was still guiding his life. I wonder if Satan allows us to get victories from time to time as long as we let him keep his hand on the controls? It's a humbling thought that you can have chains broken but still be stuck.

**7) Read Matthew 8:32, Mark 5:18-20**

Jesus didn't speak to the chains; He spoke to the evil within. We all are susceptible to being a slave in our freedom, if we don't allow Jesus to have a conversation with the worst parts of us. I'm convinced that if we do, our response will be much like that of the demoniac in that we are begging Jesus to go wherever He goes.

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