



Bob LaForge

I have been a Christian for more than 30 years. My writing credits include a friendship workbook available at Church Growth Institute (www.churchgrowth.org), and several tracts which have been distributed to more than 10,000 people. Two of these tracts have been translated into Armenian with over one thousand copies distributed. My three books are available for the Kindle on www.amazon.com: *Contemplating the Almighty* is about who God is; *Developing Great Relationships* discusses how to develop solid friendships, God centered dating, and making right decisions regarding marriage; and *The Tempter Comes* is a Christian fiction novel.

I have been married to Toni for ten years and we have two five-year old daughters, Sarah and Danielle. We attend Grace Tabernacle Church where I am on the missions board, oversee all local outreach, teach Sunday school, and oversee the church bookstore. I believe that the key to a stable spiritual walk is maintaining daily, consistent communion with God, so every day I make time for Bible reading and prayer.

We live in Freehold Township, New Jersey.

BIBLE READING: John 11:1, 37-46

Lazarus was a central figure in one of Jesus' greatest miracles, yet the Bible never records anything that he said. We do not know his occupation or the sickness that caused his death. Even when he comes out of the tomb he gives no shouts, no cries of astonishment. Yet he was not merely a prop. He was a human being. He was someone who lived and who probably said a number of times, "Yes, I am the one that Jesus raised from the dead."

God does not work miracles only through spiritual giants. God performs most of his mighty works in people who commonly struggle through life. This is because the greatest glory comes not from God merely steering the awe-inspiring talents of exceptional people, but rather, in God's ability to use empty vessels.

Who are the people for whom Jesus performed some of his greatest miracles? They were lepers, blind beggars, a widow's dead son, a paralytic lowered through a roof, a woman with a hemorrhage, a man living in a cave—and the list goes on. Do we know any of their names? They were ordinary, scared, vulnerable people. But they were the people whom Jesus wondrously used. What did they all have in common? They came to Jesus knowing they were needy and he was sufficient.

We should do the same. Though the depth of our faith is important, it is the power of God that is always sufficient.

SONG: Lead On, O King Eternal

PRAYER SUGGESTION: May I realize that because God is great I do not have to be.

—Bob LaForge

BIBLE READING: Matthew 17:1-8

Verse eight in Matthew 17 contains three words crucial to our life as a Christian and as the foundation of our beliefs: “Jesus himself alone” (NASB). This is what Christianity boils down to. It is not primarily our tenets and traditions. It is “Jesus himself alone.” It is not necessarily where we go to church or what religious things we do. It is “Jesus himself alone.” It is not our experiences or how spiritual we may or may not feel. It is “Jesus himself alone.” These other things are all important and crucial to our lives, but what is going to sustain us and carry us through the tough times? What is going to give us hope and encouragement? Will it be our willpower or will it be our relationship to Jesus Christ?

It is sometimes easy to get caught up in the activities of Christianity and forget about the One for whom we work. “Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord...” Paul writes (Colossians 3:23 NASB). God does reveal himself through Bible reading, fellowship, counsel, prayer, communion, and obedience—but in all of those things we must always see Jesus.

In today’s story the three were terrified and Jesus touched them and said, “Do not be afraid.” When the miracle on the mountain was over, Moses and Elijah vanished. The bright cloud was gone. There was only One left.

When you are struggling, when you need encouragement, when you need answers, look to Jesus himself alone. He alone is the foundation and rock on we stand.

SONG: O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Let me never forget
the One on whom my faith rests.*

—Bob La Forge

BIBLE READING: Matthew 17:8-17

The Mount of Transfiguration was probably Jesus' greatest display of glory during his first coming. His glory shone like the sun, two great Old Testament people appeared, and God the Father spoke and validated his Son. So what did Jesus do afterwards? Did his ministry take off and he only do stadium tours? Did he write a book? Was he now too big for common, everyday people? Actually, the first thing Jesus did was to show mercy and compassion to a hurting child and father. God is never too big for even the smallest of causes.

When we come down from our own spiritual mountaintops and return to our jobs or families or neighbors we may be confronted by them or overwhelmed by the numbers against us. We may not be able to answer their questions: "If God is love, why is there so much suffering?" or "What about people who never hear the gospel?"

But we can always say that "Jesus Christ changed my life and he can change yours. He gave me hope, he gave me meaning, he gave me life forever and he can do the same for you." God does not reserve himself only for those great moments. God does not isolate himself from those grimy, sin-packed situations that plague our lives. Rather, God remains with us and empowers us at all times.

Christianity gives us hope and endurance because Jesus Christ is always with us. He is not afraid to get his hands dirty for our benefit. God is great but he stoops down to attend to every detail.

SONG: Am I a Soldier of the Cross?

PRAYER SUGGESTION: May I never think that God is not interested.

—Bob LaForge

BIBLE READING: Exodus 4:6-13

The Israelites were slaves in Egypt when God called Moses to deliver them. But the first thing Moses did was to question his own importance: Moses said to God, “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh?” (Exodus 3:11). The second thing that Moses had a problem with was rejection: “What if they will not believe me, or listen to what I say? For they may say, ‘The Lord has not appeared to you’” (4:1, NASB). Then Moses questioned his abilities: “Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since Thou hast spoken to Thy servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.” (v. 10, NASB). This prompted God to make his great promise: “Now then go, and I, even I, will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say” (v. 12, NASB).

I am sure there are times when each of us feels weak and small and vulnerable. These are times when our fears run ahead of our confidence, when we would rather claim excuses than God’s promises. But God has said that he will empower us to do anything and everything that he wants us to do.

When we make excuses for why we cannot do something that God wants us to do then we must remind ourselves that it is not our talents and abilities that God is asking for, but rather, only that we be a willing vessel for God’s grace and power.

SONG: Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

PRAYER SUGGESTION: In you, God, I am important, but with you, God, I am strong; I am a champion.

—Bob LaForge

BIBLE READING: Matthew 17:1-8

Everyone has something he or she is good at and enjoys doing, and if God asked us how we want to serve him we would probably choose this first. But what happens when God tells us to do something for which we feel inadequate? The Bible includes such a story. One day Jesus took Peter, James, and John aside and told them that they were going on a hike.

Jesus takes them to Mt. Hermon and says, “We’re going up there.” I can imagine that their mouths hung limp. Mt. Hermon is the tallest mountain in Israel. It is 13 miles long and almost 9,200 feet high. Snow is usually on its top all year long and the melting water is a major contributor of the Jordan River and brings life to the region.

These guys were fishermen: water, flat, lots of swimming. And now they were being told to climb this foreboding mountain. Luke mentions that when they got to the top they were so tired they almost fell asleep. But they obeyed and followed Jesus and what they then saw was perhaps one of the most majestic events that ever occurred. Jesus was transfigured into glory; his face shone like the sun and his garments became as white as light. They followed Jesus in weakness, and their reward was magnificent. We should also be as willing when God tells us to do something. We need to follow God even when we do not think that we can.

SONG: A Mighty Fortress

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Teach me to look to your support and not to my abilities.

—Bob LaForge

BIBLE READING: Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

I have two 18-month old girls who like to drag things all over the house—chairs, pocketbooks, boxes. I recently bought a two-seat wagon to pull them around. It is too large and clumsy for one of them to pull alone which usually results in a cry of frustration. Recently I heard them giggling and looked around the corner to see them successfully pulling the wagon together.

Second Chronicles 16:9 reads, “For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that he may strongly support those whose heart is completely his” (NASB). God is searching for people who are totally focused on glorifying him and when he finds them he will strongly support them. In the original Hebrew that word *strong* has a unique implication. It means “to make firm by binding together.” Things are made stronger by girding or binding together. Thin strands of string that are interwoven become sturdy rope. A single ant is unimpressive but an entire colony can be a force.

When we give ourselves completely to God he promises to support and strengthen us by binding himself to us. We do not have to defeat sin in our lives by our own willpower. We do not have to overcome our fears of sharing the gospel by ourselves. We do not struggle through life alone. By binding ourselves to God we will be stronger than if we try by ourselves and, like my two girls, we will be filled with joy.

SONG: “Are Ye Able,” Said the Master

PRAAYER SUGGESTION: Make my heart one given wholly to you, God.

—Bob LaForge

BIBLE READING: Psalm 118:1-9

The depth of our relationship with God can often be determined by what we take comfort in when we are under stress. On the extreme wrong end are alcohol, drugs, pornography, and violence. But there are subtler traps that, although not necessarily bad in themselves, can keep us from running to God. These might include food, TV, shopping, or the Internet. We can come home beaten down by the world and turn to one of these for the whole evening rather than to God in prayer and Bible reading.

Psalm 118:9 is the middle verse in the Bible and it should be the central verse in our lives. It reads, “It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes” (NASB). A prince is anything that takes preeminence in our lives. We can substitute any of the above mentioned wrong activities or one of our own particular solaces for “princes.” These princes can be destructive in themselves or be nothing more than a distraction. But their real harm is that they take us away from sitting before God.

The theme of Psalm 118 is taking refuge in God’s saving goodness when surrounded by those who wish to do us harm. Only in the presence of the Lord will we find true joy, wisdom, and comfort. God is a refuge readily available no matter the place, time, or circumstances. When we are being hammered by life our first reaction should be to turn to God and not to the princes of the world. Only in God will we find true rest.

SONG: My Hope Is in Thee

PRAYER SUGGESTION: When opposed, beaten, or confused, God, teach me first to pray.

—Bob LaForge