

DENNIS BURKE MINISTRIES

# Insights

The Way to a New Life  
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STAYING  
IN THE  
shade  
OF GOD'S INFLUENCE

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BY DR. DENNIS BURKE

# STAYING IN THE shade OF GOD'S INFLUENCE

There is a deep satisfaction that comes from knowing we are in a strong relationship with God that cannot be broken by the daily conflicts we might face or the problems that arise. In fact, if we are willing to pursue that kind of relationship with the Father, we'll find that it's possible to enjoy a life filled with true contentment and freedom — one that is capable of withstanding and overcoming every storm that life may throw at us.

Psalm 91:16 sets the target for us. God said of the person who will pursue Him: “With long life I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation.”

God’s promise of long life isn’t merely referring to living a long time. Multitudes of people become disappointed with life and, as the years pass, grow old and bitter. They may have lived a long time, but they have also been miserable and most likely have made those around them miserable as well. In contrast, God’s promise is not only for a long life, but one that is full, peaceful, and contented as well.

There is an art to living contented — one that the Apostle Paul discovered in his own walk with God. Paul could be rich or poor, living in comfort or in less-than-comfortable conditions — yet through it all, he remained content. How did he do it? He learned an important truth: Contentment isn’t a product of our surroundings or circumstances — it’s a product of our position in Christ and our perspective.

Paul’s strength to maintain the right perspective was the result of his decision to keep God’s Kingdom at the center of every experience and God’s promises in view every time things got tough. Paul said it this way: “I have learned the secret...I have the strength to face all conditions by the power that Christ gives me” (Philippians 4:12-13 *TEV*).

Contentment is a powerful force. On the other hand, so is discontentment — capable of robbing us of both energy and joy. So where will we live — in the tent of contentment or the tent of discontent? It’s our choice. True contentment is not the result of the conditions around us but of the condition within us — and the fruit of true contentment is joy, confidence, and strength.

The journey into lasting contentment begins right where we would think — in the presence of the Almighty God.

Psalm 91:1-2 describes it best:

“He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust.’”

Dwelling “in the secret place of the Most High” is our invitation to intimacy with God Himself. In Christ we now have private access to God’s presence. Prayer time should therefore become a joy-filled time of true communion, fellowship, and conversation with the Lord. In the process, the “secret place of the Most High” becomes our ongoing dialogue with Him.

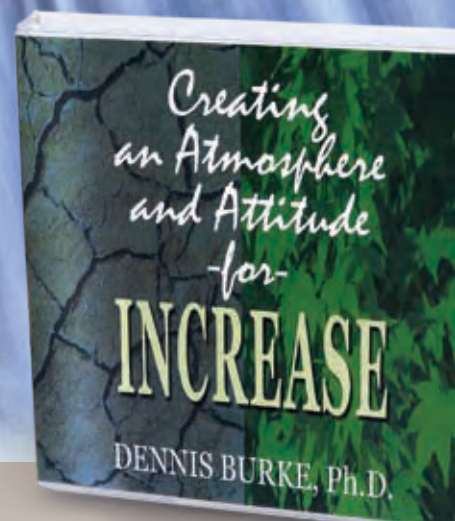
The psalmist provides a powerful picture of what this process accomplishes. He states that we will “abide [or remain] under the shadow of the Almighty.” In other words, we will live every moment in such a close, intimate place with God that

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His influence will be felt and will affect us in every situation.

The picture of abiding under God’s shadow makes me think of standing under an umbrella. Historically, the umbrella was first designed to protect a person from the sun. The Latin word for “shade” is umbra — the word from which the umbrella derived its name.

Think about it — we are carrying around our own personal umbrella of God’s influence! Everywhere we go, we have His “shade” of influence surrounding us, as well as all the situations we’re involved in. Staying under His influence will empower us to stand strong in the face of conflicts, negative reports, threats to our well-being, or any other move Satan may make against us.

Psalm 91:2 gives us a key concept for maintaining that strong stance. It says, “I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust.’” If we will fix our eyes on God as our place to run for refuge and protection, He will surround us with His protection

from threats and attacks of every kind.

The first epistle of John adds a very powerful promise in this regard: “The God-begotten are also the God-protected. The Evil One can’t lay a hand on them” (1 John 5:18 *Message*). The enemy can’t lay a hand on us as long as we stay in the “shade”!

The psalmist also gives us another important insight along this line. He makes it clear that this is something we say. It is more than a thought or something we know. God’s power is released by the words we speak — in our prayers, our declarations of faith, and our daily conversation.

God is our Refuge, our Fortress, and our Protector. He guides and keeps us, and we follow His lead.

There is something so powerful in saying just what God's Word says about us. In the beginning of Scripture, God Himself created everything with His spoken words. Throughout the first chapter of Genesis, the Bible declares: "God said, let there be... and there was..." In fact, for each of the first six days of creation, everything that came into existence was the result of God's spoken word.

Now we find the same principle in operation on our behalf. Our words set God's power into action and become our means of abiding under the shade of His influence.

There is power in your spoken words when they come from a heart of faith in God's Word. When your words totally agree with the promises God has given to you, you have taken the strongest position of faith possible — and faith moves God.

Those words, "I will say of the Lord," can be your declaration preceding every promise God has given to you in the entire Bible. You can declare with confidence: "I will say of the Lord that He is my Protector. He is my Provider. He is my Healer. He delivers me from the hand of my enemies. He is my righteousness, my shield, my joy."

We can find out in the Word who God says He is and boldly declare that He is that to us. In fact, Jesus is to us only who we say He is. He is our Savior only when we declare that He is. He is our Healer only when we say He is. He is our Baptizer in the Holy Spirit only when we say He is. We are the ones who establish how much of Jesus' influence He can bring into our lives.

Who is Jesus to you, and what are you saying of the Lord? Are you consistent in what you say? Are you letting the problems you encounter in life dictate what you believe about God's promises? The answers to these questions will unlock a great deal of understanding if you're not receiving God's blessing on the level you desire.

Begin saying of the Lord who He is in your life. Then watch Him rise up within your heart and your life to be all you have declared!

## testimonies

### Dennis and Vikki,

"Wow" is the only word that comes to mind at this moment! We have such an awesome God!

It was in 1974 that as a young 15-year old boy I was invited to church by a young lady named Miss Kim Murphy. The church was Harbor Christian Center; the youth pastor was Dennis Burke and his new wife, Vikki.

Today I am sitting at a new friend's house, Nikki, and I see a little card addressed to Vikki Burke in Arlington, Texas. My heart jumped. Goose bumps go up arms! Can it be? I asked my friend, "Is this Dennis and Vikki Burke?" She answered, "Yes, they are ministers that used to live in California. Vikki is a very old and good friend." Wow!

The last time I saw Dennis, he was a guest speaker at Assembly of God Church in Lake Charles, Louisiana; maybe five years ago. This was just after my near fatal car accident. I was in a coma for forty-five days. While I lay in my hospital bed, I thought I awoke to see Vikki standing by my feet. Her hand was on my foot praying. Then I turned to see Dennis at my side praying. Only too soon, I discovered that I was still in a coma. My Lord and Savior Jesus had brought both of you to pray for me after not seeing either of you for over 30-35 years. But wait there's more.

After being released from the hospital, upon driving into our driveway, I see a poster stapled to a pole: "Dennis Burke, Guest Speaker this Wednesday" at a church I had never attended. My sweet Jesus! How can all of this be?

As a young teenager, Dennis stood out in my life more than anyone. He never judged me. He believed in me. He taught me some of my most valuable lessons in my new walk with Jesus. Dennis was there when I ran away from home; when I tried marijuana for the first time. Yet he never judged me, instead he showed me such wisdom through his actions. And it was more than that: He showed me that I was special; that I was God's child and I could achieve anything. He showed me Agape love.

And again, after the trauma of divorce, and after I was left with hardly a roof over my head, here you are again — brought to me by a lady who has recently become a friend, Miss Nikki. I was helping her brother through my new ministry, "Point Man Ministries." My brother Joe Perry and I help veterans. And guess what church our ministry works from? Yes, Harbor Christian Center where Dennis and Vikki were my youth pastors in 1974. Pastor Don Ezell is a wonderful pastor.

Dennis and Vikki, I want so much to talk to you. I'm leaving this to God who won't ever fail me. My prayer and God's blessings.

Yours forever,  
**A Brother in Christ,**  
**Pastor Karl L. Kennicker**



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what determines the  
**COURSE**  
of your life?



Although all the blessings of God belong to every one of His children, many Christians continue to live defeated lives, never receiving what He has promised them. Why is this? Because they haven't made God's Word the final authority in their lives. If they had, they would keep the Word before their eyes and in their ears until it became firmly rooted in their hearts. Only when the Word

BY VIKKI BURKE



is anchored in their hearts will God's people develop the capacity to receive His blessings.

Along this line, Proverbs 4:20-24 tells each of us what we must do.

"My child, pay attention to what I say. Listen carefully to my words. Don't lose sight of them. Let them penetrate deep into your heart, for they bring life to those who find them, and healing to their whole body. Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life. Avoid all perverse talk; stay away from corrupt speech."

Did you catch it? The course of our lives is determined by whatever penetrates our hearts! It's no wonder God instructs us "above all else" to guard what our hearts are exposed to. Whatever we expose our hearts to will either direct us toward or detour us from God's plan for our lives. Even our health is determined by what fills our hearts. If we want our lives to reflect everything God has promised us, we must purposefully and diligently expose our hearts to His promises. On the other hand, if we allow things to fill our hearts that are contrary to God's Word, those things will detour us from the course He has planned for us.

Verse 24 tells us how to avoid detours and remain on course with God's plan: We must watch our tongues! However, that doesn't mean we're supposed to continually bite our tongues to avoid saying something negative. Avoiding negative words isn't the goal. When we say things like, "I know I shouldn't say this, but..." it reveals our confusion about the real purpose behind God's command to watch our words. That purpose is only realized when we fill our hearts with God's Word until we believe it more than outward circumstances. Then, despite circumstances, we will automatically speak from the reservoir that fills our hearts — and our words will always be in compliance with God's plan.

James tells us what a controlled tongue will achieve: "... Those who control their tongue can also control themselves in

every other way" (James 3:2). Notice the picture James paints: "We can make a large horse go wherever we want by means of a small bit in its mouth" (v. 3).

This analogy hits home for me because my horse weighs about 1,200 pounds, which is more than a thousand pounds heavier than I am. She clearly overpowers me in both weight and size — but when I put a small bit in that powerful animal's mouth, I make her go wherever I desire. Even though I weigh significantly less than my horse does, the bit empowers me to determine my direction.

On the other hand, an uncontrolled horse can run away with its rider, taking the rider wherever it wants to go. In the same way, an unrestrained tongue will produce an out-of-control life.

James continues his illustration, saying: "And a tiny rudder makes a huge ship turn wherever the pilot wants it to go, even

though the winds are strong" (James 3:4). If you have ever been on a ship, you understand just how huge it is. Yet a very small part of the ship — the rudder — steers and turns the ship wherever the pilot desires. The similarity is clear: The tongue is a small part of your body. But when it is controlled by God's Word, you

can direct your life wherever you desire — even though the opposing winds are strong.

There are dangerously strong winds blowing these days! Winds that threaten our economic stability. Winds predicting epidemic diseases. Winds of rising unemployment, extreme debt, and runaway federal spending. But we don't ever have to be swept off course by any contrary wind as long as we maintain a fixed setting, anchored in God's Word.

If we go through life unanchored, those powerful winds will push us far off course until shipwreck looks unavoidable. Venting our feelings when a strong wind is blowing is one example of a dangerous habit that can pull us off course. Another is watching hours of bad news, which only serves to

**The course of our  
lives is determined by  
whatever penetrates  
our hearts!**

contaminate us with the world's hopeless perspective. Eventually the gloom and doom that enters our hearts will mold and shape our perspectives. Spending an hour or two with God on Sunday morning cannot neutralize the effect of so much bad news.

Jesus rebuked one of His closest disciples for having the wrong perspective, saying, "...Out of my way, Satan! You stand right in my path, Peter, when you look at things from man's point of view and not from God's" (Matthew 16:23 *Phillips*). We will only see from God's perspective when our hearts are filled with His Word. Then His thoughts will become our thoughts, and His ways will become our ways. We'll use our voices to declare what God has promised instead of what the media or politicians predict. With the Word controlling our tongues, the direction and pathway to our destiny will become as clear to us as it is to the Lord! As the psalmist declared: "Your road led through the sea, your pathway through the mighty waters — a pathway no one knew was there!" (Psalm 77:19).

This simple poem by Ella Wheeler Wilcox further describes the significant role our tongues play in reaching our destination:

*One ship sails East, and another West,  
By the self-same winds that blow,  
'Tis the set of the sail, and not the gale,  
that tells the way we go.*

Like the bit and the rudder James talked about, the set of our sail (our tongue) governs the course of our lives, not the gale-force winds that blow. We set our sail by proclaiming the promises of God that will carry us to our destination.

The Apostle Paul tells us that the Word should steer each of us as we navigate our course through life: "All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the faith and correcting error, for resetting the direction of a man's life..." (2 Timothy 3:16 *Phillips*). This unailing

navigational tool will ensure that we reach our destination. And if we do get off course, our route can be reset. We just have to allow God's Word to act as our personal "GPS" (Global Positioning System), giving us the wisdom we need to make adjustments and get ourselves back on course.

Much like a pilot sets the instruments of his aircraft to maintain a designated course, so we set our course in life by speaking God-inspired Scriptures. Throughout the flight, a pilot must make adjustments as unexpected winds blow the aircraft slightly off course. Should he fail to make those necessary adjustments throughout the flight, he won't arrive at his intended destination. Instead, the wind will continue to push him further and further off course throughout the journey until

he loses his way. In the same way, when our tongues are set on God's promises, we may encounter unexpected winds that blow us slightly off course, but we

can get right back on course by making adjustments as the Word directs.

When we use our tongues to set our life's course, we begin to live offensively rather than defensively. What does this mean? It means we can stop many attacks before they ever get to us, instead of reacting to every attack that comes our way. Rather than getting sick and then desperately praying for healing, we can spend time every day building up our spiritual immune system by declaring what God says about divine health. Before getting in financial trouble and crying out to God for a miracle, we can build a reserve account in Heaven by giving tithes and offerings and then declaring that God rebukes the devourer on our behalf and that we reap a harvest from our giving. We can experience this pattern of victory in every area of our lives as we live in compliance with God's Word and avoid the costly price of defensive living.

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**Even our health is determined by what fills our hearts.**

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This explanation of compliance is an excellent illustration to help us learn how to control our tongues. If what we say isn't in compliance with God's Word, we should cut it out of our vocabulary — period! When we make a steady daily habit of speaking only words that are in agreement with God, our lives will begin to reflect His blessings. We are responsible for enforcing this discipline upon our tongues — keeping our words in compliance with God. David made this decision when he said: "...I am determined not to sin in what I say" (Psalm 17:3).

Changing lifelong habits are not always easy and they certainly don't happen overnight. Yet it is a process that the Holy Spirit is willing and able to help us with. We can invite Him to prompt us whenever we're about to say something that is "out of compliance." He is our Helper, and He lives within us to help us in any areas in which we are weak (Romans 8:26). We can call on the Lord just as the psalmist did, who said, "Post a guard at my mouth, God, set a watch at the door of my lips" (Psalm 141:3 *Message*). Notice he didn't put this guard at the door of his lips only during his prayer time; he did it 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Speaking the Word is not something we do only during prayer. If we are to live in continual blessing, our conversation must comply with the Word continually. When we speak God's Word during prayer but talk about our problems the rest of the time, the seed we planted during prayer will be uprooted.

Many people are speaking about their mountain instead of to their mountain! But that isn't what Jesus said would get results. He said, "For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says" (Mark 11:23 *NKJV*).

As we use God's Word to speak to our mountains, we must not get discouraged if our lives don't turn around overnight. Too often we expect problems that have been brewing for twenty years to turn around in twenty minutes. Yet Jesus said the Word will produce change in our lives the same way a seed grows: "...first a leaf blade pushes through, then the heads of wheat are formed, and finally the grain ripens" (Mark 4:28).

As you sow God's Word with the words of your mouth, you are planting seeds for a later harvest of His blessings. So begin speaking in compliance with God's promises throughout the day, and let the process of change begin!

*Unless otherwise indicated, all scriptures come from the New Living Translation of the Bible.*

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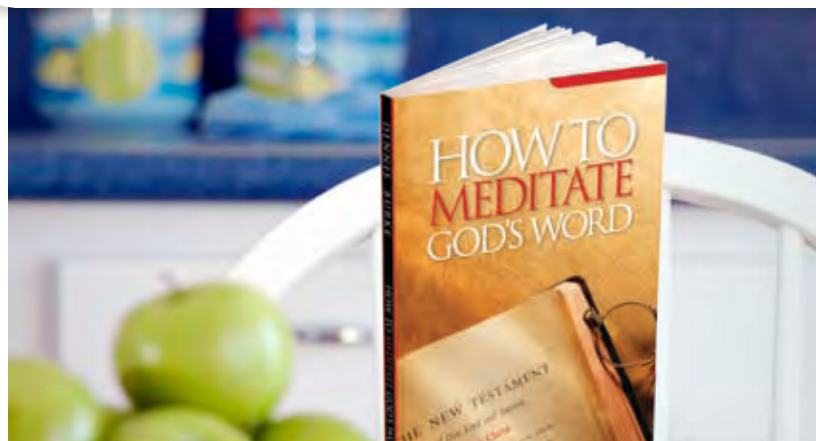
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