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# FROM THE HOLY LAND

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**Ministry of peace**

**Counsel-forgive-equip**

Renew your peace for thirty-one days

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**Milad Khoury**

**Psychologist; Counsellor**



### **About Milad**

Milad Khoury is a Christian Arab originally Palestinian with a heart for his homeland. He was born in Nazareth, Israel and was raised as a child in the Gaza Strip, Palestine. Milad has a keen understanding of the complexities of daily life in the modern Middle East.

He holds a B.A. in Psychology from the Al-Ahliyya Amman University in Amman, Jordan and a MA in Counseling from Israel college of the Bible. He has worked in partnership with a variety of organizations to provide counseling and humanitarian aid for those who are experiencing brokenness in the Middle East and abroad.

### **Vision**

Milad's vision is to equip the up-and-coming generation through counseling and training, helping to meet psychological needs using the word of God while also encouraging them to live a lifestyle of forgiveness. In order to bring peace and hope for the future (in the Middle-East and abroad).

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. The Lord is our Emmanuel from Bethlehem
2. Be grateful
3. The Power of Prayer
4. New things are yet to come
5. A Father who gives his children bread not stone
6. Life is beautiful
7. Power of the tongue
8. Respect & Love
9. Inner peace
10. Good Soldier
11. True Love
12. Pure Heart
13. Don't be afraid
14. I am with you, I am stronger than this world.
15. Descendants of Abraham
16. Children of the freewoman vs the children of bondmaid
17. Peace during the Storm
18. God is the God of miracles.
19. The heart of a child
20. Love Your Enemies
21. Forgiveness is a Lifestyle
22. Forgiveness is a decision
23. Forgiveness is to change our thoughts
24. I am successful
25. I am valued
26. I am not alone
27. I am accepted
28. I am loved
29. Grace during the storms
30. Honor as will be Honored
31. Our witness for Christ

The Lord is our Emmanuel from Bethlehem

Bethlehem is the birth city of Christ and He is our Emmanuel, The Lord with us.

Where I grew up in the Gaza strip, we faced a lot of difficulty. It was especially difficult being a child and seeing so many attacks and conflict, greater than my mind could think or explain. It was in this time I experienced the Lord as Emmanuel, God with me. The reality that He knows what will happen in every minute and in every second, the reality that He is our peace and that every hair on our head truly is counted and he knows when it will fall.

He really does know what we face and what we will face. We are not alone in this life, Emmanuel the Lord is with us. Without a doubt evil exists in this world but He is sovereign, He is our Emmanuel. Because He is sovereign God knows every detail before we ask Him our requests. He is God with us. Our Emmanuel.

Mathew 1:23 “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel” (which means, God with us).

Be grateful.

I know a volunteer in Jerusalem who is from abroad. Even though she is from a poor family, she is always grateful for the small things. She encourages others and is always thankful. Seeing this reminds me that life is short, so why not be thankful for what we have counting each little blessing and being grateful?

It is important to be happy and grateful in all situations, even the very complicated ones. This mindset will allow for obstacles in our lives to be straightened out. When we are thankful, our perspective changes and we see life in a more positive way. Being thankful through difficult times creates a stronger character in us. Studies show that being grateful brings joy and good health, in contrast with bitterness which brings deep unhappiness, sickness and even disease. Did you know that surrounding yourself with people who are thankful has a positive effect on your life? No matter what our circumstances are, we should always find things to thank the Lord for. For example, the food we eat, our jobs or our warm dry beds. Sometimes I fly to refugee camps in the Middle East for Ministry work and it's necessary to sleep there. After sleeping in the camps I realise what a big blessing it is to have a comfortable warm bed to sleep on every night. Thanking our Lord for all the things He provides us in life will bring us enormous joy. Remember to thank God at all times and to be grateful in all situations. Renew your peace.

Ephesians 5:20 "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

## The Power of Prayer

A prayer is a conversation, a relationship with God. We bring our complicated issues and our confusions to Him through prayer. The words that come from the bottom of our hearts in prayer are what move the heart of God, not repeated or memorized words. God wants to see our hearts poured out to Him when we pray to Him.

True prayer gives strength and helps us to break through closed doors. I travel often so praying when I am on a flight or driving in my car has become a lifestyle for me. In this day and age we are surrounded by many storms that could influence us to go astray, so making sure we stand firm in our faith is very important. One of the most powerful ways to stand firm and to experience the peace of the Lord is by entering our room and praying a prayer from our heart to God, even if it's only for a few minutes. It doesn't have to take hours to be powerful and effective.

Even when the Lord does not answer immediately, we gain inner peace by giving Him our burdens and taking in His Word. In this way, He restores our souls.

Matthew 6:6 “ But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you

## A Father who gives his children bread not stone

We should speak with God in the same way we would speak to our best friend. Speak to the Lord as a father who loves you and not as a scary Father holding a stick ready to hit you with every time you do something wrong. God will always give his children bread and not a stone. As a child raised in the Gaza strip the Lord gave me bread, not a stone, each day. I didn't lack anything. Yes, I can't deny it was incredibly difficult but not one day did my Father give me a stone. Quite the opposite, His blessings were actually chasing me. Your Father in heaven never fails you. Remember God is your Father who knows exactly what you need before you even ask Him for it. I have experienced how my earthly father wants me to be capable in life and I have found that the Lord is the same. He is constantly helping me to be able to produce fruit as He opens new doors for me. Your father on earth wants the best for you, can you imagine how much more the Lord does? The Lord is faithful in the small details and He will give you the desires of your heart. Expect that He will meet you in your need right now. I want to encourage you to be faithful to your heavenly father as you follow him through life. He will take care of you more than your parents or relatives. The Lord is worthy to be called a father. May you be renewed in Him.

Luke 11:11-13 11 “Which of you fathers, if your son asks for[a] a fish, will give him a snake instead? 12 Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 13 If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

New things are yet to come

Omer was a refugee from the Middle East who was without hope and peace. The reason was, he lost his home in Iraq during the war. Because of this, he emigrated to Sweden. I spoke to Omer briefly from time to time and I noticed that he always spoke about his hardships. I began to realise that he has experienced many traumatic and painful hardships. I wanted to understand what he had been through and the difficult circumstances under which he emigrated, but I found his speech very negative and never positive. I encouraged Omer to begin to reduce his thoughts about his past and to start to look forward. It's very important to know how we view our life, because our past can create our future. We will not experience success if we keep talking about our failures because these words will not help us to have victory in the future. So what advice could I offer Omer in his time of need? Clearly, understanding that the person is stuck in a cycle of disappointment and meditating on the past is very important. Also, feeling with the person is important to be able to counsel him to find a solution and to find rest and peace.

Life is short and dwelling on the failures of the past is not a solution for a better future. Let us use our words carefully and thank God for the sweet and the sour. We need to begin to stop focusing on the negatives of the past and not to restrict the flow of the positive thoughts that might enable us to step into a better future. When we focus on our past we are not able to see our future clearly.

Isaiah 43:18-19 "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.



## Life is beautiful

Life is short and dwelling on the failures of the past is not a solution for a better future. Life is short and beautiful, and we thank God for the sweet and the sour. We need to begin to stop focusing on the negatives of the past and not to restrict the flow of the positive thoughts that might enable us to step into a better future. Being raised in Gaza as a child there was very little to encourage me to believe that the future could be beautiful but in spite of all the bomb attacks and hardships, life was still beautiful. I was still able to have fun. For example, swimming in the sea while doing ministry in the Gaza strip with the Baptist church, the only evangelical church in this heavily restricted area. When we focus on our past we are not able to see our future clearly. Life is beautiful. The Lord created the seas, sun, stars and great sky to show that His beauty never ends. Let us focus on things that will bring fruit into our lives by looking at the beauty in our lives currently and the possibilities for more beauty in our future lives that have been ordained by God who gives his children beauty in spite of the hardships we face.

Psalm 8:3 “When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained;”

## The Power of the tongue

There is a difference between sharing your past experiences with others and holding onto the past. We need a clear understanding of that difference to live successfully and to develop our futures. If I focus on the past and speak about it a lot without thinking about a better future, my future success will be reduced. God wants us to be thankful in every season. He knows that we will suffer in life but Jesus will be there for us. Let us be aware of how we use our tongues as they can speak words producing life or producing death. Even when you do experience genuine failure in life, I want to encourage you that God wants you to be blessed and successful and to experience His blessing in these wilderness times. Don't block His will by speaking negative words about yourself or others, even in these times. God hears and the demons hear too. Your tongue has the power to destroy others or to lift others up. Let us encourage one another and renew our peace in our Lord Jesus as God makes a way as we speak life in every situation we are in.

Prov 18:21 "Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof."

## Respect & Love

Everyone in society has different opinions and we look at one another based on these differences of opinion. Just as each finger of our hands is not the same, to have differences is natural and normal. Without diversity in our societies, we would not have unique communities. Societies need diversity and differences of opinion, whether to agree or to disagree. Carrying different opinions also allows us to work better in our jobs and can even bring organizations to wider platforms of creative thought. Diversity gives us success and not failure. This does not mean that we must agree with people who go against the Bible. It's important to respect other people's opinion, but it is also ok to disagree. However, when disagreeing, we must be careful to do it in an appropriate way without being aggressive or harsh to or about specific groups of people. This will allow us to be respectful and show others the word of God by our love.

1 Peter 2:17" Honor all men; love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king."

## Inner peace

Growing up in Gaza with wars, conflict and terror being part of everyday life and then later living in the Middle East under constant political tension, it was essential to learn to carry inner Peace no matter what circumstances surrounded me. God enables us to have peace within us, but also, peace with others too. Diversity in our thoughts will help our self-growth, the development of our relationships with others and our ability to understand each other's opinions. Even when we disagree, and there are always going to be people who disagree with God's word, our conversations should be done with love, avoiding purposely offending others and always maintaining respect and self-control. Let us renew our peace in Christ and hold onto it so we can show others the peace and love of God. So many are searching for the inner peace that only comes from the Prince of Peace. May they seek and find the Prince of Peace as they see His peace in us.

Romans 12:18 "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."

## Good Soldier

The good soldier for Christ does not worry about life's challenges - the battlefield with difficulties like exhaustion, pain, earthquakes, viruses, the heavy burdens of life. God is preparing soldiers who are qualified in battles. These battles make you feel like you want to give up but when you don't give up, God will lift you up. Good soldiers will not give up in battles. The target is to have victory in Christ. The enemy's schemes will try to make you fail in the battlefield. God is giving you victory. Don't give up because of pain or because the battle you are in is very fierce. It is normal to be at war as a soldier for Jesus. Those who follow Jesus will have battles and wars. Without a doubt you can be very tempted to give up but I pray for you that you will not give up but will rejoice in the Lord, and be strengthened. He gives His children bread rather than stones because of His goodness! God is not limited.

My prayer is that you do not stand and meditate on your failures but will move forward no longer looking backward. God works in our hearts; He is faithful and will never deny Himself. Even if you are not faithful in the battle and you forget to carry your weapon, the word of God, the faithfulness of God intervenes because of His grace and His unchanging love. That will allow you to have hope and grace for others.

2Tim 2:1 "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2- And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. 3-Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

## True Love

God's love is not built upon conditions. God's love for us is that Christ died on the cross for sinners, to save us from any sin, strengthen us and set us free from this unrighteous era of life. We can't worship God in hatred.

The foundation of Christianity is God's love. Without His love we will not be changed and will not change others. In my articles I spoke about forgiveness as a lifestyle. Love and forgiveness without doubts are both unique and they also compliment one another. We cannot go forward if we don't possess love and forgiveness. Bitterness and hatred are easy to carry, it is much more difficult to carry out forgiveness; therefore we should strive for a lifestyle that is based on forgiveness and not on bitterness. Forgiveness will not let you carry heavy burdens. For example, a triangle has three sides, if you grow in the identity of forgiveness from God you will help yourself and help others. Carry the love from God for yourself and for others.

1 JOHN 4:7-8 "Beloved, let us love one another. For love is from God and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love."

## Pure Heart

The Bible tells us that we must carry love in a pure heart with a good conscience and sincere faith. To pray for those who persecute us; to pray for them and to bless them. Jesus loved his enemies and he didn't carry hatred or bitterness on the cross. The love of God is a force that gives strength, without hypocrisy. We need faith to move mountains and shake the unshakeable things. God can help us carry His love, faith, and wisdom when dealing with others. We need strength from God to continue walking in Christ to live a better life. Let us renew our peace in God every day; and our peace with each other. Having a pure heart is a mirror. Wherever we go in life we can reflect the character of God through our reactions to one another from a pure heart.

1 Timothy 1:5, NIV: "The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith"

Don't be afraid

Don't be afraid, Don't be afraid is counted 365 times in the Bible, simplified, 365 days. God knows what is best for your life even if you make wrong choices or mistakes, God can give beauty for ashes. He gives hope and strength to those who are defeated or broken hearted and sad. In the Middle-East fear is common and we don't know what will happen tomorrow. The threat of war is always hanging over us.

God promised us that we will all face hardships in this life but that He is with us. Jesus is not sleeping in the boat of your life but He is awake and strong. He can calm the storms and can intervene in your difficult circumstances.

Isaiah 43:1 "But now, this is what the Lord says...Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine."



I am with you; I am stronger than this world.

It was not easy to live where I lived but God can make a way even in an environment as unstable as Gaza. The Lord works everything together to make a way out for us because everything works together for the good of those who love Him. The current situation doesn't determine your future. My past was in the Gaza strip but even there, God is sovereign. He is sovereign in every situation we face no matter how dire it is. If we have confusion or can't even think, even then, God will still be working all things for our good. Nothing that is happening is by chance. Nothing is hidden from our Lord. Everything in your life, every minute, every second, God Knows about. Our Lord Jesus knows. He said don't be afraid even if the mountains shake from their places or storms rage in every corner of your life. Nothing is impossible, nothing is hidden from our Lord Jesus. Don't be afraid and don't give up. The Lord is with you in these trials. I pray that the Lord will bless you through this Bible verse and that your peace may be renewed in Christ.

Romans 8:28

28 And we know that all things work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose.

## Descendant of Abraham

This subject is not a small one. God blessed Abraham's descendants to be as numerous as the stars, God looks after his chosen ones. In Galatians Paul spoke about the one new man in Christ.

Gal 3:28

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

When we follow Jesus we will not be divided under the banner of our religious groups but one in unity and humility. One body in Christ. Not Jewish or gentile but one body of Christ. God didn't discriminate between Jewish and gentile; we are all human. Jesus came as the image of God, fully divine and fully human. He didn't discriminate between Samaritans, Arabs, or gentiles. Jesus is a descendant of Isaac. Jesus' mother, the virgin Mary, was a descendant of Boaz who was Jewish and Ruth who was a gentile from Moab. Jesus is Jewish and carried the identity of one new man because of his special descendants, but his society, the Jewish people, didn't accept him although the salvation came from him to the nations. No one will be saved only those who believe in Christ. Paul himself said we are all one in Christ despite our different opinions We have all received the Spirit of sonship.

Believe as you pray this bible verse - Eph 1:3-4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.

## Children of the freewoman vs the children of a bondmaid

Many were striving to be righteous because in Jerusalem, to be righteous was extremely important for religion. But Paul clearly said, in Christ we are children of the freewoman. That means we receive blessings from Heaven.

God has blessed us from Heaven; we are inheriting blessings from the Lord. As believers we have freedom and blessings. The law will never be able to justify us, only through Christ can Justification happen. We can never satisfy all people but our focus must be to satisfy God. Good works, fasting and giving help to the poor, in our own strength, will never be enough for God to let us enter heaven. The blood of Christ is the only way. The only way for us to come close to God is to believe by faith that we are free by the blood of Jesus and that he has made us clean. This will enable us to receive the spiritual blessings from above and we will inherit the blessings like Isaac did.

Let us remember that we inherit the spiritual blessings from above because the Lord wants to bless us much more than we realise.

Gal 4:31

So then brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.

The children of the bondmaid are the children of Ishmael or the people who are not part of the descendants of Isaac. The children of Isaac are the children of the freewoman.

## Peace during the Storm

In this world we deal with many storms which affect our lives and are often difficult for us to understand. We face storms that impact our emotional lives, our finances, security or our health. Storms that are obstacles on our path to success, progress or happiness. Very often we don't know how to deal with these storms, we have no solutions. Being in communities from backgrounds that have very different ideas and opinions creates many opportunities for conflicts and storms too. We will have storms in this life, however we need to be aware we have an enemy who wants us to fail and be defeated, not to pass the tests we face in the storms of life, he is the devil.

God's love for us still exists even if we don't make the right choices.

God is still able to restore blessings in abundance for the years of failures or the things that we didn't have success in in our pasts. Maybe it was because of a difficult situation or people who treated us badly. No matter what the reason was, Jesus can give us peace in any storm so seek His peace. God gives his children peace to sleep well. His supernatural peace intervenes in all situations. Yes, I believe you agree with me that God gives us peace in spite of the hardships of life: wars, bomb attacks in the Middle-East, heartbreak, grief or loss.

Philippians 4:7

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

God is the God of miracles.

He opens doors and He closes doors. He is the only sovereign, perfect in all His ways. He can change the curse into blessing.

The storms affect everyone from all different levels of community. All of us face storms that we can't control by ourselves. I want to share a story with you now about how I experienced God's protection. I was in a place in Gaza and a powerful bomb went off near where I was. Only the Lord's miracle power protected could have been what protected us from serious injury or death. My brother was hit by a motor vehicle at a very young age and miraculously came out of the accident unharmed. The first thing to do is to restore our peace by knowing that God is sovereign, and He is still doing miracles today. He knows everything, nothing is impossible for him. Jesus Christ, our good father, the only Prince of Peace who will open doors and close doors. Trust in Christ.

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. - Revelation 3:7-8

The heart of a child

Children are a blessing from God.

I met a child who was living in a refugee camp receiving humanitarian aid. We had chocolate to give away to the three hundred kids. A great time of blessing. We enjoyed our time playing with the kids and speaking with the families. One specific child I spoke to, told me he had lost his whole family in Iraq and then he said "I don't have any friends, I am happy that you are now one of my best friends." In short, the reason I wanted to share this story was this story impacted my heart and challenged me to think like a child again. To pray big prayers like a child and to love like a child. Yes, to be wise but not to lose this tender heart. Also that the Lord is reminding us to renew our peace.

Matthew 18:3 Then he said, "I tell you with certainty, unless you change and become like little children, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven."

## Love Your Enemies

Jesus taught us to love our enemies whether they are Jews or Arabs, as is the situation in the Middle East, or whoever your enemy may be. We are forgiven from all our sins as we confess them to Him. Jesus changes our hearts to be able to love our enemies.

Jesus is full of love, our heart's desire should be to seek His love to walk in His love as a life-style shining His light into a dark world. The Lord has taught me to love all people from every ethnicity. His love has changed me. I believe Jesus wants us to continue loving God and loving people.

Mathew 5:44 "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you."

## Forgiveness is a Life-stye

Through forgiveness we renew our peace & strength. Yes, the lifestyle of Christ is one of forgiveness. I believe you agree with me. Jesus was rejected, persecuted and kicked out of His hometown of Nazareth yet He loved His enemies and even prayed for them. He is faithful to forgive us our sins and to fill us with hope so that we can give hope to others who are experiencing hopelessness. For people who have experienced a traumatic, or other kind of serious event, forgiveness empowers. The proof is that forgiveness brings us healing from his wounds and those who forgive function better in life than those who have chosen not to forgive. I want to encourage you to forgive as in Jerusalem we need to live a lifestyle of forgiveness as followers of Christ. Forgiveness is the first step to freedom. Sometimes we decide to cut people out of our lives because of anger, resentment or bitterness. Are we willing to forgive those people? It is your decision. Let us renew our peace in Christ.

Matthew 18:22- Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.



## Forgiveness is a decision

Deciding to forgive will help us go through the process of changing our feelings, which may take time but the process has started when we decide to forgive. It is the most practical choice to take action immediately and not wait. It is a strength, not a weakness. The weakness is not to forgive and then you will end up making your own life miserable, not the one who caused you the pain. No one is without enemies. In life there are people that love us and people that hate us. So, my question here is: Do you expect destruction for your enemy? I am just thinking with you now, are you going to say he deserves it? To lose his job or be punished for doing something wrong? Maybe you are in a place of judging and hating the person because he did something wrong? At the end of the day our lives are short and bitterness can easily come into our hearts so it's very important to live a lifestyle of forgiveness. This is for both communities in Jerusalem to choose to live in forgiveness as keeping unforgiveness in your heart will not help you to move on in life. God is strengthening us to move on by His grace and to learn not to judge.

Luke 6:37 “Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven;

## Forgiveness is to change our thoughts

My point here is, are you willing to change your thoughts to positive thoughts? Then by having positive feelings rather than negative feelings toward your enemy. I am not saying we should accept negative behaviors that are repetitive. You can forgive practically by having positive thoughts about the other person and having good wishes for the other person rather than having negative wishes. By respecting and giving hope to your enemies. If you have the worldview that you don't need friends and that you can manage on your own without people, I would like to encourage you that your worldview in life should change positively by deciding to forgive & change your thoughts. Keep moving on. No matter what your example may be, an excellent example to all of us is Jesus. Let us pay attention to how He treated His enemies while He was on the cross: I know it is not easy to treat your enemies well. The Lord will help us by His grace.

Luke 23:34 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing. And they divided up his clothes by casting lots."

I am successful

If your mind is telling you that your past determines your future, that you are a failure and you will always be a failure, say to yourself, “no, I am not a failure!” A father was continually telling his son that he is a failure, he is a failure, he is a failure. What would the son think of himself? His identity has been shaped by his father telling him that he is a failure. The solution is to have people around you that will succeed. The solution is to have people around you who will speak God’s words over you until you begin to believe them. The Bible is the only one who will help you renew your mind until you receive beauty for ashes and the chains of your past failures are broken and turned into freedom. The Lord Jesus is saying to you that you are successful in spite of your weaknesses and tiredness and pain. God doesn’t tell you that you are a failure, he calls you brave. I am always praying that you will prosper and renew your peace.

3 John 1:2 Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

## I am Valued

If your mind is telling you that you are not valued and that you are worthless say, “No, I am valued and very precious.” It is very dangerous to believe that you are without value because our identity is in Christ. The Middle East faces many wrong identities; many feel they are not valued even though they are very precious in Jesus' eyes. The truth is that you are precious and because you are precious, Jesus died on the cross for you. Remember how special and valued you truly are and don't allow the enemy to change your identity and make you feel defeated, as if you are not valued. Maybe to some people, you are not important or valuable but know that you are known by God and He loves and values you more than you could ever imagine.

Luke 12:7 But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.

I am not alone

When I was school going age, I changed schools five times. This affected my life and I was sometimes lonely and found the transition hard to process, being a child. Thank the Lord for the body of Jesus who stood by me as friends. If your mind is telling you that you are lonely, say “No, I am not alone!” Do you know that when a person closes his eyes, he may feel alone and that is a normal thing. But Jesus is always with us. (“I will never leave you or forsake you.” Hebrews 13:5)

Lies can come into our minds when we are alone, especially in this era of life. The solution is to refuse these lies and be renewed in Peace. When you are alone, be encouraged by reading the Bible and spending time doing good things with encouraging friends or things that will help you develop and grow in life.

I am accepted

Not feeling accepted because of constantly moving from place to place was a cause of conflict for me. I moved from Gaza to Nazareth to Bethlehem and then to Jerusalem. Rejection comes from Adam and Eve transferred through the human being through our sin that separated us from God. Rejection does not come from nothing, it affects our lives through our experiences. Our culture has a role in shaping whether we are accepted or rejected. There are people in your life who will reject you and people who will love you. Jesus is the Prince of Peace and the only mediator between people who brought peace and reconciliation between people and God. To find yourself accepted and loved by God is very important. Renew your peace. You can't heal rejection by yourself and you need to know that Jesus is the one who is accepting you as you are. Jesus hates sin, but he loves you as you are. You are accepted, not rejected.

Matthew 11:28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

I am loved

As a minority, we can sometimes feel victimized because it is not easy to fit in in the Middle-East region. If your mind whispers to you that you are hated, say: "No, I am loved". Can you communicate with others if you feel you are being hated? Our various relations with individuals in life shape our identities. Some create positive thoughts, some negative thoughts and some are our own illusions about ourselves. Moreover, our thoughts will reflect our own identity as a person. Your mind is a battlefield receiving thoughts that are shaping your personality and reflecting whether you feel loved or hated.

People love with conditions. Renew your peace in God. God loves us without conditions.

1 John 4:19 We love him, because he first loved us.

## Grace during the storms

The challenges we face today are different to the challenges we faced ten years ago. We need God's grace in order to see the puzzle that is not yet fully completed. Grace is needed from God to complete the beautiful pieces of this puzzle. Grace is a gift that has been given to you and me to continue living this life and to be able to show grace to others because this grace has been given to us first. By the Grace of God let us renew our peace with others, honor others and love others. His grace is enough and is far beyond our own understanding. We need to complete this puzzle by not allowing ourselves to feel guilty and begin blaming ourselves because His grace is for us too. Let us put the grace eyeglass up to our eye so we can see people clearly and give them the grace that is needed.

2 Corinthians 12:9 <sup>9</sup> But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.



## Honor as will be Honored

In a sports center a first-year student asked a question, “what is the most important thing to you in life? ”The answer, “ to honor my Lord and then to be honored.”

To honor the Lord is not only to worship the Lord and to pray to him but to honor the poor, to love your enemies whether they are Arabs, Jews or people from any other cultural background. Christ said love your enemies. To have a smile, to say thank you. Yes, to fellow Christ, not to be religious but to show the character of Christ in your everyday actions. We have to be active and ready to do good things so people will see our good works and give glory to God when they see us.

All cultures play a part in honoring others. In the Palestinian culture, the Middle Eastern Arabs are the most hospitable, friendly people. Generous in giving even if the family is suffering. Being made to feel welcome is important to strangers, specifically in the Holy-Land. How many tourists have come and visited our homes in the past? When we give tea, coffee or a meal to others we honor the Lord in the simple things and this will renew the peace as we love and honor people. By doing these kind things we will show Christ’s love that is in our hearts for the different people groups.

1 Samuel 2:30 “for them that honor me I will honor”

You are witnesses for Christ

God wants us to be thankful in everything. He knows that we will suffer in life but Jesus will be there for us. Once I was speaking with a person and demonstrating Jesus to him by showing kindness and love to his non-believing friends. His friends said, “you remind us of someone who we read about, his name is Jesus.” Let us be aware how we respond and behave. In psychology no behavior happens by chance it builds with how you spend your time and energy. The result will be behaviour that produces life or produces death. Even when you do experience genuine failures in life and not successes, I want to encourage you that God wants you to be blessed and successful so don't block His will by thinking negative things about yourself or others. Even in these tough times of failure . God sees, so repent of any behavior that wasn't right according to the Bible. Your witness for Jesus will lift others up. Let us encourage one another to draw many to Him as we live lives that show we have inner peace in the Lord Jesus because you will be a witness for Christ as you live your lives gazing upon Him. Our peace will be renewed and our future will be according to his will. Many people will know Jesus. I want to encourage you to pray with me, if you want to accept Jesus as Saviour and you truly want to follow Him.

Pray this prayer with me now: Lord Jesus come into my life. I admit that I am a sinner and I repent of my sin. I turn away from my life of sin and choose to follow you Jesus with all my heart, mind and strength by Your blood that makes me clean.

I want to share this bible verse :

Acts 1:8: <sup>8</sup> But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

May the Lord fill you with His grace to keep moving on in this race without giving up; making Jesus famous.