

# Short & Sweet: Mirror, Mirror

*Ma–You’re so bad at the alphabet game!*



My youngest son teased as I epic-ly (is this a word?) lost, yet again, another round of the famous Car Alphabet game. I was struggling on “J” as my three men shouted “Z” at the same moment. Yep. I stink at Car Alphabet. Why?

## **It’s all about the eyes.**

From chronic conjunctivitis, blocked tear ducts, light sensitivity, tracking issues, letter reversals, astigmatism to a torn retina, my eyes have always been an issue. I don’t ever remember being able to see well. By the time I was in middle school, I was legally blind without corrective lenses. But, I have always been very thankful for my glasses and the fact I could see at all.

Aside from the obvious visual side effects, my vision challenges have also affected my self-esteem. Not being able to clearly see what I look like has caused me to lack confidence and as a result to avoid looking people in the eye. Who can be confident not knowing if ones eye makeup is applied

correctly or hair is combed smoothly?

## **Mirror, mirror, on the wall.**

Then came the mirror. Recently, my oldest sister introduced me to her latest purchase, an amazing techno-mirror complete with magnification and motion-sensitive LED lighting. Wow. Snow White's stepmother would have been envious.

Within a few days I bought my own. I can see!

Make-up is smoothed to a flawless finish. Rogue eyebrows are brought under control in seconds. Dirty smudges are wiped away. The greatest transformation the mirror brought about though is how I feel about myself.

## **Knowing the truth about how I look has brought me wonderful freedom and peace.**

The Bible does the same thing—it give an accurate picture of what we are really like. Please read the verses below.

*23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; 24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. James 1:23-25*

## **The mirror of Truth.**

Interesting to note in Biblical times mirrors were not made from glass but metal—strong, tough durable—sort of like the Bible. The word used for *mirror* in James 1:23 is derived from

*optanomai*, which means, *to allow oneself to be seen*.

Like my sister's amazing techno-mirror, the Bible *allows oneself to be seen*,. It gives an accurate picture of the heart. Bad habits and character flaws are brought to light as we see ourselves reflected in the truth of scripture. Doing life with an obvious character flaw is like walking around with spinach in your teeth. Embarrassing! Everyone sees it except you. Like a real friend who tells you the truth, God has given us the mirror of His word so we can clearly see ourselves. He loves us too much to let us continue in our sin. When we clearly see our sin, we can ask God to wash us clean and makes us as white as snow.

## **Action Points.**

1. **Look in the mirror.** In the morning, before you do your hair or brush your teeth, look into the mirror of God's word. Spend fifteen to twenty minutes meeting with God each morning in the pages of scripture
2. **What do you see?** What is God showing you? What needs to change? If you can't see anything that needs improvement you need to turn on the light or jack up the magnification on your mirror.
3. **Remove it.** When God shows you a flaw, don't pull out the concealer. Instead, pluck it out with prayer and God's truth. Find a scripture that applies to your problem. Memorize it. Meditate on it. Pray it. Speak it. Keep it up until your problem is under control.

Life is sweet. Take a look in the mirror.

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## Take 5! : How to Know God



*" as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. 5 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, 7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love."*

2 Peter 1:3-7

Please take a moment to empty your heart of sin and self and ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit. If you haven't already, please read 2 Peter 1:3-7.

## **According to verse 3, what has God given us?**

Did you notice that God has given us *everything* we need to live a highly effective successful Christian life? Have you ever thought you were unable to bring a certain area of your life under the control of the Holy Spirit? I know I have. But, God has given us *divine power* to overcome our flesh and live by the Spirit. An untamed area of sin is no match for the power of God.

## **How can we begin to unleash the divine power God made available to us (verse 3)?**

By knowing God. The original Greek word for *knowing* used in this verse is *epignosis* which means *precise and correct knowledge, to become thoroughly acquainted with, to know accurately, to know thoroughly, to perceive, ascertain, to understand (BLB)*. How do we acquire this kind of knowledge of God? By *studying* His holy word; a cursory glance at a few verses each day won't cut it. We need to dig in deep, investing our time and ourselves in order to know God.

## **What else has been given to us (verse 4)?**

"Exceedingly great and precious promises" have been given to us, which are recorded in the Bible, enable us to partake of the divine nature of God.

**Please list everything we are to add to our faith mentioned in verses 5-7.**

Now let's take a quick at what each of these concepts mean in the original language.

**Virtue:** a course of thought, feeling and actions concerning modesty, purity and moral excellence.

**Knowledge:** knowledge of lawful and unlawful things for Christians, right living.

**Self-control:** "the virtue of one who masters his desires and passions, esp. his sensual appetites" (BLB).

**Perseverance:** the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings.

**Godliness:** reverence, respect, to be well off, to prosper, acting well, to revere, to worship.

**Brotherly kindness:** love or affection between friends

**Love:** the love of God, love that always acts for the best interest of the recipient.

**Which of the above virtues do you need God to develop in your life?**

If you feel discouraged by lack of progress in one of the above areas, remember you have access to His divine power. And He is greater than your sin. Power up and press on!

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# **Short & Sweet: 3 Signs You're Building on the Rock**



## **We live very close to Lake Michigan.**

While we go to the big lake most often in the summer months, we enjoy it best in the fall and winter, after the tourists have gone home for the season. This winter the Midwest experienced days of turbulent wind, especially along the lake shore. The waves reached incredible heights, crashing the coast and pounding the beaches. Churning. Tossing. Stirring.

### **Big storms mean big change.**



### **Tweet This**

They reshape and sculpt the landscape. Yards of beach can be gained or lost during the stormy season. Houses built too close to the shore are at risk. Every year some are lost to the lake. Expensive, beautiful homes tumble down to the surf like so many houses of cards. Why? Poor construction? Cheap

materials? No, wrong foundation – they were built upon the sand.

Sand is unstable—it shifts beneath our feet causing us to stumble and trip. Sand stings and whips as it is whisked away by the winds.

## **I have built upon the sand:**

Crumbling castles of pride and foolishness.

Misplaced trust.

Wrong motives.

False doctrines.

A relationship that never should have been.

Habits of sin.

## **Dreams I built upon the sand came tumbling down.**

I stood among the rubble, thinking all was lost—not realizing the false had been washed away by the waves to make way for the True.

Storms of life reshape the landscape of our existence—sculpting the substance of our souls. Underneath all the turmoil God is at work. The Holy Spirit, the breath of God, blows away the sand and reveals a Rock—a firm foundation.

While the wind and waves bring devastation to the house built upon the sand, we see a strange phenomenon for the house upon the Rock. The house is not wrecked or ruined by the waves—it is refined. Jagged edges smoothed. Rough surfaces polished. Sharp corners chiseled.

# The storms no longer destroy—they transform.

We no longer have to fear the storms. God uses them as an effective tool to conform us into the image of His Son. We can stand upon the Rock with the assurance that because He stands, we also will stand.

## On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.

<sup>24</sup> “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. <sup>25</sup> The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. <sup>26</sup> But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. <sup>27</sup> The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.” Matthew 7:24-27

## 3 signs you are building on the Rock.

1. Are you building on the Truth? Can everything you are doing be traced back to Scripture? Is God’s Word at the foundation of all your decisions and actions?
2. Do you have a good supply of building materials? Are you filling your mind and heart with God’s Word? What needs to go? What do you need to add?
3. Are your current projects, relationships, and ideas built upon rock or sand? Will they stand the storms of life or are they destined to fall with a mighty crash?

It's never too late to make a change.

Life is sweet. Build on the Rock.

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# Short & Sweet: Feast or Famine?



*"1 "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to  
the waters: and you who have no money,  
"Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money  
and without price.*

*2 "Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your  
wages for what does not satisfy?"*

*Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your  
soul delight itself in abundance."*

*Isaiah 55:1-2*

# Feast or Famine?

Bread and water are the basic elements of sustaining human life. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that about 805 million people of the 7.3 billion people in the world, or one in nine, suffered from chronic undernourishment in 2012-2014 ([worldhunger.org](http://worldhunger.org)). Less known is the fact that 1.1 billion people lack basic access to safe water ([worldthirst.org](http://worldthirst.org)).

There is another **famine** in our land more critical than the lack of bread and water. The book of Amos calls it a *famine of the Word of God*. Spiritual malnourishment is rampant in our land. God asks everyone who is thirsty or hungry to come and eat and drink – for free. Without money, without price. **Feast or famine.**

## Read Isaiah 55:1-2 again.

What food challenge did God's people face? It wasn't lack of money, but poor choice. They were deceived. God's people spent their money on something that was not bread, therefore it did not satisfy. They fed their souls with provisions that left them hungry, undernourished and poor. **Famine.**

## God offers an alternative, manna from heaven.

Bread, water, wine and milk to nourish the soul and satisfy the heart. It costs nothing to partake because Jesus paid plenty to provide. What is this manna from heaven God calls us to **feast** upon? Read the second sentence of verse two carefully, "*Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good . . .*

”

## **His Word.**

He invites us to **feast** abundantly upon His word—“all you can eat.” So many of us settle for tidbits, junk food and meal replacements. Why? Why do so many Christians bypass the **feast** while our emaciated souls cry out for nutrient-dense nourishment of the word? We get by on a verse here, a word there, from a devotional vending machine while God has prepared a banquet for us.

## **I had a similar experience recently.**

A few friends came to spend the weekend. When meal time arrived, we presented the menu and asked our guests to make themselves at home. With a smile I said, “*We have a wide variety of organic fruits, vegetables, and salads.*”

## **Tension. Fear. Suspicion.**

Silence reigned in the kitchen. Faces froze and smiles faded. Everyone quickly begged-off dining with us and said they would eat later. And they did—at a local fast food restaurant. I was baffled. Our guests had a choice:

1. Free nutritious organic food fresh from the garden, or
2. Expensive fake processed food straight from the factory.

And they chose Door Number 2. Quick. Convenient. Familiar. I wonder how often God feels the same way, baffled by our choice to bypass the feast for the snack.

It’s time to put an end to drive-thru Christianity. Let’s carve some time out of our busy schedules and join God in the feast He has prepared for us. Spending time with God isn’t always quick, convenient or familiar, but it will satisfy and nourish your mind body and spirit. Are you hungry? It’s time

to **feast**.

## Action Points:

1. **Identify the junk food in your life:** sketchy TV shows, controversial music, dicey movies, etc. What needs to go to make room for a good helping of God's Word?
2. **Examine your calendar.** What can you cut to make time for God's Word? If nothing can go, you're probably too busy. Or maybe you honestly have your schedule pared down to absolute necessities. Ask God to multiply your time, walk by faith and spend time with God anyway. He will bless you for your sacrifice.
3. **Find ways to put more of God's Word into your day.** Listen to His word on your iPod. Download an audio version of the Bible to your Kindle and listen while you do chores or fall to sleep at night.

Life is sweet. Come to the **feast**.

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## Short & Sweet: She Sinned



Short and Sweet Nourishment  
for the Soul

2 ... all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them. 3 Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, 4 they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. 5 Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?" 6 This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.

7 So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." ... 9 Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst ... "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" 11 She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

## She sinned.

She was caught in the very act. Given the nature of her sin, she did not sin alone, yet she stood alone before the crowd in the temple. Was her lover in the crowd? The scribes and Pharisees were using her as a sacrificial lamb to trap the Lamb of God. With rocks in hand, the Pharisees interrogate Jesus about the law. Ironic isn't it ... questioning *The Word* about the Word.

Why did scribes and Pharisees think Jesus would give another answer rather than stone her? Perhaps the fact He ate dinner with tax collectors and prostitutes got around town. At any rate, the Pharisees were willing to sacrifice the woman in order to get to Jesus. After all, **she sinned**.

Jesus' answer is brilliant.

**“Let he who is without sin cast the first stone.”**

Silence.

Memories. Regret.

A single stone hits the ground.

Rocks drop one by one. Fists unclench. A hailstorm of rocks fall to the dust.

Stones ... stone tablets of commandments broken ... the stone rolls away from the tomb ... the Rock of Ages, the Stone which the builders rejected offers grace. The One who was without sin, the only One who could throw a rock, throws her a lifeline. She is left standing, boldly before the throne of grace. **She sinned**.

Her story starts with a man and ends with a Man; one a sinner, one a Savior. Grace comes and crushes her guilt, sin, and shame. And she is free. **She sinned** no more.

## Action Points:

1. **Take your sin to Jesus.** Tell Him what you have done and accept His grace. Tell Him now.
2. **Talk to Jesus.** Like the woman caught in adultery, leave

your accusers to Jesus. Notice the only person the woman talked to was Jesus. She did not fight, argue, or defend herself to the crowds. What do you need to do to spend more time with Jesus?

3. **Turn and sin no more.** Whatever it takes ... new friends ... new job ... new habits ... **sin no more.** Change requires change. What will you change today to change your life?

Life is sweet.

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