

## Hold Fast!

**Serve [God] and hold fast to him** (Deuteronomy 13:4).

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 13:1-4

**Song:** “Hold the Fort, for I Am Coming”

Years ago I was in a boat on a deep Maine lake on an extremely windy day. I don't usually go boating in that kind of weather, but it was the last chance to show my visiting sister the lake. We were enjoying snack time when an empty cookie box blew away. I foolishly jumped overboard to retrieve it and was overwhelmed with the waves. It was impossible to swim, and the boat was fast moving away from me. My grandson threw me a life preserver. I realized if I just held fast to the preserver, I could keep my head above water until they could bring the boat back to me.

When things get turbulent around us, God tells us to just hold fast to Him. If we do, we'll have no trouble keeping our heads above the waters of difficulty, despair, or confusion. We may be tempted to jump and do something when we need to stay put, pray, and trust God for direction. Hold fast to Him and don't let go for anything! He tells us to love, walk, fear, keep, obey, serve, and hold fast.

**Father**, help us not to be fooled or influenced wrongly but to hold fast to the truth of Your Word. In Jesus' name, amen.

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August 16–22. **Ruth Myer** enjoys life with her husband in the Sunshine State of Florida. Her hobbies are music (especially jamming with other musicians), creating puzzles, and pool aerobics.

## The Big, Little Word *If*

**“I [Jesus] will not leave you as orphans”** (John 14:18).

**Scripture:** John 14:15-24

**Song:** “I’m a Child of the King”

Friends of ours had three children. Their home was busy and happy with much love and caring. But their hearts were also tender toward children without a home or loving parents to nurture them. The couple opened their home to foster children, and eventually their family doubled to six children. In time, love grew and the parents adopted the three. Those three gained the same rights as the other children. They were also subject to the same discipline and training as the birth children. There were times of heartache and difficulty. Orphans and foster children bring their own attitudes and behavior challenges that have to be prayed over and worked out.

Jesus said that He and the Father will come live in anyone who loves Him, and that love of God is demonstrated through obedience (John 14:23). The simple condition is if we will love. The little word *if* makes a big difference. If we do our part to love Jesus, then He will keep His word to come and make His home with us. He will not leave us as orphans but will come to live in us and we in Him. We immediately receive full rights as children; we are also subject to His loving discipline and training as His children. It is all part of being in the family so we grow and mature in Him.

**Father**, thank You for making me part of Your family. Teach me and train me to be like Jesus. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## The Greater One

**The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world** (1 John 4:4).

**Scripture:** 1 John 4:1, 4-6

**Song:** “Greater Is He That Is in Me”

Years ago I accepted the challenging, but very needed, job of driving a school bus. One afternoon while I was sitting on the bus in the depot, another driver came in and began discussing religion. I attempted to learn where she was spiritually, but she kept skirting around my questions. She agreed with all my spiritual words, but I found out later that her meaning was entirely different. Her answers were meant to bring down my defenses so she could change my thinking. It didn't work. I believe the Holy Spirit within me warned me of the spirit of error.

God has equipped us with His Spirit to discern between truth and error. How do we test the spirits? First of all, does the teaching agree with the Word of God? Does the person accept that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, our Savior, who died for our sins and rose again to redeem us? False prophets can be very subtle. It is easy to be fooled by circumstances or influenced by other people's opinions. However, He who is in us is greater! He will help keep us from being led astray. Concerning the other driver, years later she did believe in Jesus Christ and was born again.

**Father**, thank You for giving us the tools to discern right from wrong and helping us, through the Holy Spirit, to live godly lives in our world. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Love Perfected!

**If we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us** (1 John 4:12).

**Scripture:** 1 John 4:7-12

**Song:** “The Love of God”

When my son was a little boy, someone gave us a box of chocolates. He and I shared a special love for chocolates. Every night we each ate one piece together. One night when he brought me my piece of chocolate, I said, “Where’s yours?”

He said, “That’s the last piece. I want you to have it.” That was a touching moment for this mother! That kind of orientation to another has to be love straight from the heart of God.

We are born self-centered beings. From the time we cry because we’re hungry, wet, need to be burped, held, rocked, and want attention . . . to the time we want others to accept us, notice our accomplishments, and love us, we are self-centered. Loving and caring for others—especially when it means depriving ourselves—is a godly trait. Loving others means we direct our attention to them.

Love comes from God because God is love. Because He loved, He gave His only Son. This is love made complete. Our Scripture passage tells us that if we love, we have been born of God and know God. When we love one another, God lives in us and His love is made complete in us. Loving others is love made complete (1 John 4:12).

**Father**, we ask that our hearts may be so filled with love for the family of God that Your love will shine through us and influence all our decisions. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Where's the Proof?

**This is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome** (1 John 5:3).

**Scripture:** 1 John 5:1-3

**Song:** "Trust and Obey"

The old saying "The proof of the pudding is in the eating!" dates back to the fourteenth century, possibly earlier. Pudding in the 1500s was a mixture of meat and seasonings stuffed into a casing like sausage, not the creamy milk-based dessert we make today. Meat in those days could easily spoil since there was no refrigeration. You would not know whether the pudding was good or bad until you ate it. There was no proof without eating, and that could be troubling because it could be risky. But unlike testing pudding, obeying God's commands is neither troubling nor risky. In fact, our obedience is good for us and for our fellow believers.

God's Word tells us that when we believe in the Lord Jesus and love God, we also will love others who believe in Jesus (1 John 5:2). Love in action is keeping His commandments. And one of His commandments is to love one another. Love is the proof of the believer.

God enables us to follow His instructions through His Holy Spirit. He gives us wisdom in our daily situations. What are ways in which we can show our love for others? By doing good to them, praying for them, helping them when they are in need, being sensitive to their needs and feelings, and being willing to go the extra mile, if necessary.

**Father,** thank You for helping me to love You. Teach me how to better show my love to others. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Do We or Don't We?

**Whoever does not believe God has made him out to be a liar** (1 John 5:10).

**Scripture:** 1 John 5:6-12

**Song:** "I Believe the True Report"

The owner of a country general store left his adult daughter in charge while he went fishing. Not long after, he came back and said, "I caught a dozen fish and I'm going in the back to clean them." *That was quick*, she thought. She also didn't see or smell any fish, but he was certainly doing something in the back of the store. Soon a few men came in and asked for her dad. She explained that he just got back from fishing and was in the rear of the store. But she wasn't ready to say what he was doing. The men asked whether he'd caught any fish. She lowered her head, not sure that her father had told the truth about his success, and replied, "I'm not sure I can say. He will be out soon. Ask him."

Everything God says in Scripture is true. We can fully trust the Bible's testimony and share it with confidence. And the most important part of the Father's testimony is that He gives us eternal life through His Son, Jesus Christ (1 John 5:11). This truth we can declare confidently to everyone. Even if people say we are wrong, they are actually calling God a liar.

**Father**, thank You for sending Jesus to give all people the words of eternal life. I believe what He said and trust in His salvation for me. Thank You for the testimony You have given us. In Jesus' name, amen.

## We Overcome by Faith

**Everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world** (1 John 5:4).

**Scripture:** 1 John 4:2-3, 13-17; 5:4-5

**Song:** “Victory in Jesus”

Scott Hamilton overcame obstacles to win numerous championship titles and a gold medal at the 1984 Olympics. In professional skating he achieved more success but also some discouragements in his career—and then health challenges from cancer and a brain tumor. But along the way, Scott met the Lord and, by his confession, put his trust, faith, and everything else in God’s hands, knowing that God brings all who believe in Jesus to victory.

The victory for all who declare that Jesus is the Son of God is overcoming the power of sin. This is God’s work in us because He lives in all who declare that Jesus is their Lord. By faith, believers are “born of God” (1 John 5:4). Born because God has come to live in them and by His Spirit in them makes it possible to overcome the sinful patterns that held us captive when we belonged to the world.

God makes the way for us to overcome because of our faith. His presence in us strengthens and equips us to obey His commands. Through our obedience we demonstrate that we belong to God and He is in us. Respond to God’s presence in you with victorious living today, even in (or especially in) a sinful world.

**Father,** thank You for the power of Your presence in me to live in victory over the power of sin that still remains in the world. In Jesus’ name, amen.