

What Really Matters to Me

The Big Picture About the Criteria and Family Status

By Maria

FD/MM/FM 3555 7/05



Dearest Family,

This Letter is to every one of you, FM, MM or FD, who are serving Jesus with your whole heart. Peter and I love you so much, and we're proud of each of you. Over this last year and a half of restructuring and strengthening you have personally had to make some difficult choices and sacrifices, and you've chosen to trust our Husband and follow, even though at times you've probably felt as if you didn't have the strength or the anointing and couldn't see ahead very clearly. Peter and I have had to do the same—everyone in the Family has.

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2. These last couple of years haven't been easy ones, and just the fact that you're still here, still serving Jesus, and working on becoming winning teams is a wonderful thing. We're proud of you, and our Husband is proud of you! The hard part isn't over yet—you're still working to implement the changes, things are moving fast, and we have some hard work ahead of us. But He and we are proud of you for how far you've already come, all the changes that you've already made, all the progress that is already behind you! You might not see it so clearly, but the Lord has confirmed that the Family is being strengthened and you are being strengthened. His purpose is being accomplished.

3. I want to share with you some of the Lord's encouragement and perspective on how He sees the restructuring so far. He wants to remind you of what the overall goal is. We've had to focus a lot on technicalities in some of the restructuring GNs, and because many of the changes are practical, they can seem pretty all-encompassing when you're trying to implement them. But the Lord doesn't want us to lose sight of why we're doing all this, what the goal is, and how He sees it. I think His perspective will be very encouraging for you.

4. In order to personally benefit from this encouragement from the Lord, please ask Him to help you to receive it as a personal chat between you and Him. He is talking to you. He is proud of you. He wants you to see things the way He does. This is not something He's giving for the other 99% of the Family and not you. He's speaking to you, dear loves, each of you!

5. I wish that I could hold you in my arms and tell each of you by name that this encouragement and counsel is for you. I wish we could send it by e-mail personally to each of your addresses, and put your name in it. Even though we can't do that, you can receive it as such, if you choose to. If you do, you'll feel our Husband's love and comfort and understanding, and it will give you strength and faith to keep going.

6. As part of His encouragement, the Lord is also going to share with you some ways that your mindset might have drifted from where it should be. There are some things that are too prominent in your minds or priorities, and that lack of balance or false perspective is causing you to be discouraged or feel as if you're failing—when just the opposite is true!

7. As I said, we have had to focus a lot on some of the practical aspects and rules of the restructuring. The board criteria and the new leadership structure, the Home reviews, the minimum Home size, etc., are understandably taking a lot of effort and time and prayer as you try to figure out how to make it all work in your Home. But the Lord wants to pull you back from all that and remind you of the overall picture.

8. It's up to you whether you choose to make His perspective your own. If you just read these words and say, "That's nice, but His encouragement doesn't really apply to me or to our Home, because we aren't meeting up to such-and-such standard," then unfortunately you will miss out on the gift of faith and strength and comfort and encouragement that could be yours. These words from the Lord are for every single Family member—MM, FD or FM.

9. These messages were received by a variety of channels, independent of one another. And yet, as you will see, the Lord said the same thing over and over again, in slightly different ways. He really wants you to get the message and believe it!

10. Our Husband wants you to make it, to have what you need to persevere and win—not "win" a title or achieve a certain status, or "win" in terms of attaining a 100% score on your Home review, but win as one of His disciples, a missionary to the lost, one of His vessels of love in these Last Days.

11. So stop right now and ask Him to open your heart to these words. Call on the keys to bind the power of Pan and Arakan and Obstacon and all the demons of Hell who try

to cast doubt on God's Word. The Enemy will try to convince you that, "As nice as this encouragement sounds, it just isn't reality." But the wonderful thing about knowing the Lord and having access to so much of His Spirit is that what He says can be reality for you, if you believe it and act on it!

12. Okay, on to the Lord's perspective!

We'll talk more about some of the points the Lord touches on in this next message in greater detail later in the GN. But to start with, here is the big picture as the Lord sees it.

The restructuring is a means to an end, not the end in itself

13. (Jesus:) I'm so glad that you, My Family, are getting wholeheartedly behind the restructuring and the year of strengthening and all the many details and changes that it has brought with it. You're getting stronger together and you're learning so much about what is needed to make the Family of the future work. And not only are you doing these things for today, but you're laying a foundation that will support and uphold the Family for years to come. This is no small reorganization; this is the real deal, a full revolution in every way, and you're all doing great.

14. You've been through lots of upheavals and changes during your time in the Family, but this might take the cake as far as new policies and information to assimilate and do all at once! It could look like a pretty heavy burden, so I'm thankful that you're calling out to Me to help you and that you're learning the art of dependence to help you shoulder this load. I'm proud of you, My children, and I'm so thankful that you're bravely giving this new day your best shot and your full cooperation.

15. But there is an aspect I want to talk about with all of you, a concern I have and something that I want to explain. I want to help you to pull back from the trees a little so that you can view the whole forest of My plan and make

sure that you understand My intent in all these things, and are keeping that intent, the "spirit" of the law, ahead of the letter of the law itself.

16. To Me, things like status, criteria, Home reviews, grades, etc., are a means to an end. What is that end? I would define My "ends" for the Family as My desire to have a group of people on planet Earth who will wholeheartedly and efficiently do what I need them to do in these Last Days. I need you to be My hands and feet to accomplish the great job that I want to get done before I bring the whole show to a close.

17. But that job gets more complex as the days go by. I know that your existence there doesn't have the simplicity of Eden anymore. I know that modern life adds level upon level of responsibility and complexity. It's not enough that you go out and do nothing but preach the Gospel to every creature. In the meantime, you also have to strengthen your spiritual lives and your walk with Me to ensure that the Gospel you're preaching and living is the most up-to-date Gospel available, and to keep you close to the Source so that you don't end up like the one in "The Temple Prophecy" who was preaching away but whose light had long since gone out. (See ML #9, Vol.1.)

18. You also have to train your children and shepherd your young people. You have to defend and explain your faith. You have to provide comfortable and adequate living conditions from which to stage your missionary works. You have to have food to eat, clothes to wear, vehicles that run, products to distribute, and on and on the list goes.

19. So it's My goal through this restructuring process to set up a framework that will help you to fulfill My will in all of these areas while always nudging you forward to the greatest goals of all—bringing salvation to all mankind and your eventual reunion with Me.

20. But the concern I want to speak of here is My concern that some of you, or even

many of you, could get so bogged down in the nitty-gritty details of the restructuring that you start to miss the reason for what you're doing!

21. I want to make sure that you've got things in the right order. I want to make sure that you know that the basic principle of seeking My Kingdom first and obeying Me, loving Me, and doing what I tell you to do is the most important thing. Things such as your status, how many people you have in your Home, your Home review grade, and similar details are also important, but of secondary importance. They are the tools through which you accomplish My will, not My will alone or by themselves.

22. If you get too wrapped up in the fine points of the restructuring, the rules and requirements, you could lose the vision completely and become like the Scribes and Pharisees of My day. They never missed their tithe, never under-weighed the spices from their garden, yet they completely lost touch with the source of the law, the intent and spirit of the law—to love God with all their heart, soul, and mind, and to love their neighbors as themselves. Don't let that happen to you.

23. You might say, "Well, Mama and Peter and the boards have given these things great importance," and if we aren't concerned about these things, then we will probably lose our status and be less useful to You as a result." That's probably true; if you ignore the counsel that's been given and the direction I've been trying to lead you, then I will not be able to use you to the full; things will change in your life.

24. I'm not telling you to forget all these things and that they're not important. They are important because it's important that you do your best to obey. But I want you to remember that above all these things is the big picture, the bottom line, upon which everything else must be built: And that is, that you're here for Me. You're not here to get a perfect score on your Home review, or to "make good" in the eyes of

those around you. You're here because you love Me, and you want to give everyone a chance to know Me personally. If you keep your eyes on the big picture, then all the various aspects of the restructuring will fall into place much easier in your Home, because you will see how they fit together to help you accomplish My will. But if you focus so much on the criteria and your Home review score, or especially on points you get stuck on, then you'll wind up in a works trip that ends in discouragement and failure, because you've lost the vision for why you're doing all this, and your priorities have gotten out of whack.

25. I want to see you seeking Me as to how to implement and balance all these various mandates within the big picture of My will. I want to see you hearing from Me step by step, and keeping yourselves open, fluid, and adaptable. That's how I can really use you. If I need you to spend time with your children, but your witnessing hours aren't quite where they need to be for your "perfect score," then just do what I show you is most important. Follow where I'm leading and give your kids the time they need. If you just can't get enough people for your Home, but you have a thriving missionary work right where you are, then seek Me as to whether it's My will that you move in order to be FD, or if I prefer that you change your focus from trying so hard to be FD to just trying your best to be the best disciples and missionaries that you can be no matter what status you are, and trust that I will bring along more laborers in My time.

26. To get slavishly bound to a status or a score or a criteria point to the extent that it closes you off to My moving and changing will, or that it makes you neglect other priorities because you're so consumed with being perfect in some area, is not good and will not receive My blessing. All you'll get is the dandy bad example from "The Temple Prophecy" that I mentioned above—you speaking and speaking and working and working, but the light of My blessing is off and you've lost your anointing.

You will wind up with a form of godliness, but without the power thereof.

The thing to be slavish to is My will, not the status itself.

27. Or to put it another way, you can't put the cart before the horse. I'm your horse, your star, the one you need to hitch your wagon of works and obedience to, not the other way around. You can't put your goals of perfection, your ideals or plans or measure of progress or "achievement" or works of the flesh first and expect that I'll follow. You have to put Me and My will first, and trust that if you're seeking first My Kingdom, then all these things will be added unto you (Mat.6:33).

28. In fact, you'll end up doing much better at living the criteria and growing stronger as a Home if you're regularly stepping back enough from the nitty-gritty details to see the big picture and seeking Me for My overall will at that particular time for your Home—where I am leading, how I am leading, how you can follow, and what specifics I'm giving you to do. Don't you think that if you put Me first like that and stay yielded and open enough to make My priorities your priorities, I'll ensure that you meet the goals that you have to meet?

29. You need to be balanced in your application of these things and remember that the harvest and the Lord of the harvest are more important than the tools you use to reap the harvest. You don't want to be like the characters in the old MO Letter cartoon who got so into how cool their sickles were that they forgot all about doing what they were supposed to be doing, and God had to come down and blow their works into nothing until they got their priorities straight. (See ML #320, page 2751 of Vol.3.)

30. It's not bad to have a sharp sickle, or a good Home review grade, or high marks

in your criteria points. In fact, those are very good things, and I have asked you to work hard toward fulfilling the standard in the various criteria points.

31. But don't forget why you're working hard to fulfill the criteria. The criteria are meant to help you be My witnesses to the world. They're to enable you to live the lives of disciples, and thereby bring many to Me. If you let the tools to do the job become your whole goal in themselves, then you are missing the mark. If you find yourself saying something like, "I can't take my Word time today because I have to get out 13 more *Activated* mags before the end of the month," you've missed the point. You must maintain a good balance and keep a proper perspective in your life and work for Me.

Prioritize, and then tackle one thing at a time

32. (Question:) What if there are several things that you know are the Lord's will for you? How do you decide what to do then? For example, all of the things in the criteria GNs are the Lord's will. They're all good things and part of the standard of the Word. If we can't do everything, how do we decide what's most important or what the Lord's will is for us to focus on at the moment?

33. (Jesus:) The secret is found in stepping back and asking Me to help you see the big picture, and prioritize what is most important for you to be shooting for right now, today. Let Me help you to decide your first priority, your second priority, and so on. Then you can simply follow Me and work down the list, and commit to Me anything you don't get done. If you do that, you're doing the most

important things and not getting stuck on any one in particular, which may not be as important as the others in the overall plan.

34. I know that it's going to take some time to be able to fulfill all the criteria and the full standard of My Word. Even a couple of years down the road, when you've worked hard and you're much stronger, your Homes are much more organized and functioning more efficiently, you're still going to have faults, weaknesses, lacks, and areas to grow in. You're still going to face choices every single day between many important needs, and you will have to decide which ones you should attend to. The harvest is plenteous, but My laborers are few, so I'm trying to help you laborers learn to depend on Me, the Lord of the Harvest, for your directions, your strength, and your everything.

35. I'm trying to teach you to grow through the challenges, be strengthened through your mistakes, and overall find a better balance between reaching for the goal of the full standard of My Word, and not being discouraged or self-righteously condemning yourselves when you fall short of it.

36. And with this message, I'm also trying to help you to pull back from the details so that you can have a better picture of what I'm asking of you or expecting from you, so you can ensure that no area of your life or work is being neglected in favor of another area.

37. There is a lot to do and there will always be a lot to do. But My promise holds as true now in the days

of criteria as it ever did: If you put Me first and ask Me what you should focus on, you can expect and depend on Me to take care of everything else.

38. So don't beat yourselves up if you fall short in some criteria points. These are days of strengthening, and no one expects that you would have passed the first Home review with a good score, or even that you'll pass the next one with a good score. It takes time to be strengthened, and that's what you're working toward.

39. So step back and look at the overall picture. Are you putting Me first? Are you giving your children enough love and quality care and attention? Are you faithfully feeding the sheep I bring across your path? Are you working to strengthen your winning team? Those are some good examples of what the big priorities are. Focus on the big priorities. Keep the big priorities in focus, and all the little ones will fall into place. *(End of message.)*

40. (Jesus continues:) The biggest key to keeping things in perspective and putting first things first is to do your work in the spirit, in counsel and close communication with Me, and not to force it through as a work of the flesh. If you keep in mind the overall goals I have for you, then the criteria points and the Home reviews and your status and all these other things will fall into their logical place.

41. It can't be said more simply than it has been already, that if you seek first the Kingdom and My righteousness, all these things shall be added unto you (Mat.6:33). That means to find My will, do it to the best of your ability, and then trust Me that I'll take care of the rest. My will and My plan for you isn't

going to lead contrary to what's in the Word or the criteria, but it will help you to balance those things one against the other so that your obedience isn't one-dimensional or self-righteously legalistic, but is flexible and effective. That's what I want you to be.

42. To do things any other way will not work. You can strive and strive in the arm of the flesh to cover all your bases and meet every need or point, but if you're not connecting with Me and letting Me guide you as to what to tackle first and next and so on, it won't happen, and you'll only encounter failure, frustration, and sadness. You'll feel overworked and you'll feel the full weight of your yoke, which is neither easy nor light because you haven't been coming to Me for the rest you need.

43. But if you view these aspects of the restructuring spiritually, as I do, as tools and as a means to an end, then you can use them in their proper way—as aids to help you accomplish My will, not making them the end in themselves. If you do this, you'll feel so much happier and lighter because you'll be on My track, and all these details and things you have to do will truly be propelling you forward and helping you to bounce higher and higher for Me—not dragging you down as it could seem to do in the flesh. (See “God’s Trampolines,” ML #3508, GN 1098.)

44. Step back and look at the big picture. Are you serving Me with your whole heart? Are you actively searching for My will in every aspect of your life? Are you doing your best to obey My instruction to you? Are you loving Me more than anything else in the world? Are you loving others as yourself? If so, then all the rest will be added unto you, and you will go from strength to strength and succeed on every hand. But if you let the details and processes and procedures come between you and the overall goals of not just the Family, but of loving Me and loving others and being a disciple in general, then you've lost your way and you need to back up and take stock of what's really important in life.

45. A just balance is My delight, and it will be My delight to help you balance all that you have to do. Just be willing to be made willing and remain flexible and moldable, and don't lock yourself down to, “I have to do this at all costs” or “no matter what, we can't stop because we haven't reached such-and-such goal yet,” because that kind of attitude of pushing in the arm of your own strength to try to accomplish your plans and your goals will hinder you from finding and performing My will.

46. Be open to whatever I might say to you. Be open to whatever I might do and engineer in your life. Be instantly obedient and put Me first, and I'll be the star to which you can hitch your wagon, and I'll take you places you never dreamed possible! (*End of message.*)

If you're feeling overwhelmed, hang on!

47. (Mama:) As the Lord touched on in the preceding message, some of you are feeling overwhelmed by the criteria and the new structure, and are wondering if you're going to be able to make it. There is a lot to do to fulfill the criteria and get things up to standard—too much, some of you feel—and you're wondering if you're going to be able to do it all, or, if after months of hard work and sacrifice, you're not going to “make the grade” and will wind up being reclassified anyway. If you're feeling that way, I want to encourage you to hang on.

48. There are several things to remember about this time of restructuring and strengthening, which I think will help you to have a better perspective. For one thing, this time of restructuring and strengthening isn't over yet. Things haven't fully gelled yet. We're still in a stage of building our structure and there is still room for adjustment—and there will undoubtedly be adjustments in the months to come.

49. Peter and I have explained this several times, but when the Lord showed us that our Titanic was sinking, we didn't have a lot of time to plan and prepare and figure out

every detail of exactly how things were going to be structured or wind up in the end. We had to follow the Lord step by step, and we had to do it immediately. We couldn't wait around to try to figure out the end from the beginning. It was an emergency—the Family was in danger of becoming an ineffective and stagnant part of the church system through our compromises, and losing our place as the Lord's Endtime Bride.

50. When we received that message from the Lord—and many confirmations, of course—we knew we had to take action immediately and take the steps the Lord was showing us to take. It's been a step-by-step process from there. We and our counselors, including the RSs and field leadership, have worked very hard over the last couple of years, counseling, praying, discussing, and discovering the Lord's plan.

51. Things have often moved faster than we would have liked over the last year or two, but it was and is wartime, and the Lord has assured us repeatedly, at each step, that we had to move ahead even if every detail wasn't quite figured out yet. It was important for the Family to do an "about-face," and even the upheaval that these changes have caused is an important part of the Lord's plan to shake us out of our ruts and get us started on a new path. He is interested in preserving the Revolution, so we know that things are never going to settle down completely if we keep following Him!

52. Thankfully, through all of our obedience and willingness to go through this restructuring, to make the necessary changes—even if the Lord hasn't revealed all of the finer details yet—to make whatever sacrifices are necessary to hit the mark of His will, the Lord has said that we are reclaiming our place as His Endtime bride, and we are well on our way to being strengthened. Praise the Lord!

53. But if you are feeling unsettled and like things are still chaotic, don't worry. Peter and I—and your shepherds—feel that way too sometimes! We have had the faith to proceed

because our wonderful Husband has promised us over and over that even though we don't know the end from the beginning, He does. We are trusting Him and following Him step by step, because we know that He knows best.

54. But we know we haven't arrived yet, by any means. So if you still feel overwhelmed and like you're not really on top of things, or even that some aspects of the changes aren't working for you yet or aren't doable in the long term, don't worry. Perhaps in time the Lord will show us to adjust some things. It's also likely that with time you will discover that you're capable of a lot more than you think you are right now. Remember that this is the year of strengthening, and even if you feel like all this stretching and spiritual exercise is too much and is going to kill you, the Lord is allowing it because it's actually strengthening you.

55. Even though the basic structure is in place, we know we still have a lot of work to do. This structure, the criteria, and the grading system for the Home reviews are all new, and while we have full faith that we are going in the direction the Lord wants us to go, we also know that the Lord often works with us step by step, and that with time He will probably show us to make adjustments. There will probably need to be minor changes to make things more doable or accurate, and there will probably be other things that the Lord shows us to raise the standard in or further clarify what the intent or meaning is, so that we truly become the winning teams we're meant to be.

56. The Lord told us we needed to have a big change, to set the standard high for our FD Homes, to stretch and grow and realize that we needed to be living the Word much more fully than we had been in the past. He wants us to grow into our full potential, and we're going to have to really stretch to reach it. But Peter and I are not assuming that everything is now the way it should be forever, or that it's set in stone. We are prepared for things to come up

that will need tweaking. We and your shepherds are continuing to monitor how things go.

57. We also know that we have a way to go before we are strengthened to the point that we should be. That's one reason many of these changes seem so difficult and why the standard seems so high to many of you, because as a Family, we had gotten quite far behind where we should have been. We were compromising, our spiritual muscles were pretty flabby and out of shape, and even though we had all the instruction and spiritual "nourishment" we needed, we weren't taking it in and digesting it and absorbing it as we should have been. We weren't exercising ourselves enough spiritually. We should have been exercising like a marathon runner, but instead we were becoming more and more lethargic and flabby in spirit. So now that the Lord is putting us through an intense strengthening program, it's no wonder that many of you are feeling out of breath and wondering if you're going to make it.

58. The Lord probably would have shown us to do the restructuring regardless of where we were at spiritually, as He wants to preserve the Revolution, and knows He needs to keep us changing and stirred up. He needs to keep raising up and training new leadership. He needs us to stay flexible and flowing and adapting.

59. But the restructuring along with this strengthening program we're going through makes for double duty. That's why many of you are finding it so difficult. Much of that difficulty came from our own lacks and disobediences and compromises, which the Family is having to make up for now.—Not in a works trip sense, but we're having to work harder to get where we should have been all along!

60. The Lord warned us many times over the years that if we didn't keep up, it was going to be much harder to catch up later. That's what we're having to do now.

61. All that to say, if some aspect of the criteria or new structure seems very "heavy" to you and you're doubting your ability to make

it, or if everything together feels overwhelming to you, please hang on. You're still growing and becoming stronger, and with time, things that seem very hard now will become second nature as you adapt to them and learn to use your spiritual weapons more effectively.

62. We are also communicating with the RSs and asking them for their assessment of how things are going. We are open to input, and if there is something you feel we should know about, or something that is unclear, or that doesn't seem to work, or that you think might work better a different way, please write us. The RBCs and IBCs are evaluating the criteria questions and the scoring system, looking at the results of the Home review. (When you write us, please remember to include your Home number, membership category, and country. Thanks!)

63. So the bottom line is: If things seem like too much right now, please hold on. Wait for a while and see how things go. With time, you will get stronger and thus things will get easier, and the dust will settle more. But right now the Lord is using this restructuring and upheaval as a test for each of you, and for each Home worldwide. We'll talk more about that later on.

64. (Jesus:) My dear loves and precious brides, if you are feeling the weight of the burdens and cares of life pressing heavily upon you, then this message is for you. If you're feeling like it's all just too much, that there's no way you can fulfill the criteria in every pillar, then this message is for you. If you're worried that you're not going to make it, then I want you to sit still and listen.

65. This message isn't going to be a new revelation or something you haven't heard before, but it's what I know you need to hear right now. Sit with Me, lie with Me, or walk with Me—however you want to picture Me giving this message to you personally, in whatever setting helps you to relax and think about Me and enjoy My company.

66. I want you to meditate upon My love and care for you. I want you to picture Me holding you close, stroking your hair, wiping your tears, and easing your concerns. I want you to picture how I look at you, just you, and what a treasure you are to Me. Above all, I want you to know My unending love for you, and that I would never do anything that wasn't for your good. Do you believe and trust that?

67. Okay, now let's talk heart to heart about these battles that have weighed heavily upon your heart and spirit, to the point that you feel that you can't keep going, that it's too much, or you're worn out physically and spiritually from the battle and the call to change in so many areas.

68. I know it's a lot all at once, and your shepherds have acknowledged that as well. They are also tired. The restructuring has been a time of change for all, and change is rarely easy, especially change that involves sacrifice, giving more, and striving to be a professional disciple for Me. But I have not given you more than you are able to bear, My loves. I'm not asking the impossible of you. It might seem that way in some respects, especially if you look at all that has gone into the last months. There have been changes on so many fronts, and then with the Home review you realized once more that there are yet more areas to work on strengthening and changing in.

69. But that constant forward movement is what is keeping you alive, My loves. It's keeping you desperate with Me. I'm not letting you settle down, solidify, and stagnate. Though the restructuring changes won't continue indefinitely, and things will settle and fall into place, I will continue to work in your life to change you and to keep you on your toes spiritually.

70. That's the way of My Spirit—always changing, moving, revolting, and keeping you fresh and alive. Wouldn't you rather that, than settling down in a more comfortable life and losing that spark of the spirit? It is that spark

of My Spirit that keeps you so different from the world. The most uncomfortable place for a Christian is a comfortable place. I don't want you to settle down and just take it easy. When you settle down, I lose the marvelous potential that I have to work in you fully; and what a sad loss that would be—both for My Kingdom and for you.

71. But by saying this, don't get Me wrong. I want you to cast your burdens on Me. I want you to take time to rest in My arms and in My Word every day. I want you to have times for relaxation and fun. I want you to enjoy your life too! So don't let the Enemy steal that away by getting you under pressure with all that there is to do. If you put Me first, I will add all these other things unto you—whether it's the solution to problems or difficulties, excitement in your service for Me, fun and enjoyable times of recreation, and so much more.

72. So, My dear loves, take your load off, cast it on Me, and have patience. Have patience that things will fall into place and that the picture will become clearer. "You have need of patience, that after you have done the will of God you might receive the promise" (Heb.10:36). That "promise" is all the wonderful things I have said will come of the restructuring and a stronger, tighter Family. That promise is the fruit that will be borne as a result of the work you've put into forming your winning teams. And that promise will be fully fulfilled when I take you into My arms and tell you, "Well done, My good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord!" (Mat.25:21).

73. You'll see that it was worth the work and the effort to change. Don't get discouraged if right now it doesn't seem that much good is resulting from all the work that you're putting into it. Be patient, My loves, and trust Me. You will see the fulfillment of My promises—all will come to pass, and not one will fail. (*End of message.*)

A crash course in the art of dependence

74. (Mama:) There is another reason why the Lord has allowed all of this to happen at once and to seem overwhelming and even impossible to deal with in the flesh. It's because He is giving us a crash course in the art of dependence on Him. He doesn't want us to be able to default to our old ways of doing things. He wants us to completely change our ways of operating, our mindsets, and learn to depend on Him, on our spiritual weapons, on His grace and miracle-working power to get us through and help us to accomplish what He knows is important.

75. This crash course is a wrench for your flesh, especially for those of you who are very work-oriented, used to getting done what you feel needs to be done, and operating in a way which has now suddenly become "outdated." All of a sudden you're swamped with more than you can do. You have to admit that you're not up to the task, and need a total change of mindset in order to flow with what the Lord is doing and adjust to a new way of operating.

76. And the Lord isn't just asking for a change of mindset in learning to use our spiritual weapons either. He wants us to completely change our mode of operating in other ways too, and become much more tightly knit as teams, more humble and dependent on one another, more accountable and responsible to shepherd each other, care for each other, and win together.

77. Instead of being a valuable Home member by yourself and finding a Home that supports your visions and standard, the Lord is asking you to become a support to all the other members of your Home, a true "team player," putting the needs of the winning team before your own accomplishments or priorities. Instead of going to your VEs or RSs for counsel, as you might have in the past, the Lord is asking you to humble yourself and receive shepherding from your Home shepherds and peers, and give it too. He wants you to ask them for counsel and prayer when you need

it, and to be willing to counsel and pray with them when they need it.

78. Adjusting to all of these changes that have come with the restructuring is a huge challenge in itself. It naturally seems like too much for the Lord to expect us to make all these changes at once. But He has done it this way on purpose—so that we will see it is too much for us and throw ourselves on His mercy to see us through and give us the strength. And through it we will learn and grow in the art of dependence, and thus eventually we will reach our full potential.

79. Operating in the natural, physical realm by relying on our abilities, gifts and talents, drive, energy, or our own ideas of how things should be done, with a little help from the spirit, will only get us so far. In order to become the Endtime witnesses that the Lord has prepared us to be all this time, we must switch over to depending on the spirit realm for the help we need, and working closely with both our spirit helpers and our mates and co-workers on Earth. That's the only way we're going to make it.

80. So our Husband, in His mercy, has set things up so that we can't keep going the way we've always gone. We have to make the switch if we're going to survive.

It's not going to be this way forever!

81. As the Lord said in the preceding message, things will get better with time. He knows and understands that this is a difficult year, but He has promised that as we are strengthened, things will get easier. It's not going to feel this difficult forever. Hang on. "Let patience have her perfect work," and with it will come the victory.

82. (Jesus:) I have so much love for each of you, My brides. I'm so concerned about your happiness, your fruitfulness, and your well-being. This restructuring and strengthening isn't an easy time for Me either, because My heart breaks at the difficulties that many of you are facing.

83. But I am looking beyond this time you're going through now. I'm looking at the beautiful butterfly that is going to come out of the cocoon, and I'm not going to rescue you prematurely by bringing the victories too soon. I'm preparing you for days of great darkness, days so dark that normal night and the light of the moon and stars will seem bright. I'm preparing you to walk by faith, not by sight. I'm strengthening your faith so that it is solid and can withstand the most difficult of tests. It's for your own good that I'm doing this, because I know you want to win. I know you want to enter the Endtime with your place by My side secure as My elite, My called-out ones.

84. I know it's difficult. I know that many of you are struggling. I feel your pain and your sense of disappointment with the battles that just keep coming and coming and coming. I feel what you're going through. It's like what My Father went through when I was dying on the cross and feeling forsaken, and yet He couldn't rescue Me, for it was part of what I had to go through in order to be your Savior.

85. This is similar, in that it is a period of endurance for the Family, a period of severe testing, a period when many of you are having to hang on simply because you know that I've always spoken the truth, and so you believe that I will see you through, even though right now you can't see how you're going to make it.

86. It's really, really tough. But that is all part of what you must go through, and I can't rescue you prematurely. I can't bring the victories until you have passed the tests. The victories are there. My Word is sure, and I will bring those victories. But first comes the testing, and in order to win the very great victories that are ahead, this period of testing is prolonged and very difficult.

87. So that is the way I want you to be looking at things. I want you to hold on to that picture, to keep reminding yourself that I do all things well, and that I never ask anything of you that is too much, I never ask anything that I'm not prepared to see you through.

88. My loves, be comforted that I do see the difficulties—you aren't imagining them, and you're not the only one who feels this way. But at the same time, don't let the burdens overwhelm you. Keep placing them back on My shoulders where they belong. Keep praising Me and trusting Me that I'm going to bring the victories in My time, and that this purging is a strengthening. It will be, for those who hold on. *(End of message.)*

Too much emphasis on status is unhealthy

89. (Mama:) There is something else that is making some of you discouraged, and I believe that is an inappropriate importance placed on status. To some of you, the FD standard has become a measure of success or failure. Thus the criteria and the Home reviews and all they entail have become a very big weight or burden that you feel you must bear. You feel that if you don't get everything just right, you're failing. You fear losing your FD status, or think that if you have to change status—whether permanently or for a time—you're a failure.

90. I realize that you mean well in trying to make the FD standard and keep your status, or in trying to live as close to the FD standard as possible, if you are MM. You're trying to please the Lord. You're trying to "make it." But, you know, the Lord doesn't judge anything by whether you're FD or not. That might come as a shock to you, but He really doesn't. What's important to Him is your love for Him, the love you show to others, and whether you're doing your very best—learning, growing and progressing in the ways He shows you. I know we've said this so much that it's almost a cliché, but it really is between you and Him. He sees your heart and how much you are capable of giving, and that's what He judges you by. He looks at your obedience and how much of yourself you've given to Him. It's very basic. The FD standard was created as a safeguard or support

to help us live the discipleship lifestyle, and be a testimony to the world of living the full meat of the Word. It's necessary to have a high standard for the FD Family so that we can preserve the testimony of full-time discipleship.

91. But no matter what your status, you can still do your best for Jesus by living the spirit of the Word, living for Him, loving each other, and doing your best to win others to Him. That's what He expects from you. That is "all the law and the prophets" right there (Mat.22:37-40).

92. The Lord doesn't judge you according to your status. There are no special rewards in Heaven simply for being FD. The special rewards go to those who were faithful, who did their very best for Jesus. The Lord looks at your heart. He looks at whether or not you're doing what you're doing out of love for Him and a desire to love and help others. If you are, then you're succeeding in His book. You're racking up rewards in Heaven. You will be blessed and cared for.

93. When you lose sight of the overall goals or the true priorities—which are the same as they've always been—then things get out of focus. Whereas if you are keeping the overall priorities, the big picture, clearly in your mind, then you'll see that all the criteria and details of the restructuring fit within that big picture and are designed to help you accomplish what's most important. Looking at it that way provides a much better perspective, and will enable you to accomplish things in a much more balanced way.

94. What's really important in life? What will last forever? Dad said one time that "souls and children are all that you'll be able to take with you." And, of course, in order to win souls effectively and raise our children right, we have to be firmly connected to the Source of love and be faithfully spending time with the Lord. That is a rather simplistic summary of the big picture, but those are our main priorities as disciples. Everything else—the restructuring, the criteria—it's all to help us accomplish our

job of winning the world for Jesus, and raising our children in His nurture and admonition—and being spiritually strengthened and prepared for what's ahead while we're at it. Those big priorities have not changed.

95. (*Jesus:*) You need to realize that what matters most is what has always mattered most—your love for Me and your love for others. That is the essence of all the laws and all My Word. Everything else is to help you accomplish those two main goals. You need to be putting Me first, and you need to be growing in love and living more like Me every day. The purpose of all the criteria, the purpose of the Home reviews, the purpose of the new leadership structure, the purpose of it all, is to help you to learn how to apply My Word—in short, it's to help you be a better disciple, more like Me.

96. If you get wound up in the letter of the law, it killeth, and you will soon find yourself strangled and incapacitated. But if you are living the spirit of My Law of Love, loving Me with all your heart and soul and mind and loving your neighbor as yourself, then you will find that many of the criteria points are automatically fulfilled.

97. I want to remind you clearly of what I look at—it's your heart, your love for Me, and your obedience out of love. Whenever you start trying too hard in your own strength, something is wrong. Whenever you get discouraged, you're seeing things differently than I do. My yoke is easy and My burden is light. And a great secret to learning to bear My yoke is found in the first part of the verse, "Come unto Me" (Mat.11:28).

98. So if you are heavy laden and under too much strain and pressure, maybe you need to step back and evaluate whether you're spending enough time with Me, committing enough to Me in prayer, letting Me solve enough of the problems, or whether you're trying to do too much too quickly.

99. A works trip will not save the Family.

Working very hard in your own strength will not achieve the restructuring and get your Titanic forging ahead. You can't accomplish all that I want you to and need you to in your own strength. If you try, even though you work as hard as you can, you won't see the results you hoped for. And, rather than getting stronger in Me, you'll find yourself getting weaker and more discouraged with yourself.

100. The most important thing is and always has been the spirit. If you can get the spirit right, then the important things fall into place. If you can get the spirit in sync—loving Me, loving each other, loving your children, loving your sheep—then you will be a good Home, a winning team, and effective witnesses. *(End of message.)*

101. (Question:) What does it mean in practical terms to “get the spirit in sync”?

102. (Jesus:) It's hard to put in black and white, because it is a thing of the spirit, and there is a lot of flexibility in the spiritual realm—within certain boundaries, of course. My Spirit is always moving, and changing, flowing. It's not stuck or rigid, but it is flexible, adaptable, giving, loving, soothing. Here are some signs that the spirit is going in the right direction in your Home:

— **You are putting Me first, as individuals and as a Home.** You're dedicated to your time with Me, and you place a high priority on hearing from Me and following through on what I show you. Each member of the Home connects with Me personally, and you all connect with Me together as well.

- **You're dedicated to the Word and obedient, and your obedience is carried out with humility and flexibility.** You interpret the Word and its instructions with love and unselfishness and a lack of self-righteousness, and this carries over into your actions. You seek Me as to how to implement the New Wine in your Home, and you take consistent, patient steps of obedience toward the goals I lay out for you.
- **Your Home is loving, caring, affectionate, warm, giving—both within your Home and also with outsiders** such as other Homes or your sheep and friends and contacts. But you're just as giving and loving with your Home members as you are with those you're less familiar with. Everyone has their needs met for the most part, because everyone is willing to sacrifice to meet the needs of others.
- **You are flexible and are willing to change plans and programs as the need arises.** You don't insist on carrying out a plan when it's obvious that My will has changed or I'm leading in a different direction.
- **You regularly step back and take a look at the big picture and remind yourself why you're here, serving Me, and making all these sacrifices and working so hard.** You don't lose touch with the happiness of My Spirit, the anticipation of the rewards waiting for you, and the touches of My love that I'm giving you here and now.

You appreciate the simple things in life, you celebrate the victories together, you're a team for Me.

103. Those are just a few indications of the spirit being right. There are many others. But I think you get the picture—it's not one thing or a list of things you can easily define, but it is a byproduct of each person being here for Me, loving Me, and letting Me love others through them. It's when you find the spirit of My Word, and work to make My Spirit a part of your being, your actions, your thoughts. Then the spirit is right. *(End of message from Jesus.)*

104. (Jesus:) My beloved brides, I will not ask more of you than you are able to give Me. I am aware of your limitations and I remember that you are but dust. I know that this time of adapting, of stretching, and of growing is difficult for many of you, and I see that many of you wonder if you'll even be able to make it.

105. Of course, this is just how the Enemy wants you to feel. He gains entrance through fear and tries to convince you that you're a failure, or that there's no way your personal life or your Home could improve to the point that you would be considered "up to par."

106. You're aware of the particulars of your situation and why they may make it extra difficult for you to live up to some of the criteria requirements. If you take your eyes off Me, it's natural to feel very overwhelmed and discouraged at the seeming mountains that are ahead for you to tackle. But that is perhaps one of the most important points of the changes I'm bringing you through—to teach you not to take your eyes off Me.

107. While "the natural you" would try hard to stop all the leaks in the boat of

your Home or personal life, and run around with nuts and bolts to tighten valves and repair damaged parts, you're realizing that even all of that won't get you where you need and want to be. You're realizing that no amount of effort on your part will fully succeed, and that's what's making some of you feel discouraged or feel like there's no use in trying.

108. But it should instead drive you into My arms, which is your only hope. When you come to Me, you can rest assured that what I have begun in your life and your Home, I am well able to finish, regardless of the path I might choose to have you take.

109. Another thing to remember is that My will is different in each person's life, and it also adapts to circumstances and to choices—not only to your own choices, but to those of the people around you. If you are reclassified and find yourself no longer FD, maybe that is My highest will for you for a time. Even if it wasn't originally My highest will, but happened because of other people's choices and decisions (such as not being able to find enough members to boost your Home size to the six-person requirement), I'm still able to turn the situation around and use it for good if your own heart and motives are right.

110. Down through history I've had countless men and women accomplish great feats for Me and build wonderful works for My glory. None of them had an FD title, but that didn't curb their efforts, nor did it lessen their results.

111. Just as I do not love leaders any more than regular Family members, so I do not love My FD brides more than My MM or FM ones. The FD Family members are not necessarily more blessed or more protected just by virtue of their status. I am a righteous Judge, and I look past outward appearances and statuses to see what's deep within you. When I look at your hearts, I promise that it makes no difference to Me what status you fall under. My love, care, supply, and protection are not contingent on such things. *(End of message.)*

112. (Jesus:) If you are called to be FD and you know that is the place for you, then all you have to do is yield to what I'm asking of you one day at a time, doing your best to be the disciple I need you to be, and I'll help you with all the details of making your winning team fruitful and successful in the way that I want you to be. Don't worry about it; trust Me!

113. Even if you do get reclassified, is that the end? No! I'll say it again: Each of My children is needed and precious, and I do not judge by status. If you are called to be MM, then be the best Missionary member you can. Or if you're FM, do your best for Me in the situation you are in, and I won't fail to bless and prosper you.

114. You might find that after a time in another level of membership you are stronger than ever, and you will see that it was just the right thing to help set you fully on course. No time was lost, but rather gained, with each step forward that you took.

115. (Mama:) The Lord has directed us step by step in how He wants to structure the FD Family. But all of that structure and the rules and safeguards and criteria are only a means to an end. It's to help us preserve the testimony of full discipleship. It's to help us live the Word fully. Simply retaining your FD status is not the end in itself.

116. Your goal shouldn't be just to keep your FD membership. If that's your goal, you're going to trip over all the rules and regulations, and it's going to be too difficult.

117. But if your goal is to serve Jesus the best you can, if you're putting first things first,

many of the criteria points will automatically be fulfilled. Things will fall into place. There will still be a lot of work and you'll still have catching up to do, but you'll not mind the stretching so much, because it will be helping you reach your goal of being the best disciple you can be.

118. If you want to be a full-time disciple, the FD Family is probably the easiest place to do that. But even more important than being in a place that you think is best for you, or one that seems easier or "safer," is to find out what the Lord's highest will is for you. You can't let yourself get stuck on status, or think that being in the FD Family is the all in all. If it has too great a priority in your mind, then things are out of balance, they're out of sync. Because in the Lord's eyes, it doesn't really matter, as long as you're serving Him to the best of your ability.

119. I'm not putting down being part of the FD Family. It's a high calling, and you who are FD know that there is a lot of spiritual sacrifice and a high standard required. And when you give cheerfully as unto the Lord, He really blesses and rewards that. But what needs to change is the fear some of you have of losing your status, or feeling that if you're not FD, you're failing. That's just not the truth! And if you have that fear or that feeling, it's going to influence the way you look at the criteria, the Home size requirements, and other new changes. It's going to make you resent those rules, when they are there to help you.

120. Also, you can't second-guess the Lord's will for you. Maybe it's His will that you step out of the FD Family for a time and get strengthened in another way. I'm not recommending that you do that unless you really know that it's the Lord's will. But if it is the Lord's will—for example, if you don't pass a Home review and have to spend some time raising your standard before you reapply, or if you have to become MM for a time to help one of your children who has decided to leave the Family, or you are in a fruitful mission field but

you can't get enough Home members to reach the Home size minimum, or for any other reason that the Lord makes clear is His will—then you shouldn't feel bad about it and you shouldn't let it discourage you. Just take it as a challenge and see what treasures the Lord wants to give you through the experience.

121. Someone recently wrote one of their loved ones who lives in our Home, asking for prayer for a situation with his children. He was sensing that he might have to step out of the FD Family for a time to care for a couple of his children who had left the Family and were getting into trouble, and there didn't seem to be any other way to give them the care and attention that they needed. My first reaction when praying for this dear one was, "It's just the Lord giving him more training in working with young people and loving them through their problems. He's going to be a great shepherd eventually for all those who are going to flock to us for help."

122. This dear person who was praying about stepping out of the FD Family was worried that by not being within the safeguards of the FD Family he was going to drift from the Lord or miss out on some of the strengthening that he could have gotten if he had stayed in an FD Home. But you know, if you really want to serve the Lord and stay close to Him, you can do that anywhere. And certainly the MM category is designed for that. You can drift just as much being in the FD Family as anywhere else, if your heart isn't in the right place!

123. What it really comes down to is, how much do you want to serve the Lord and live for Him? If your priorities are right, you can do that anywhere. The FD Family is designed to make it easy for you to serve the Lord with your whole heart. You have the support system, the safeguards, the Word and the manual of how to do it. You are guaranteed to be living with people who feel the same way you do. But it's by no means the only place you can serve the Lord! And if you can't be in the FD Family for

one reason or another, you shouldn't see that as a sign of failure! Just keep serving the Lord and be strengthened where you are! And how are you strengthened? By living the Word! If you have to be a different status for a while, maybe the Lord wants you to be strengthened in a different area or in a different way. And certainly you will be strengthened through the experience, if you make the effort to fight to stay close to Him.

124. We're entering the days of the End, and things are going to get a whole lot more difficult! That's what we're preparing for now. The Lord is going to have to keep us through a lot more than simply being out of the FD Family! How is the Lord going to keep us when we have to be separated from one another because of persecution, or being in prison, or some of the other missions the Lord might send some of us on? My goodness, if we can only be strong when we're in the FD Family, then we're sunk!

125. I do still believe that if you can be FD, and you want to serve the Lord as a full-time disciple, that FD is the place where you'll find it the easiest to do that. But if you find that it's the Lord's will for you to go MM for a time, then make the most of it! Fight even harder to stay close to the Lord and faithful to Him, and strengthen your convictions, even though you don't have the built-in safeguards of living in an FD atmosphere.

126. Most of the great men and women of God throughout the ages had very little support. Many of them were abandoned even by their own family and friends when they stood by their convictions. We have it so good by comparison! We have nothing to complain about! And if the Lord chooses a route for your personal strengthening program that's a bit different from what you had in mind, well, just praise Him that He knows what you need, He knows what is ahead, He knows best.

127. It all comes back to what you're really here for. Are you here to attain to FD

membership? Are you here to be in a Home and for your ministry? Or are you a disciple of Jesus who is ready to go, ready to stay, and going to be strengthened through whatever comes your way, because you're firmly tied to your Anchor, Jesus, and His Word?

128. (Jesus:) You can do the best you can for Me no matter what situation or position you are in—just as all My faithful children throughout the ages have done, whether or not they had the support of others or had like-minded people to work with. There are countless men and women who fought and lived for Me until their dying day, without being attached to a specific group of people. They weren't FD, and yet look how I used them!

129. The most important thing to remember is that you have to find My perfect will for you and do your best for Me in that place, and then you can be sure of My blessings in your life in every respect.

130. The goal isn't to simply hold on to your FD status. The goal is to serve Me with all your heart and to be the best disciple for Me that you can be. That should be your priority, and if you're looking at it this way, it helps to take the edge off the worry and concern about your status, so that you focus your energy on what truly matters.

131. I love you and I'm not going to fail you! Will you please give your cares and burdens to Me and trust Me for your future? Okay. That's good. That's what I knew you'd say, but it's a bit hard to see it all in perspective when you're out in the wings and you start getting weighed down with much serving. Please remember that only in Me will you find your strength, and through your time with Me you'll be able to see things as I do. Don't things look a little brighter now? It's not the bad, bleak picture that the Enemy tries to paint. And it's certainly possible to make it and succeed, with My help, one step at a time.

132. Smile! You look so beautiful when you smile—even if the smile comes through your tears. It tells Me and others that you trust Me and that you know everything's going to be okay, because I'm your Husband and I won't let you down. Keep smiling, and keep on fighting! You're doing wonderfully. I love you! (*End of message.*)

This time is a test

133. (Mama:) Another thing to keep in mind during this time of restructuring—which is bringing a good measure of change and hard work and a bit of chaos—is that **the Lord is testing each of us to see how we'll handle it, how we'll react.** He's allowed tests for His children throughout the ages, and this is just another test, to help us be strengthened.

134. Don't feel bad if you are realizing that at times you haven't reacted all that well so far. But do recognize that this time when things are far from perfect, and there's a lot going on, is really a test from the Lord.

135. He's waiting to see if you'll go to His Word to strengthen your faith in the areas where it's weak. He wants you to trust Him even when you're feeling overwhelmed. He wants you to keep your eyes on Him, even though there are a lot of big "waves" around. He wants you to put first things first when there's too much to do. He wants you to focus on Him and learn to use your spiritual weapons, rather than trying to fight through the battles yourself.

136. Here are a few points and tips you can remember and try to apply right away, and that you'll probably find will help you pass the tests better:

137. —When things get hectic and you feel overwhelmed, pull out your weapon of praise! Calm your spirit by telling our Husband that you know He is in control and He is going to bring the victories, He got us going in this direction, and He is going to bring us through!

138. —When there's too much to do, simplify your priorities and put first things first:

139. Top priority: Everyone gets quality time with Jesus, time in the Word, and time hearing His voice and receiving His instructions. I'll throw in there that you take the time you need for intercessory prayer, and to bring your needs before the King of kings—the One Who is really able to pull strings on your behalf!

140. Second priority: Your kids, JETTs and teens get the love and attention and focused time they need to be happy, secure, well cared for and educated. You also take the time you need to show love to your teammates and keep your bond of unity strong.

141. Third priority: You are good shepherds to the sheep that the Lord has entrusted to your care, you're faithful to witness to those who the Lord brings across your path, and you're a good sample to them.

142. Even if all you do is those three things, you're putting first things first, and the Lord's promise applies that "all these other things will be added unto you."

143. —It's not an exaggeration to say that right now probably every Home has more to do than you can realistically get done. You're not only maintaining a missionary work and educating your children, but you're also trying to make improvements and progress in every board pillar. That translates into a lot of work!

144. Ask yourself: How are you going about the changes and progress? Are you working together well in your Home Council and discussing things lovingly, or have things gotten a bit intense at times, with too much emphasis on trying to eradicate imperfections and bring everything "up to standard"? Are you progressing as a Home in the love department? Are you changing and growing together as a team, or are some people moving fast and getting self-righteous, and others dragging behind and resenting the changes? Is the pace in your Home so fast and frantic that you don't have time to enjoy each other, or are you taking time

to bond as a team, to love each other through the battles, to make your Home a happy and enjoyable place for each member?

145. —When a big battle hits, pull out your spiritual weapons and determine that this battle, which the Enemy undoubtedly sent to try to weaken you or throw you off, is going to be an exceptional opportunity to get strengthened spiritually. Everything this year is an opportunity to be strengthened, if you will take it as such. If you're fighting to improve in your use of your spiritual weapons and your "response time," if you're practicing the art of dependence, then you're being strengthened, and all the physical details and aspects will eventually fall into place.

Strengthening is a process!

146. As much as it would be wonderful to be able to be strengthened overnight, that's just not the way it works. Our wonderful Husband has prepared a program of strengthening for us, and we're progressing through it, one day at a time! Keep reminding yourself of that when you're discouraged or weary. You're getting stronger!

147. (Jesus:) My precious ones, if you are feeling at all discouraged, overwhelmed, or hopeless because of all that you are facing, I have something for you. I bring you a flask of heavenly encouragement, and ask that you will simply take a moment to say to Me, "Yes, Jesus, I accept this gift of encouragement that You want to give me." That acceptance, especially if you say those words by faith even though you don't feel you are worthy, will open your heart to Me and chase away the Enemy's lies and negative thoughts.

148. If you have said yes to Me, then as you read these words I will pour the contents of My flask of encouragement into your heart to comfort, strengthen, and cheer you on. I know how much you are in need of this gift, and

how hard you are getting hit with discouragement, feeling overwhelmed, and at times feeling condemned about your lacks and failings.

149. But, My dear, please stop and look into My eyes. I love you! I know I've said it many times, and yet human nature is such that you feel you somehow have to work for My love. When I am asking for major changes and steps of growth and progress as I am now, the Enemy works double time to try to get you discouraged and condemned about your lacks, and then working in the arm of the flesh to compensate, which just leads to further discouragement, and actual setbacks.

150. I look at you now, and you are making so much progress, I am delighted! You are desperate, you are humble before Me, and you are now taking steps to more fully depend on Me and on My power. You are beautiful and your heart shines before Me as a beautiful jewel that has been cleansed by your prayers, tears, and desperation. It can now come even closer to Me, for it has been purified and cleansed.

151. Now you are working toward getting your work for Me up to the standard it needs to be, and it hurts My heart to see you struggling and disheartened because you can't do it all at once. My dear, the point is not to do it all at once and attain instantly. The point is to simply let Me pick you up and help you to make one step of forward progress at a time.

152. Do you know why I'm doing it that way? It's not that I'm contradicting Myself by putting an unreachable goal in front of you and then telling you that you can make it. You can make it, and I want you to make it and know you can make it—eventually. The discouragement and hopelessness comes in because you're trying to do it all at once.

153. Do you know what I want? I want to get you to where I want you to be slowly, one step at a time and one victory at a time. That's because fulfilling the criteria is as much about

the journey to get there as it is about getting to the destination in My perfect time.

154. If you were able to work hard, and pray desperately for a couple of weeks or months and then achieve 100% fulfillment of every aspect of the criteria, you would miss out on gaining the depth of spirit that you need in order to fulfill the criteria in true love and humility. Because you would be lacking in true love and humility, you would be lacking in My Spirit and power, and you wouldn't be the strong samples that will be an irresistible drawing force to bring My sheep to Me.

155. So you see, while on one hand I'm putting high goals in front of you and telling you that I expect you to reach them, on the other hand I'm telling you that the secret is in walking in step with Me. While you would probably like to arrive at your destination overnight, I've ordained that it will take time, in order that you may gain the full depth, beauty, and maturity of spirit needed to be ready spiritually when you arrive at your destination.

156. I would like you to come to Me and ask Me to put the areas of the criteria you still need to attain to in order of priority. Be willing to simply take one little step at a time in the direction of the one I show you is most important, and then praise and thank Me with your whole heart for helping you get one step closer.

157. While you're focusing on taking the one step I show you to take, I don't want you to worry about all the other steps you have yet to take. All that does is discourage you and prevent you from actually taking the step of progress you need to be taking. By asking Me for one step, and then taking it and praising Me for it, you will be pleasing Me very much.

158. Then I will show you the next step, and you repeat the process. That is all I ask. I do not ask you to get everything right all the time. Perfection is My enemy because it brings with it pride, self-righteousness, and working

in the arm of the flesh, all of which lead you away from My side, which hurts us both.

159. It's not just because I need you to do a job for Me that I want you close to Me. Of course, I do need you very desperately, but when it comes down to it, it's the joy of having you near Me, and being able to be with you, love you, and enjoy life with you that really means the most to Me. That's what I want, that is My desire, My wish, and My dream—a dream that you make come true every time you spend time with Me.

160. Anything that causes you to feel not good enough for Me, discouraged, or distant from My love and favor is My enemy. Getting on a works / discouragement / condemnation trip about fulfilling every aspect of the criteria all at once is one of those things, and it saddens Me.

161. I just want you—all of you! And as you give Me all of you one day at a time, I will bring you a little closer to the goal each day, and you'll get there in My perfect time. And when I say “in My perfect time,” you must remember that My ways are higher than your ways, and My thoughts above yours. You won't get there in your time, but that's good and positive, because it means you will get there in My time, which is when it will really count.

162. You will get there humble, you will get there loving, and then we will celebrate! Then I will use you in the ways you so long for, and you will know that it was worth waiting and learning love, patience, humility, and dependence on Me.

163. If you need to become MM for a time, that may just be My plan. You may need that experience and that understanding in the future. It may seem to you like a setback, or like you failed, but what if that was My plan and highest will for you all along? My way up is down, so whenever you face something that seems to you like a setback or a disappointment, you can smile and be happy, because it means I have something special in that situation for you, if you will let Me show you.

164. I want to hold you, carry you, love you, and guide you into the future one day at a time. So won't you please come to My arms? Won't you lay down all your works and cares and plans of what you think you need to do, and bathe with Me in the waterfall of My love? Won't you drink deeply of the fountains of My Word so that you may enter into the future refreshed, with faith, and with Me carrying you?

165. Please do it, My loves, I beg you. I plead with you to accept your lack of perfection as a good thing, just because I said it is, and because it brings about the most important qualities of desperation, closeness to Me, humility, and dependence on Me.

166. Try praising Me by faith for your lacks, problems, weaknesses and faults, knowing that I have a greater purpose. I know you will, and I await your praises and drawing near to Me eagerly. Be encouraged and happy that you are right where I need you to be, and that you are with Me, and that's all that really matters. Please remember that Rome wasn't built in a day, and neither will your winning team be, but if you keep at it, in time you will reach the standard I have set forth.

167. The extra time it may have taken will not matter in the end—you will have made it, reached these goals, attained, and be ready to move into greater works, greater witnessing, and greater miracles.

168. Just concern yourself with staying close to Me, that's all I ask, and I will lead you each step of the way. And if you feel you're moving slowly, remember it was the tortoise, not the hare, that won the race, because he was consistent and steadily moved forward. As you take one step at a time toward the goal of fulfilling all the different aspects of the criteria, you will be moving steadily along, and in the end you will win! You're on your way, and I say to you, keep up the good work! (*End of message.*)

Progress, not perfection, is the goal!

169. (Jesus:) There's a simple little quote that I want each of you to repeat with Me right now, and again and again whenever you feel hit with the weight of all there is to do and accomplish.

170. It goes like this: Progress, not perfection! This quote is the pith of what I want to talk to you about.

171. Some of you have equated progress and perfection—you have made them one and the same. But progress does not equal perfection, either spiritually or physically, and progress, not perfection, is what I am asking of you. You will never be faultless, but you can progress.

172. In order to understand just how I want you to progress, you will need to step away from your little view of life and of the standard, and allow Me to show you things from My vantage point—the full bird's-eye view. I want you to understand the big picture as I see it. I want you to realize what is most important by My standards. I want you to see things My way.

173. Right now, with the restructuring plan being put in place, with the new rules having been initiated, with the criteria clearly defining the standard, I can understand why many of you have been looking at the details of all there is to do and wondering just how you can attain to it all. You all want to attain, you want to make the grade and prove yourself worthy and able to be what I'm asking you to be. You see all that needs doing, the criteria make it very clear, and you're eager to act on it and improve each area as needed.

174. Some of you have also become very consumed with the subject of status, feeling that if you aren't a specific status, others will look down on you or won't respect you, or you won't be as loved or used by Me. Others of you look down on those who have a different status than yourself. You've begun looking at the status

and the outward appearance as a measuring stick of service and love for Me.

175. But today I'm going to clearly define My perspective for you. I'm going to show you the big picture—which is how I see things and what matters most to Me. Please listen carefully.

176. In My eyes, the big picture is your love for Me and your obedience to My Word. In My eyes, the big picture is your desire to please Me and to serve Me with all your heart. In My eyes, the big picture is your faithfulness—out of love for Me—to the job or ministry or field that I've called you to. In My eyes, the big picture is your love for others. In My eyes, the big picture is your love for your children. In My eyes, the big picture is your love—plain and simple as that.

177. Fulfilling the criteria to the nth degree is not the big picture. This means it is not what matters most to Me. Attaining to the status of your desire, be it MM or FD, is not the big picture in My eyes. This means it is not what matters most to Me.

178. What matters to Me is that your hearts are right with Me, that your hearts are yielding to Me and bending to My will and seeking to please Me. What matters to Me is that you are putting Me first each day—in your decisions, in your thoughts, in your actions. What matters to Me is that you are seeking first My Kingdom, the things of My Spirit, above anything else. Because I know that if you are putting Me first, if you're seeking first Me and My Word and My Spirit, then everything else will fall into place.

179. Of course, this doesn't mean that there isn't any work that needs to be done on your part regarding the criteria. You and I both know that there is a lot of work to be done. But just because there is work, that doesn't mean it should automatically become your priority.

180. Your priority, first and foremost, should always be Me. I am your number one. I am your priority. Your priority should always be the things of the spirit first; love should

always be your priority. Making sure you've spent quality time with Me in the Word each day. Making sure you're spending enough time with your children.

181. I don't want you to get so consumed with all there is to do that you begin to lose sight of the big picture. If you find that you're easily discouraged or condemned when you aren't able to accomplish some task one day, or when you feel an overwhelming pressure or sense of loss when looking at your Home and how far you have yet to go, or when you look at all there is to do both individually and as a Home in regards to the criteria and feel a wave of frustration, despair, or fear, then you probably have the wrong goal in your mind's eye, and it's time for a readjustment.

182. If you find that you feel that way, it's probably because you've set your eyes on "perfection" and have tried aiming and shooting in that direction, when instead My goal is a whole lot closer to you, a whole lot easier to attain to, and a whole lot easier to hit.

183. My goal is marked "progress," and you reach the goal every time you reach out to love Me; every time you put Me first in your day; every time you put the needs of others, your sheep, and your children before your own; every time you put the Word into practice in your life; every time you use your spiritual new weapons; every time you put the things of the spirit first. Each time you do one of these things you are reaching the goal of progress that I have for you.

184. And if you are progressing spiritually and reaching that goal spiritually, then I guarantee you that you will also reach the other goals of physical progress as well. The two go hand-in-hand. But you can only make physical progress in your Home if you're aiming for spiritual progress first. If you're aiming to put Me first and love Me first, then I promise to help you to also accomplish and progress on the physical scale as well. (*End of message.*)



185. (Jesus:) Just remember that it doesn't matter to Me that you are full of mistakes, that you don't get everything right, that you have areas that you need to work on. Those aren't requirements for being My disciple. Perfection is not how I want My disciples to be defined or remembered. What was the one defining feature I gave My disciples so long ago? "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love" (Jn.13:35). That's My goal for you to strive for—love. Love is what I want you to be known for, love is what will attract My lost sheep to you, love for Me is what will empower you to live My Word and apply it to your lives.

186. So don't worry about getting everything right. Don't worry about attaining. Don't worry that you might fail. Focus instead on progressing as I want you to progress. Focus instead on loving Me as I want to be loved. Focus instead on giving your love and time to others. Focus instead on taking on My Spirit and My attributes so that you can be the disciple at heart that I want you to be.

187. Regardless of what your status is, if you desire to serve Me and to love Me and others, then this is what is most important to Me, and I can and will mightily use you. Don't worry about what others might think of you either—just focus on pleasing Me. And each day that you do, you're progressing. Each step of progress you make, you are being strengthened. And through that strengthening you are being prepared for the greater works that I have for you.

188. Keep that as your vision and remind yourself that progress, not perfection, is the key to becoming that man or woman, that winning team, that loving and effective Home that I need you to be. (*End of message.*)

Fight to maintain a balanced life

189. (Mama:) Even though this is wartime and there are many sacrifices the Lord is asking of us, it is still important and necessary that you maintain a balanced life. Especially

when things are busy, that won't just happen automatically. You have to work at it, schedule it, make it a priority.

190. It's very important, as you're all working to build and then maintain your winning teams, that you take time to enjoy the mates of your greater marriage. Do things together that will build your greater marriage and give everyone a chance to breathe and relax. Take time together to relax. Enjoy your children together. Enjoy being a Home together. Appreciate the fun you can have together, and invest in your bond of unity and happiness. You can't build a winning Home without it!

191. Everyone needs good, focused, quality time with our Husband, and times when they can just relax and appreciate the life He's given us. You all need times together with one another, to strengthen your bond of love and invest in your "marriage" together. No matter how busy, your Home should be a happy place, a place where all the members feel loved, appreciated, and where you can sometimes let down your hair and relax together. It's not all pain and suffering, or at least it shouldn't be! Even in wartime you have to stop and be refueled. Remember that "It's a marathon, not a sprint."

192. Another key to being renewed and actually rested and rejuvenated through the times you take away from work is to bring the Lord into your times of relaxation. "Vegging out" on System input or ungodly influences might seem more "relaxing" or "away from thinking," but in more than small quantities, it doesn't bear the intended results of helping you feel better, strengthened, inspired, and ready to go back to your big job for Jesus.

193. (Jesus:) As your Father David used to say, "Enjoy yourself! It's later than you think!" The pleasures of life were indeed placed at your disposal by Me because I know that you need them. Everyone needs time to relax and

enjoy their life lest they permanently lose the joy of the Lord, which is your strength.

194. I have said a lot about the intensity of these days you're living in. It's true that it is wartime and I am asking you all to be willing to sacrifice whatever is necessary in order to get the job done. But as with all of My counsel, it must be applied in balance and in wisdom so that, although you do burn for Me, you don't burn out completely.

195. There are a lot of dangers and risks you run when you completely cut all the "fun" out of your life and you don't give yourself enough time to enjoy the life I've given you to live. Some of these risks are physical, such as getting so tired that you just can't perform at your maximum anymore; and some of the risks are spiritual, such as opening the door to the Enemy's doubts and lies that life is too hard, that I don't want you to have a life, that service for Me is unending labor and drudgery.

196. Those risks are real and can happen to you if you don't endeavor to live the kind of balanced life that I've recommended in My Word. Taking time to give each aspect of life its proper attention is something that shouldn't be neglected by any of My children, whether it's wartime or not. Although I want to build your endurance and see you able to fight longer and harder than you did in the past, perhaps sacrificing more than you did in the past, I'm not calling you to go nonstop with work, changes, revolutions, spiritual progress, etc.

197. You're soldiers, not robots! You're made to have certain needs, and when you don't fill those needs, you suffer. You might think you're doing Me or the work a favor, but really you won't be because you'll be getting some things done but leaving other important things undone, and eventually you'll suffer for it. If you want to make sure that you're in good shape so that you can carry out My plans, and you want to close the door to the Enemy's doubts and discouragements about the intensity of these

Last Days, you'll need to regularly take time to refill yourself, both spiritually and physically.

198. In saying this, however, I hope you have learned from your time of renewal the difference between godly relaxation and System entertainment. In the past, relaxation and System entertainment were synonymous, but now they should not be seen that way. To relax and have fun often meant to while away your time with movies, TV, sports, computer games, etc. The problem with that kind of entertainment being your primary definition of relaxing is that you're fixing one problem partially, but you're creating a bigger one in the process.

199. You're all becoming creatures of the spirit much more than you were in times past. All your efforts to read the Word faithfully and to memorize and wield the keys and take on My mind through full possession are changing you. Some of you might have some bad habits or leftover hunger for certain aspects of the world, but almost all of you have a greater awareness that those things of the world don't fully satisfy you anymore, and in fact create a certain dryness of spirit, a leanness to your soul.

200. So, although indulging primarily in worldly entertainment when you need to relax may temporarily make you feel relaxed, it's not the deep relaxation that can come through other forms of input and fun, and it's nowhere close to the spiritual refilling that you get when you spend time with Me. It's like drinking very salty water. For the first few seconds it might seem to wet your throat and quench your thirst, but within minutes you'll feel drier and thirstier than ever.

201. When you're feeling a little stressed and like you've really been working hard and are almost overloaded, and you're starting to feel like life is too hard and I'm expecting too much from you, that's a definite sign that you need to make sure you're allotting relaxation time and faithfully taking it. The first step

would be to check on your Word intake. See if you've been faithfully getting your minimum 1½ hours. If you haven't, that could explain a lot of your tiredness, as the Word gives you strength of spirit, and strength of spirit will very often sustain your flesh.

202. But even if you have been getting regular Word, it's always important to make sure that your times of relaxation include Me and put Me first. You can always benefit from more time spent with Me. Perhaps you can use your "extra" Word time, or some of the time you take with Me on free days or vacations, to focus on different aspects of your spiritual life. In other words, you might not always need to read the newest GN or hear from Me about heavy personal questions, but you might want to focus on time loving Me intimately, or catching up on other reading such as *FSMs*, *Grapevines*, Family testimonies, the Bible, etc.

203. The kind of spiritual input that people find relaxing is as varied as each individual. I'm not going to say that this one thing is relaxing and this other thing isn't, so it's up to you to find something that helps you to enjoy yourself and the things of the spirit—not something that you rush through quickly so that you can get to the "real" relaxing. While you still want to shoot for quality and not let Obstacon fritter away your time with Me, you should also regularly have the kind of time with Me that doesn't feel like "work," and that feels soothing, refreshing and meaningful to your spirit.

204. Your time with Me is always the first step. None of your other plans will be nearly as blessed, nor will they fulfill your desires if you don't put Me first and search for your relaxation in the temple with Me before anything else.

205. Even after you've spent your time with Me, don't automatically default to System entertainment. Try to employ a little of the creativity that you put to use in the renewal. Things done with others that strengthen your unity as

a Home are always better for your spirit than things done on your own. Please understand, it's not that you can't watch a movie or play a game in accordance with the guidelines I've given you personally, but that shouldn't become your primary definition of what it means to relax.

206. Often System entertainment choices will seem like the only thing you can think of to do if you haven't planned your day out a little or gotten some instructions from Me as to what would be fun. To really relax and enjoy yourself with others takes some forethought so you can think about what will be a lot of fun for you and what will keep you from defaulting to a couch-potato kind of activity.

207. Exercise can be enjoyable, especially if you have the opportunity to go out in My creation. Parties and fellowship with others can be very fun and good for you and build great memories together. Sex too is always refilling and relaxing when done in My spirit. Cooking a nice meal with others and taking time to eat slowly and fellowship around the table as you eat and drink is a popular activity the world over for relaxing. Or sometimes to take a nice long nap is just what you need.

208. There are many ideas, and one of the main keys to having time off that's truly relaxing and refilling is to take a little time to plan it out. Come up with some ideas beforehand so that you don't feel bored and tempted to just fritter away your time with movies, computer games, books, or some other form of prepackaged System entertainment. At the end of a break that's been full of the world you won't feel good; you'll feel drained and it won't make you happy.

209. That's not to say System entertainment is out of the question; it just shouldn't be the main staple. Watching a good movie that doesn't hurt or pollute your spirit is a good way to have fun as long as it's kept in its place.

210. In all that you do, keep in mind the simple principle of making JOY through

Jesus, others, then you. Give Me My due first and relax in My arms; then make sure you've allotted time for fun with others; then put yourself last, and if you have time you can enjoy some of the personal entertainment or projects that make you happy. You don't have to spend all day with others, but neither should you spend all day by yourself on your own projects, or whatever. The best relaxation comes through a perfect balance of all the various kinds of enjoyable activities, and making sure your spirit is full and has what it needs to recover and be strengthened.

211. I want to encourage you again that it is My will that you take time for relaxation and recreation, both to plan them and to do them. I want you to be fresh, revitalized, energetic, and filled with My joy, which is your strength. Even if your time off can't be long, pray and ask Me how you can get the most out of it, and how I can help to make it truly special and enjoyable. I'm the key, the cornerstone, and if you put Me first, all the rest will fall into place. *(End of message.)*

Additional Reading

Hold on!

212. (Dad:) Remember my talk, "Hold On!—The Victory Is Just Outta Sight"? (ML #1650). I know some of you remember it very well, and maybe for others of you it's not so fresh in your memory. But you can call this message "Hold On, Part 2," if you like, because that's the bottom line, folks! You've just got to hang in there, and hang in there, and hang in there some more! I promise you that the victory is just around the corner if you can just stand this test: the test of waiting and the test of endurance.

213. The victory is just outta sight! But it's just out of your physical sight in many ways, because the victory has already been secured

in the spirit; He's seen to that for you. Now, that's love! Well, that's your dear Husband, He's always trying to help you to make it, and will make it as easy as possible for you to make it. But He's shown me the victory, and it's there!—Already complete, already accomplished, already sealed in the spirit, and it's a beautiful one to behold.

214. So even though your physical body and senses haven't quite caught up with it yet, I guarantee you that it's there; all that remains is for you to hold on. You know by now that just because you can't see something, that doesn't mean it's not there or it's not a reality. Well, you can apply that same principle to this particular struggle and time of testing.

215. I can see the victory right there above and before each person who is struggling right now. It's within your reach—your hearts' reach and your spiritual arms' reach. All you have to do is reach up in the spirit and claim it as yours and proceed as if possessing in a spirit of faith and praise. That will secure the victory, and then everything else will fall into place. I can see that victory so clearly that I almost want to grab that victory myself and hand it to you, but neither I nor the Lord can do that. That part only you can do.

216. That's because the victory is not a matter of doing all the right things in the physical and fulfilling all the criteria and having a "perfect" team and Home. The victory is mainly to do with latching on to the victory in the spirit first and refusing to let go until you and your Home get the blessing of seeing those victories become a reality in the physical realm.

217. That talk, "Hold On!" that I gave many years ago has helped more folks than you can even imagine over the years. People read that Letter, and read that Letter, and read it over and over again, and it has helped many of you stick it out and remain in the Family through some very tough times, when you really

didn't think you had it in you to wait for that "just around the corner" victory.

218. That's because it's a very important spiritual principle that is part and parcel of learning endurance, and a major part of learning the art of dependence. That's why He is allowing many of you to go through this particular test right now—to strengthen your spiritual sinews, your willingness to endure the tests in order to receive the promised rewards.

219. He's particularly proud of you who are truly fighting to hold on, despite what's going on inside you and around you. He knows that takes real gold faith, and it's a good indication that you're well on the road to learning the art of dependence. He didn't say you have to do everything right and feel like you're making it—you just have to "hold on." In most cases, that means holding on by your fingernails, and when it's that tough, when it's a literal "make or break" situation, the reward of your faith and holding on is even greater, and His commendation is greater.

220. The Lord is looking down upon you and rooting for you, because He knows what the future holds. He knows what is just around the corner for you, if you can make it through this testing. It's not a maybe, it's a for sure, if you will only hold on a while longer.

221. Nevertheless, at this point we realize it's still a test—a test of your faith and belief in His promises, and a test of your trust in Him and His foresight. Great will be your reward if you can go through this testing time, if you can take it like a soldier, enduring hardness for the sake of the victory—or the series of victories He's promised to those who persevere and make it through this time of struggle and metamorphosis.

222. Right now you're feeling the "pain" of the strengthening and of the test of endurance. Perhaps it's hurting all over your "body"—all over your Home or all over your spiritual body—but that's no indication what-

soever that the victory isn't coming for you. In fact, the victory will be even sweeter because of the intensity of the struggle. As the popular saying goes, "No pain, no gain." This test is proving how much you can take, how pure your faith is, how strong you are, how much you believe in what He's promised, and how much you're prepared to fight for that victory no matter what it takes, no matter what it costs you, no matter how much "pain" is involved.

223. But you've got to remember that the Lord is working with you on this. He's not just standing up there in a smug way watching to see how much you can stand. It's not a test in that sense. Although He's bound by the laws of the spirit, so He can't just hand you the victory yet—the medal of endurance—until you've gone on a bit longer, He's going to do everything in His power to help you make it. He wants you to make it; in fact, He's banking on you making it. However, even with all His power, He can only help you to make it if—and this is a big if—you'll make it by asking Him to help you hang on, no matter what.

224. There's a big difference in times like this between giving up in defeat and frustration, and asking Him to help you make it, no matter how defeated and frustrated you feel. He's not judging you by how you feel; in fact, that's part of the test. But what's important is your reaction to how you feel. Get it? He wants your reaction to be one of turning to Him and to the spiritual weapons to help you to make it. And if you fight to have the right reactions, you will make it.

225. This is a test that can only be won by looking to Him and leaning heavily on Him. Nothing else in the natural—even your own dogged determination—is going to cut it. That's because He's designed this particular year and this particular test so that you'll be strengthened spiritually. Yes, you'll come to the end of yourself. Yes, you'll feel like quitting. Yes, you'll feel like it's an impossible situation. But

that's exactly where He wants you—tottering on the edge of your cliff of temptation and testing and feeling like you're about to topple off! Because when you call out to Him, then He'll make a way of escape for you, whereby you can make it—just as He promised He would.

226. He will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able to bear, but will with the temptation, or test, also make a way to escape whereby you are able to bear it. That's a promise, folks, and you've got to hold on to that promise and believe that promise. He knows your limits, He knows just where your particular "edge" is, and He's not about to fail you or not come through for you when you are bravely plowing ahead by faith—even though you can barely see two inches in front of you, because the storm of testing is so thick!

227. He's watching you with pride, not disappointment. There's nothing that turns His heart toward His dearest loves and brides more than to see you take it and to see you putting one foot in front of the other by faith, trusting in Him. At that point His love for you swells up so much, it practically spills all over the place, seeing you prepared to suffer and endure a lot of tests and trials for His and the Kingdom's sake and the wonderful promised future He has for you.

228. So, can we say this of you?:

If you can force your heart and nerve
and sinew

To serve your turn long after they are
gone,

And so hold on when there is nothing
in you

Except the will, which says to them:
"Hold on!"

—Rudyard Kipling

229. Won't you hold on a little longer? All I can say is that it will be worth it—everything you're going through and enduring right now.

Hold on a little longer, because rescue is on the way! Having come this far by faith, we want each of you to receive the wonderful reward of your faith. Will you hold on, and keep making those steps of obedience?—Because that’s all He’s asking of you right now. Even though you can’t see the victory and are even in the position of wondering if there ever will be a victory, all He’s asking of you is to believe in Him and to trust Him.

230. He’s not going to put you through this test for nothing. You will receive the reward if you keep fighting on—and that reward is going to be not just good, or better, but it’s going to be the best!—Something far greater than you’ve ever imagined. So hold on a little longer for that best, okay? It is just around the corner, and it’s worth it!—Believe me! (*End of message.*)

**Do what you can,
and I will do all the rest!**

231. (Jesus:) When I welcome you Home to Heaven, what are the words I have promised to say to you if you have given your all and pleased Me on Earth? Are the first words out of My lips going to be, “My, how successful you were, how much you got done, how hard you worked, what glorious accomplishments precede you”? Or are My words going to be, “Well done, good and faithful servant”?

232. This is the difference between how I see things and how you see them. I see you as successful and accomplished by your faithfulness, through your perseverance, dedication, and getting up from your falls again and again to accomplish My will for you.

233. I don’t look at how much you accomplished. I don’t look at all that you did for Me. In fact, that’s one of the last things on the list of deeds worthy of rewards with Me. I don’t look at how great you were and how few faults and mistakes you had. All I look at is how you obeyed, loved Me, and did what I asked you to do.

234. I know you’re feeling pretty weighed down and even a little discouraged, seeing the monumental task that you face right now. I know that in reevaluating your Home and your life you’ve seen many, many areas where you need to improve and aren’t living up to the standard in the criteria.

235. Oh, My loves, I wish for you to see things as I see them. I don’t expect you to be faultless, and I don’t want you to expect it either. Such expectations are unrealistic and only serve to discourage you from doing all you can do. Notice how I say all that you can do? You cannot be perfect; it is not humanly possible. I know this, and that is why I don’t ask you to be perfect.

236. The criteria have outlined the standard you need to reach for, what you need to strive toward, the direction in which you need to head. The criteria are like a distant mountain range, and it may seem so far away right now, almost too far for you to reach. The mindset you need to adopt is, “This is where we’re heading. We’ve got problems, we’re not up to snuff in every area, but we’re sure going to do our best to head in the right direction and do all we can to reach the goals in the Lord’s time.”—Realizing that the most important thing is not how perfect you are, how flawless your Home review is, but rather that you are striving to make progress, that you are going uphill instead of continuing the downhill trend that has been prevalent for so long.

237. The goals are what you should be striving for, but the most important thing to Me is not whether you are at the top of the mountain. What is most important to Me is that you are taking steady strides out of the valley and are heading to the mountaintop because I asked you to.

238. What is important to Me is your obedience, not your perfection. I know you’ll always have areas to grow in and you’ll never be without blemish or faults. I don’t expect that

sort of unrealistic goal to be reached, and neither should you. I've put the standard out there so you know what direction you need to head in, so you can see where you need to improve and where you're falling down on the job.

239. I didn't make the criteria to be a heavy weight of stone that you must carry on your back as it steadily crushes your spirit. The criteria are to help you to see your goals and give you help in making it there. No one expects you to live up to every single point of the criteria all the time.—Not today, not tomorrow, not ever. That would be perfection, and is humanly impossible. This mentality that I would expect perfection of you is a lie of the Enemy; it's part of his tactic to discourage you and weigh you down with a defeatist attitude.

240. You have time to work on your weak areas, and as long as you're making progress I will be pleased with you. I love you and I don't want you to feel overburdened about all that there is to do and all the progress there is to be made. I'm happy if you have things to do better in; that's how I made you. I'm happy that you have weaknesses, because they draw you closer to Me, they keep you humble, and they inspire you to make progress and work toward overcoming your weak areas both individually and as a Home.

241. Also very important to Me is how you reach your goals. Remember that the most important thing to Me is our love and saving lost souls for My Kingdom. It would be easy to fall into a works trip and neglect to be loving about achieving the goals I have set out for you. Remember that how you get to your goals, how you achieve them, is what I'm going to look at when you come to Heaven.

242. Were you loving about it? Did you put the needs of others above your own? Did you put souls above your personal desires or attitudes? Did you put loving Me and loving others even above your service for Me? You have to realize that the accomplishments aren't the

goals in themselves; doing it in the right spirit, being loving, and reaching the lost along the way are the goals.

243. If you are lovingly striving to make progress, helping up the brother next to you, sharing the load, and working as a winning team bonded together with the superglue of My Spirit, then you will have done a job worthy of accolades and rewards.

244. It's not the work itself that I praise. It's how obedient you were to Me, how loving you were, how much you gave even to your own hurt, your sacrificial spirit, your love for Me and others, that causes Me to want to give you every blessing I can!

245. If you're doing it in the arm of the flesh, plowing through and over your brethren and the sheep just to accomplish the goals set out in the criteria, you're going about it all wrong and you're missing the spirit. It's not about accomplishments and achievements; it's about love and obedience.

246. Obedience without My Spirit is a works trip and will get you nowhere, and won't earn you the rewards and blessings you seek. In order to hear My "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" at the end of your journey, you need to have obeyed in My spirit of loving service to each other and to the lost.

247. There are so many things that will never be done; there is so much work that won't be completed, and goals that will never be reached in this life. I'm okay with that. I don't expect you to live a life of achievement, the realization of every venture's goals, and spotless perfection. Oh, that would be such an empty life and you would never be happy. You would always be reaching for something out of your grasp, and that would be discouraging and depressing.

248. What I ask of you is that you love Me and love your brethren first of all—these are the two most important things to Me. Loving

one another, loving souls into My Kingdom, and loving Me enough to obey, whatever the personal cost might be—this is what is important. Perfection is nowhere on My list of importance.

249. I would be far more happy to receive you into My arms with a spotted record, failures, mistakes, and sins, and a humble love for Me and others, than with a self-righteous attitude of sanctimonious perfection.

250. I want you with your flaws and your mistakes. I don't want or ask that you get it right all the time, or that you be faultless—all I ask for is your love and obedience. So if you're not where you'd like to be, if your halo is a little crooked and your garments aren't spotlessly white when you do your evaluations, praise Me, because I want you—imperfections and all.

251. Of course, there is a balance, and I don't want you to just sit there doing nothing about your weak areas. I want you to make progress toward the goals I have set in place. But if you're not there immediately, don't worry about it. You've got time to make progress so long as you are progressing at My rate. Okay?

252. Please don't let the Enemy get you down about this. Don't let Apotheon weigh you down and depress and discourage you because of your imperfections and weaknesses. I allow you to have weaknesses to help teach you humility and love, and to help you learn to progress. If you did everything just right, if you lived up to the standard of the Word in every area, there would be no need for Me or your brethren to support and help you. You would be hard, distant, and "above" everyone. Your mistakes make you human, natural, and approachable. These things help you to relate to the lost sheep I bring along your path.

253. So won't you please take My words to heart and not worry if you can't achieve all your goals? Won't you resist the Enemy's discouraging thoughts and feelings of being overwhelmed? Do what you can do, give it

your best, and then know that I am happy with you for obeying and making progress toward the goals I have outlined for you.

254. One hundred percent attainment of the criteria is not the goal; obedience out of love is the goal.—Obedience in as many areas as you can to the best of your ability. I don't ask that you be faultless, only that you do the very best you can to serve Me and obey what I have told you to do. I know you won't reach every goal; I accept that and I will not hold that against you. Do what you can do, giving all that you can, making all the progress you can. But don't worry if you still make mistakes, still need to learn and grow, still have weaknesses and have to apologize and try again, because perfection is not important to Me.—Only your obedience is. (*End of message.*)

Crowns of Life

255. (Jesus:) So much about the coming few years is going to depend on the Family's desperation. Many of the children of David have thrown open their hearts to Me. They want whatever I have to give them. They have committed in their hearts to embrace whatever I know is needed to make them what they need to be.

256. Because of this, I have given them powers to use under My command. Many have already begun to experience healings, greater miracles of protection and miracles of supply. Others are seeing their witness blossom, and many in the world are being driven to a choice. Those who are stepping out to receive the challenges I place before them and are preparing for the days ahead can sense a change in their spirit. It's a day by day choice, and a day by day strengthening.

257. He that endures to the end shall receive a crown of life. This is not salvation, but a unique crown.

258. The waters of the River of Life flow from the Father's throne and carry great

power and anointing. The crowns of life are likewise a heavenly treasure, and emanate the very spirit of the Father.

259. These crowns are one of the most highly treasured gifts in the spirit realm. Each crown of life carries with it the very spirit of the Father Who gives life, power, wisdom, strength, and so much more. It is a reward desired and treasured not just amongst those who have lived on Earth, but by all within the spiritual realm. It is a reward given to those who, although they may stumble and fall at times, yet they refuse to stop. They refuse to let go. It is the reward given to those who continue day by day, doing what they can to choose the path they sense Me showing them.

260. Each day that the children of David continue to move forward as one into the fray, into the smoke and heat of battle, is one day closer to their crowns of life.

261. It is one reason why you are among the most envied in Heaven. You have been chosen to walk these times of the End. They are uniquely intense and difficult at times, but they have a reward that is equally glorious and eternal.

262. Being a martyr in a moment takes My dying grace, but continuing to die to yourself, your desires, the lures and attractions of the Enemy at the level of intensity present in these times, and doing it for a lifetime, is a struggle and a challenge that few have had to face.

263. Not since the days of Noah have there been such intense spiritual allurements poured forth by the Enemy. Had the Father allowed it before now, man, without a strong link to Me, would have again sunk into darkness as all but Noah and his family did in those days.

264. In the days of darkness ahead, that crown of life held out before you will be a source of vision, joy and conviction. There will be times when there is no strength left, yet you will look up and that crown will stir you to

fight on. As the days grow darker, its light will shine the brighter.

265. Many in the Family are beginning to sense their crown of life. Each is a unique design created of the treasures which the Father has placed within you: the weaknesses, the battles, the failings designed to make you strong and the beauties that grew from them. Each crown is so precious that it is impossible even for Me to gaze upon them without being in awe of My Father's handiwork. They are a manifestation of the Father's special love for you in utter perfection.

266. Some of you even now are beginning to see glimpses of your crown of life. It's not to be a source of pride about yourself but of humility. Its glory is so far beyond your frail works and attempts to do the right thing. Its radiance shows no hint of your many failings along the way. As a crown is fashioned to fit around a head, so your crown of life is fashioned around core knowledge that you are hopeless without Me to make you strong. But it is the glory of the gold and jewels that wrap around the core which is seen and admired. Your crown of life shows the beauties of your clinging to Me in desperation.

267. This heavenly treasure will become more visible to you as the End grows closer. Your carnal mind will not be able to describe it, but your spirit will perceive it. It will challenge you when you are despairing. It will empower you when you have no more strength to give. It will spur you on when the mountains seem impossible to cross. But most of all it will envision you when there is nothing your mind can comprehend or your eyes can see that gives any hope.

268. All that each of you has to do is get up in the morning and set your heart not on what you have to do in the flesh, but set your heart on that crown and nothing else will matter. Nothing will be able to defeat you. (*End of message.*)