

Romans 8:28 Series

“I can hear you.”

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October 3rd:

Morning Scripture: Then Moses said, If You don't personally go with us, don't make us leave this place.
Exodus 33:15 NLT

"Moses, I am with you on that!" Chris said as he closed his bible app and placed his phone back on his nightstand.

Reading a scripture every morning started as a challenge that was given to him by the pastor at one of the men's bible studies. That was about three years ago. Now, it's a part of his daily routine. It helps him to focus on something positive or encouraging for the day. And Lord knows he could use some encouragement, especially these days.

He stood up and stretched. If he laid around any longer, he might not be able to get moving at all.

"I don't know if I like where I am though, Lord." Chris commented out loud in reference to the scripture, as he headed towards the shower.

He was speaking of his current situation as he saw it. He and his wife had gotten a divorce close to five years ago. Since that time, he felt like he had been dropped into an unfamiliar place and he had to figure out what role he played, because he just didn't know anymore.

When he was married, he was a husband and a father. He provided for his family financially, emotionally and spiritually. Well, at least he thought he did. According to his ex-wife, however, he was lacking in some areas. Which caused her to look elsewhere. In order for him to not go completely crazy, he resolved in his mind that he just didn't have enough to give her. He tried. And all you can do is try. That helped him to get over her. But it hasn't helped as far as his daughter, Ava was concerned. While he could move on from a broken marriage, he

couldn't get passed not being able to be in his daughter's life the way he was before.

Being under the same roof, she was always with him and they did lots of things together. She thought everything he did was the coolest, especially his drawings. When he learned that she had the talent as well, they even began working on pieces together. But all of that changed after the divorce. He became a weekend dad. Then a 'maybe this weekend' dad, to now 'whenever I can' dad.

It was never what he intended or envisioned as a parent, but it was his reality. And although he knew that things couldn't ever go back to the way they used to be, he tried everything in his power to make it better than it currently was with his daughter.

Providing for her was the easy and most accepted part. It was spending time with her that he had to fight for, which seem to be a losing battle.



"It's amazing to me the people they put in charge of stuff." Chris complained to his girlfriend Nicole as he walked into his apartment. Meeting at a singles conference, they have been dating for almost six months now.

Nicole didn't interrupt much. She just listened. He wasn't really looking for her to help out with anything anyway. It was all a matter of just getting it off his chest.

"He knows absolutely nothing about what I do, yet he's over me." He says of his boss. "And he gets paid good money to do it."

They both laugh simultaneously at his observation.

“In all seriousness, though. It’s enough to make you wanna flip a table.” He said as he took a seat on his sofa.

“I’m sure it is.” She agreed with him. “Just keep praying about it and ask God to help you behave the right way.”

“I do. But it’s not working.” He chuckled. “Every time I go to work, it seems like it’s worse.”

Chris sighed as he took his shoes off and picked up the remote.

“Well, let me grab something to eat...chill for a minute. I’ll call you a little later.”

He headed to the kitchen to make himself a quick sandwich.

“Girl I can’t stand him. He gets on my nerves.” He heard his next-door neighbor say to someone through the walls.

Placing some chips on the paper plate, he shook his head. Thin walls! Add that to the list of things that bugs him. He made his way back into the living room and onto the couch.

Sandwich in one hand, he grabbed his phone with the other and began scrolling through the gram. He runs across the page of his daughter, Ava.

A smile automatically crosses his face. Every time he sees her, he can’t help but to think what a beautiful young lady she has grown to be. That is usually followed by sadness though. She is no longer the little girl that used to adore and want to be around him all the time. As a matter of fact, now that she’s a Senior in high school, this method seems to be the only way he can keep up with her.

He switched off social media and dialed her up as he does every evening. It goes straight to voicemail. Not too surprising though. He rarely gets her on the phone when he calls.

“Hey, it's me.” He began his message. “I was just checking on you...I see you had a banquet the other night... I wish I would have known. I mean, I would have liked to have been there. Anyway, call me back.”

“Oh well.” He said out loud as he put his phone down. “All I can do is try.”

To occupy his thoughts, he flipped through the channels in search of something to watch.

Michelle

“Ugh. Mom's home!” She said the moment she saw her mom's car in the parking lot.

“Girl.” Her friend Brianna began as she pulled into a vacant spot. “Your mom is not that bad.”

“Whatever. She's always hovering. She won't let me do anything. Her being at work is the only bit of peace I get!” Michelle huffed as she grabbed her things. “Well, that and volleyball.”

“And you'll get plenty of that! We got extended practice all week.”

“I know.” Michelle opened the door. “And I'm looking forward to it. Thanks for the ride.”

Walking upstairs. She knew her face showed how she was feeling on the inside. Annoyed. Which only got worse the minute she opened the door to see her mom sitting on the couch in the dark. It appeared that she was waiting on her.

“What'd I do now?” She asked as she closed the door.

Although they looked a lot alike, Michelle believed they were totally different people. They pretty much clashed on everything, including the move here to the city. Her mother felt they needed some space from her father after the divorce. And while that may have been true, Michelle didn't see why a move was necessary for that. But it wasn't like her opinion mattered. Because here she was, in this apartment, with her mom.

It's been a while since she talked with her dad. And since he wasn't much of a father while she was in the house, she didn't expect him to be afterwards. Truthfully, she was okay with their non-existent relationship. In fact, she just wished everyone would leave her be.



Chris began making his way upstairs to his study. Even though his phone was not on silent, he continued to check it. No return phone call from Ava.

“Well, wherever she is, she is able to post.” He said with a chuckle. At least he knew nothing had happened to her!

His study had dual purposes. It was where he came to work, and it was his prayer room.

Being in his room to pray made him sleepy. So, having a whole other room has proven to be more effective. The only occasional distraction was when his neighbor's daughter, who lived behind him, would leave out of her bedroom door that was adjacent to his study's door. But that hasn't happened in a while. Not since the mom got smart and exchanged rooms with her. How does he know all that? Those thin walls.

He knelt on the floor in front of a sofa bed and began to pray.

“Father. I do want to thank you for this day. You have been so good to me, And I am grateful. But Lord, my job... I just don’t know what to do. My boss is incompetent! I’ve been trying. You know I have! But I just don’t know how to follow someone who doesn’t know what he is doing! Why was he brought in in the first place...? I could have been promoted to that position.... I just don’t know what else to do.

And Lord, Ava...will you watch over her and keep her. I HATE the relationship that we have. Or I guess the lack of one. I just don’t understand how I became an afterthought. I’ve been there. I try to let her know that I’m here. I just get ignored and left out...only penciled in a few times...mostly when she needs something. I just...”

He took a moment to breathe. “Please show me what I’m doing wrong.”

Wrapping up his prayer, he stood up to stretch. He was about to have a seat on the sofa for some quiet time, when he heard a conversation taking place. It sounded as if someone was crying.

He shook his head. Probably another argument between his neighbor and her daughter. Man, the level of disrespect he heard come from that girl, made him want to come through the wall and discipline her for the mom.

“Cancer. Really God...” She uttered through sniffles. *“You know it’s just me and Michelle. How am I going to take*

care of her? It's her last year, she has a lot going on... I want to be there for it. I want to be there for EVERYTHING!" She said breaking into tears. *"I've already fought enough... why this ... why now..."*

Dang. Chris exhaled as he listened to her sob. Exiting the room, he said a silent prayer. I hope everything works out for her.

October 4th:

Morning Scripture: Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see. Hebrews 11:1 NLT.

Chris thought about this scripture for a minute. Faith is a pretty powerful thing to have then, he preached to himself. It reminded him of another scripture that says, *without faith, it is impossible to please God*. He can understand why. Faith is the only way you can continue to operate and believe when you can't see it, or it doesn't seem like anything is happening. And that seems to be the only way God operates. We may not know *what* He's doing, but you know that He's doing something!

Michelle

Michelle woke up to the smell of breakfast. Her mom loved to cook, so it was the usual in her house.

The morning's routine consisted of her waiting until her ride was outside before she even came out of her room. That way, she could grab whatever and head out the door. Today really wasn't that much different, except her avoidance of her mom was for another reason.

"I'm gone." She said walking out of her room and straight to the front door.

"Hey... let's pray before you go." That wasn't too unusual either.

Normally, she would find a way to get out of it or just complain the whole time. But after yesterday's news, she put up no fight.

Her mom had her brave front on. It was the same front she put on for her after the fights she would have with her dad. She would smile through a bruised face. Pray through swollen lips. It all aggravated Michelle to no end. Was her mom really that soft? Was she that much of a pushover that you can do anything to her, and she just let you? Smile, pray about it and allow you or it to continue to mistreat her. It was always, "let's pray. God this.... God that..." Well, Michelle's prayer was that she would *for once* show some real emotion. One that was accurate to the situation at hand.

Chris

"Hey!" Nicole says the moment that Chris picks up the phone. "What cha doing?"

"On Indeed...looking for jobs." Sitting in his study, he switched the call to his earbuds.

"Tough day?" She chuckled, already knowing the answer.

"Man. I just got home about 30 minutes ago." He responded looking at the clock that displayed 7:38 p.m.

"Oh wow!"

"Yeah. This cat waits until 4:30 to request that I take a look at a project. So, there I am... two hours later..."

He decided not to go any further with the details. “I gotta get out of there before I end up getting fired for going off on him.”

“Not you Man of God.” She tried to cheer him up. “You know better than that!”

“Key word, ‘Man’... There’s only so much a man can take. Especially a man that should have his job.”

His daughter’s face flashed across his phone screen.

“Hey, this is Ava calling!” He interrupted her before she could respond. “Let me talk to her real quick!”

Nicole didn’t even have the chance to tell him bye, as he had already clicked over to catch the call.

“Hey baby girl. What’s going on?”

“Hey Dad!” She yelled out his name as usual. He used to joke with her that she said his name like cheer chant.

“So, you finally found time to call me back, after sending me to voicemail every evening.” He complained.

“It was loud where I was... I was over to some friends’ house.” She explained. “We were hanging out watching movies, and it got late.”

“You couldn’t hit me back and let me know you were good... a text... I saw you called... inbox me on Instagram.”

“Dad! I’m calling you now! Goodness.”

“I see the church had their who’s who and prayed over you guys and your school year. I would have loved to have been there.”

“Oh... yeah... my bad. It wasn’t, like a big deal to me....”

“Regardless,” He interrupted her excuse. “YOU are a big deal to *me*, and I would have wanted to be there.” He calmed himself down after unintentionally raising his voice.

“O-Kay. Okay dad I get it.” He rarely yelled at her and when he did, she would respond like a much younger kid.

“I just don’t want to be a stranger...you know I love you, right.”

“I know daddy. I love you too!”

The moment of silence between them signaled one thing for Chris. The request was coming.

“Sooo, I want to get these braids out of my head and get my hair done.” She laughed.

Chris tried to ignore the fact that she just got those braids put in last month. “How much...”

“Can you just cashapp me a hundred?” She mumbled the amount.

“A hundred! I thought you were getting *your* hair done!

“Well, you know what I mean...I got to get hair, get it put in... that’s only half of the money. Mom is giving me the rest.”

“Okay.” He gave in without much of a fight. “I’m sending it now.”

“Thank youuuuuu. You’re the best for real!!

“Yep.” He responded not believing her declaration.

“Hey! Somebody is calling me; I will call you right back.”

“Yep.” He expected that too. “I’ll talk to you later, because you are not going to call me back.”

“I will! I will if it's not too late.” She tried to convince him.

“Noooo, I’ll talk to you later. Not even finna get my hopes up...bye.”

Michelle

She had been trying to shake her feelings ever since her mother told her the news, but she’s been unsuccessful. In fact, every time she hears her mother’s voice in her head say, “I have Cancer” the tears roll down her face.

That’s what brought her outside. She didn’t want her mother to see her cry.

Michelle walked up to the second flight of stairs. This area used to be her thinking spot before her mother made her take the downstairs’ room. She would just step outside her bedroom door and gaze across the apartment’s courtyard. For some reason, it made her feel better.

But not this evening. Every time she gets a glimpse of what is now her mother's bedroom door behind her, she feels a wave of heat come over her.

Anxiety. Fear. No TERROR. It's not like she has a dad in her life. What would happen to her if she lost her mom?!

"It's not fair." She said out loud. She was supposed to be worried about senior stuff, not losing her mom! Life was so unfair.

She wiped the tears away that streamed down her face.

"We're just going to pray, and everything is going to be okay."

Those were also her mother's words that bounced around in her head. Except it came with a different reaction.

Prayer. She never understood prayer. Well, it was more like, it never seemed to work. So, she made up in her mind that either God doesn't hear her, or He doesn't care about her. Either way, she just stopped doing it.

Nevertheless, she kept hearing, *"we're just going to pray, and everything is going to be okay...we're just going to pray, and everything is going to be okay.... we're just going to pray....."*

"I'll pray..." She interrupted her own thoughts. *"if you show me you care or that you are actually listening...."* She muttered to herself. *"Then...I'll pray."*

Chris



Hanging up the phone with Ava, he continuously shook his head from side to side. He needed some kind of joy in his life. Things are not going right with his daughter. It's not going right with his job. Things are just not right. Period.

"I wish I knew what my purpose was... nobody seems to care much about what I'm doing or trying to do, at least."

As he continues to surf for jobs, he runs across one that would be perfect. It was actually a managerial position. He had all the qualifications too! Without much thought, he was attaching his resume and cover letter, visualizing turning in his two-week notice.

Trying not to get too excited about it, he closed his laptop and headed over to his sofa for prayer.

He couldn't help but to think about how perfect it was, though. More money, closer to home and of course the best part, he would be in charge.

"Come on Lord... do this for me! Do. this. for me." He said through a big grin on his face, as he kneeled.

"Lord...I do want to thank you for all that you have done. I thank you for bringing this job across my path... can you please...

"Father.... I just don't know..." His neighbor began her conversation with God. *"I have to have this surgery. I'm scared. Even more afraid than I was before...I am afraid Physically. I am emotionally a wreck...and Financially!"*

Being off work... and Michelle's a Senior... volleyball stuff... Her emotions got the best of her.

He could hear her crying and almost see the tears.

“Lord... will you...” These dang thin walls! “let my application fall into the right hands. In the meantime, can you help me not to lose it at work. And my daughter... she just, doesn’t get it, she...”

He exhaled, feeling as if his neighbor’s sorrow was covering him.

“Lord... will you go with her and her daughter Michelle.” He uttered as he reached his hand out towards where he felt she might be located. “I know you to be a healer, a provider...everything that we need. Will you show up in her situation... in Jesus name... Amen.”

October 5th:

Morning Scripture: Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart. Psalms 37:4 ESV

Chris couldn't help but to laugh after reading this scripture. For one, he was remembering how he used to interpret it. "I go to church; I pray and pay tithes... then why do I not have my Mercedes that I desire!" But that's far from what that scripture means. If you delight in the Lord, you are softening your heart towards Him and what He wants. Therefore, your heart will be asking for what He desires for you. That's why He gives it to you!!

Shaking his head, he began thinking about some of the things he had asked for or desired. What wasn't funny was the thought of what would have happened if he had gotten them... "Lord have mercy."



"I'm going to stop letting you pick the restaurants." Nicole said as she browsed the menu.

"Why? They have good food here." He didn't need to look at the menu, he knew exactly what he wanted and was ready to order.

"Yeah, but not a lot of selections!" She stated, still turning the pages. "I see they got chicken fried chicken though."

"You already know!" He laughed at her observation. "And whatever you get needs to come with mash potatoes, cause you are not getting any of mine."

They both chuckled. He always said that. And he always shared his mash potatoes with her.

“Are we ready to order?” The young waitress asked as she approached the table.

Chris looked in the direction of his date. “You ready?”

Seeing her trying to hurry up and pick something, he excused the waitress. “She needs a couple more minutes.”

“Not a problem.”

He tried not to be annoyed. But he was getting hungry, so that was hard to do. He glanced over at the to-go area to see a familiar face coming through the door. She smiled when she saw him and waved. He returned the gesture.

Nicole quickly lost interest in her menu to see who he was speaking to.

“Who’s that?” She inquired, still trying to decide on an entree.

“That’s my neighbor...the one I was telling you about.” He spoke softly as if he was trying not to be heard by her.

“Oh!” Nicole turned to get another look at her. She was standing at the counter with a young lady beside her. “Is that her daughter?”

“Yeah.” He confirmed. “With her little disrespectful self.” He shook his head. “I was so glad that they switched rooms. She would be going in and out that door all times of night.... talking bad about her mama...to her mama.”

“Teenagers.” Nicole commented. “Mom seems to be in good spirits at least.”

“Her nighttime hours definitely reflect something different though.”

“That’s sad. I wonder if the daughter knows?” Nicole thought out loud.

“I don’t know.” He said. “But I do know this is the first time in a long time I have seen them together. Like I said, they don’t have the best relationship.”

“I hate to hear that... all of it.” Nicole finally closed the menu. “I hope everything works out for them.”

“Yeah, me too.”



Finally making it home, Chris put his keys down and headed straight for his study. He knew that sleep would start to set in soon. So, it was best to go ahead and get his prayer time in.

“Lord, I just thank you so much for getting me through one more day. I lift up my job situation to You. You know all about my boss and his leadership. I pray that you would help him to see how to lead better. I pray for that managerial position, that you would open doors and opportunity for growth. I pray for my daughter... that you continue to watch over and keep her... please grow our relationship. I pray she is able to see that I care for her and want to spend more time with her... and that we build a better relationship before she leaves for school.... And

Lord, I pray for my neighbor... you know her name. You know her situation. I pray that you would watch over her and her daughter Michelle. Heal her body, provide for them, fix their relationship... in Jesus name... Amen.

October 10th:

Morning Scripture: Do not conform to the behaviors and customs of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will know God's will. And you will see that it is good, pleasing and perfect. Romans 12:2 NLT

Not conforming is a daily struggle. Especially when you have constant access to the world and its belief systems. So, to renew your mind, you gotta withdraw from the world and tune into God. It now has to be a choice that you make. That's what he tried to do with scripture in the morning and prayer everyday all day. And still, it was a battle. Because he can't say that he sees God's will for his life as good, pleasing and perfect.

“But I trust you Lord.”

His day would be a normal workday, with the exception of hanging out with Ava afterwards. He had spoken with her a couple of days ago and somehow managed to get her to come by after school and watch a movie with him.

“Okay Dad...I can come around 6 or so.”

Being that she hadn't called to cancel yet, he was hopeful that it might actually happen.

Michelle

“I'm going to go stay with Mom...you know, with this surgery coming up and all.” Michelle's mother mentioned to her as she fixed her a plate. “I figured it would be better for me to be over there than for her to be here.”

Michelle took a drink of her orange juice. It was just so much to deal with. She batted back the tears.

“I know you have a lot going on, so if you want to just stay here, that will be perfectly fine.” Her mother smiled as she took a seat at the table across from her. “When is your first payment for the senior...”

“Mom...” Michelle interjected. “Don't worry about that.”

“No, I’m going to see what I can do...because it’s going to be hard, with all the time off. I think it’s best to go ahead and take care of it now.”

Chris

As soon as he was able, he went ahead and left work. Chris headed to the store to pick up all the items needed for sloppy joes. It used to be one of their favorite meals to eat whenever they were watching a movie or playing board games. And although she was much older, he figured her food choice hadn’t changed.

As he prepared all the fixings for the sandwiches, he realized that there were a lot of things that he was in the dark about when it came to Ava. Like, where was she planning on going to school? What was she looking to major in? Those were just a few of the questions he hoped to get answered during their time together.

Having everything situated, the only thing that was left was to wait on her arrival. He flipped through Netflix until he heard a knock at the door.

Michelle

Peering out over the courtyard, Michelle wondered if she had made the right decision. Even Though she wanted to be near her mom during this time, she thought it was best to stay put at the apartment. Keeping a somewhat normal routine would help to keep her mind off of the possibility of losing her mom. It was also closer to Brianna, who was more than happy to continue to be her ride to and from school and practice.

“See how God works things out?” Her mom said to her as they discussed her decision.

“Yeah.” She replied trying to sound as upbeat as she possibly could. Although she felt she still needed a little more convincing on whether or not that was true.

Hearing the voices of a group of girls jolted her out of her thoughts. She turned and recognized a couple of them from school. One of them she had a class with. Making eye contact, they gave the quick “oh, hey girl” wave. She smiled and waved back.

She was relieved to see them head on into the other apartment. On top of sadness, jealousy reared its ugly head. Not that they were prettier or more popular, but at the fact that they were able to laugh and smile and mean it! She missed that feeling.

On top of all that was going on, her mom had informed her that she might call her dad for help with her senior fees. Michelle had to really bite her tongue to not share her true thoughts on that suggestion.

“I’m not worried about those fees.” She told her mom.
“Especially if he has to be involved to take care of them.”

“Well, I am.” Her mother responded back quickly. “And you’re his daughter too. He might be glad to do that for you...we won’t know unless we ask.”

“Yeah...he might.” Michelle said through a smile to cover the sarcasm.

Chris

“Hey Dad!” She was always so loud and extra.

“Hey sweetie.” He responded trying to fix his expression as other young ladies continued to walk through the door.

“Hey Mr. Jackson.” They all said in unison, as they gathered in the living room.

He spoke back with a smile on his face. “Okay... well, I wasn’t expecting all of you. But...” He gathered his composure. “I think there’s enough food. Y’all can... go ahead and ...have a seat.”



Chris had never been so ready for his daughter to leave. Their father-daughter time turned into a kick back for her and her friends that he sponsored. Of course, the evening is always wrapped up by a request for money. He came really close to telling her ‘no’. That he wasn’t giving her one more dollar other than the money she got through child support. But that didn’t happen. What took place, was what always happens. He cashes her money. She tells him he’s the best. She leaves happy and he feels used.



“Aghhhhh.” He yells out his frustration as he heads up the steps. “How did I end up with such a selfish daughter!” His prayer began the moment that he made it inside his prayer room.

He paced the floor. “All she does is take. All I want is to spend time with her... that’s it....Just spend time with her....and...” He stopped his rant. It seemed like the more he said, the worst he felt.

He plopped down on the sofa. “It is as if none of it matters...none of it! There’s no appreciation, no recognition...I just want to have something going right in my life. Something.”

Leaning back with his head against the wall, the silence gave way to the whimpering.

He had gotten used to it. In fact, he tried to alter his prayer time so that it wouldn’t coincide with hers. But she doesn’t seem to have a schedule. And it’s been more and more frequent.

As he sat and sulked in his place of solitude, she continued to cry. Not even being able to get a word out.

“Lord,” He began. “You are close to those who are poor in spirit. Be with her. Heal her. Provide for her and Michelle. Will you let her know that you are there?”

He sat on the sofa for a couple of minutes, relieved that at least the whimpering had stopped.

“We need some happiness around these parts, Lord.” He said to himself, laughing as he made his way out the door.

“Mom...Mom!” He could hear the daughter calling out to his neighbor.

The tone of her voice made him backup to listen. After his interaction with his own daughter, he was hoping that this little girl wasn’t bringing no added issues to her mom!

“What is it?”

Muffled, he could make out that something was being played on a phone.

Chris moved closer to the wall so that he could hear. He jumped when he heard a scream... but then the laughter came. Another scream and laughs as they replayed a tic toc that brought them joy.... well... all of them joy.

Michelle

“Okay God. I’m going to try this prayer thing.” She whispered as she overlooked the courtyard. “I don’t know what to say...other than...help me. I don’t want my mom to die.”

October 14th:

Morning Scripture: Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, at the right time he will exalt you and honor you. 1 Peter 5:6 NASB

To humble yourself, is to make yourself low. It shows that you are totally dependent on God.

That was the first thing he read that morning. The second thing he read was an email of regret, that he was not chosen as a candidate for the managerial position he applied for.

So, he took both messages with him throughout the day. Humble yourself and you were not chosen. He mulled over it at work in meetings, as he listened to his manager take credit for work he has done. It came to mind again during his drive home, when he was sent to Ava's voicemail.

"I'm feeling *pretty* low right about now." He said as he knelt in front of his couch.

"I don't even know what to pray for." He spoke what was in his heart. "It just seems like it's not getting better. But..." He rubbed his eyes in exasperation. "Will you be with my neighbor and her daughter Michelle. Will you heal her body, will you..."

This surgery is almost upon us. I hate to leave Michelle here alone. But I don't want to make her come. She's had to go along with a lot of my issues for a while now. Anyway, I'm praying that it's temporary. We actually had breakfast the other day! I hope that continues when this is over. And Lord, I don't know how I am going to pay for her senior stuff. I don't want to have to call my ex-husband. But

if I have to for my baby girl then I will... Just tell me what to do...

Michelle

"I think my mom is a nice person. Why is she having to fight so much? She prayed silently. And she really thinks a lot of You? Why are you putting her through so much? And... I'm scared of her contacting my dad. I don't want to be the cause of him gaining access to my mom. Especially now."

October 16th:

Morning Scripture: Commit your work to the Lord and your plans will succeed. Proverbs 16:3 NLT

This scripture presents a cause and an effect. If you want your plans to succeed, you have to commit your work to the Lord. So how do you commit your work to the Lord? Is it by doing it to the best of your abilities? Is it by making sure that it brings Him honor? He had to search for the answer.

Reading it in the text analysis of the original language, gave him different wording. It read: Commit to Yahweh your works, and will be established your thoughts.

Well, that certainly changed his understanding a bit.

“So, I give my work or deeds to You...and You give me the plan or the purpose...you put it into place?”

Still thinking about it, he got up from his chair. He could easily spend more time on this scripture, but he needed to get ready for work.

Michelle

“I’ll be leaving for mom’s house sometime today...probably be gone when you get back.” Her mother informed her as she stepped out of her room.

“Do you need help taking anything to the car?” She took a seat on the sofa across from her mom.

“No, I’m good. We already took the bulk of it over. You have an away game, right?”

“Yeah, we’ll be leaving right after school to get there.”

“And Brianna can bring you home?” Her mother was allowing her to stay by herself, but she was still very much concerned. “I’ll make sure the light is on for you.”

“I know you will.” Michelle slouched down on the couch. *She’ll be having surgery soon and this is what she is worried about?* Michelle thought to herself.

“She’s bringing me home.” She assured her mother. “I’ll be fine. I’m good...on that at least.”

“Well, here’s the debit card just in case you need something.” Her mother completely disregarded her last remark. “Make sure that you give her gas money and...”

“Are you scared!?” Michelle had to ask the question that was burning in her mind. “Because I don’t want to be the only one scared.”

Her mother took a deep breath before answering. “Yes, I’m scared.”

“And you believe that God will take care of you?” Michelle asked looking directly into her mother’s eyes.

“I know He will.” Her mother declared with confidence, as she took a seat next to her daughter. “And He will take care of you too.”

Michelle hugged her mother. Something she hadn’t done in probably eight years. It was long overdue and needed, for the both of them.

Chris

After leaving a message on Ava's voicemail, Chris switched on his Gospel playlist.

There was a big meeting today and lots of new things happening. A new guy would be added to their team to help with getting all the changes up and going. Chris was informed that he would be in charge of getting the guy up to speed on things. "Add that to the list of things I don't get paid for." He thought to himself then laughed. They also casually mentioned that there would be a few late nights coming. Well, at least *that's* extra money.

Pulling up into the parking lot, his attention immediately shifted to his neighbor. She was trying to bring a huge piece of luggage down the stairs.

Michelle

Michelle grabbed her phone to face-time her mom before the game.

"Mom!" She said as soon as she saw her face. It appeared that her mom was outdoors. "What are you doing?"

"About to head out." She responded in between breaths. "You ready?!"

"You know I am." Michelle answered while tossing the ball up in the air.

Her nerves always got the best of her before the game. But this time, it worked in her favor. A welcomed distraction off the surgery that would happen in a few days.

“How many times do you want me to spike this on somebody’s head?” She asked her mom with a smirk.

“Girl...” Her mom shot her a look.

They both started laughing.

“Oh...Thank you...” Her mother said to someone in the background. *“Katherine...yeah...right.”* She chuckled. *“Nice to meet you Chris.”*

“Helllo!?” Michelle was a bit annoyed that her mother’s attention was elsewhere. “Mom...who are you talking to?”

“Oh, that was one of our neighbors.” She explained. “He helped me take my suitcase to the car.”

“Anyway.” Her mother had to address her daughter’s original request. “You know I don’t want you spiking on somebody’s head.” She felt like that needed to be said. You just never know with Michelle. “But I do want you to kick butt.”

“I will...for you!”

Her mother smiled at that statement. “Alright sweetie...love you.”

“I love you too.

Chris



Father, I thank you for this day. Thank you for my job. It's a lot happening... It will be a lot of long days. I pray that you will help me deal with it. Help me not to lose it on the boss... help me to do a good job. And Lord, I haven't heard from my daughter... I just don't get it. But I'm trying... with everything, I'm trying. I pray for Katherine and Michelle. I pray that the surgery goes well... I pray that you would provide for them...continue to be with them and cover them. In Jesus name... Amen.

Michelle

Coming home to an empty house used to be a great thing. Now, not so much. Locking the door, she turned off all the lights and headed into her room. She knew she was by herself, but she didn't feel alone.

October 15th:

Morning Scripture: Immediately, the father of the child cried out and said, I believe; help my unbelief.

Mark 9:24 NASB

This father's response came because of a request made to heal his son. "*If* you can do anything..." the father asked Jesus. That 'if' seemed to strike nerve with our Savior, who in turned reminded him that all things are possible to him who believes. From there, the father's answer seems to be a bit confusing. I mean, either you believe, or you don't. But all Christians know that both can be present in any given situation. We can have faith in God and in Jesus Christ, yet still doubt that what we are hoping for will happen. But the father in the scripture had it right. We need Jesus for everything! He supplies our faith and He can help our unbelief.

Michelle

The alarm clock signaled that it was time for her to get up. But she didn't feel like it. Stepping out of her room, she looked over in the direction of the kitchen. She knew her mom wouldn't be there. But to think of her Mom never being there again caused the tears to fall.

She walked upstairs to her mother's room and sat in the area that her mother called her prayer corner. "This chair is really comfortable." She said out loud and then laughed. "I see why she likes being over here. Well... I know it's because of You.

Lord, the surgery is tomorrow and... I don't know what to ask really. I just want everything to go well and for my mom to come out of this cancer free. And we live normal lives for a change."

Chris

"So, how was work?" Nicole asked as she sat a plate down in front of Chris.

"I made it through." Chris answered, after finishing up with grace. "I did get a shout out in a mass email by my big boss though." He said in between bites. "He was applauding how quickly I fixed this issue that came up."

"Oh wow...from the big boss, huh?" She grabbed a seat in front of him.

"Yeah. It made me feel good that my work was being recognized." He said after a sip of his drink. "This is good by the way. I appreciate you for doing this."

"Oh...well thank you." She was shocked at his last comment. "I'm glad you like it."

"I'm learning to show others my gratitude for things." He said as if he read her mind. "Considering I don't like the way it feels to be unappreciated."

"Like with Ava's lil tail." He added realizing that it was over an hour ago that he had first called her. "I'm getting tired of feeling ignored by her."

"You know she's a Senior. She's living that teenage life!" Nicole tried to help him see it in another light.

“Because of me...and my money.” He said laughing to keep from showing his true feelings of hurt. “And that’s cool... if I could at least hear from her. I would even be okay with a text everyday...something.”

“Well, maybe you should say something.”

“I was kinda praying that I didn’t have to. But, at some point, it’s just gonna come out. I don’t want to lose it on her though.

“So, you should bring it up. She’s old enough to understand.”

There was a moment of silence between them as they both continued to eat and enjoy their dinner.

“I overheard the neighbor’s daughter this morning praying.” He broke the silence first.

“Really?!”

“Yeah. I used to want to...whoop her.” He laughed at his truth, even when his own daughter could use the same. “But now, I feel so bad for her. I wish she didn’t have to go through all this... especially now.”

“Yeah.” Nicole sighed, thinking about how rough it must be for the young lady. “You’ve been praying for her and the mom though. That’s all you can do...well, it’s the best thing to do!”

Chris



“Lord...I want to thank you for this day. I thank you for the shout out at work. That really felt good and lifted my spirits. I think it’s been a while since I said thank you. I’m grateful for my job...that I can provide for my daughter. That we have our health.

My neighbors Katherine and Michelle are going through a lot. Will you be with them. I pray for healing, I pray that you would continue to strengthen their relationship, I pray that you will provide for them, in every way, including the senior fees. And like the father in the scripture, help my unbelief. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.”

Michelle

Being outside at this time of night, was probably not the smartest thing to do. But she had grown accustomed to hanging out there. Now, it was her place to pray. Her mother had her corner, she had outdoors overlooking the courtyard.

She needed encouragement for the days to come. In fact, Michelle aimed to take her mother’s place in being confident that everything was going to be okay. But first, she needed to get reassurance herself, that everything would indeed work out.

October 17th:

Morning Scripture: This is real love-not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. 1 John 4:10 NLT

This scripture reminded him of something he once heard a preacher say, “We are not loved because we have value. We have value because we are loved.”

God’s love for us has nothing to do with our love for him. It doesn’t even have to do with how we behave. He simply, without a good cause or reason, loved us first. And not just in words, but in action. *He gave* his only begotten Son. *Jesus paid* the price for our sins. *We* reap the benefits of love in action. He went the distance to get us back in relationship with Him. All because of His love for us.

That did make Chris feel valued, that the God of the universe loved him that much. It also helped him to see the trickle-down effect. God loves and helps us, we in turn should love and help others.

Ava said that she would be dropping by this evening. Maybe she would show up, maybe she wouldn’t. It could be with friends. She might be alone. He just never knew what to expect from her. So, he figured it was best to just wait and see.



She arrived a little after 6, talking on the phone.

“I’m at my dad’s place.” She said after about twenty minutes of conversation. “He looking at me crazy, so let me call you back later.”

Ava hung up the phone and placed it on the couch.

She exhaled really loudly then laid back on the sofa. “So, how was your day dad?” She asked turning her attention to him.

“Depends?”

“On?”

“How much are you about to ask for?”

She began to laugh. “I only need like, fifty bucks or so!”

“And I only need you to answer the phone when I call you every day.... or at least call me back.”

“Daaaaad!” She acted as if he had requested that she build him a monument. “I have stuff going on! I can’t promise that I will be able to do that every day.”

“I have stuff to do with my money too.” He shot back.

That caused a moment of silence. It pained him that she had a problem with agreeing to talk to him when he called. He’d had enough.

“I tell you what...I’m going to give you...a hundred dollars.”

That dollar amount got her attention, as her eyes lit up.

“But... it’s October 17th... you can’t come to me for no more money until November 17th.

Her mood changed a bit. The folding of her arms was proof that she didn’t think she could make it that far without requesting anymore funds.

“And... if I haven’t heard from you within that time... I’m not giving you anything.... I’ll pay for your senior stuff... but that’s it...deal?”

“Fine... whatever Dad.”

He picked up the phone and cashapped her the money. In the space for reason he put: to get my daughter to answer my calls.

“I got some homework I got to do.” She said grabbing her car keys.

“You know I love you right?” He grabbed her for a hug. “Just in case I don’t see you no more after this.” He said with a chuckle.

“Whatever Dad.... I love you too.” She returned the hug.

“Then act like it.”



“Lord, I want to thank you for all that you do and have done for me. For loving me... in all my faults, ungratefulness. I pray my daughter understands that I love her. Will you continue to watch over her and keep her? Will you be with Michelle...no, thank you for being with Michelle and Katherine. I pray for healing in every way...

physically, emotionally, spiritually. Will you provide what they need...In Jesus name...Amen.

October 21st:

Morning Scripture: The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent. Exodus 14:14 NASB

Moses said this to the people as they were in between the Egyptian Army and the Red Sea. The Israelites were verbally assaulting Moses, believing that it was his fault that they were in that predicament. But it wasn't his plan. In fact, it was God's plan. God put it all in motion, but He was also going to take care of it for them too...once and for all. They wouldn't have to do anything. There wasn't even a need for them to *say* anything.

Michelle

Having a game the next day, Michelle came home the night before. She was there for the surgery and was able to spend time with her mother afterwards. There was a bit of relief that at least that part was over. Now her mom could begin the process of healing.

Michelle went into her mother's room and sat in her chair. *"Lord, thank you for taking care of my mom."* She said. *"I know there are still some things that she has to do, but I believe you will take care of her...well, I hope so. Oh, and... she keeps talking about these fees and my dad. If you could just, help her to forget about that for now...please... Amen."*

Chris

The new guy, Carl, had been tagging along with him for almost a week now. He was a young guy, eager to learn.

That made things a lot easier and bearable. It also helped Chris to be mindful of his behavior and words. He made sure to keep things professional, not letting the conversation go past the actual task of the job. Any personal comments he had about their direct boss, he kept to himself.

“Hey man, I appreciate you helping me learn the ropes.” Carl said after work, as they stepped out of the elevator into the parking garage.

“Not a problem. Gotta get you up to speed, so we can knock these projects out!”

“Well, I’m ready now!” He said as he got into his vehicle. “I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Aight.” Chris replied as he opened his car door.

Before he could even switch the gear to reverse, his phone rang. It was his ex-wife calling.

“Hello?”

Ever since Ava came of age where she could call him herself, communication between him and his ex-had ceased. So, this call made him a little nervous.

“I was calling to ask you if you were going to give me anything on Ava’s senior fees.” Her voice vibrated through the radio via the Bluetooth. She didn’t even bother to greet him.

Hearing her tone and the nature of the call, made him take his hand off the gear. This conversation probably would be

one that he would not want to be driving for. “What’s with the attitude?” He asked.

“Cause I shouldn’t have to call you. Your daughter was scared.... talking about you told her she couldn’t ask for anything and...”

“That is not what I said...I told her...” He stopped mid-sentence. He knew it would be pointless to finish as his ex-wife was already on one.

“Well she seems to think she can’t come to you for it.” She got louder with each word. “So, I told her *I* would ask you. So, are you going to help or not?”

As if he hasn’t been. As if he needed anyone to tell him or remind him to do for his daughter. As if he was the one to leave the marriage. As if he was the one who doesn’t call or reach out.

“Chris!! Are you going to give me half on Ava’s fees?!”

“I’ve already paid for it.” Chris responded as calmly as he could while gripping the steering wheel.

“What?! I know you are not talking about child support money, because you know that...”

“No, I’ve already paid the school. Check your phone for the receipt.” He forwards a copy to Ava’s phone as well.

“I paid it the day after giving my daughter a hundred bucks.” He added.

“Oh... well, why didn’t you tell me...”

“You called asking about the fees.” He decided to not let her make him lose it. “It’s been taken care of. Is Ava okay?”

“Yeah, she’s fine.” Her tone was not as hostile as before. “But she thinks you’re mad at her!”

“Well, she would know that I’m not if she would answer her phone.”

Before his ex could start up again, he interjected. “She’s okay... fees are paid... I’m hanging up.”

After the phone call, he sat in the parking lot for a second.

“AHHHHH.” He pounded the steering wheel to let off some steam.

“Lord I held my peace.” He said looking up to the heavens. “But I really want to fight right now.”

His honesty about the situation made him laugh. He shuffled through his playlist still snickering at his remarks.

“This is how I fight my battles...” came through the speakers. He turned it up loud enough to drown out his thoughts.

“It may look like I’m surrounded, but I’m surrounded by you.” He sang as she backed out his parking space and headed home.



Chris went to pray a little bit earlier than usual tonight. He knew that he would be there a lot longer.

That whole conversation with his ex-wife still bothered him. During the call, she got to him. He could admit that. But he had gotten over *her* behavior. That's the type of person she was, so nothing out of the ordinary there. What did bother him was his feelings toward his daughter. He wondered if she really did tell her mom that he said not to ask for anything. He also wondered why she didn't at least reply to the text to tell him thank you for paying for the fees. Maybe he should just expect that type of behavior from her too.

"I'm really close to just not trying anymore." He said out loud. "I mean I'll do whatever needs to be done.... but just stop expecting anything else."

Laughter came out of nowhere again from him.

"I'm just talking, Father." He put his head in his hands. "I'm not the best son to you either, but you continue to show me love. Which I would like to ask for forgiveness for...help me to honor you."

"Mom...okay, I'm in your room...yeah... We won both games. Yeah.... our last game is coming up... I'll probably come stay and help out.... Yeah... oh, I see it right here..."

It sounded as if she had left the room.

"Lord thank you that at least somebody's daughter is acting right." He chuckled.

"And I won't stop trying with mines...Will you keep watching over Michelle and Katherine, will you...."

October 23rd:

Effective prayer of the righteous man accomplishes much. James 5:16b NASB

This scripture falls in between verses where James is encouraging believers to pray. He does so by explaining what situations you should pray in and how effective prayer can be. If Chris had to guess, he would say this verse was necessary because people want to see immediate results. And quite often, prayer doesn't do that. So, most won't do it or maybe not as much as they should. But James reminds us that extraordinary things happened by way of prayer through ordinary men. Effective prayer is faith partnering with The Source. When this happens, something *is* happening. Whether you can see it or not.

Michelle

Michelle plopped down in her mother's chair, as she waited on Brianna to come pick her up.

Her mom would be coming home soon, as she seemed to be recovering rather quickly. *"I always thought my mom was weak."* She admitted to the Lord. *"That's because I didn't see her fight back...or yell, curse...or do anything most would do when someone was attacking them. I guess there's different types of strength..."* She continued. *"I mean.... she's gone through some battles, but she's winning them...so that makes her pretty strong. And I don't know for sure... but I'm going to say that You have a lot to do with that...I can see that You take care of her..."*



Michelle tried to find a seat somewhere in the back at one of three meetings the school would be having for the seniors. Lots of events and due dates would be discussed this evening and she promised her mom she would come and get the information for her.

When she arrived, Joy Matthews, CEO of the HBCU Kid was speaking about the upcoming HBCU tour. Michelle wasn't sure if she would be able to go, but she hoped so. One of the school's that she was interested in was on the list. It would be cool to be able to check out the campus. But considering her senior fees weren't even paid, this trip would probably be out of the question for her.

During the break, Michelle got up to partake of some of the light refreshments in the cafeteria.

"Hey Michelle!" A girl from one of her classes spoke as she poured herself some punch.

"Heeey!" She replied back.

"Great game the other day, by the way. You be spiking that ball hard!"

Michelle laughed. "Thanks... I try. Hey, I think your dad is trying to get your attention."

Her classmate turned around to see. She laughed then resumed talking to Michelle. "That's not my dad...my dad is *not* here."

"Oh...my dad isn't in my life either." Michelle said taking a sip of her punch.

“My dad is...in my life. He’s just not here.” The girl laughed.

“Working?” Michelle was always curious about the relationships of others with their fathers.

“No... he just didn’t know about it. I mean, it’s just a meeting about little stuff.”

“Yeah.... SENIOR stuff.” Michelle had said it before she knew it. “Parents *want* to be here for these things. My mom tried to come... and she has Cancer.” She laughed so that it wouldn’t hit so hard.

Her classmate definitely wasn’t expecting to hear that.

“Dang.” She said on accident. “But that’s love though.” She quickly tried to clean up her slip up.

“Parents love! Even when you treat them like crap. ... like how I treated my mom before all of this.”

“Girls.” One of the counselors came up holding a list. “Don’t forget that the first payment for your senior fees is...wait...” She shuffled through the papers. “You’re good...and Mi-chelle...you’re good too! Never mind then.” She laughed and started to walk off.

Michelle’s eyes widened.

“Well, I guess I will see you tomorrow.” She concluded the conversation with her classmate, so that she could try and catch up with the counselor.

“I’m good?!” Michelle caught her before she engaged in conversation with another group of teens. “Michelle Cooks?”

“Yes, dear. You’re all set. You’re D-ad I believe paid for you a couple of days ago.”

“Oh.” That was downright shocking. She knew her mom was thinking about reaching out to him. But didn’t know that she did it. “So, he actually came through.” She said underneath her breath.

Chris

Just getting home at 8:30p.m., the only thing he wanted to do was shower and get in the bed. He didn’t make it to his study, but he did pray in his room.

“Father, I thank you for watching over me on today. Not just me, but my family, my daughter...everyone is safe and good. I thank you for provision, and health, and loving me, in spite of me. I continue to pray for Michelle and Katherine and their health, and provision...and relationship...In Jesus name I pray... Amen.

Getting off his knees, he stretched and sat down on his bed.

Ding! His text notification went off. He was so tired that he did the lazy move:

“Hey Siri, can you read the last text message?”

“Okay... Ava said: Hey Dad! I have an art show coming up in a couple of days. I am texting you now, in case I forget later...okay... bye.”

“Would you like to respond?” Siri asked.

Chris grabbed his phone to double check the message. He read it again.

“I will be there.” He texted back.

Ding! Smiley face emoji popped up. Yea! She messaged.

“Good night sweetie.” He texted, hoping he wasn’t pushing it.

Ding! “Good night dad. Emoji hearts.

Michelle

Bling! Michelle reached over and read her incoming message:

Mom: I hope all the doors are locked! Good night!

She shook her head and chuckled. Smiling she replied:
Locked up! Goodnight Mom! Moons and heart emojis.

Putting her phone on the nightstand, she kneeled beside her bed. *“Lord...I want to say, Thank you...for watching over and taking care of all of those who watch over and take care of me.”*

October 28th:

Morning Scripture: And we know that all things work together for the good to those who love the Lord, to those who are called according to His purposes. Romans 8:28 NKJV

It's hard to believe that *all* things can work together for the good. That's bad things, okay things, horrible things, anyone of them can come together for your good. Strange right? I mean can you imagine taking a whole bunch of bad or nasty ingredients, dumping them in a pot and coming out with something that taste good? It's probably not something you are going to want to try. But the Chef in this scripture is God. He causes *all* things to work together for the good. Why? Because you love Him and are called according to His purposes.

We need not try to control or worry about *the things*. Our concerned is loving Him and being called according to His purposes. He takes care of everything else.

Chris was hoping to get to work a little earlier today. He knew they had a lot on going on, but he had to get out there at 5pm if wanted to make it to Ava's art show on time.

Almost to his car, he realized that he forgot his lunch.

Dropping his head, he sighed. *Should I go back and get it?* He asked himself.

Chris jogged back up the stairs to his apartment. He could save money and time by eating at work.

As he made it to his door, he noticed Michelle standing near his upstairs study door leaning over the rails.

“Hey...” He spoke to get her attention “Are you okay?” He asked before opening his door.

“Oh...yeah.” She turned to face him. “I’m good...just waiting on my ride to get here.” She replied with a smile.

“Oh okay.”

He quickly entered his apartment and grabbed his lunch.

Locking the door behind him, he headed for work, again.

“Thanks for the prayers!” She yelled out to him before he made it to the bottom of his front steps.

He stopped in his tracks.

“The only person I have ever heard praying for me is my mom.” She said, smiling. “My dad never did.”

“How did you...”

She motioned towards the area near his study door. “I come here to hang out and think.”

“You can hear like that?!”

“Well...you know these walls are thin! But, one day I was out here... and I thought I heard you say my name. So, I leaned in closer to make sure I wasn’t imagining things.” She said with a chuckle. “And I heard the prayer.”

Chris nodded his head up and down, signaling that he understood.

“And I then, I came up another night.” She said softly. “You prayed for us again...you said my name, again...then, I knew it wasn’t a coincidence.”

“How’s your mom doing?” Chris asked.

“She’s doing good!” Her face perked up. “She’s going through treatments now, but doctors believe they caught it early enough to get her back cancer free.”

“That’s good!” He breathed a sigh of relief. “I’m glad to hear that...for real.”

“How’s everything going for you?” She interjected. “You got a new job, right?”

“No...” He was a bit confused. “Still at the same job.”

“Oh... it’s just that, I haven’t heard you pray about it in a while, so I thought you had gotten a new one.” She paused for a second. “But things *are* getting better, right?”

“They are.” He confirmed after thinking about it. “They really are.”

“My ride’s here.” She picked her things up from the ground. “I just wanted to say thank you though.”

“You’re welcome.” With a full heart, he turned to head to the car.

“Wait...” Michelle called out to him. “Will you keep praying for me?”

He shook his head up and down, signaling that he would. “You got it.”

“Thanks.” She said with a smile and headed down the stairs. “I’ll keep praying for you too!”



The workday was full of issues. But with Carl’s help, they were able to get most of them fixed and back on track.

Having Carl was a lifesaver. That was the only way he was able to leave work in enough time to get to Ava’s art show.

Walking into the lobby of the gymnasium, Chris saw Ava jumping up and down, waving to get his attention.

“Hey dad!” She hugged him the moment he made it over to her.

“Hey sweetie.” He kissed her on the forehead. “Whoa, it’s a lot of good pieces here!”

“Yeah, and of course mine is Da Best!” She snickered after her comment. “Just kidding, theirs are alright too.”

She led him over to her area that was set up in a corner. Chris was really impressed with her drawings and paintings.

“You did these?!” He was amazed at how much she had grown as an artist.

“Yep! These two pieces are new.” She said beaming with pride. “This one, I’ve been working on for a minute, because of the details of course. I just finished it a couple of days ago.”

Mouth ajar, he studied each one. Shaking his head at how good she was, he grabbed his phone so that he could take a few pictures to post on his social media accounts. He snapped away, until his eyes settled upon the last piece. It was a picture of hands in prayer position. Underneath the hands, was a little girl.

“Is that you?!” He asked, pointing at the little girl in the painting.

“Yeah... that’s why it took a long time!” Ava was looking in the direction of the basketball court.

“Wow!” It was the only word he managed to get out.

“Hey, dad... hold on for a second...I’ll be right back.” She said as she left to go and speak with someone.

Chris remained frozen in front of the painting. “This is incredible.” He whispered to himself as he noticed a pinky ring on one of the hands covering the little girl.

“Dad!” Ava returned grabbing his arm. “I need you to do something for me!”

“Yeah...okay...” He was still thinking about the painting. “Don’t sell this one though. I want to buy it.”

“Really dad!” She said as if she was annoyed. “Why would I make you buy my painting.” She rolled her eyes. “Can you do me a favor...please?”

Walking him towards the gym doors, she explained what was going on.

“Will you do it?!” She pleaded with her hands clasp together. “I’ll answer your evening calls for a week!”

“No matter what?” Chris was not about to miss out on this opportunity.

“No matter what.” She confirmed.

“Deal.” He made it over to a makeshift check-in table.

“I’m going to loan you my dad.” Ava said with a big smile.
“But I want him back.”

Her classmate laughed.

“So, you will be walking with Michelle.” The counselor said switching clipboards. Without looking up, she asked, “What is the name and the relation?”

“Chris Jackson.” He said, then gave a confused look to both of the girls. He didn’t know how to answer the second part.

“Oh...wait...you took care of her senior fees last week. So, you are...”

Both girls shot Chris a confused look.

“Players and parents...line up, please!” The assistant coach bailed Chris out from having to explain.

Ava headed for the stands, while Michelle asked the counselor to make a correction.

Our next senior.... is #28.... Michelle Cooks.

Ava and a group of her friends cheered loudly.

She is being escorted by her Godfather, Mr. Chris Jackson.

“I told y’all my dad was the best.” Ava said with a smile.

Michelle glanced at the cross on Chris’s pinky ring. “Now, I know...you do care for me.” She whispered.