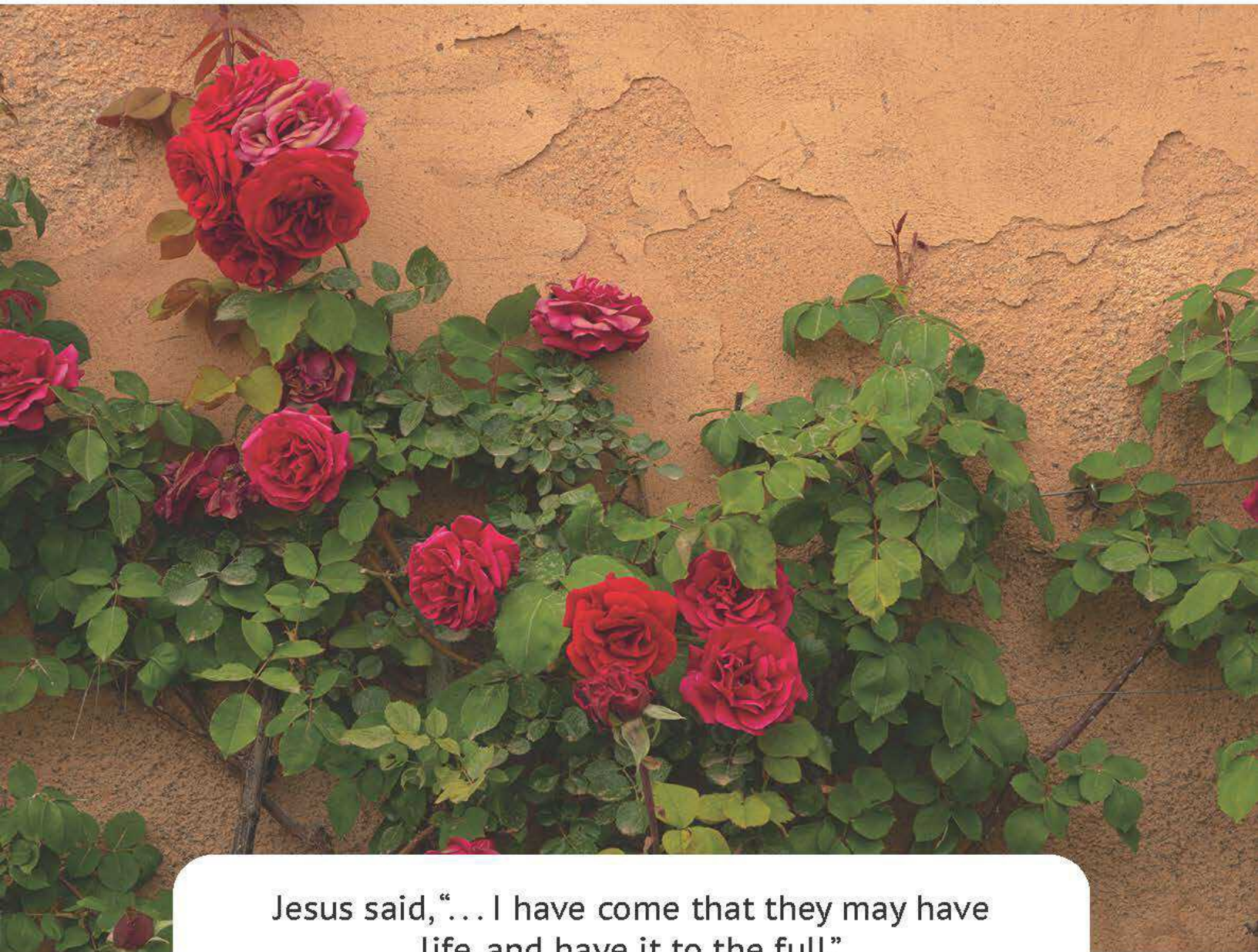




Our Daily Bread

JANUARY | FEBRUARY | MARCH 2025



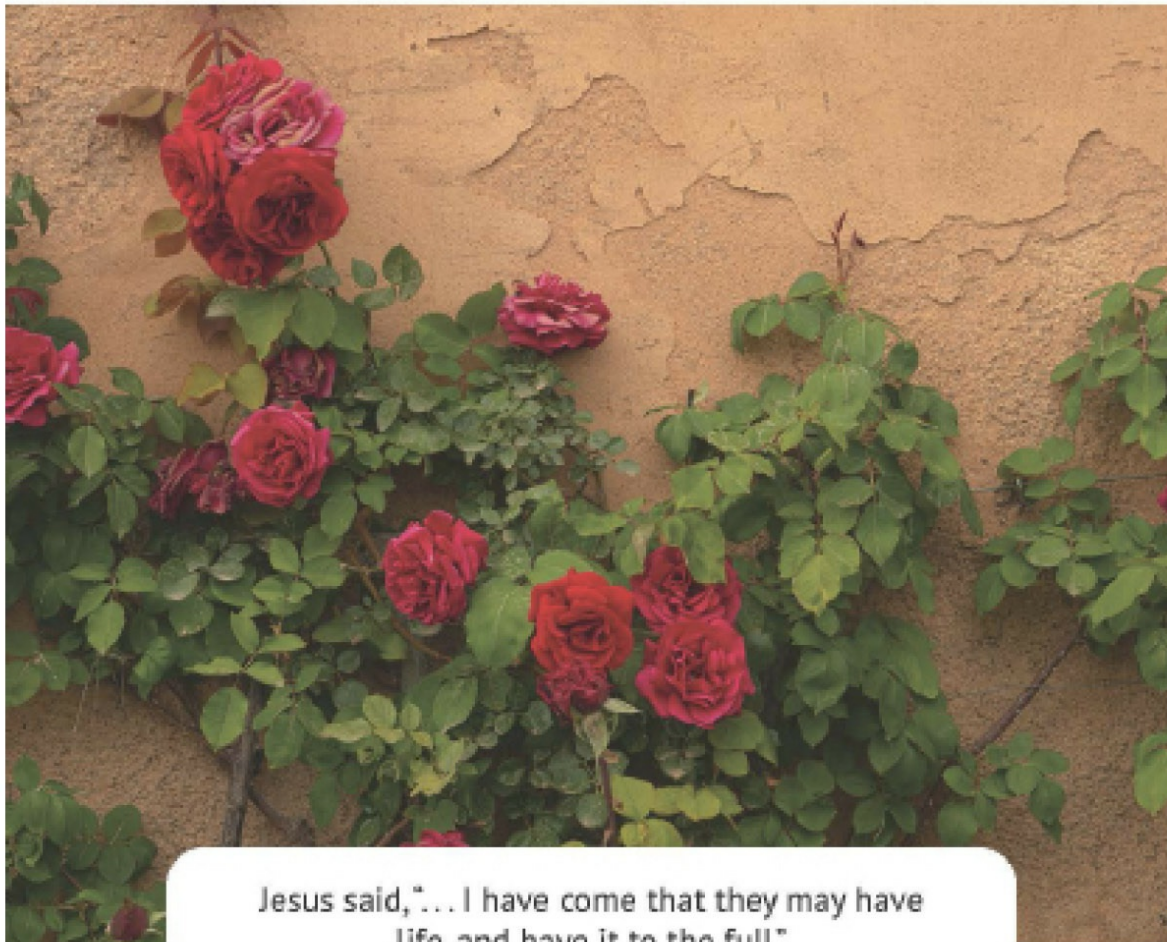
Jesus said, "... I have come that they may have
life, and have it to the full."

JOHN 10:7, 10



Our Daily Bread

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For Personal and Family Devotions since 1956

2025

January • February • March

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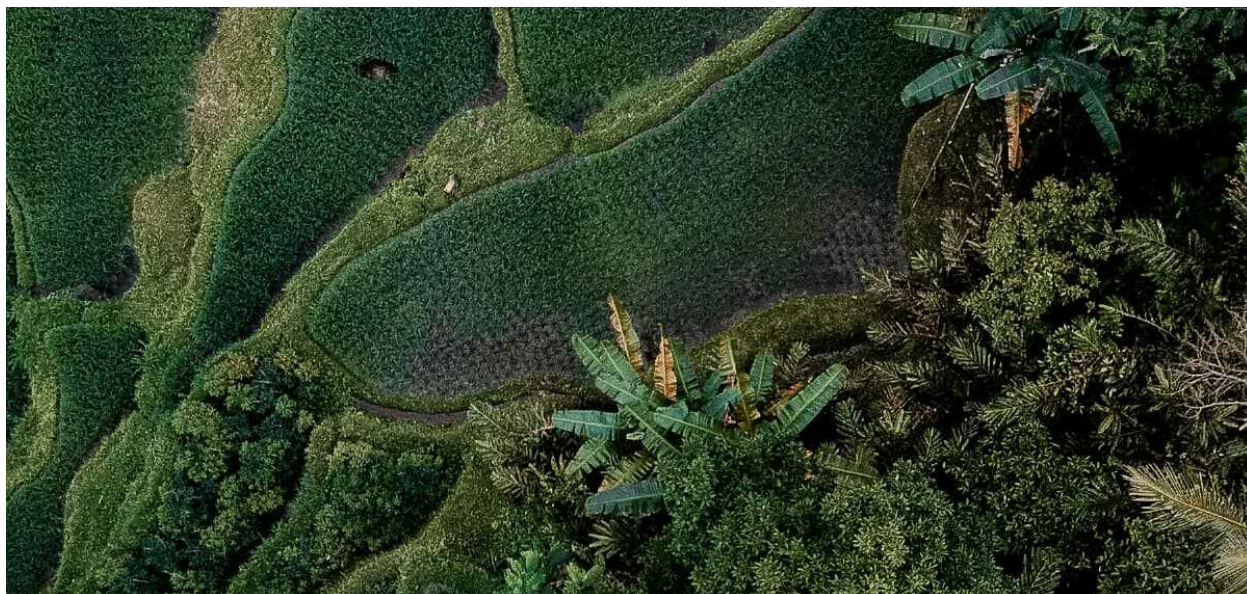
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THE JESUS STORY

Wednesday, January 1

The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it. 1 John 1:2



READ: 1 JOHN 1:1-5

Most people have never heard of Kate Hankey, but she was a remarkable woman. A teacher, evangelist, school organizer, missionary, and poet, she faithfully served Jesus in 1800s England. In 1867, Kate contracted a serious illness. During her recovery, she penned a lengthy poem in two parts: “The Story Wanted” and “The Story Told.” The poem expresses in a very personal way her relationship with Jesus and the events of His life.

All Scripture points to Jesus and tells His story. John begins his epistle reminding readers how they had personally experienced Jesus: “That which . . . we have seen with our eyes, which we have

looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim” (1 John 1:1). Because of our experience of Him, the apostle writes, we’re telling the Jesus story: “The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it” (v. 2). Later, John makes the fascinating comment, “The word of God lives in you” (2:14). In other words, the Jesus story is our story too. We’re called to tell the story of Christ in light of our own experience with Him.

This is what Kate Hankey did in her poem. Eventually, the two parts of her poem became these beloved hymns: “I Love to Tell the Story” and “Tell Me the Old, Old Story.” Perhaps we might, like Kate, find our own words and share our Jesus story with others—the unique way in which He loved us, came to us, and rescued us.
—[Kenneth Petersen](#)

What is your story with Jesus? How did He come to you and rescue you?

Dear Jesus, thank You for rescuing me and doing Your loving work in my life.

For further study, read [Jesus Is in the Room](#).

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • 1 JOHN 1:1-5

¹ *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.* ² *The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.* ³ *We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.* ⁴ *We write this to make our joy complete.*

⁵ *This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.*

INSIGHT

Many scholars believe that the apostle John, the author of the gospel of John, also wrote the three letters that bear his name. He wrote 1 John to refute false teachers who taught that Jesus is neither God nor human and points to His incarnation to show His humanity: “[Jesus] was with the Father and has appeared to us” (1:2). John had personally heard, seen, and touched the man Jesus (vv. 1-3), demonstrating that Christ is a real

human person.

To prove that Jesus is the preexistent creator God, John begins his letter with the words “that which was from the beginning” (v. 1), echoing Genesis 1:1 (“in the beginning God”) and John 1:1 (“in the beginning was the Word”). Jesus is “the Word of life” (1 John 1:1), who “spoke” life into every living thing (Genesis 1; John 1:1-2). He’s “the eternal life, which was with the Father” and He’s “[God’s] Son, Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:2-3), the promised Messiah.

The Bible in a Year: [Genesis 1-3; Matthew 1](#)



GOD'S PROMISE BEYOND THE RUINS

Thursday, January 2

The heavens will vanish like smoke But my salvation will last forever. Isaiah 51:6



READ: ISAIAH 51:1-6

As Hurricane Laura raged through the Gulf of Mexico toward the US coastline of Louisiana, the warnings were dire. One sheriff, noting the 150-mile-per-hour winds, issued this jolting message: "Please evacuate. But if you choose to stay and we can't get to you, write your name, address, social security number, and next of kin and put it in a Ziploc bag in your pocket. Praying that it does not come to this." Rescue crews knew that once Laura hit land, they could only watch the storm's destructive path—helpless in its wake.

Whenever God's people in the Old Testament faced natural or

spiritual calamity, His words were far more certain and hopeful, promising His presence despite destruction. He said that He would “look with compassion on all her ruins; [and would] make her wastelands . . . like the garden of the LORD” (Isaiah 51:3). And more, God always assured His people of the rescue and healing that would certainly follow if they would only trust Him. Even though “the heavens [would] vanish like smoke,” God said, His “salvation [would] last forever” (v. 6). Whatever the damage, His ultimate goodness toward them wouldn’t be thwarted, *ever*.

God doesn’t safeguard us from hardship, but He does promise that His restorative healing extends far beyond the ruin. —[Winn Collier](#)

Where are you facing calamity and ruin? How do you hear God’s promise to be with you, to heal and rebuild after the ruins?

Dear God, the ruins are so devastating. I’m not sure I can believe that You have a promise big enough for this. But I choose to believe.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • ISAIAH 51:1-6

- ¹ *Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness
and who seek the LORD:
Look to the rock from which you were cut
and to the quarry from which you were hewn;*
- ² *look to Abraham, your father,
and to Sarah, who gave you birth.
When I called him he was only one man,
and I blessed him and made him many.*
- ³ *The LORD will surely comfort Zion
and will look with compassion on all her ruins;
he will make her deserts like Eden,
her wastelands like the garden of the LORD.
Joy and gladness will be found in her,
thanksgiving and the sound of singing.*
- ⁴ *Listen to me, my people;
hear me, my nation:
Instruction will go out from me;
my justice will become a light to the nations.*
- ⁵ *My righteousness draws near speedily,
my salvation is on the way,
and my arm will bring justice to the nations.*

*The islands will look to me
and wait in hope for my arm.*

*⁶ Lift up your eyes to the heavens,
look at the earth beneath;
the heavens will vanish like smoke,
the earth will wear out like a garment
and its inhabitants die like flies.
But my salvation will last forever,
my righteousness will never fail.*

INSIGHT

What does Isaiah 51:1 mean? “Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the LORD: Look to the rock from which you were cut.” God is challenging His exiled people to “look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who gave you birth” (v. 2). The people were trying to gain righteousness by keeping the law. What they needed was the faith of their spiritual father Abraham. The apostle Paul wrote, “It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith” (Romans 4:13).

The Bible in a Year: [Genesis 4-6; Matthew 2](#)



FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN

Friday, January 3

In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. John 16:33



READ: JOHN 16:31-33

Fear woke me at 3 a.m. on the first day of the new year. The year ahead weighed heavily on me, overwhelming me with dread. Illness in the family had long wearied me, and now, thoughts of the future made me afraid. *Will more bad things happen?* I wondered.

Jesus' disciples understood the fear of bad things happening. Even though their Master had prepared and reassured them the day before He died, they were still afraid. They fled when He was arrested (Matthew 26:56); Peter denied Him (John 18:15-17, 25-27), and they went into hiding (20:19). Their fear during the upheaval of Jesus'

arrest and crucifixion, as well as of persecution, led them to act contrary to His command to “take heart” and His promise, “I have overcome the world” (16:33).

But Christ’s death and resurrection proved His authority and power over life and death. He has the ultimate victory. Even though the sinful state of our world makes suffering a certainty, we can rest in the truth that all things are subject to the authority of our wise and loving God. Jesus’ presence is with us (16:32-33), just as it was with His disciples, who later confidently went on to share the gospel to the world. May God’s promise that He’s in control strengthen our hearts to trust Him in this new year and be courageous even when we don’t know what the future will bring. —[Karen Huang](#)

What’s your response to difficulty, suffering, and trials? What would “taking heart” look like for you?

Thank You, Jesus, for helping me with my fears and for showing me how to live courageously.

Visit ODBU.org/OT315 for further study on suffering and trials from the book of Job.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • JOHN 16:31-33

³¹ “Do you now believe?” Jesus replied. ³² “A time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered, each to your own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me.

³³ “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

INSIGHT

In John 16, as Jesus addressed His disciples’ fears and the grief and suffering that would come during and after His death, it’s noteworthy that nowhere did He suggest they’d be rescued from experiencing fear and pain. As Christ faced death, they’d abandon Him in terror—“leave [Him] all alone” (John 16:32). The grief they’d experience from His death was unavoidable—they’d “weep and mourn while the world [rejoiced]” (v. 20).

Instead of a comfort based on escaping suffering, however, Jesus offered His disciples hope rooted in His resurrection (16:22). They couldn’t avoid the pain they’d experience, but because Christ has “overcome the world” (16:33), their suffering would be like that of

childbirth—the pain wouldn’t be purposeless but would “turn to joy” (v. 20)—tremendous joy that “no one will take away” (v. 22).

The Bible in a Year: [Genesis 7-9; Matthew 3](#)



GIVING BACK TO GOD

Saturday, January 4

Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. 1 Chronicles 29:14



READ: 1 CHRONICLES 29:10-16

One year, the leaders of our congregation invited us to give gifts, in addition to our regular weekly offerings, to build a new gymnasium—a space we could use to minister to the families in our community. After prayerfully considering the medical expenses caused by living with a disability, I asked my husband, “Are you sure we can do this?” He nodded. “We’re not giving God anything that’s not already His,” he said. “He’ll provide all we need.” And He did! Over a decade later, our church family still has the privilege of serving Jesus by serving people in that facility.

In 1 Chronicles 29, King David showed the leaders of Israel his commitment to support his son Solomon as his God-chosen successor and the builder of the temple (vv. 1-5). Everyone followed suit, “gave willingly,” and “rejoiced” (vv. 6, 9). David praised God and declared that “everything in heaven and earth” belonged to Him (v. 11). He prayed: “LORD our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you” (v. 16).

As we consider all God has done and given to us, specifically the gift of a personal relationship with Jesus, we can express our worship and show our gratitude and love by simply giving back to God, the Giver of all good things! —[Xochitl Dixon](#)

How does acknowledging that all things belong to God change the way you view giving? How can expressing your gratitude through giving change you?

Loving God, thank You for being a generous and faithful provider.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • 1 CHRONICLES 29:10-16

*¹⁰ David praised the LORD in the presence of the whole assembly, saying,
“Praise be to you, LORD,
the God of our father Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting.*

*¹¹ Yours, LORD, is the greatness and the power
and the glory and the majesty and the splendor,
for everything in heaven and earth is yours.
Yours, LORD, is the kingdom;
you are exalted as head over all.*

*¹² Wealth and honor come from you;
you are the ruler of all things.
In your hands are strength and power
to exalt and give strength to all.*

*¹³ Now, our God, we give you thanks,
and praise your glorious name.*

¹⁴ “But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. ¹⁵ We are foreigners and strangers in your sight, as were all our ancestors. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. ¹⁶ LORD our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name comes from your hand, and all of it

belongs to you."

INSIGHT

David gathered "all the officials of Israel" (1 Chronicles 28:1) to address the temple project (ch. 28; 29:1-9) and to crown Solomon as king (29:21-25). David provided large amounts of the kingdom's resources and also gave "[his] personal treasures of gold and silver . . . over and above everything [he'd] provided" (v. 3). Following his example, the leaders also gave their resources "freely and wholeheartedly to the LORD" (v. 9). He then led the whole assembly in heartfelt worship—praising God and extolling His greatness, eternality, power, glory, and sovereignty (vv. 10-13). David humbly acknowledged that God owns everything! Whatever they gave back to Him was simply returning to Him what He'd generously given to them in the first place (vv. 14-16).

The Bible in a Year: [Genesis 10-12; Matthew 4](#)



GOD KNOWS EVERYTHING

Sunday, January 5

You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do. Psalm 139:3 NLT



READ: PSALM 139:1-12

God truly knows all. But according to an article in *The Wall Street Journal*, the National Security Agency knows a great deal about us as well through our smartphone data trails. Everyone who owns a cell phone creates “metadata” that leaves a “digital trail.” While each individual crumb of data might seem insignificant, when it’s combined and analyzed, it provides “one of the most powerful investigative tools ever devised.” By tracing our metadata, investigators can pinpoint where we’ve been or where we are at any given moment.

Far more superior than the NSA's digital trail analysis, David said God knows where we are in relation to Him. In Psalm 139, he addresses a prayer to God, the one who alone can search and examine what's going on inside of us (v. 1). The psalmist wrote, "Search me, God, and know my heart" (v. 23). He knows everything about us (vv. 2-6), is present everywhere (vv. 7-12), and "created [our] inmost being" (vv. 13-16). His thoughts are higher than our human understanding (vv. 17-18), and He's even with us as we face our enemies (vv. 19-22).

Because God is all-knowing, ever-present, and all-powerful, He knows exactly where we've been, what we've been doing, and what we're made of. But He's also a loving Father who will help us walk in His ways. Let's follow Him down the trail of life today. —[Marvin Williams](#)

How does it encourage you to know God truly knows you? How are you walking with Him?

Dear God, thank You for loving me even though You know all about me. Please help me to walk well with You.

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • PSALM 139:1-12

- ¹ *You have searched me, LORD,
and you know me.*
- ² *You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.*
- ³ *You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.*
- ⁴ *Before a word is on my tongue
you, LORD, know it completely.*
- ⁵ *You hem me in behind and before,
and you lay your hand upon me.*
- ⁶ *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.*
- ⁷ *Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?*
- ⁸ *If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.*

⁹ *If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.
¹¹ If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,"
¹² even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you.*

INSIGHT

Psalms 139 is one of the most intimate of the psalms. Such closeness comes through in David's extensive use of second- and first-person pronouns. John Stott makes this observation in his book *Authentic Christianity*: " 'Psalm 139 is arguably the most radical statement in the Old Testament of God's personal relationship to the individual. Personal pronouns and possessives occur in the first person (I, me, my) forty-six times and in the second person (you, yours) thirty-two times.' " This intimacy prompts the psalmist's praise (vv. 14, 17-18) and prayers that consider his and God's enemies (vv. 19-22) and his desire for deeper communion with Him: "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (vv. 23-24).

The Bible in a Year: [Genesis 13-15; Matthew 5:1-26](#)



LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM

Monday, January 6

Bethlehem, . . . out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel. Matthew 2:6



READ: MATTHEW 2:1-11

Phillips Brooks wrote the lyrics to the beloved carol “O Little Town of Bethlehem” after visiting Bethlehem. Brooks, pastor of a church in the United States, was so moved by his experience that he wrote this to his Sunday school students: “I remember . . . on Christmas Eve, when I was standing in the old church at Bethlehem, close to the spot where Jesus was born, when the whole church was ringing hour after hour with the splendid hymns of praise to God, how again and again it seemed as if I could hear voices that I knew well, telling each other of the ‘Wonderful Night’ of the Savior’s birth.”

In 1868, Brooks put his thoughts into a poem, and his church organist set it to music. The song spoke stillness and peace into the unsettling aftermath of the American Civil War: "O little town of Bethlehem / How still we see thee lie! / . . . The hopes and fears of all the years / Are met in thee tonight."

Matthew wrote of our Savior's birth in Bethlehem in Matthew 2. When the "Magi from the east" (v. 1) followed the star to Bethlehem (see Micah 5:2), "they were overjoyed" to find Jesus (Matthew 2:10).

Today, as we celebrate Epiphany, we too need the glorious news of our Savior's birth. As the hymn reminds us, He came to "cast out our sin and enter in" and "be born in us." In Him, we find peace.
—[Alyson Kieda](#)

Where in your life do you need the peace the Savior offers? What aspect of Jesus' story touches you most?

Dear Jesus, thank You for the hope and peace You've brought to me.

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • MATTHEW 2:1-11

¹ After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ² and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

³ When King Herod heard this he was disturbed . . . ⁴ When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

⁶ " 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
—are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
—who will shepherd my people Israel.' "

⁷ Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

⁹ After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹ On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

INSIGHT

Matthew's gospel emphasizes gentile (non-Jewish) inclusion into God's redemption story. His genealogy, for example, highlights three gentile women—Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth (Matthew 1:3, 5). And Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, was previously married to a gentile, Uriah the Hittite (v. 6). In Matthew 2, gentiles—the magi (who may have been members of the Persian royal court)—come to worship Jesus (vv. 1-2). By highlighting gentile inclusion in Christ's story, Matthew leads his readers to the good news that God's redemption is for all people and His followers are called to “make disciples of all nations” (28:19).

The Bible in a Year: [Genesis 16-17; Matthew 5:27-48](#)



SEEING GOD IN CREATION

Tuesday, January 7

My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Job 42:5



READ: JOB 42:1-6

Kenny stood before the congregation he'd left years before after he'd lost faith in God. He shared that his belief had been restored. How? God had touched his heart through the beauty and design he saw in creation. Kenny was in awe of Him once more through the witness of God's general revelation seen in the natural world, and he now embraced the wisdom found in the special revelation of Scripture. After sharing his story, Kenny stepped into the tank of water at the front of the sanctuary. His father, tears of joy in his eyes, baptized him based on his faith in Jesus.

After he'd lost much in life, Job's faith had also been shaken. He

said, “I cry to you, O God, but you don’t answer. I stand before you, but you don’t even look” (Job 30:20 NLT). God “spoke to Job out of the storm” (38:1), declaring that it wasn’t about Him not seeing Job but that Job’s vision needed to be expanded as he considered God’s amazing, intricate creation. The “earth’s foundation” and the “morning stars” (vv. 4, 7) and all the creatures, plants, and waters found between (vv. 8-41), pointed to the one whom Job could trust—the God of amazing love and power. Job responded by saying, “My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you” (42:5).

When doubts threaten your faith in Christ, consider the magnificence of God’s creation. He reveals Himself in it if we only have eyes to see. —[Tom Felten](#)

How has God revealed Himself in creation? How are awe of God and faith in Him linked?

Creator God, thank You for helping me see You in creation.

For further study, read [Origin Story: Following Jesus Back to the Beginning](#).

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • JOB 42:1-6

¹ *Then Job replied to the LORD:*

² *“I know that you can do all things;
no purpose of yours can be thwarted.*

³ *You asked, ‘Who is this that obscures my plans without knowledge?’
Surely I spoke of things I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me to know.*

⁴ *“You said, ‘Listen now, and I will speak;
I will question you,
and you shall answer me.’*

⁵ *My ears had heard of you
but now my eyes have seen you.*

⁶ *Therefore I despise myself
and repent in dust and ashes.”*

INSIGHT

Job’s friends insisted that his suffering was caused by his sins (Job 3-37). Job relentlessly defended his innocence and sought his vindication from God (23:1-7). Instead of answering his questions, however, God asked *Job*

a series of questions pertaining to His creation (chs. 38-41). Instead of providing an explanation as to *why* He permitted evil and suffering in this world, God revealed His character.

Job didn't need to fully understand God's ways, for no man can (Isaiah 55:8-9). He only needed to humble himself, seek to know God deeply, and trust Him wholeheartedly. His suffering taught him to run to God as the only sure place of refuge—the safest place to go for comfort, sustenance, and strength (Job 42:2-6). Job wasn't given a reason for suffering, but he discovered that when life comes out short, God is enough (see Psalm 23:1, 4).

Find out more about why we believe in [a God who allows suffering](#).

The Bible in a Year: [Genesis 18-19; Matthew 6:1-18](#)



A DEAF HEART

Wednesday, January 8

[Jesus] too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of . . . the devil. Hebrews 2:14



READ: HEBREWS 2:9-18

To improve her sign language skills, Leisa immersed herself in the world of the Deaf. Soon she learned the problems they face. The Deaf are awkwardly ignored by hearing people, expected to lip-read flawlessly, and routinely get passed over for promotions at work. Most public events go uninterpreted.

Leisa's signing steadily improved to the point where she felt at home with the Deaf. At a party, a Deaf person was surprised to learn Leisa could hear. Before Leisa could respond, another friend signed, "She has a Deaf heart." The key had been Leisa's willingness to live

in their world.

Leisa didn't "condescend" to be with the Deaf. Except for her hearing, she was like them. But Jesus did stoop to reach all of us—to live in our world. He "was made lower than the angels for a little while" (Hebrews 2:9). Christ "shared in [our] humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil" (v. 14). In doing so, He freed "those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death" (v. 15). More than that, He was "fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God" (v. 17).

Whatever we face, Jesus knows and understands. He hears our heart. He's with us in every way. —[Tim Gustafson](#)

What does it mean to you that Jesus has experienced the same hardships you face? How might you step into someone else's world for a while?

Thank You, Father, for the gift of Your Son, who brings me into Your family.

For further study, read [Walk with Me: Traveling with Jesus and Others on Life's Road](#).

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • HEBREWS 2:9-18

⁹ But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

¹⁰ In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered. ¹¹ Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are

of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters. ¹² He says,

"I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters;
in the assembly I will sing your praises."

¹³ And again,

"I will put my trust in him."

And again he says,

"Here am I, and the children God has given me."

¹⁴ Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil

— ¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. ¹⁶ For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. ¹⁷ For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and

faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ *Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*

INSIGHT

Why does Hebrews 2:10 say that Jesus was *made* “perfect”? As God in human flesh, wasn’t He perfect already? According to scholar Marvin R. Vincent, the Greek word translated “perfect,” *teleioō*, literally means “to carry to the goal” and possesses the connotative meaning of “consummation.” The idea is that Christ was made “complete” by His suffering and death. He understands in the fullest way possible what we face in this difficult world. This provides us with a greater understanding of His words from the cross: “It is finished” (John 19:30). He’d completed the mission His Father gave Him to do.

The Bible in a Year: [Genesis 20-22; Matthew 6:19-34](#)



BETTER THAN LIFE

Thursday, January 9

Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. Psalm 63:3



READ: PSALM 63

After another unexpected health setback, I joined my husband and others during a retreat in the mountains. I trudged up the wooden staircase that led to the tiny church on the top of a hill. Alone in the dark, I stopped to rest on a splintered step. “Help me, Lord,” I whispered as the music began. I walked slowly until I stepped into the small room. I breathed through the lingering pain, grateful that God hears us in the wilderness!

Some of the most intimate moments of worshiping God recorded in Scripture took place in the wilderness. While hiding in the Desert of

Judah and most likely on the run from his son Absalom, King David sang: “You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you” (Psalm 63:1). Having experienced God’s power and glory, David deemed God’s love as “better than life” (v. 3), and it was the reason he committed to a lifetime of worship—even while in the wilderness (vv. 2-6). He said, “Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings. I cling to you; your right hand upholds me” (vv. 7-8).

Like David, regardless of our circumstances or the fierceness of those standing against us, we can demonstrate confidence in God by praising Him (v. 11). Though we’ll suffer, sometimes by no fault of our own, we can trust that God’s love is always better than life.

—[Xochitl Dixon](#)

How can knowing God loves you help when you’re feeling attacked or defeated? When has praising Him strengthened your faith during hard times?

My God, Your love is better than life!

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • PSALM 63

- ¹ You, God, are my God,
earnestly I seek you;
I thirst for you,
my whole being longs for you,
in a dry and parched land
where there is no water.*
- ² I have seen you in the sanctuary
and beheld your power and your glory.*
- ³ Because your love is better than life,
my lips will glorify you.*
- ⁴ I will praise you as long as I live,
and in your name I will lift up my hands.*
- ⁵ I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods;
with singing lips my mouth will praise you.*
- ⁶ On my bed I remember you;
I think of you through the watches of the night.*
- ⁷ Because you are my help,
I sing in the shadow of your wings.*

⁸ *I cling to you;
your right hand upholds me.*

⁹ *Those who want to kill me will be destroyed;
they will go down to the depths of the earth.*

¹⁰ *They will be given over to the sword
and become food for jackals.*

¹¹ *But the king will rejoice in God;
all who swear by God will glory in him,
while the mouths of liars will be silenced.*

INSIGHT

David wrote seventy-five psalms, seventy-three of which bear his name. Acts 4:25 confirms he also wrote Psalm 2 and Hebrews 4:7 confirms he wrote Psalm 95.

Psalm 63 includes a note about its historical background. We're told that David penned it "when he was in the Desert of Judah." On several occasions, David retreated into the wilderness when he was fleeing from Saul (see 1 Samuel 23:14-15; 24:1) and also when his own son Absalom rebelled to usurp his throne (see 2 Samuel 15:13-30). When he wrote Psalm 63, he was probably fleeing from Absalom because David refers to himself as "the king" (v. 11), and he wasn't yet king when Saul pursued him.

The Bible in a Year: [Genesis 23-24; Matthew 7](#)



WHAT SCRIPTURE REVEALS

Friday, January 10

Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. 2 John 1:7



READ: 2 JOHN 1:4-11

In April 1817, a disoriented young woman was found wandering around in Gloucestershire, England, wearing exotic clothes and speaking an unknown language. Assuming she was a beggar, authorities placed her in prison. However, she convinced her captors that she was Princess Caraboo from the island of Javas. For ten weeks, the community treated her as royalty until a boardinghouse keeper revealed that the woman was, in fact, a servant girl named Mary Willcocks.

We may wonder how this young woman deceived an entire

community for almost three months. But the book of 2 John warns us that deception is nothing new as it mentions “many deceivers who . . . have gone out into the world” (1:7). These are people who deny that Jesus Christ came “in the flesh” (v. 7), or those who go beyond what Christ taught (v. 9)—proclaiming that the Bible isn’t adequate for us today. Both these types of deceivers can cause us to not “receive [our] full reward” (v. 8 NLT) and can even trick us into helping them in their work (v. 11).

No one likes to be deceived. The people of Gloucestershire didn’t lose much, just some clothing and a few meals. But the Bible says that the consequences of sin and deception continue to threaten us. As we engage with Scripture, God will help us avoid deception as we “walk in obedience to his commands” (v. 6). —[Brent Hackett](#)

How do you watch for false teachers today? What will help you read, reflect on, and respond to Scripture?

Dear Father, please help me to stand firm on the wisdom of Scripture and not be deceived.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • 2 JOHN 1:4-11

⁴ It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us. ⁵ And now, dear lady, I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another. ⁶ And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.

⁷ I say this because many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist. ⁸ Watch out that you do not lose what we have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully. ⁹ Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. ¹⁰ If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take them into your house or welcome them. ¹¹ Anyone who welcomes them shares in their wicked work.

INSIGHT

Love is a major theme of John’s writings, and he continues it here in his second letter. The apostle says, “I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another”

(2 John 1:5). But in John's gospel, he records Jesus telling His disciples, "A new command I give you: Love one another" (John 13:34). Is the command to love old or new? It's old, because Christ affirmed that the greatest two commands are to "love the Lord your God" (Matthew 22:37; see Deuteronomy 6:5) and "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39; see Leviticus 19:18). It's also new because Jesus expanded the scope of these commands when He instructed His disciples to love each other "as I have loved you"—completely and sacrificially (John 13:34). "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples" (v. 35).

The Bible in a Year: [Genesis 25-26; Matthew 8:1-17](#)



OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF . . .

Saturday, January 11

Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, "I have sinned. I did not realize you were standing in the road to oppose me." Numbers 22:34



READ: NUMBERS 22:21-23, 31-35

What if you could understand what your dog was saying? New technology uses “bark” recognition to help determine canines’ feelings when they bark. The high-tech collars interpret dogs’ barks using data from more than ten thousand barks to identify the emotion they’re expressing. Though the collars don’t enable a word translation, they do foster a greater understanding between owner and pet.

God used an animal to get Balaam’s attention too. Balaam saddled his donkey to travel to Moab in response to God’s instructions to “go

. . . but do only what I tell you” (Numbers 22:20). The donkey stopped when it saw God’s angel “standing in the road with a drawn sword in his hand,” though Balaam couldn’t see it (v. 23). Balaam continued to try to press forward, so God enabled the donkey to speak in human words. When Balaam’s eyes were finally opened to the danger, “he bowed low and fell facedown” (v. 31), admitting his inward intention to either collect a reward or curse God’s people contrary to God’s instructions (vv. 15-18, 37-38). “I have sinned,” he said. “I did not realize you were standing in the road to oppose me” (v. 34).

May we heed the instructions God gives us in the pages of the Bible, through the Holy Spirit’s guidance, and in the wise counsel of others—not just outwardly, but inwardly, too. —[Kirsten Holmberg](#)

In what area do you give the appearance of obedience without the inward intention? How might God be calling your attention to that?

Heavenly Father, thank You for lovingly guiding and turning me away from sin and things that aren’t good for me.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • NUMBERS 22:21-23, 31-35

²¹ Balaam got up in the morning, saddled his donkey and went with the Moabite officials. ²² But God was very angry when he went, and the angel of the LORD stood in the road to oppose him. Balaam was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him. ²³ When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road with a drawn sword in his hand, it turned off the road into a field. Balaam beat it to get it back on the road.

³¹ Then the LORD opened Balaam’s eyes, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road with his sword drawn. So he bowed low and fell facedown.

³² The angel of the LORD asked him, “Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? I have come here to oppose you because your path is a reckless one before me. ³³ The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If it had not turned away, I would certainly have killed you by now, but I would have spared it.”

³⁴ Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, “I have sinned. I did not realize you were standing in the road to oppose me. Now if you are displeased, I will go back.”

³⁵ The angel of the LORD said to Balaam, “Go with the men, but speak only what I tell you.” So Balaam went with Balak’s officials.

INSIGHT

Although God had previously given Balaam permission to go with the Moabite officials if he would speak only what God instructed him to (Numbers 22:20), Balaam is stopped and challenged on his journey by God's angel (v. 22). Three other examples in Scripture of God challenging and testing someone through a sudden encounter while on their journey are Jacob (Genesis 31:3-9; 32:22-32), Moses (Exodus 3:10; 4:24-26), and Joshua (Joshua 5:13-15). God always has the right to test and challenge someone's heart.

The Bible in a Year: [Genesis 27-28; Matthew 8:18-34](#)



GOD WILL ACT

Sunday, January 12

Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry. 2 Timothy 4:11



READ: ACTS 15:36-41

A hardworking clerk, Erin always did her job well. But after she was accused of dishonesty, Erin was put on leave while being investigated. She felt like quitting in protest but was advised to wait it out. “Leaving suggests you’re guilty,” she was told. So Erin stayed, praying for God to give her justice. Sure enough, months later, she was cleared.

John Mark may have felt the same when Paul dropped him from the mission team. To be sure, the young man had left them earlier (Acts 15:37-38). But perhaps he’d regretted this and was hoping to be

included this time. He must have felt unfairly judged by Paul; only Barnabas believed in him.

Years later, Paul would change his mind. “Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry,” he said (2 Timothy 4:11). John Mark must have been relieved to have his reputation restored.

When we’re unfairly judged, may we remember that Jesus understands how we feel: He Himself was judged a sinner though He wasn’t, and He was treated worse than a common criminal though He was the Son of God. But He continued to do His Father’s will, knowing that He’d be vindicated and shown to be righteous. If you’ve been unfairly judged, don’t give up: God knows and will act in His time. —[Leslie Koh](#)

What promises of God can you hold on to when you’re unfairly judged? How does Jesus’ example encourage you?

Father, only You know how I feel and what I’m going through. Please grant me the faith and patience to wait and to trust in You, for You’re a just God.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • ACTS 15:36-41

³⁶ Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing.” ³⁷ Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, ³⁸ but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. ³⁹ They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, ⁴⁰ but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord. ⁴¹ He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

INSIGHT

“John, also called Mark” was a young believer in Jesus in Jerusalem, where his mother Mary hosted a church in her house (Acts 12:12). After handing over the famine relief money from the Antioch church to the Jerusalem church, Barnabas and Paul took Mark with them back to Antioch (v. 25). He became Paul’s missionary intern in his first missionary journey (13:5) but left the mission team halfway and returned to Jerusalem (v. 13). Paul viewed this as an unforgivable defection and

failure (15:38). The apostle's refusal to let Mark join the second missionary trip ended his cordial partnership with Barnabas (v. 39). Barnabas restored and nurtured his young cousin (Colossians 4:10) into faithfulness and fruitfulness (2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 1:24). Because Peter called him "my son Mark" (1 Peter 5:13), scholars believe that he later came under the tutelage of Peter. Scholars also believe that Peter gave Mark the source materials to write the gospel bearing his name.

The Bible in a Year: [Genesis 29-30; Matthew 9:1-17](#)



SCOUTING FOR TRUTH

Monday, January 13

Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry. James 1:19



READ: JAMES 1:19-27

Reflecting on why people tend to be entirely convinced they're right—even when they're *not*—author Julia Galef suggests that it has to do with a “soldier mindset”—where we’re focused on defending what we already believe against what we see as threats. Galef argues a more helpful mindset is that of a scout—someone focused not primarily on eliminating threats but on seeking the complete truth: comprehending “what’s really there as honestly and accurately as you can, even if it’s not pretty or convenient or pleasant.” People with this outlook have the humility to continually

grow in understanding.

Galef's insights bring to mind James' encouragement that believers adopt a similar mindset—one where they're "quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry" (James 1:19). Instead of being driven by knee-jerk reactions to others, James urges believers in Jesus to remember that human anger doesn't lead to God's righteousness (v. 20). Growth in wisdom is only possible through humble submission to His grace (v. 21; see Titus 2:11-14).

When we remember that each moment of our lives is dependent on God's grace—not on us—we can let go of a need to always be right. And we can rely on His leading for how to live and care well for others (James 1:25-27). —[Monica La Rose](#)

What examples have you seen of a spirit of humble willingness to learn and change? How can you cultivate a willingness to learn from others?

Dear God, please help me to surrender the need to always be right in exchange for the gift of unending learning as I journey with You.

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • JAMES 1:19-27

¹⁹ *My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry,* ²⁰ *because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.* ²¹ *Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.*

²² *Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.* ²³ *Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror* ²⁴ *and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.* ²⁵ *But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.*

²⁶ *Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless.* ²⁷ *Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.*

INSIGHT

When James warns that believers in Jesus should be "slow to become

angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires” (1:19-20), the context suggests he has in mind angry outbursts. Instead of lashing out at someone in anger, believers ought to be “quick to listen, slow to speak” (v. 19). Outbursts of anger fall short of “the righteousness that God desires” (v. 20). It’s impossible to aim at how God wishes us to live our lives if our tempers are leading our behavior. Instead, we ought to humbly depend on Him and His standards for a life of service (vv. 21, 25). James even goes so far as to say that “those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless” (v. 26).

The Bible in a Year: [Genesis 31-32; Matthew 9:18-38](#)



WALKING WITH GOD

Tuesday, January 14

Enoch walked faithfully with God. Genesis 5:24



READ: GENESIS 5:21-24

For years, fitness experts have stressed the importance of running for cardiovascular health. But recent scientific studies have demonstrated that daily walking also has a range of health benefits. According to the US National Institute of Health, “Adults who took 8,000 or more steps a day had a reduced risk of death over the following decade than those who walked only 4,000 steps a day.” Walking is good for us.

Throughout the story of the Bible, walking is used as a metaphor for communing with God. In Genesis 3, we’re told how God walked with Adam and Eve “in the cool of the day” (v. 8). Genesis 5 shares

the story of Enoch, who “walked faithfully with God 300 years” (v. 22). One day Enoch’s regular time spent with his Creator led to him being taken directly to be with God (v. 24). In Genesis 17, God invited Abram to “walk before” Him as He renewed His covenant with him (v. 1). And Jacob, near the end of his life, described God as his shepherd and spoke of his ancestors who had “walked faithfully” (48:15). In the New Testament, Paul instructed us to “walk by the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16).

Like Enoch and the patriarchs in Genesis, we can walk with God daily. We do so by surrendering our lives to Jesus and being guided by the Holy Spirit. That’s the path to true health.

How’s your walk? —[Matt Lucas](#)

How would you describe “walking with God”? Today, as you reflect on Scripture, how will you follow and obey it?

Father, please forgive me when I’ve chosen not to walk with You but pursued my own agenda. Help me keep in step with You.

Visit ODBU.org/NT050 to learn more about walking by the Spirit.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • GENESIS 5:21-24

²¹ When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. ²² After he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked faithfully with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters. ²³ Altogether, Enoch lived a total of 365 years. ²⁴ Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.

INSIGHT

The metaphor of walking with God is a prominent theme in the Bible. Walking describes a life of obedience and submission to His instruction. Genesis 5 says that “Enoch walked faithfully with God” (vv. 22, 24). This imagery is also used throughout the book of Deuteronomy to remind Israel to follow the law by *walking* in it (5:33; 8:6; 10:12; 11:22; 19:9; 26:17; 28:9; 30:16). In chapter 6, we see the explicit origin of this idea. Verses 4-9 are referred to as the *Shema*, which means “hear,” the first word in this section of Scripture: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one” (v. 4). In the Shema, Israel is encouraged to make God’s law central to everything they do. Observant Jews today still recite this prayer daily.

Other examples of walking imagery appear in the Psalms (see 1, 15, 119, 128) and in the New Testament (see Colossians 3:7; 1 John 1:7; 2 John 1:6).

The Bible in a Year: [Genesis 33-35; Matthew 10:1-20](#)



A NEW BEGINNING WITH GOD

Wednesday, January 15

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8



READ: ROMANS 5:6-11

Did your sin also put Jesus on the cross?" That's the question Dutch painter Rembrandt seems to be asking in his 1633 masterpiece, *The Raising of the Cross*. Jesus appears in the center of the picture as His cross is lifted and put in place. Four men are doing the lifting, but one stands out in the light surrounding Jesus. His clothing is different; he's dressed in the style of Rembrandt's day, wearing a cap the painter often wore. A closer look at his face reveals that Rembrandt has put himself into the painting, as if to say, "My sins had a part in Jesus' death."

But there's another who also stands out. He's on horseback, looking

directly out of the painting. Some see this as a second self-portrait by Rembrandt, engaging all who observe with a knowing glance that seems to ask, “Aren’t you here too?”

Paul saw himself there, and we may also, because Jesus suffered and died for us as well. In Romans 5:10, he refers to himself and us as “God’s enemies.” But even though our sins caused Jesus’ death, His death reconciles us to God: “God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (v. 8).

We stand with both Rembrandt and Paul: sinners in need of forgiveness. Through His cross, Jesus offers us what we could never do for ourselves and meets our deepest need: a new beginning with God. —[James Banks](#)

How were you once God’s enemy? In what ways can you live as His friend today?

Dear Jesus, thank You for giving Yourself for me. Please help me to live in Your love today.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • ROMANS 5:6-11

⁶ You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

⁹ Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! ¹⁰ For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! ¹¹ Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

INSIGHT

The book of Romans tells us that all humanity is sinful (3:23). We were once enemies of God (5:10) and objects of His wrath (1:18; 2:5). But “God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight . . . through Christ Jesus [who] freed us from the penalty for our sins” (3:24 NLT). In Romans 5:1-11, Paul points to the intensity of God’s love for us. First, “we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love” (v. 5 NLT). Second, while we were still His enemies and sinners, God gave us His one and only Son to atone for our

sins (see 1 John 4:9-10), save us from God's wrath (Romans 5:9-10), and restore our relationship with Him: "So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God" (v. 11 NLT).

The Bible in a Year: [Genesis 36-38; Matthew 10:21-42](#)



EASY AND HARD

Thursday, January 16

God said, "If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt." Exodus 13:17



READ: EXODUS 14:5-14

Mark was a promising young pastor. Then one morning his son, Owen, collapsed and died while kicking a ball with him. Mark was devastated and still grieves the loss. But through his pain he's become a more compassionate pastor. I've mourned with Mark and wondered if his trial illustrates an insight A. W. Tozer noted: "It is doubtful whether God can bless a man greatly until he has hurt him deeply." I fear that's true.

Then again, perhaps it's not that simple. We learn about the complexity of God's ways by observing the exodus of Israel. God led

the young nation out of Egypt on an easy road, saying of Israel, “If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt” (Exodus 13:17). Yet a few verses later, God told Moses to double back so Pharaoh would rally his army and come out to fight (14:1-4). Pharaoh took the bait. The Israelites “were terrified and cried out to the LORD” (v. 10). Moses chided them, “The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still” (v. 14).

God uses both easy and hard paths to grow His people and bring Him glory. He promised, “I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD” (v. 4). So did Israel. So can we. God is building our faith through every test, whether easy or hard. When life is easy, rest in Him. When life is hard, let Him carry you. —[Mike Wittmer](#)

How has pain contributed to your growth? Why do you think God uses both easy and hard tests?

Dear Jesus, You're enough for every test.

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • EXODUS 14:5-14

⁵ When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds about them and said, “What have we done? We have let the Israelites go and have lost their services!” ⁶ So he had his chariot made ready and took his army with him. ⁷ He took six hundred of the best chariots, along with all the other chariots of Egypt, with officers over all of them. ⁸ The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, so that he pursued the Israelites, who were marching out boldly. ⁹ The Egyptians—all Pharaoh's horses and chariots, horsemen and troops—pursued the Israelites and overtook them as they camped by the sea near Pi Hahiroth, opposite Baal Zephon.

¹⁰ As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the LORD. ¹¹ They said to Moses, “Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? ¹² Didn't we say to you in Egypt, ‘Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians’? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!”

¹³ Moses answered the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. ¹⁴ The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.”

INSIGHT

After Pharaoh set the Israelites free from slavery (Exodus 12:28-33), he immediately had a change of heart and summoned his elite army to recapture them (14:5-9). Although God had overwhelmingly demonstrated His great power through the ten plagues (chs. 7-11), the Israelites chose not to trust in Him. Terrified, they accused Moses of deceiving them and leading them into the wilderness to die (14:11-12). But Moses encouraged them not to be afraid, to be still, and to trust in God (vv. 13-14). He was faithful and saved them from Pharaoh's army (vv. 21-23) and continued to provide for them during their forty years in the wilderness.

The Bible in a Year: [Genesis 39-40; Matthew 11](#)



DON'T LOSE HEART

Friday, January 17

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Galatians 6:9



READ: GALATIANS 6:7-10

W *ear* **y.** That's how Satya felt after nine months in his new job. As a believer in Jesus, he'd sought to follow God's principles in the way he solved problems and directed the work. But people-related problems persisted, and little organizational progress seemed to have been made. He felt like throwing in the towel.

Perhaps, like Satya, you're feeling tired. You know the good that you ought to do but simply feel too emotionally and physically drained to carry on. Take heart. The apostle Paul encourages us with these words: "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the

proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” (Galatians 6:9). He uses the metaphor of a farmer. And, as any farmer knows, sowing is hard work.

Sowing to “please the Spirit” (v. 8) is hard work too. Believers in Jesus who seek to follow the Spirit’s lead and live a life that honors Him can grow faint and lose heart. But as we hang on to His promise, the harvest will come. We’ll “reap eternal life” (v. 8; see John 17:3)—a bumper crop of God’s blessing when Christ returns, and in this life, we’ll have the confidence and joy that come from knowing Him. We’ll reap at the proper time, a time determined not by seasons or the weather but by the will of a perfect God. Until the harvest comes, let’s keep sowing in God’s strength. —[Poh Fang Chia](#)

What’s causing you to lose heart? How can you hang on to the promise that “at the proper time we will reap a harvest”?

Dear Father, please help me to not lose heart and to persevere in doing good.

For further study, read [The Sword, the Son, and a Rest for God’s People](#).

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • GALATIANS 6:7-10

⁷ Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. ⁸ Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. ⁹ Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. ¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

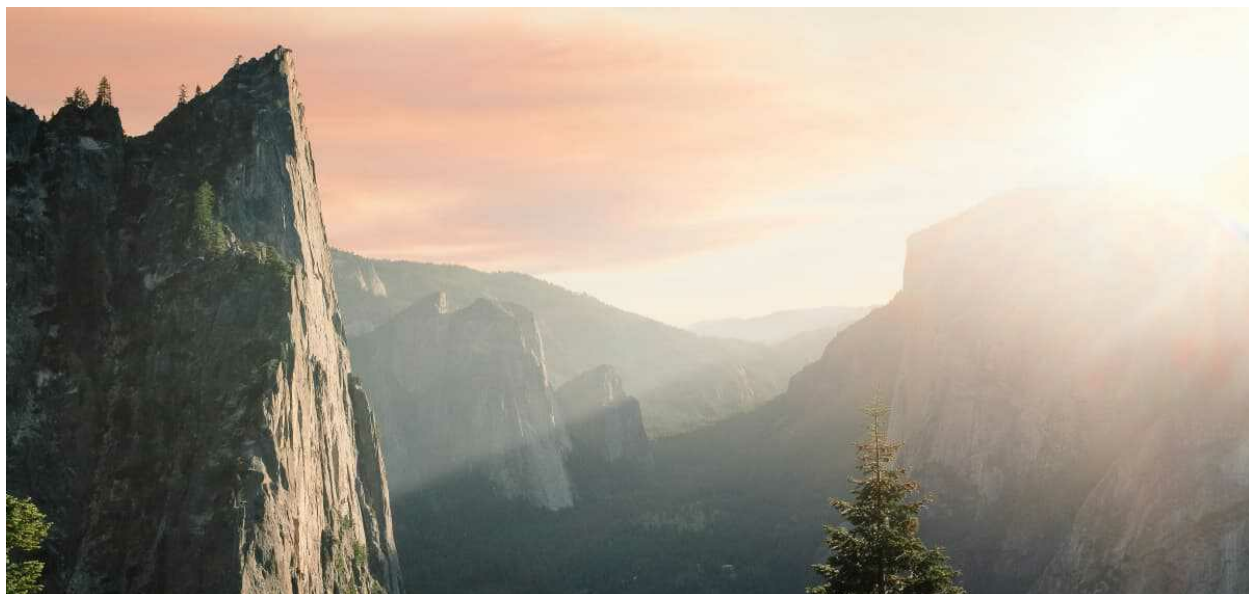
INSIGHT

The letter to the Galatians wasn’t written to a single church or city but to “the churches in Galatia” (1:2), a region of what was then known as Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). There’s been an ongoing debate regarding the exact location of the recipients of this letter. Some scholars say the letter was directed to northern Galatia. Others say it was directed to southern Galatia, where Paul planted churches (Acts 13-14). Although the letter’s specific destination is unclear, there’s no doubt about its message. Paul is challenging the Galatians to set aside the teaching of those who taught adherence to Moses’ law as a condition of salvation. It’s

all about grace. Bill Crowder

Learn more about [Paul's letter to the Galatians](#).

The Bible in a Year: [Genesis 41-42; Matthew 12:1-23](#)



MADE RIGHT WITH JESUS

Saturday, January 18

Now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation. 2 Corinthians 6:2



READ: 2 CORINTHIANS 5:21-6:2

We're ready to board our flight to Montego Bay," came the announcement. I was traveling as a speaker for and leader of a high school group on a missions trip to Jamaica. I reached into my backpack for my boarding pass and passport—and panic hit. My passport was gone!

Our group boarded the plane without me, and I faced four days of frantic efforts trying to get a new passport. After hundreds of phone calls, a fruitless trip to Washington DC, a long drive back to Grand Rapids, Michigan, two days in a nearby city, and the help of our local

congresswoman's office—I finally got a new passport and could join my group in Jamaica.

A passport. A simple little book—but my only guarantee to where I wanted to go. As hard as I worked to get that new document, its value pales in comparison to something that will determine our eternal destination: faith in Jesus, which is the only guarantee of receiving salvation from our sins and new life in Him.

Scripture says, “Now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2). Paul was describing the reality that the dawn of salvation arrived in Christ. By believing in Him, we can experience God's love and His redemptive, restoring work in all creation. Today, let's make sure that we truly know what it means to “be made right with God through Christ” (5:21 NLT). —[Dave Branon](#)

How has Jesus provided the way for you to receive salvation? What does it mean for you to trust Him as your Savior?

Dear Jesus, thank You for providing the way for me to receive salvation from sin and death.

Learn more here: ODB.org/personal-relationship-with-god.

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • 2 CORINTHIANS 5:21-6:2

²¹ *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Chapter ⁶

¹ *As God's co-workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain.* ² *For he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you."*

I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.

INSIGHT

At its heart, Paul's statement in 2 Corinthians 5:21 that Jesus “had no sin” shows us the magnitude of Christ's work through His life and death. The Greek word translated “had” (in some versions “knew”) suggests an intimate acquaintance with something. Jesus knew of sin and its consequences, but it was something he'd never experienced Himself. He had no intimate, personal acquaintance with sin.

Much like the first humans who had no personal experience with sin until they took the fruit of the tree of knowledge (Genesis 2:25–3:7),

Christ didn't sin. But "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21)—or "to be the offering for our sin" (NLT)—so that humanity could be reconciled to God forever.

The Bible in a Year: [Genesis 43-45; Matthew 12:24-50](#)



STILL FRUITFUL FOR GOD

Sunday, January 19

They will still bear fruit in old age. Psalm 92:14



READ: PSALM 92:12-15

There's an old folktale about a woman who carried water home every day from a river using two buckets at either end of a long pole—one bucket new and solid, the other much older and cracked. When the woman got home, the new bucket was still full, but the old bucket almost empty. The old bucket felt bad and apologized. The woman turned and pointed back down the road and asked the old bucket, "Do you see all those flowers, growing on your side of the road? Every day you water them, and my walk to and from the river is always filled with beauty."

We live in a world that worships and rewards youth—the young

and solid, unscarred and efficient. Yet the Bible clearly tells us of a righteous beauty that comes from the older and weaker, maybe even the cracked and leaky. “The righteous will flourish like a palm tree,” said the old songwriter, “they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon” (Psalm 92:12).

Granted, *old* is not always synonymous with *wise*, but the old contribute to our lives in ways the young can’t because they’ve lived a little longer, experienced a little more, and stand a little more rooted, flourishing in faith and trust in God. Such people “will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green” (v. 14).

Older adults in our lives continue to bear beautiful fruit. Let’s take the time to see it and care for them. —[John Blase](#)

How can you serve the older adults on your path? What will you do today to see and appreciate them?

Father, please give me eyes to see those still bearing fruit in old age.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • PSALM 92:12-15

- ¹² *The righteous will flourish like a palm tree,
they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon;*
- ¹³ *planted in the house of the LORD,
they will flourish in the courts of our God.*
- ¹⁴ *They will still bear fruit in old age,
they will stay fresh and green,*
- ¹⁵ *proclaiming, “The LORD is upright;
he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him.”*

INSIGHT

The book of Psalms has been described as a “prayer book for God’s people as they wait for the arrival of the Messiah and the fulfillment of God’s promises” (The Bible Project). The Psalms are divided into five books: Book One, Psalms 1-41; Book Two, Psalms 42-72; Book Three, Psalms 73-89; Book Four, Psalms 90-106; and Book Five, Psalms 107-150. Psalms 90-92 form the opening portion of Book Four.

Psalm 92 has a deep connection to the psalms that precede it. *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* says: “Psalms 90-92 are united by

development of concepts and repetition of vocabulary. These psalms lead the worshiper from a meditation on the transience of life (Psalm 90) and a call for wisdom (Psalm 91) to a climactic celebration of divine deliverance and protection (Psalm 92).”

The Bible in a Year: [Genesis 46-48; Matthew 13:1-30](#)



LET MY PEOPLE GO

Monday, January 20

*The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt."
Exodus 3:7*



READ: EXODUS 3:1-10

The acclaimed painting *Let My People Go* by Aaron Douglas uses vibrant colors of lavender, green, and gold, along with traditional African imagery, to tell the biblical story of Moses and connect it with Black Americans' struggle for freedom and justice.

The painting portrays God's appearance to Moses in a burning bush when He revealed that He'd seen the plight of the Israelites in Egypt. The artist uses a beam of light to symbolize God and His message, "So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt" (Exodus 3:10).

In *Let My People Go*, Moses kneels in obedient submission to God's instructions, but the eye is drawn to the dark waves and horses trained for war surrounding him—reminding viewers of the struggles the Israelites would face as they left Egypt. But the beam of light shines brightly as a reminder that God would be with the Israelites.

The emotions evoked by the painting resonate because the struggle against injustice continues; many use their power to oppress men, women, and children around the world. As those who are suffering cry out for God to be “a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble” (Psalm 9:9), we can plead with God to respond to their cries for help. And, like Moses, we can be willing to act on behalf of the oppressed. —[Lisa M. Samra](#)

How might you pray for oppressed people? How might you learn more about caring for those suffering from injustice?

Heavenly Father, please make Your presence known to all those who suffer unjustly.

Visit ODBU.org/SF120 to learn more about how to pray for others.

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • EXODUS 3:1-10

¹ Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law . . . and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ² There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. ³ So Moses thought, “I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.”

⁴ When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses!”

And Moses said, “Here I am.”

⁵ “Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” ⁶ Then he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

⁷ The LORD said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. ⁸ So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey . . . ⁹ I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. ¹⁰ So now, go. I am sending you to

Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

INSIGHT

Moses' burning bush experience (Exodus 3) involves what's known as a theophany, "a theological term to refer to either a visible or auditory manifestation of God" (*Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*). The sight or sound grabs one's attention, but the message is what's paramount. God assured Moses: "I have indeed *seen* the misery of my people I have *heard* them crying out because of their slave drivers and I am concerned about their suffering" (v. 7). Another example of a theophany is when God appeared in fire and smoke at Mount Sinai (19:16-20).

The Bible in a Year: [Genesis 49-50; Matthew 13:31-58](#)



THE GIFT OF TRIALS

Tuesday, January 21

The Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. 1 Peter 4:14



READ: 1 PETER 4:12-19

The two men conquered human flight, but the Wright brothers' journey to success was never easy. Despite countless failures, ridicule, money woes, and serious injury to one of them, the brothers weren't stopped by the trials they faced. As Orville Wright observed, "No bird soars in a calm." The idea, according to biographer David McCullough, means that adversity can "often be exactly what you need to give you a lift higher." Said McCullough, "Their joy was not getting to the top of the mountain. Their joy was climbing the mountain."

The apostle Peter taught a similar spiritual principle to the

persecuted early church. He told them, “Do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you” (1 Peter 4:12). This wasn’t a denial of suffering’s pain. Peter knew that hope in Christ grows our trust in God.

This is especially true when we suffer for being a believer in Jesus, as those early Christians did. Peter wrote to them, “Rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed” (v. 13). He went on, “If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you” (v. 14).

As the Wright brothers’ character was hailed by their biographer, may others see God’s loving character at work in us. He uses our adversity to raise us to new heights. —[Patricia Raybon](#)

How have you suffered for Christ? How was He glorified?

Suffering tests me, dear God. Please grant me hope for Your glory.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • 1 PETER 4:12-19

¹² Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. ¹⁵ If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. ¹⁶ However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. ¹⁷ For it is time for judgment to begin with God’s household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ And, “If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”

¹⁹ So then, those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

INSIGHT

The apostle Peter penned his first letter to encourage believers in Jesus who—because of persecution in Jerusalem (see Acts 8:1)—had been scattered throughout Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). Peter’s words

still encourage suffering believers today. We're not to be surprised when we face persecution because of our faith (1 Peter 4:12). After all, Christ warned, "If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also" (John 15:20). Yet Peter tells us to rejoice when we suffer for being Christ's followers (1 Peter 4:13, 16). We see this modeled by Paul in prison (Acts 16:22-25). God the Holy Spirit was with the early believers in their trials—and He's with us in ours (1 Peter 4:14; see John 14:15-17; Romans 5:5). He comforts (2 Corinthians 1:3-4) and inspires His followers to persevere with rejoicing.

The Bible in a Year: [Exodus 1-3; Matthew 14:1-21](#)



RECOGNIZING GOD

Wednesday, January 22

The Son is the . . . exact representation of [God's] being. Hebrews 1:3



READ: HEBREWS 1:1-4

I flew to India, a land I'd never visited, and arrived at the Bengaluru airport after midnight. Though there'd been a flurry of emails, I didn't know who was picking me up or where I should meet him. I followed the streaming mass of humanity to the baggage claim and customs, then out into the sticky night where I tried to spot a pair of friendly eyes among the sea of faces. For an hour, I walked back and forth in front of the crowd, hoping someone would recognize me. A kind man finally approached. "Are you Winn?" he asked. "I'm so sorry. I thought I'd recognize you, and you kept walking in front of me—but you didn't look how I expected."

We regularly get confused and fail to recognize people or places we should know. God provides an unmistakable way of recognizing Him, however. He arrived in our world as Jesus, who “is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being” (Hebrews 1:3). Christ is God’s exact representation. When we see Him, we have complete confidence that we’re seeing God.

If we want to know what God is like—what He would say, how He would love—then we need only look and listen to Jesus. Are we truly hearing what “[God] has spoken” (v. 2) through Him? Are we actually following His truth? To be sure that we know how to recognize God, we fix our gaze on the Son and learn from Him.
—[Winn Collier](#)

When do you have trouble recognizing God’s voice? How does fixing your focus on Jesus help?

Dear God, I want to know Your voice and follow You. Please help me recognize You in Jesus.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • HEBREWS 1:1-4

¹ *In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways,* ² *but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.* ³ *The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.* ⁴ *So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.*

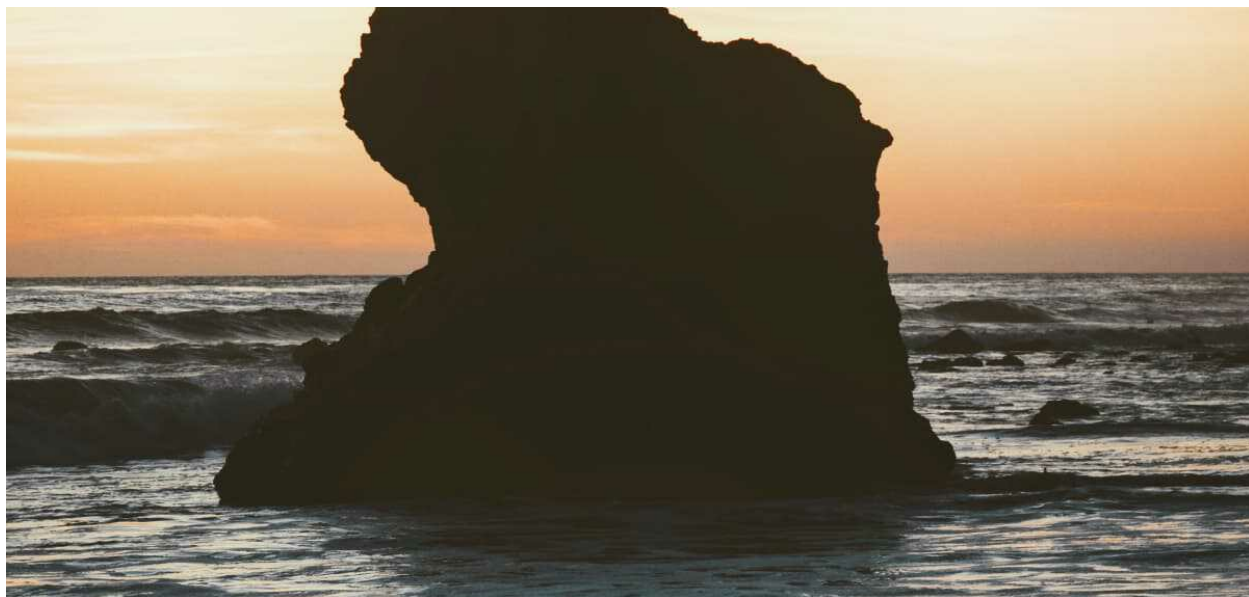
INSIGHT

How God has made Himself known to us is noted briefly in Hebrews 1. In the past, He spoke “through the prophets” (v. 1), but now He “has spoken to us by his Son” (v. 2). The supreme revelation of God to us is Jesus. The first of several warning passages comes on the heels of the exaltation of Jesus in Hebrews 1. Readers are cautioned about rejecting the message of the Son and those commissioned by Him (2:3).

The revelation of the Son is also seen in the teaching of Christ in Mark 12:1-12. Using story, He spoke of a man who planted a vineyard and sent servants (representing the prophets) to gather its fruit. When they were rejected, the man sent “a son, whom he loved” (v. 6)—a reference to

God's Son, Jesus—and they killed him (v. 8). Christ's teaching here also concludes with words about rejecting the Son—"the stone the builders rejected" (v. 10).

The Bible in a Year: [Exodus 4-6; Matthew 14:22-36](#)



GOD'S PROMISES

Thursday, January 23

What is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. 2 Corinthians 4:18



READ: 2 CORINTHIANS 4:16-18

It was painful to see my dad losing his memory. Dementia is cruel, taking away all the recollections of people until there's no remembrance left of the life they lived. One night, I had a dream I believe God used to encourage me. In the dream, He had a small treasure chest in His hands. "All your dad's memories are safely stored here," He told me. "I'll keep them in the meantime. Then one day, in heaven, I'll return them to him."

In the following years, this dream comforted me whenever my dad didn't know who I was. I'd be reminded that his disease was

temporary. Because he was a child of God, he'd be permanently restored one day.

It also helped to remember that Paul described suffering as "light and momentary" (2 Corinthians 4:17). The apostle wasn't underplaying suffering; he himself had suffered much (vv. 7-12). He was emphasizing that in the light of eternity and the future glory that's ours in Christ, our troubles are light and momentary. All the glorious blessings we already have in Jesus now—and those we'll one day experience—will infinitely outweigh them all (v. 17).

Because of God and His promises, we can choose not to lose heart. Even as we suffer, we can live each day in faith, relying on His power to renew us (v. 16). Let's "fix our eyes" on His eternal promises today (v. 18). —[Karen Huang](#)

What suffering are you experiencing? How can God's promises and all that you have as His child help you to not lose heart?

Father, thank You that my suffering doesn't have the final say. You do.

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • 2 CORINTHIANS 4:16-18

¹⁶ Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸ So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

INSIGHT

We sometimes fail to consider the connection between suffering and spiritual growth. In Paul's letter to the people in Corinth, he spoke of the eternal glory that our troubles bring: "Our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all" (2 Corinthians 4:17).

This isn't the only place where Scripture states that our difficulties are actually beneficial for us. The apostle says in Romans, "We also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope" (5:3-4). James too tells us that the testing of our faith is for our benefit: "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you

know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (1:2-4).

The Bible in a Year: [Exodus 7-8; Matthew 15:1-20](#)



CHRIST MATTERS MOST

Friday, January 24

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy. Colossians 2:8



READ: COLOSSIANS 2:6-12

My wife and I like cheesy, feel-good romantic movies. I *could* say it's *her* thing. But I like 'em too. Their charm and appeal lies in their predictable path toward happily ever after. Recently, we watched one that offered some questionable romantic advice. *Love is a feeling*, it said. Then, *Follow your heart*. Finally, *Your happiness matters most*. Our emotions matter, of course. But self-focused emotionalism is a lousy foundation for a lasting marriage.

Mainstream culture dishes up many ideas that sound good initially but crumble upon closer inspection. And careful inspection is exactly

what Paul has in mind in Colossians 2. There, he emphasizes that being “rooted and built up in [Christ], strengthened in the faith” (v. 7) enables us to identify our culture’s lies. The apostle calls such lies “hollow and deceptive philosophy,” built “on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ” (v. 8).

So the next time you watch a movie, ask yourself or those you’re with, “What does this movie suggest is wise? How does that compare to what Scripture says is true?” And remember that it’s Christ that matters most. Only in Him can we find true wisdom and wholeness (vv. 9-10). —[Adam R. Holz](#)

How does popular culture shape how you see the world? How does your faith help you evaluate the values you encounter in entertainment?

Father, our world is filled with stories that promise life but ultimately run counter to Your truth. Please give me a hunger for Your wisdom that I might walk in Your ways.

For further study, read [The Story of God’s Quest of Redemption](#).

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • COLOSSIANS 2:6-12

⁶ So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.

⁹ For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, ¹⁰ and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. ¹¹ In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

INSIGHT

Paul wrote the book of Colossians to the church in Colossae, which was possibly founded by Epaphras (Colossians 1:6-7). Paul wrote this letter during his first Roman imprisonment to address false beliefs and warn of the danger of falling prey to “hollow and deceptive” teaching (2:8). He

knew the best way not to be led astray was to be “rooted and built up in [Christ]” (v. 7) through a relationship with Him and familiarity with Scripture. Elsewhere, the apostle warned of false teachers (themselves deceived by Satan) who deceived “naive people” through “smooth talk and flattery” (Romans 16:18) and “empty words” (Ephesians 5:6). He urged believers to battle deception by being “strong in the Lord and in his mighty power” by putting on “the full armor of God, so that [we] can take [our] stand against the devil’s schemes” (6:10-11). With God, we can “stand firm” (v. 14).

The Bible in a Year: [Exodus 9-11; Matthew 15:21-39](#)



GOD'S PERFECT CARE

Saturday, January 25

The life of my lord [David] will be bound securely in the bundle of the living by the LORD your God. 1 Samuel 25:29



READ: 1 SAMUEL 25:28-31

David Vetter died at age twelve after spending his entire life in a bubble. Nicknamed “The Bubble Boy,” David was born with severe combined immunodeficiency (SCID). His parents had lost their first son to the disease and were determined to protect their second-born. To prolong his life, NASA engineers designed a plastic protection bubble as well as a spacesuit so his parents could hold David in the outside world. Oh, how we all long to protect those we love!

King David was wronged by Nabal, the foolish husband of Abigail.

In a rogue moment, David sought revenge by his own hands. Abigail rushed to meet him with a wise reminder, “Even though someone is pursuing you to take your life, the life of my lord will be bound securely in the bundle of the living by the LORD your God” (1 Samuel 25:29). The concept of “bundle” conveys the idea of gathering up valuable items so the owner can protectively carry them. Abigail reminded David that God wanted to carry him in a protective bundle. He was safest in God’s hands, rather than in his own. “My lord will not have on his conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed or of having avenged himself” (v. 31).

We do well to work to protect others when they need it, but it’s only in God’s perfect care that they’re truly safe. —[Elisa Morgan](#)

When are you tempted to gather others into self-made bubbles of protection? How can you remember that God’s care is the best?

Dear Father, please help me to trust You with my loved ones, knowing that You can carry them better than I can.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • 1 SAMUEL 25:28-31

²⁸ Please forgive your servant’s presumption. The LORD your God will certainly make a lasting dynasty for my lord, because you fight the LORD’s battles, and no wrongdoing will be found in you as long as you live. ²⁹ Even though someone is pursuing you to take your life, the life of my lord will be bound securely in the bundle of the living by the LORD your God, but the lives of your enemies he will hurl away as from the pocket of a sling. ³⁰ When the LORD has fulfilled for my lord every good thing he promised concerning him and has appointed him ruler over Israel, ³¹ my lord will not have on his conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed or of having avenged himself. And when the LORD your God has brought my lord success, remember your servant.

INSIGHT

The account in 1 Samuel 25 shows that David could be a bit of a hothead. Denied supplies by conceited Nabal, he reacted in anger and went to slaughter Nabal’s entire household (v. 22). Nabal’s wife, Abigail, however, stopped David from bloodshed with wise words. She pointed out that he should trust God with vengeance (vv. 26, 29, 31) and not take it into his own hands.

Abigail fully expected David to take the throne from then-ruling Saul

(v. 28), but begged David not to act rashly. In a way, Abigail's challenge stopped him from treating Nabal the same way that Saul had been treating him—pursuing bloodshed out of self-centered anger (see 22:6-19).

The Bible in a Year: [Exodus 12-13; Matthew 16](#)



REVERENT FEAR

Sunday, January 26

If you look for [wisdom] as for silver . . . then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. Proverbs 2:4-5



READ: PROVERBS 2:1-11

Jeremy writes, “I know quite a bit about the fear of dying. Seven years ago . . . I felt intense, sickening, dizzying, overwhelming fear when I was told I had incurable cancer.” But he learned to manage his fear by leaning on the presence of God and moving from his fear of death to embracing a reverent fear of Him. To Jeremy, this means being in awe of the Maker of the universe who will “swallow up death” (Isaiah 25:8) while also understanding deep within that God knows and loves him.

The fear of the Lord—a deep respect and awe for our holy God—is

a theme that runs throughout Scripture. King Solomon admonished his son to fear the Lord in his series of wise sayings, the Proverbs. He said that if his son would turn his “ear to wisdom” and “search for it as for hidden treasure,” then he’d “understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God” (Proverbs 2:2, 4-5). Along with wisdom and knowledge, he’d find discretion and understanding (vv. 10-11).

When we face challenges of many kinds and experience a sense of dread and fear, we’re reminded of our limitations. But as we turn to God, asking Him to help us humble ourselves before Him and worship Him in reverence, we’ll find He helps us to move from being fearful to embracing a healthy fear of Him. —[Amy Boucher Pye](#)

How important is “the fear of the Lord” to you? How could you humble yourself before Him today? Creator Father, You made the heavens and the earth and yet You know and love me. Please help me to serve and honor You all the days of my life.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • PROVERBS 2:1-11

- ¹ *My son, if you accept my words
and store up my commands within you,*
- ² *turning your ear to wisdom
and applying your heart to understanding—*
- ³ *indeed, if you call out for insight
and cry aloud for understanding,*
- ⁴ *and if you look for it as for silver
and search for it as for hidden treasure,*
- ⁵ *then you will understand the fear of the LORD
and find the knowledge of God.*
- ⁶ *For the LORD gives wisdom;
from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.*
- ⁷ *He holds success in store for the upright,
he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless,*
- ⁸ *for he guards the course of the just
and protects the way of his faithful ones.*
- ⁹ *Then you will understand what is right and just
and fair—every good path.*
- ¹⁰ *For wisdom will enter your heart,*

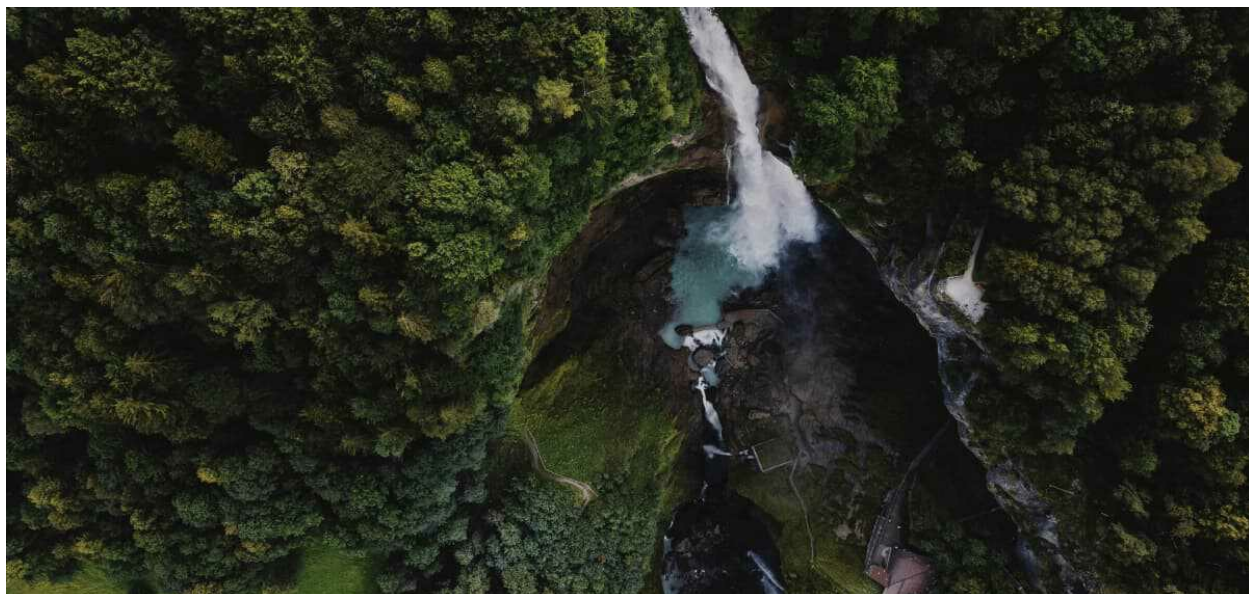
and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.

*¹¹ Discretion will protect you,
and understanding will guard you.*

INSIGHT

The book of Proverbs is often misunderstood to be a book of promises. In reality, however, it's a book that shows how life works best when lived according to the wisdom of God. In chapters 1-9, King Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived (1 Kings 3:12), offers wisdom to his son on a variety of issues including moral purity. Because Solomon's life story revealed his own struggles in this area, some scholars have wondered if Solomon wrote these words earlier in his life—in anticipation of children that would come later. Other scholars believe Solomon offered this insight very late in life, with his own moral failings as a backdrop to the accuracy of that wisdom. Either way, it's clear that despite his great God-given wisdom, Solomon struggled at times to apply that wisdom to his own life

The Bible in a Year: [Exodus 14-15; Matthew 17](#)



BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING

Monday, January 27

They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring. 2 Kings 4:5



READ: 2 KINGS 4:1-7

During my years as a journalist, I enjoyed telling other people's stories, but I was trained to not share my own opinions. So years after I had felt God call me out of my journalism career, when I increasingly felt God directing me to write a blog and speak about Him, I was a little nervous about sharing my thoughts, especially about my faith. As I started blogging, I was afraid I'd run out of things to say. But week after week, I found encouraging words and insights to share. The more I wrote, the more ideas flowed. The same is still true now.

I have witnessed in my own life how God has filled me with more

joy and inspiration when I've poured out my gifts and talents to serve others.

In 2 Kings, we read about a poor widow who went to the prophet Elisha for help. Her late husband's creditor wanted to seize her two sons. All she had at home was a small jar of olive oil. The prophet instructed her to collect empty jars from her neighbors and to keep pouring oil into the containers. "They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring" (4:5). She kept pouring until all the jars were miraculously filled. She could pay her family's debts with the extra oil.

God is faithful and always provides. He's blessed us with gifts and talents and resources to be a blessing to others. Let's not hide or dismiss our gifts but use them for His glory. —[Nancy Gavilanes](#)

What gifts and talents has God given you? How are you using your gifts to serve others?

Dear God, thank You for blessing me and making me a blessing.

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • 2 KINGS 4:1-7

¹ *The wife of a man from the company of the prophets cried out to Elisha, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that he revered the LORD. But now his creditor is coming to take my two boys as his slaves."*

² *Elisha replied to her, "How can I help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house?" "Your servant has nothing there at all," she said, "except a small jar of olive oil."*

³ *Elisha said, "Go around and ask all your neighbors for empty jars. Don't ask for just a few."* ⁴ *Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars, and as each is filled, put it to one side."*

⁵ *She left him and shut the door behind her and her sons. They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring.* ⁶ *When all the jars were full, she said to her son, "Bring me another one." But he replied, "There is not a jar left." Then the oil stopped flowing.*

⁷ *She went and told the man of God, and he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what is left."*

INSIGHT

Elisha was the disciple of the great prophet Elijah during the ninth century BC (853-798). He was plowing when Elijah "threw his cloak around him" (1 Kings 19:19)—a sign that God was calling him to

continue Elijah's ministry. Before Elijah was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind (2 Kings 2), Elisha asked, "Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit" (v. 9), a request to be his successor or heir. God granted Elisha's request (vv. 10-12), likely because He knew his motive and that he longed to be used by Him. Like Elijah, Elisha prophesied in Israel against the idolatry and injustice of the nation. And like his predecessor, Elisha performed many miracles, including multiplying a widow's oil (2 Kings 4:1-7), raising a woman's son from the dead (vv. 8-37), and healing Naaman of leprosy (5:1-14). Elisha faithfully served as a prophet for more than fifty years.

The Bible in a Year: [Exodus 16-18; Matthew 18:1-20](#)



GOD—OUR SURE FOUNDATION

Tuesday, January 28

He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge. Isaiah 33:6



READ: ISAIAH 33:2-6

With a crumbling kitchen and sagging floors, our house needed renovation. After large sections of it were demolished, builders began digging a new foundation. Then things got interesting.

As the builders dug, shovel loads of broken plates, 1850s-era soda bottles, even cutlery emerged. Were we built on an old garbage dump? Who knows, but as a result, our engineer said our foundations would need to be dug deeper or else cracks would appear in our walls.

Good foundations make for strong houses. The same is true of our lives. When the Israelites were shaken by their enemies, Isaiah prayed for them to stay strong (Isaiah 33:2-4). But their strength wouldn't come from bravery or weapons, but by building their lives on God. "He will be the sure foundation for your times," the prophet said, "a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge" (v. 6). Jesus said something similar, teaching that those who built their lives on His wisdom would withstand life's storms (Matthew 7:24-25).

A sure sign our foundations need tending is when cracks like aggression, addiction, or marriage problems appear in our lives. When we seek security where it can't be found or follow the wisdom of this age alone, we'll be on shaky ground. But those who build their lives on God gain access to all His strength and treasures (Isaiah 33:6). —[Sheridan Voysey](#)

What "cracks" in your life might reveal a faulty foundation? How is your foundation looking this week?

Father God, I praise You for being the surest foundation for my life.

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • ISAIAH 33:2-6

² *LORD, be gracious to us;
we long for you.*

*Be our strength every morning,
our salvation in time of distress.*

³ *At the uproar of your army, the peoples flee;
when you rise up, the nations scatter.*

⁴ *Your plunder, O nations, is harvested as by young locusts;
like a swarm of locusts people pounce on it.*

⁵ *The LORD is exalted, for he dwells on high;
he will fill Zion with his justice and righteousness.*

⁶ *He will be the sure foundation for your times,
a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge;
the fear of the LORD is the key to this treasure.*

INSIGHT

The Hebrew word *Yeshu'ah* ("salvation," "deliverance," "rescue") is a key word in the book of Isaiah. Noun and verb forms appear numerous

times. This word occurs in the prayer in Isaiah 33:2: “Be . . . our *salvation* in time of distress.” It’s also used in verse 6 as a pronouncement about God: “He will be . . . a rich store of *salvation*.” In his commentary *Isaiah: God Saves Sinners*, Raymond C. Ortlund Jr. summarizes the book’s message with these words: “God is announcing to us through Isaiah: *The Lord*, for all that he is, *saves*, for all that’s worth, *sinners*, for all that we need. This truth is better than we give it credit for.” Isaiah 33:22 captures this truth well. “The LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; it is he who will save us.”

The Bible in a Year: [Exodus 19-20; Matthew 18:21-35](#)



BECOMING HOLY

Wednesday, January 29

I am the LORD, who makes them holy. Leviticus 22:9



READ: LEVITICUS 22:1-9

After viewing world-class ceramic sculptures at an art museum, I was invited to create my own “pinch pot” from air-dry clay. I spent two hours shaping a little bowl, engraving patterns, and painting. The result of all my hard work was underwhelming: a tiny, misshapen pot with uneven color. It wasn’t going to end up in a museum anytime soon.

Living up to a high standard can be daunting. The Israelite priests experienced this as they tried to follow God’s commands to be ceremonially clean (Leviticus 22:1-8) plus additional instructions regarding the sacrifices (vv. 10-33). The priests’ work was supposed

to be holy—set apart—but despite their best efforts, they often fell short. That’s why God ultimately placed the responsibility for their righteousness on His own shoulders: “I am the LORD, who makes [the priests] holy,” He told Moses repeatedly (22:9, 16, 32).

Jesus is our perfect High Priest and He alone provided the pure, acceptable sacrifice for sin through His death on the cross. He prayed, “I give myself as a holy sacrifice for [my disciples] so they can be made holy by your truth” (John 17:19 NLT). When it feels like our attempts at living right are just amateur pinch pots, we can rest in the perfect work Jesus has already completed and rely on the Holy Spirit’s power to live for Him. —[Karen Pimpo](#)

Where’s your lack of holiness most frustrating to you? How has Jesus fulfilled that requirement for perfection?

I’m so thankful that my righteousness rests in You, Jesus! Thank You for making me holy.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • LEVITICUS 22:1-9

¹ *The LORD said to Moses, ² “Tell Aaron and his sons to treat with respect the sacred offerings the Israelites consecrate to me, so they will not profane my holy name. I am the LORD.*

³ *“Say to them: ‘For the generations to come, if any of your descendants is ceremonially unclean and yet comes near the sacred offerings that the Israelites consecrate to the LORD, that person must be cut off from my presence. I am the LORD.*

⁴ *“ ‘If a descendant of Aaron has a defiling skin disease or a bodily discharge, he may not eat the sacred offerings until he is cleansed. He will also be unclean if he touches something defiled by a corpse or by anyone who has an emission of semen, ⁵ or if he touches any crawling thing that makes him unclean, or any person who makes him unclean, whatever the uncleanness may be. ⁶ The one who touches any such thing will be unclean till evening. He must not eat any of the sacred offerings unless he has bathed himself with water. ⁷ When the sun goes down, he will be clean, and after that he may eat the sacred offerings, for they are his food. ⁸ He must not eat anything found dead or torn by wild animals, and so become unclean through it. I am the LORD.*

⁹ *“ ‘The priests are to perform my service in such a way that they do not become guilty and die for treating it with contempt. I am the LORD, who makes them holy.’ ”*

INSIGHT

The book of Leviticus is so named in English because it focuses largely on

the work and duties of the Israelite priesthood. These priests were from the tribe of Levi. Aaron, a Levite, was Israel's first high priest. These words were given while the people of Israel camped at the base of Mount Sinai and the Levitical law formed the structure and foundation for the practices and worship of Judaism for centuries to come.

The Bible in a Year: [Exodus 21-22; Matthew 19](#)



WHAT WOULD YOU ASK JESUS?

Thursday, January 30

Let the little children come to me. Luke 18:16



READ: LUKE 18:9-17

If Jesus were physically seated at the table with us this morning, “what would you want to ask Him?” Joe inquired of his children at breakfast. His boys thought of their toughest questions. They decided they wanted to ask Jesus the most difficult math problems and have Him tell them how big the universe really is. Then his daughter replied, “I would ask Him for a hug.”

Can’t you picture the love in Jesus’ eyes for these children? I think He would be glad to comply with the requests, don’t you? I imagine Him bantering with the boys and opening his arms to the little girl. He might especially like the desire of Joe’s daughter for a hug, which

seems to demonstrate a heart of love for Him and a desire for His love.

Children have a sense of their dependence, and they know that Jesus is strong and loving. He said, “Anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it” (Luke 18:17). Christ longs for us to recognize our need for His grace, forgiveness, and salvation. He enjoys humble hearts that long to be near Him.

Is there something you’d like to ask Jesus? We’ve certainly all had our questions! Or maybe you just want to be close to Him? Run to Him now for that hug and so much more that you need. —[Anne Cetas](#)

What do you think you will say or do when you first see Jesus? What does it mean to have the faith of a child?

Heavenly Father, I’m thankful to be Your child and that You draw me close.

For further study, read [Character Comes from the Story We Tell Ourselves](#).

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • LUKE 18:9-17

⁹ *To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable:* ¹⁰ *“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’*

¹³ *“But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’*

¹⁴ *“I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”*

¹⁵ *People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. ¹⁶ But Jesus called the children to him and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁷ Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”*

INSIGHT

The parable of the tax collector (Luke 18:9-17) was specifically told to

those who, like the Pharisee, were confident in their own righteousness. It wasn't a warning against being righteous but against *trusting* in our righteousness, thinking that doing certain things or following certain rules puts us in correct standing with God. Jesus says the opposite is true. God looks with grace and mercy upon those who in humility recognize their need of Him, regardless of their actions. James reminds us of this same truth: "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up" (James 4:10).

The Bible in a Year: [Exodus 23-24; Matthew 20:1-16](#)



COMPELLED TO TELL

Friday, January 31

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes. Romans 1:16



READ: ACTS 20:17-24

You know Jesus loves you. He *really* loves you.” Those were the last words of John Daniels. Just seconds after he’d given a homeless man money and shared those parting words, he was struck by a car and instantly killed. The printed program for the service that celebrated John’s life included these words: “He wanted to figure out how he could reach more people, so on a Sunday afternoon, trying to help a man in need, God gave him a way to reach the world. All of the local TV channels carried the news, and it reached friends, family, and many others all over the country.”

Though John Daniels wasn't a preacher, he was compelled to tell others about Jesus. So was Paul. In Acts 20, the apostle expressed his zeal for the gospel in his parting words to the church leaders at Ephesus: "My only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace" (v. 24).

The good news of forgiveness and new life in Jesus is too good not to share with others. Some believers are more skilled at explaining the gospel than others. But with the help of the Holy Spirit, all who've experienced its life-changing power can tell their story of God's love. —[Arthur Jackson](#)

*Who do you know who needs to hear about God's love and forgiveness in and through Christ?
What's keeping you from sharing His work in your life with them?*

Dear Father, please forgive me for being hesitant to tell others about the new life that comes through Jesus and help me boldly share Your love.

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • ACTS 20:17-24

¹⁷ From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. ¹⁸ When they arrived, he said to them: "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. ¹⁹ I served the Lord with great humility and with tears and in the midst of severe testing by the plots of my Jewish opponents. ²⁰ You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. ²¹ I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

²² "And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. ²³ I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. ²⁴ However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace."

INSIGHT

Acts 20:17-35 records the first part of Paul's teaching to the elders of the church at Ephesus. He called them to meet with him in Miletus, a seaport on the west coast of Asia Minor about forty miles away. Not only had Paul been instrumental in the founding of the Ephesian church (see chs. 18-19), he'd spent extended time there teaching, mentoring, and raising

up leadership (20:31). The resulting close relationship resulted in a painful, tearstained farewell as Paul informed his Ephesian friends that they wouldn't see him again (v. 25). This speech, however, wouldn't be the last apostolic communication that the church at Ephesus would receive. Other New Testament letters that were either written to or about the church in Ephesus include 1 and 2 Timothy and 1, 2, and 3 John. And in Revelation 2:1-7, Ephesus received a letter from the risen Christ Himself revealed in a vision of the apostle John.

The Bible in a Year: [Exodus 25-26; Matthew 20:17-34](#)



I AM THE WAY

What are we to do with Jesus' claim, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6)? Jesus said, "Whoever is not with me is against me" (Matthew 12:30). In other words, neutrality is impossible. This simple fact confronted Sheldon Vanauken after he'd carried on a lengthy correspondence about Christianity with the great Oxford professor C. S. Lewis.

In the book *A Severe Mercy*, Vanauken wrote that he came to the chilling realization that he "could not go back":

I had regarded Christianity as a sort of fairy tale; and I had neither accepted nor rejected Jesus, since I had never, in fact, encountered Him. Now I had. The position was not . . . merely a question of whether I was to accept the Messiah or not. It was a question of whether I was to accept Him—or reject [Him]. My God! There was a gap behind me, too. Perhaps the leap to acceptance was a horrifying gamble—but what of the leap to

rejection? . . . If I were to reject, I would certainly face the haunting, terrible thought: "Perhaps it's true—and I have rejected my God!"

Vanauken decided that there was only one thing he could do: He chose "to believe in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—in Christ, my Lord and my God. Christianity has the ring, the feel, of . . . essential truth. By it, life is made full instead of empty, meaningful instead of meaningless."

The same decision faces each of us. Jesus challenges us with His claim that He is God in human form, the Savior of the world, and the source of life—both now and forever. How will we respond to Him?

Excerpted from *I am the Way: The Amazing Claims of Jesus* by Jack Kuhatschek. Read more at DiscoverySeries.org/Q0221.

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OUR FATHER'S LOVE

Saturday, February 1

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! 1 John 3:1



READ: 1 JOHN 3:1-3, 16-24

Kim settled in by the window, bag packed, waiting eagerly for her daddy to arrive. But as the bright day darkened and then turned to night, her enthusiasm faded. She realized Daddy wasn't coming—again.

Kim's parents were divorced, and she longed to spend time with her father. Not for the first time she thought, *I must not really matter. He must not love me.*

As Kim later learned—and as all of us who receive Jesus as our Savior come to know—though our earthly parents and others will

disappoint us, we have a heavenly Father who loves us and won't let us down.

John—the author of three inspired biblical letters, the gospel bearing his name, and the book of Revelation—understood the depth of God's love. In fact, he referred to himself as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 21:20), identifying himself as someone whose life had been changed by Christ's love for him. “See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” he wrote (1 John 3:1).

God loves us so much that He gave His Son Jesus who laid down His life for us (v. 16; John 3:16). He's always available to us in prayer, and He promises, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). We can rest secure in His love. —[Alyson Kieda](#)

When has another person disappointed you? How have you found comfort in your heavenly Father?

Heavenly Father, thank You for the great love You lavish on me. I rest in Your promise that You'll never forsake me.

For further study, read [In the Grip of God's Love](#).

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • 1 JOHN 3:1-3, 16-24

¹ See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ² Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. ³ All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

¹⁶ This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. . . .

¹⁹ This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence: ²⁰ If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. ²¹ Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God ²² and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him. ²³ And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. ²⁴ The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

INSIGHT

John begins 1 John in a similar way to the opening of his gospel account. In both cases, he goes back to the beginning to affirm Jesus' identity as God the Son (John 1:1-5; 1 John 1:1-3). In John's gospel, he does so by showing the Son's equality with the Father and His primary role in creation: "He was with God in the beginning" and "through him all things were made" (John 1:2-3). In 1 John, the author repeats the idea of Christ's presence "from the beginning" (1:1) yet affirms that He came and lived among us (v. 2).

The Bible in a Year: [Exodus 27-28; Matthew 21:1-22](#)



CHRIST'S VISUAL PARADOX

Sunday, February 2

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Matthew 5:4



READ: MATTHEW 5:1-12

One of the great hymn writers of all time, Isaac Watts, wrote “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.” In penning its lyrics, he used the poetic device of paradox to show a contrast in themes: “my richest gain I count but loss” and “pour contempt on all my pride.” We sometimes call these *oxymorons*, “words used in seeming contradiction to themselves”—like “awfully good” and “jumbo shrimp.” In the case of Watts’s lyrics, this device is far more profound.

Jesus used paradox often. “Blessed are the poor in spirit” (Matthew 5:3), He said, suggesting that those who have no hope will receive

more than they could ever hope for. When you or I mourn the loss of someone dear and are sad, Jesus says we “will be comforted” (v. 4). Christ was showing how in God’s kingdom the common rules of life don’t apply.

These paradoxes tell us that life in Christ defies all expectations: we who are nobodies are cherished as somebodies. It was on the cross that Jesus bore a visual paradox—a crown of thorns. Isaac Watts took this symbol of ridicule and, paradoxically, gave it soaring beauty: “Did e’er such love and sorrow meet, / or thorns compose so rich a crown?” In this we thrill yet are mindful of the final line of the hymn: “Love so amazing, so divine, / demands my soul, my life, my all.” —[Kenneth Petersen](#)

What statement in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5) do you most identify with? How does it relate to your life experience?

Dear God, thank You for Your sacrifice on the cross, for making me a somebody in Your kingdom.

Go deeper into [the Beatitudes of Jesus](#).

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • MATTHEW 5:1-12

¹ Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ² and he began to teach them.

He said:

*³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*⁴ Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.*

*⁵ Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.*

*⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.*

*⁷ Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.*

*⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.*

*⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.*

¹⁰ *Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

¹¹ *“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil
against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven,
for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”*

INSIGHT

The first and last beatitudes contain this promise: “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3, 10). Bible teacher D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones notes that Christ begins and ends with this phrase “because it is his way of saying that the first thing [believers in Jesus] have to realize . . . is that you belong to a different kingdom.” Believers live in two different worlds. We’re living on this earth, “but our citizenship is in heaven” (Philippians 3:20). Christ sheds light on Matthew 5:10-12 in John 15:19-20: “If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember what I told you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.”

The Bible in a Year: [Exodus 29-30; Matthew 21:23-46](#)



LOWLY BUT LOVED BY GOD

Monday, February 3

Though the LORD is great, he cares for the humble, but he keeps his distance from the proud. Psalm 138:6 NLT



READ: PSALM 138

One day at church, I greeted a visiting family. I knelt next to their little girl's wheelchair, introduced her to my service dog, Callie, and complimented her pretty, pink glasses and boots. Though she was nonverbal, her smile told me she enjoyed our conversation. Another little girl approached, avoiding eye contact with my new friend. She whispered, "Tell her I like her dress." I said, "You tell her. She's kind, just like you." I explained how easy it was to speak with our new friend even though she communicated differently, and how looking at her and smiling would help her feel accepted and loved.

In Scripture and in this world, people are often excluded because they're perceived as *different*. However, our great God celebrates our differences and invites us into relationship with Him and His family. In Psalm 138, David says, "I will praise you, LORD, with all my heart; before the 'gods' I will sing your praise" (v. 1). He says, "the LORD is exalted" and yet, He "looks kindly on the lowly" (v. 6).

God, exalted and holy, looks kindly on *us*, His created ones, especially when we humble ourselves. As we ask Him to help us look kindly on and behave kindly toward others, we can thank Him for affirming that we're lowly *and* loved! —[Xochitl Dixon](#)

How does remembering you're lowly in comparison to God change the way you see others? How can you show love to those in your community with disabilities?

Dear God, please help me greet all people with the same abundant kindness and unconditional love that
You show me each day.

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • PSALM 138

¹ *I will praise you, LORD, with all my heart;
before the "gods" I will sing your praise.*

² *I will bow down toward your holy temple
and will praise your name
for your unfailing love and your faithfulness,
for you have so exalted your solemn decree
that it surpasses your fame.*

³ *When I called, you answered me;
you greatly emboldened me.*

⁴ *May all the kings of the earth praise you, LORD,
when they hear what you have decreed.*

⁵ *May they sing of the ways of the LORD,
for the glory of the LORD is great.*

⁶ *Though the LORD is exalted, he looks kindly on the lowly;
though lofty, he sees them from afar.*

⁷ *Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
you preserve my life.
You stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes;
with your right hand you save me.*

⁸ *The LORD will vindicate me;
your love, LORD, endures forever—*

do not abandon the works of your hands.

INSIGHT

David was no stranger to fighting foreign powers and their so-called gods. As a young man, he had faced off against Goliath who represented the Philistine god Dagon (1 Samuel 5:1-8; 17:32-50). He'd seen Yahweh triumph over kings (see 1 Samuel 27). And he knew God's promise to him that he'd take the throne of Israel (16:6-13).

In Psalm 138, David expressed everything he'd learned in his relationship with God. God recognizes the humble, not the powerful—no matter how lofty that power may be (v. 6). After all, Yahweh is stronger than all things in both heaven and on earth. David could confidently praise and thank God because he knew he was secure. It's out of that security that he can turn and fearlessly praise Yahweh in the face of any threat.

The Bible in a Year: [Exodus 31-33; Matthew 22:1-22](#)



GOD'S SPACIOUS PLACE

Tuesday, February 4

You . . . have set my feet in a spacious place. Psalm 31:8



READ: PSALM 31:1-2, 8-16

When theologian Todd Billings received a diagnosis of incurable blood cancer, he described his imminent mortality as like lights in distant rooms turning off or flickering. “As the father of a one- and three-year-old, I tended to think of the next few decades as an open expanse, assuming I would see Neti and Nathaniel grow and mature. . . . But in being diagnosed . . . there is a narrowing that takes place.”

In thinking about these limitations, Billings reflected on Psalm 31, how God set David in “a spacious place” (v. 8). Although David spoke of being afflicted by his enemies, he knew that God was his

refuge and place of safety (v. 2). Through this song, the psalmist voiced his trust in God: “My times are in your hands” (v. 15).

Billings follows David in placing his hope in God. Although this theologian, husband, and father faces a narrowing in life, he agrees that he also lives in a spacious place. Why? Because God’s victory over death through Christ’s sacrifice means that we dwell in Christ, “the most spacious place imaginable.” As he explains, “What could be broader and more expansive than to share in His life by the Holy Spirit?”

We too may cry in lament, but we can take refuge in God, asking Him to lead us and guide us (vv. 1, 3). With David we can affirm that we live in a spacious place. —[Amy Boucher Pye](#)

What does it mean to you to live in a spacious place? What are some concrete ways you can put your hope in God today?

Heavenly Father, You allowed Your Son to die to set me free. Thank You for the gift of a spacious place.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • PSALM 31:1-2, 8-16

¹ *In you, LORD, I have taken refuge;
let me never be put to shame;
deliver me in your righteousness.*

² *Turn your ear to me,
come quickly to my rescue;
be my rock of refuge,
a strong fortress to save me.*

⁸ *You have not given me into the hands of the enemy
but have set my feet in a spacious place.*

⁹ *Be merciful to me, LORD, for I am in distress;
my eyes grow weak with sorrow,
my soul and body with grief.*

¹⁰ *My life is consumed by anguish
and my years by groaning;
my strength fails because of my affliction,
and my bones grow weak.*

¹¹ *Because of all my enemies,
I am the utter contempt of my neighbors
and an object of dread to my closest friends—
those who see me on the street flee from me.*

*12 I am forgotten as though I were dead;
I have become like broken pottery.*

*13 For I hear many whispering,
"Terror on every side!"
They conspire against me
and plot to take my life.*

*14 But I trust in you, LORD;
I say, "You are my God."*

*15 My times are in your hands;
deliver me from the hands of my enemies,
from those who pursue me.*

*16 Let your face shine on your servant;
save me in your unfailing love.*

INSIGHT

The book of Psalms is divided into five books or sections. Book I (chs. 1-41) and Book II (chs. 42-72) carry the majority of David's psalms and many of them are in the form of lament. Psalm 31 falls into this category. We might think it's inappropriate to "complain" to God, but that's what a lament is—a complaint about a circumstance in life. The difference between biblical lament and complaining, however, is that biblical lament almost always resolves in hope and praise. The psalmist finds this resolution in verses 19-24. He concludes: "Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the LORD" (v. 24).

The Bible in a Year: [Exodus 34-35; Matthew 22:23-46](#)



FIXING OUR EYES ON JESUS

Wednesday, February 5

[Jesus said], "These are the very Scriptures that testify about me." John 5:39



READ: JOHN 5:36-40

June's eyes were fixed on the gray car beside her. She had to change lanes to exit the highway, but each time she tried to overtake the vehicle, the other driver seemed to speed up too. Finally, she managed to cut in front. Smug in her moment of triumph, June looked in the rearview mirror and smirked. At the same time, she noticed her destination exit passing her by.

With a rueful smile, she recounted: "I was so fixated on overtaking that I missed my exit."

Such a slip can also happen in our desire to walk in God's ways.

When the religious leaders persecuted Jesus for not keeping the Jewish law (John 5:16), He warned that they'd become so fixated on studying and enforcing the law that they were missing the person the law pointed to: "These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life" (vv. 39-40).

In trying to be right before God, the religious leaders focused on following the Jewish law and making sure everyone else did too. Likewise, in our zeal for God, we may keep up with good things—church attendance, Bible study, charity work—and even get others to join us. But we can become so focused on them that we miss the person we're doing them for—Jesus.

In all we do, let's ask God to help us fix our eyes on Christ (Hebrews 12:2). He alone is "the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6). —[Jasmine Goh](#)

What are you focused on today? What does it mean for you to fix your eyes on Jesus?

Dear God, thank You for giving me life through Christ. Please help me to keep Him at the center of all I do.

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • JOHN 5:36-40

³⁶ *I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to finish—the very works that I am doing—testify that the Father has sent me.* ³⁷ *And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form,* ³⁸ *nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent.* ³⁹ *You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me,* ⁴⁰ *yet you refuse to come to me to have life.*

INSIGHT

In John 5:39-40, Jesus acknowledges the importance of studying the Scriptures yet asserts that they ultimately point to Him. Both the Old and New Testaments declare Scripture's impact. In 2 Timothy 3, Paul encourages Timothy to continue in the Scriptures, and he notes that "all Scripture is God-breathed" and trains and equips us for personal growth in holiness and to serve others (vv. 16-17). Before installing Joshua as the new Israelite leader, God urged him to "meditate on [the Law] day and

night” so that he’d be “prosperous and successful” in leading the Israelites into Canaan (Joshua 1:8). In Psalm 19, David declares that the words of God refresh the soul, make wise the simple, and give joy to the heart and light to the eyes. By them we’re warned and find great reward (vv. 7-11). Through keeping and treasuring Scripture, God makes our way clear (Psalm 119:1-3, 105; Proverbs 2:1-5).

The Bible in a Year: [Exodus 36-38; Matthew 23:1-22](#)



A CULTIVATED LIFE IN CHRIST

Thursday, February 6

There was no one to work the ground. Genesis 2:5



READ: GENESIS 2:4-9

When we built our home, it stood on little more than a muddy, empty lot at the end of a gravel road. We needed grass, trees, and shrubs to match the surrounding Oregon foothills. As I got out my lawn tools and set to work, I thought of the first garden waiting for humans: “No shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up, . . . and there was no one to work the ground” (Genesis 2:5).

The creation account in Genesis 1 repeats God’s assessment of creation: it “was good” or “very good” (vv. 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). However, it wasn’t complete. Adam and Eve needed to cultivate the

ground—to exercise stewardship of God’s creation (v. 28). They weren’t meant to live in an unchanging paradise but one that needed care and development.

Since the beginning, God has been inviting humans to partner with Him in His creation. He did it in the garden of Eden, and He does it with “the new creation” He makes of us when we put our faith in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). Upon salvation, we’re not made perfect. As the apostle Paul says, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world” (Romans 12:2). God works in us as we pursue a life pleasing to Him, “conformed to the image of his Son” (8:29).

Whether it’s caring for the earth or caring for our new life in Christ, God has given us a gift we need to cultivate. —[Matt Lucas](#)

What work do you enjoy most? What might God be calling you to cultivate in your community?

Father, thank You for inviting me to participate in the work You’re doing in the world and in me.

For further study, read [Worshipping God Means More than Singing](#).

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • GENESIS 2:4-9

⁴ *This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.*

⁵ *Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground,* ⁶ *but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground.* ⁷ *Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.*

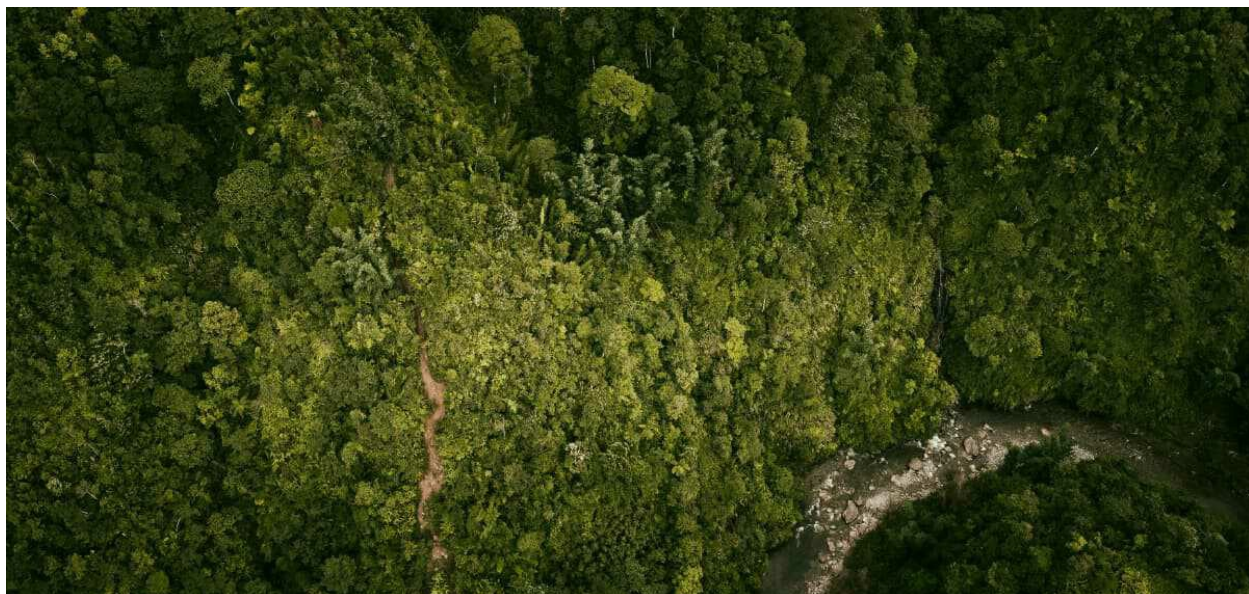
⁸ *Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed.* ⁹ *The LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*

INSIGHT

In Genesis 2, we’re given a description of the garden of Eden where God placed the first humans so they could care for what He created (vv. 8, 15). The garden was delightful—God caused trees to provide fruit (v. 9) and rivers to water the ground (v. 10). He asked our first parents to care for it, but this request came with a commandment (vv. 15-17). This is a picture

of how God continues to interact with humanity. He brings blessing but also gives us instructions in how to live. We're given the choice to obey Him or not. We honor Him when we choose obedience as the Spirit helps us.

The Bible in a Year: [Exodus 39-40; Matthew 23:23-39](#)



NOT IRRELEVANT IN GOD'S EYES

Friday, February 7

*People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.
1 Samuel 16:7*



READ: 1 SAMUEL 16:1, 6-13

During the annual National Football League Draft, professional football teams choose new players. Coaches spend thousands of hours evaluating prospective players' skills and physical fitness. In 2022, Brock Purdy was the last—262nd—pick and labeled “Mr. Irrelevant,” the nickname given to the last football player selected. No one expected he would play in a game during the upcoming season. Just a few months later, however, Purdy led his team to two playoff wins. The reality is that team executives don't always do an effective job identifying potential. And neither do we.

In a familiar Old Testament story, God sent the prophet Samuel to select the next king of Israel from among the sons of Jesse. When Samuel looked at the men, he was swayed by their physical appearance. But God said to him, “Do not consider his appearance or his height” (1 Samuel 16:7). Instead, God led him to choose not the oldest or tallest but the youngest and seemingly least relevant choice—David, who would be Israel’s greatest earthly king.

Why do we often do such a poor job evaluating people? Our passage reminds us that “people look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart” (v. 7). When we’re asked to select someone to be on a work team or serve on a volunteer committee, we can ask God to give us wisdom to make choices based on qualities valuable to Him. —[Lisa M. Samra](#)

When have you felt “irrelevant”? How might you see people from God’s perspective?

Heavenly Father, please give me insight to see others as You see them.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • 1 SAMUEL 16:1, 6-13

¹ *The LORD said to Samuel, “How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king.”*

⁶ *When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, “Surely the LORD’s anointed stands here before the LORD.”*

⁷ *But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” . . .*

¹⁰ *Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, “The LORD has not chosen these.”* ¹¹ *So he asked Jesse, “Are these all the sons you have?”*

“There is still the youngest,” Jesse answered. “He is tending the sheep.”

Samuel said, “Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives.”

¹² *So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features.*

Then the LORD said, “Rise and anoint him; this is the one.”

¹³ *So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon David. Samuel then went to Ramah.*

INSIGHT

There's no mention of how David's brothers felt about his public anointing by the prophet Samuel in Bethlehem (1 Samuel 16:13). A bit later, however, we gain a glimpse of his eldest brother Eliab's resentment when David visited the frontlines of a standoff between Israel and the Philistines. Eliab "burned with anger" at his youngest brother (17:28). He said, "I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle" (v. 28). Eliab likely regretted those words as David soon made history by slaying Goliath (vv. 41-51).

The Bible in a Year: [Leviticus 1-3; Matthew 24:1-28](#)



CARING IN CHRIST

Saturday, February 8

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. Philippians 2:5



READ: PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11

Ms. Charlene, my friend Dwayne's mother, is ninety-four years old, under five feet tall, and weighs less than a hundred pounds. Yet this doesn't stop her from doing what she can to care for her son, whose physical health prevents him from caring for himself. Visits to their two-story home often find her on the second floor where she resides. Slowly, she descends sixteen stairs to the first floor to greet her guests, just as she does to assist in caring for the son whom she loves.

Ms. Charlene's selfless determination convicts, challenges, and

inspires me as she prioritizes her son's well-being over her own. She models what Paul encourages in Philippians 2: "In humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others" (vv. 3-4).

Caring for those with health challenges or other needs can be costly. The demands of life can be all-consuming, and even those closest to us can be shortchanged if we're not intentional about taking our eyes off ourselves. But humbly caring is what believers in Jesus are called to do (see vv. 1-4). When we give of ourselves, we follow the example of Jesus and help others in the process. The apostle reminds us: "In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus" (v. 5). —[Arthur Jackson](#)

Who inspires you to be more caring and selfless? What obstacles might you have to navigate to meet others' needs?

Dear Jesus, please help me to be more intentional in giving myself for the good of others.

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11

¹ Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

⁵ *In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:*

⁶ *Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;*

⁷ *rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.*

⁸ *And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!*

⁹ *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place*

*and gave him the name that is above every name,
10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.*

INSIGHT

Paul's call to imitate Jesus' example of self-giving love (Philippians 2:5-8) begins with a call to unity: "Make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind" (v. 2). This kind of deep unity isn't accomplished by a lack of differences, but a willingness to surrender "selfish ambition" and "vain conceit" (v. 3) in order to see and serve others with a heart like His. When believers in Christ live out what He modeled—the humility and willingness to surrender for the well-being of others—unity is possible.

The Bible in a Year: [Leviticus 4-5; Matthew 24:29-51](#)



JESUS OUR PEACE

Sunday, February 9

He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. Ephesians 2:17



READ: EPHESIANS 2:11-18

Joan groaned when she saw Susan's social media post. The photo showed ten church friends, smiling around a restaurant table. For the second time this month, they were having a grand time—without her. Joan blinked away tears. She didn't always get along with the others, but still. How strange to attend church with people who didn't include her!

How strangely first century! But Jesus desires unity and came to heal our division. From the church's beginning, people who didn't get along were to find common ground in Him. Jews looked down

on gentiles for not keeping the law, and gentiles loathed Jews for thinking they were better. Then Jesus “made the two groups one”; He “destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands” (Ephesians 2:14-15). Keeping the law no longer mattered. What counted was Jesus. Would Jew and gentile unite in Him?

That depended on their response. Jesus “preached peace to” gentiles “who were far away and peace to [Jews] who were near” (v. 17). Same message, different application. Self-righteous Jews needed to admit they weren’t better, while snubbed gentiles needed to believe they weren’t worse. Both needed to stop fretting about the other and focus on Christ, who was creating “in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace” (v. 15).

Feeling snubbed? That hurts. It’s not right. But you can be a peacemaker as you rest in Jesus. He’s still our peace. —[Mike Wittmer](#)

When have you felt snubbed? How can you be a peacemaker?

Dear Father, when I’m snubbed, I’ll rest in Your Son.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • EPHESIANS 2:11-18

¹¹ *Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)—* ¹² *remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.* ¹³ *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*

¹⁴ *For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,* ¹⁵ *by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace,* ¹⁶ *and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.* ¹⁷ *He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.* ¹⁸ *For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.*

INSIGHT

Ephesians 2:11-22 is theologically rich. Like a cord of three strands, this

passage brings together three key doctrines of the faith in Jesus: teaching about Christ (Christology), the church (ecclesiology), and the Holy Spirit (pneumatology). Jesus, through His reconciling work, is the source of our peace with God (vv. 14, 16) and through Him two disparate groups—Jews and gentiles—could become one new humanity (vv. 14-15). The church is indeed one body and a new family (vv. 14-18) “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone” (v. 20). The Holy Spirit has been and is at work in forming and sustaining the church. He facilitates our decision for salvation (v. 18) and indwells the church that Jesus is building (v. 22).

The Bible in a Year: [Leviticus 6-7; Matthew 25:1-30](#)



FISHING FOR FRIENDS

Monday, February 10

[Jesus said,] "I will send you out to fish for people." Matthew 4:19



READ: MATTHEW 4:18-22

Patty spent the afternoon on the banks of a local river, using her fishing pole to cast bait into the water. Having only recently moved to the area, she wasn't hoping to catch fish; she was angling for some new friends. Her line wasn't baited with worms or any other traditional lure. Instead, she used her heavy-duty sturgeon rod to extend packets of cookies to people who were floating down the river in rafts on a hot summer day. She used this creative way to meet her new neighbors, who all seemed to enjoy the sweet treat!

Patty went "fishing for friends" in a much more literal way than Jesus intended when He invited Peter and Andrew to walk with Him

through life. The two brothers were hardworking fishermen, casting their nets into the Sea of Galilee. Jesus interrupted their labors with a call to follow Him, saying He would send them out to “fish for people” instead of fish (Matthew 4:19). He made the same invitation to two other fishermen, James and John, shortly thereafter. They all left their nets and boats immediately to journey with Jesus.

Like the fishermen who became His first disciples, Christ invites us to follow Him and focus our attention on eternal matters: the spiritual lives of those with whom we interact. We can offer those around us what really satisfies—the enduring hope of life with Jesus (John 4:13-14). —[Kirsten Holmberg](#)

Who first shared with you about Jesus? How might you offer others the hope He provides?

Dear Jesus, please help me to become a fisher of people so that others will know You better.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • MATTHEW 4:18-22

¹⁸ *As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.* ¹⁹ *“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.”* ²⁰ *At once they left their nets and followed him.*

²¹ *Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them,* ²² *and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.*

INSIGHT

Christ’s calling of His disciples to follow Him was strategic. He started His public ministry when He “was about thirty years old” (Luke 3:23) and many scholars believe He ministered for approximately three years before He was crucified. During this time, He called and taught His disciples. In addition to His invitation to two sets of brothers from Galilee to join Him—Simon Peter and Andrew; James and John (Matthew 4:18-22)—He called Matthew (Levi), a tax collector: “Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. ‘Follow me,’ Jesus said to him, and Levi got up, left everything and followed him. Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them” (Luke

5:27-29). Matthew's example of friends reaching friends is worth emulating today.

The Bible in a Year: [Leviticus 8-10; Matthew 25:31-46](#)



GOD RUNS AFTER US

Tuesday, February 11

The Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. Ezekiel 34:11



READ: EZEKIEL 34:11-16

For years, Evan struggled with an addiction that kept him from drawing close to God. *How can I be worthy of His love?* he wondered. So, while he kept going to church, he felt that there was an unbridgeable chasm that kept him separated from God.

Yet, whenever Evan prayed earnestly for something, God seemed to answer him. God also sent people to encourage and comfort him in difficult times. After some years, Evan realized God was constantly pursuing him and showing that He'd always loved and cared for him, and that's when he began to trust in God's forgiveness

and love. “Now, I know that I’m forgiven and can let God draw me close to Him, even though I’m still struggling with my addiction,” he said.

Ezekiel 34:11-16 tells us of a God who pursued His people. “I myself will search for my sheep and look after them,” He said, vowing to rescue them and provide for them abundantly (v. 11). This was after their human leaders abandoned them, and they themselves disobeyed their true shepherd (vv. 1-6). Whether we’re helpless victims of circumstances or struggling with the consequences of our own sin, God pursues us in love. In His mercy and grace, He draws us back to Him. If you’ve forgotten God, turn back to Him. Then, as He leads, continue to walk with Him each day. —[Leslie Koh](#)

How has God shown you that He cares for you and loves you? How can you let Him draw you closer to Him?

Dear God, thank You for always loving me despite my struggles and doubts. Please teach me to trust in Your love anew.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • EZEKIEL 34:11-16

¹¹ For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. ¹² As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. ¹³ I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. ¹⁴ I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵ I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD. ¹⁶ I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.

INSIGHT

Ezekiel was both a priest and a prophet, prophesying from 593 to 571 BC. He was among the ten thousand captives brought out of Judea to Babylon in 597 BC, which included officers, soldiers, skilled workers, artisans, and eighteen-year-old King Jehoiachin and his family (2 Kings 24:10-15; 2

Chronicles 36:9). In Babylon, Ezekiel had his first vision at age thirty by the Kebar River (Ezekiel 1:1-3). He prophesied to a people who desperately needed to hear from God. The book's main themes include the holiness of God and the sin of the people (36:22-23), which included judgment on those who turn away from God and mercy and hope for those who repent and trust in Him. During Ezekiel's captivity (586 BC), Babylon besieged Jerusalem, destroyed the temple, and burned down the city, carrying away the remnant of the people. The captivity lasted seventy years (2 Kings 25; 2 Chronicles 36:21).

The Bible in a Year: [Leviticus 11-12; Matthew 26:1-25](#)



OUR PLANS AND GOD'S PLANS

Wednesday, February 12

"Neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. Isaiah 55:8



READ: ISAIAH 55:8-12

Many years ago, my husband decided to take a trip to Africa with a group of people from his church. At the last minute, the group was prevented from going on its journey. Everyone was disappointed, but the money they'd collected for airfare, lodging, and food was donated to the people they'd tried to visit. The people used it to construct a building that would shelter victims of abuse.

Recently, at a prayer breakfast, my husband met someone who lived in the village he'd almost traveled to so many years ago. This person was a teacher who said he walked by the building every day.

He confirmed that God had used it to provide for the most vulnerable people in the area.

Our plans and desires don't always match what God has in mind. For His "thoughts are not [our] thoughts, neither are [our] ways [His] ways" (Isaiah 55:8). God's ways aren't just different from ours; His ways are "higher" and *better* because what He does is consistent with who He is (v. 9). This truth gives us hope when our efforts to serve Him don't turn out the way we'd planned.

It might be years before we're able to look back and trace God's influence through certain situations. For now, though, as we continue to reach out to the world in His name, we can remember that God is always powerfully at work (v. 11). —[Jennifer Benson Schuldt](#)

When have you felt disappointed with an experience? How might God use this to teach you something about Himself?

Dear God, You're the all-knowing one. When I don't understand what's happening, please help me to trust You.

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • ISAIAH 55:8-12

⁸ *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways,"
declares the LORD.*

⁹ *"As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

¹⁰ *As the rain and the snow
come down from heaven,
and do not return to it
without watering the earth
and making it bud and flourish,
so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,*

¹¹ *so is my word that goes out from my mouth:
It will not return to me empty,
but will accomplish what I desire
and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.*

¹² *You will go out in joy
and be led forth in peace;
the mountains and hills
will burst into song before you,*

*and all the trees of the field
will clap their hands."*

INSIGHT

The book of Isaiah is the first of the five books referred to as the Major Prophets, so named because of their length, not their importance. The other Major Prophets are Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel. Isaiah is the sixth longest book of the Bible, and two other prophetic books—Jeremiah and Ezekiel—are even longer. Isaiah contains many prophecies related to divine judgment and many others about the coming Messiah. J. A. Martin in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* points out: "Isaiah had a lofty view of God. The Lord is seen as the Initiator of events in history. He is apart from and greater than His Creation; yet He is involved in the affairs of that Creation. Whether in his dealings with sin or his promise of redemption, Isaiah portrays God's greatness as above all that he has created."

Visit ODBU.org/OT247 to discover more from the book of Isaiah.

The Bible in a Year: [Leviticus 13; Matthew 26:26-50](#)



NEVER OVERLOOKED BY GOD

Thursday, February 13

The LORD make his face shine on you. Numbers 6:25



READ: NUMBERS 6:22-27

Sometimes I just feel so . . . *invisible*.” The word hung in the air as Joanie talked to her friend. Her husband had left for another woman, leaving Joanie with young children still at home. “I gave him my best years,” she confided. “And now I don’t know if anyone would really see me or take the time to actually *know* me.”

“I’m so sorry,” her friend responded. “My dad walked out when I was six, and it was hard for us, especially Mom. But she said this thing when she tucked me in at night that I never forgot: ‘God never closes His eyes.’ When I was older, she explained she was trying to teach me that God loved me and watched over me always, even

while I slept.”

The Bible presents words God gave Moses to share with His people during a challenging time, when they were wandering in Sinai’s desert: “The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace” (Numbers 6:24-26). The blessing was to be spoken by the priests over the people.

Even in life’s wildernesses—those places where we wonder if anyone sees us or truly understands—God is faithful. God’s favor—His shining face and enduring love—is always turned toward those who love Him, even when we can’t feel Him because of our pain. No one is invisible to God. —[James Banks](#)

How does it comfort you to know that God truly sees you? Who can you share that comfort with today?

Thank You, Father, for seeing me, knowing me, and loving me. Please help me to turn my face to You always!

Hear more from James Banks on [how God sees our needs and hears our prayers](#).

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • NUMBERS 6:22-27

²² The LORD said to Moses, ²³ “Tell Aaron and his sons, ‘This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them:

²⁴ “ ‘ “The LORD bless you
and keep you;

²⁵ the LORD make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;

²⁶ the LORD turn his face toward you
and give you peace.” ‘

²⁷ “So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.”

INSIGHT

In showering the people with His favor, God instructed the high priest to bestow on them the blessing found in Numbers 6:24-26. “The LORD make his face shine on you” (v. 25) is rendered “the LORD smile on you” in the New Living Translation. God smiling and turning “his face toward you” (v. 26) expresses the idea that the people have God’s special attention and approval. This benediction, pronounced by many pastors at the end of

church services today, affirms that God provides for and protects His people, assuring us of His presence, pardon, and peace. The Hebrew concept of peace (*shalom*) is all-embracing and includes the concepts of completeness, security, health, wealth, tranquility, contentment, friendship, and peace with God and humanity.

The Bible in a Year: [Leviticus 14; Matthew 26:51-75](#)



WEDDED TO LOVE

Friday, February 14

Love never fails. 1 Corinthians 13:8



READ: 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-13

At Meredith's wedding, her mother read a beautiful Scripture from 1 Corinthians. Often called "the love chapter" of the Bible, the thirteenth chapter sounded perfect for the occasion. "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud" (v. 4). Listening, I wondered if modern brides and grooms knew what prompted the apostle's stirring words. Paul wasn't writing a love poem. The apostle penned a plea to a divided church in an effort to heal its raging divisions.

Simply put, the church at Corinth "was a mess," says scholar Douglas A. Campbell. Seething problems included incest,

prostitution, and rivalry among leaders. Lawsuits between members weren't uncommon. Worship was often chaotic—with those speaking in tongues competing to be heard first, and others prophesying to look impressive (see 1 Corinthians 14).

Underlying this chaos, says Campbell, was “a basic failure in relating to one another in love.” To show the more excellent way, Paul preached love because “love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away” (13:8).

Paul's loving reminders can certainly encourage a wedding party. May they also inspire all of us to live out love and kindness too.
—[Patricia Raybon](#)

How do you show kindness and love in your relationships? How do you show love in the body of Christ?

Your love never fails, loving God, so please guide me in relating to all with the excellence of love.

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-13

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

⁸ Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. ¹¹ When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. ¹² For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

¹³ And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

INSIGHT

In 1 Corinthians 13, the well-known chapter of love so often recited at weddings, Paul defines love not as an emotion but as an action (vv. 4-8). These verses call to mind the fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23, also written by Paul. We can't love as the apostle calls us to love without a

relationship with Jesus and the work of the Spirit in our lives. This is the process of sanctification, whereby we grow to become more like God. Paul compares it to becoming an adult and leaving our childish ways behind (1 Corinthians 13:11-12). Just as we need to do today, the Corinthian church needed to learn to love as Christ called them to love and to use their gifts to serve others (see ch. 12). Spiritual gifts are temporary (13:8-12) and will disappear (v. 10), but “faith, hope and love” will remain and “the greatest of these is love” (v. 13).

The Bible in a Year: [Leviticus 15-16; Matthew 27:1-26](#)



PERFECTLY PERFECT SAVIOR

Saturday, February 15

We have a great high priest . . . who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Hebrews 4:14-15



READ: HEBREWS 4:12-16

The interior designer on the home improvement show raved about the handmade ceramic tiles selected for the home's new shower area. Different from commercially manufactured tiles, which are all identical, these handcrafted pieces were "imperfectly perfect." The imperfections gave each tile unique beauty, adding to the charm and style of an otherwise practical space.

I know little of style or charm, let alone how tiles might contribute positively or negatively to it. Yet while those tiles were imperfectly perfect, Jesus, in the incarnation (His coming to earth as a human

being), was *perfectly* perfect. The writer of Hebrews affirmed, “We do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin” (Hebrews 4:15). At no time during His earthly journey did Jesus speak a sinful word or commit a sinful act. He is perfectly perfect.

The encouragement for us, as Hebrews says, is to “hold firmly to the faith we profess” in Jesus (v. 14) because He understands and empathizes with the struggles we endure. He has been there and done that—but perfectly. Our perfectly perfect Savior can help us with all things. —[Bill Crowder](#)

When have you seen your own imperfections on display? How can you give thanks for the perfect Savior who endured all as our perfect high priest before our Father?

Loving Father, I’m thankful for the incarnate experience of Jesus—that He lived, walked, and worked in our broken world, yet was without sin.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • HEBREWS 4:12-16

¹² *For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.* ¹³ *Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*

¹⁴ *Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.* ¹⁵ *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.* ¹⁶ *Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

INSIGHT

Scripture teaches that Jesus was a perfect priest who offered Himself to God without blemish for the forgiveness of all who accept His sacrifice as payment for their sins (Hebrews 9:12-14). The book of Hebrews is filled with the aroma of this good news! The permanence of Christ’s priesthood is noted in Hebrews 7:23-25. Then the author describes His perfection: “[He] is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to

offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. For the law appoints as high priests men in all their weakness; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever” (vv. 26-28).

The Bible in a Year: [Leviticus 17-18; Matthew 27:27-50](#)



REFLECTING GOD'S MERCY

Sunday, February 16

*In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you.
Matthew 7:12*



READ: MATTHEW 7:7-12

A Finnish soldier in the three-month Winter War with Russia (1939-1940) lay wounded on the battlefield. A Russian soldier walked his way, pointing his rifle. The Finn was certain he'd met his end. However, the Russian handed him a medic kit, then kept moving. Remarkably, the Finn later found himself in a similar situation, only the roles were reversed—a Russian soldier lay wounded and helpless on the battlefield. The Finn handed him medical supplies and walked on.

Jesus gave us a central, guiding principle for our lives: "In

everything, do to others what you would have them do to you” (Matthew 7:12) Can you imagine how different our world would be if believers kept this one simple principle? Can we calculate how much oppression would end if we collectively obeyed Jesus’ wisdom? If only, as He guides us, we would give others the same compassion and mercy we’d hope to receive ourselves. As we “give good gifts” to others, we reflect the heart of our “Father in heaven [who gives] good gifts to those” He loves (v. 11).

It’s vital that we see others as not merely enemies or strangers or people with whom we compete for resources or opportunities. Instead, we should see their need for mercy and kindness just as we need it. And as we do, our posture and perspective will change. Then, as God provides, we can freely offer them the love He’s freely offered to us. —[Winn Collier](#)

Why is it vital to treat others the way you’d like to be treated? How can Jesus help you?

Dear God, please help me reflect Your mercy and love in how I treat others.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • MATTHEW 7:7-12

⁷ Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

⁹ Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹ If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! ¹² So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

INSIGHT

Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) wasn’t His first public address. Matthew 4:13-17 tells us that His teaching ministry had already begun: “Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum . . . From that time on Jesus began to preach.” The Sermon on the Mount, however, was His first *recorded* public message. He shares what life in His kingdom looks like—in sharp contrast to the kingdoms of this world. The Beatitudes (5:3-10) show that His kingdom values people and things

differently than the surrounding cultures. It describes how we're to impact the world around us and relates to issues of the heart (as opposed to the letter) of the law. It even calls His kingdom citizens to love their enemies. Life in His kingdom is characterized by care for the poor, prayer that rests in God's good will, and a trust in the Father that precludes the need for worry. A very different kind of kingdom indeed!

The Bible in a Year: [Leviticus 19-20; Matthew 27:51-66](#)



WISE RESTRAINT IN GOD

Monday, February 17

Do you see someone who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for them. Proverbs 29:20



READ: PROVERBS 29:4-11, 20

Following the South's catastrophic loss at Gettysburg in the American Civil War (1863), General Robert E. Lee led his battered troops back to Southern territory. Heavy rains flooded the Potomac River, blocking his retreat. President Abraham Lincoln urged General George Meade to attack. But Meade's men were just as weary as Lee's. He rested his troops.

Lincoln picked up his quill and wrote a letter in which he confessed he was "distressed immeasurably" at Meade's reluctance to pursue Lee. On the envelope are these words in the president's handwriting:

“To Gen. Meade, never sent, or signed.” And indeed, it never was.

Long before Lincoln, another great leader grasped the importance of reining in our emotions. Anger, no matter how justified, is a dangerously powerful force. “Do you see someone who speaks in haste?” King Solomon asked. “There is more hope for a fool than for them” (Proverbs 29:20). Solomon knew that “by justice a king gives a country stability” (v. 4). He also understood that “fools give full vent to their rage, but the wise bring calm in the end” (v. 11).

And in the end, not sending that letter prevented Lincoln from demoralizing his top general, helped win a necessary war, and contributed to the healing of a nation. We do well to learn from examples like his of wise restraint. —[Tim Gustafson](#)

Why is it important to cautiously give vent to your emotions? How will you do this the next time you're angry?

Father, I give my emotions to You so that Your Spirit will help me avoid speaking in haste.

For further study, read [Why Am I Angry? Understanding Anger's Roots](#).

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • PROVERBS 29:4-11, 20

⁴ *By justice a king gives a country stability,
but those who are greedy for bribes tear it down.*

⁵ *Those who flatter their neighbors
are spreading nets for their feet.*

⁶ *Evildoers are snared by their own sin,
but the righteous shout for joy and are glad.*

⁷ *The righteous care about justice for the poor,
but the wicked have no such concern.*

⁸ *Mockers stir up a city,
but the wise turn away anger.*

⁹ *If a wise person goes to court with a fool,
the fool rages and scoffs, and there is no peace.*

¹⁰ *The bloodthirsty hate a person of integrity
and seek to kill the upright.*

¹¹ *Fools give full vent to their rage,
but the wise bring calm in the end. . . .*

²⁰ *Do you see someone who speaks in haste?
There is more hope for a fool than for them.*

INSIGHT

Proverbs 29 cautions us to restrain and overcome our anger. “The wise turn away anger” (v. 8), whereas “fools give full vent to their rage” (v. 11). An angry person inevitably “stirs up conflict, and a hot-tempered person commits many sins” (v. 22). Unrestrained anger resulted in humanity’s first murder. God warned Cain to rein in his anger lest he be consumed by it. Succumbing, Cain killed his own brother in cold blood (Genesis 4:6-8). Moses, another classic example, killed an Egyptian taskmaster in a moment of rage (Exodus 2:11-12). Years later, angered by the Israelites’ persistent grumblings, Moses disobeyed and dishonored God and unsympathetically disparaged God’s people by striking the rock (Numbers 20:1-13). The psalmist says that “they made Moses angry, and he spoke foolishly” (Psalm 106:33 NLT). Indeed, “A quick-tempered person does foolish things” (Proverbs 14:17). Paul warns, “Don’t sin by letting anger control you . . . for anger gives a foothold to the devil” (Ephesians 4:26-27 NLT).

The Bible in a Year: [Leviticus 21-22; Matthew 28](#)



No FAKE RATINGS

Tuesday, February 18

Put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. Ephesians 4:25



READ: EPHESIANS 4:17, 22-32

A ride-sharing customer shared that he had endured a driver eating the world's smelliest fruit, another driver who was bickering with a girlfriend, and one who tried to get him to invest money in a Ponzi scheme. In each case, instead of a poor rating, he gave the drivers five stars. He explained, "They all seemed like nice people. I didn't want them to be kicked off the app over my bad rating." He gave false reviews—keeping the truth from the drivers . . . and others.

For different reasons, we might withhold the truth from others. But

the apostle Paul encouraged the Ephesian believers to lovingly speak the truth to one another as new creatures in Christ. This required cultivating habits of “righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:24)—living lives that were set apart for Him and that reflected His ways. They were to replace lying with telling one another the truth because lies divide and disrupt while truth unites us as believers. He wrote, “Each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body” (v. 25).

Jesus empowers us with the courage to resist lying and giving one another “fake ratings”—things that can disrupt our unity with other believers. Living a life of love, as He guides us, will lead to our sharing “kind and compassionate” expressions of truth (v. 32).

—[Marvin Williams](#)

When are you tempted to withhold the truth from other believers? Why is it vital to share what's honest and true?

Dear God, please help me to be authentic in my relationships out of love for You and others.

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • EPHESIANS 4:17, 22-32

¹⁷ So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.

²² You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

²⁵ Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. ²⁶ “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold. ²⁸ Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

²⁹ Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

INSIGHT

In Ephesians 4:17-32, Paul contrasts the deceptive ways of "the devil" (v. 27) with the truth of God's ways. The "Gentiles" (who don't believe in God) are lost in "the futility of their thinking" (v. 17) and "darkened in their understanding." Paul notes how this "ignorance" is "due to the hardening of their hearts" (v. 18). This reflects their conscious choice to reject God's truth. In contrast, we've been "taught . . . the truth that is in Jesus" (v. 21) so that we will "put off [our] old self" and "its deceitful desires" (v. 22). We're to live in God's truth.

The Bible in a Year: [Leviticus 23-24; Mark 1:1-22](#)



FINDING LOVE IN GOD

Wednesday, February 19

The LORD saw that Leah was not loved. Genesis 29:31



READ: GENESIS 29:28-35

As a child, when asked, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” Ben would say, “I want to be like Dave.” Ben’s older brother was athletic, sociable, and an honor student. Ben, on the other hand, says, “I was clumsy in sports, timid, and struggled with a learning disability. I’d always wanted a close relationship with Dave, but he didn’t. He called me ‘the boring one.’ ”

Ben spent much of his life pursuing his older brother’s love in vain. It was only when Ben became a follower of Jesus that he learned to rest in the love of his Savior instead.

Leah, the first wife of Jacob, spent much of her life pursuing her

husband's love (Genesis 29:32-35). Jacob, however, remained devoted to Rachel. But God saw Leah's plight and made up for the rejection in her life. He blessed her by allowing her to be a mother, a great honor in her culture at that time (v. 31). Leah, unseen and unheard by her husband, was lovingly seen and heard by God (vv. 32-33). She gave birth to a daughter and six sons (35:23), one of whom was Judah, a forefather of Jesus Himself. She said at his birth, "This time I will praise the LORD" (29:35). Leah lived a long life in Canaan and was buried in a place of honor—with Jacob's family (49:29-32).

When we experience rejection, let's find comfort in Leah's story. We can rest in the love of God, who makes up for what we lack. —[Karen Huang](#)

How can you rest in God's love when you're rejected? How might you entrust your pain to Him?

Dear God, thank You that Your love heals me in all the places where I've been rejected.

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • GENESIS 29:28-35

²⁸ [Jacob] finished the week with Leah, and then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife. ²⁹ Laban gave his servant Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her attendant. ³⁰ Jacob made love to Rachel also, and his love for Rachel was greater than his love for Leah. And he worked for Laban another seven years.

³¹ When the LORD saw that Leah was not loved, he enabled her to conceive, but Rachel remained childless. ³² Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben, for she said, "It is because the LORD has seen my misery. Surely my husband will love me now."

³³ She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "Because the LORD heard that I am not loved, he gave me this one too." So she named him Simeon.

³⁴ Again she conceived, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "Now at last my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." So he was named Levi.

³⁵ She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "This time I will praise the LORD." So she named him Judah. Then she stopped having children.

INSIGHT

Genesis 29:31–30:24 and 35:16-26 tell of the births of the twelve sons of Jacob, whose name means "deceiver." His name was later changed by God to *Israel*, which means, he "struggled with God" (32:28). Jacob's life

was characterized by favoritism (29:18, 30), spousal neglect, jealousy, and rivalry (29:31–30:1). That God would name His chosen nation after Jacob and use his twelve sons to become the ancestral heads of the twelve tribes of the nation of Israel points to His covenantal love and unmerited grace (see Romans 9:10-18). Equally noteworthy in Leah's sad story is that two crucial institutions of the nation of Israel—the Aaronic-Levitical priesthood (Numbers 18:1-7) and the kingship (Genesis 49:10)—come from her third and fourth sons, Levi and Judah (29:34-35). These two sons were from a marriage in which she was unwanted and unloved. Yet God honored Leah and graciously looked after her (vv. 31-35; 30:17-21).

The Bible in a Year: [Leviticus 25; Mark 1:23-45](#)



THE SIMPLE TRUTH

Thursday, February 20

Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved. Acts 16:31



READ: ROMANS 10:9-11

When my wife and I go biking, we like to know how many miles we've pedaled. So, I went to a bike shop to buy an odometer and came home with a minicomputer that I discovered was a bit too complicated to program.

I headed back to the bike shop, where the person who sold it to me had it working in no time. I realized it wasn't as difficult to understand as I thought.

In life, new things and new ideas can seem complicated. Think about salvation, for instance. Some people might think becoming a child of God is complicated.

Yet, the Bible spells it out in simple terms: “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). No set of rules to follow. No mysteries to solve.

Here’s the simple truth: We’ve all sinned (Romans 3:23). Jesus came to earth to save us from the penalty of our sin—death and eternal separation from Him (Matthew 1:21; 1 Peter 2:24). He arose from the dead (Romans 10:9). And we’re saved from spiritual death to eternal life by trusting in what He did for us (John 3:16).

Consider what it will mean for you to simply trust and believe in Jesus. Let Him give you “life . . . to the full” (John 10:10). —[Dave Branon](#)

What will it mean for you to receive salvation in Jesus? If you’ve been saved, what difference has faith in Him made in your life?

Loving God, I realize that I’m a sinner—I do things that are wrong in Your eyes. I also realize that You sent Jesus to earth to die on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and redeem me. Thank You for the salvation You’ve provided!

Learn more here: ODB.org/personal-relationship-with-god.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • ROMANS 10:9-11

⁹ *If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.* ¹⁰ *For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.* ¹¹ *As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.”*

INSIGHT

The context of the promise in Romans 10 that “if you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (v. 9) is the full inclusion of gentiles—non-Jewish people—into God’s people and into a saving relationship with Him. Before Christ came, gentiles could only become part of God’s people by converting to Judaism and following Jewish law. But Paul argued that gentiles were no longer required to follow Jewish law to be considered righteous before God. Instead, “Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes” (v. 4). This means that a relationship with God is accessible to all—“there is

no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him” (v. 12).

The Bible in a Year: [Leviticus 26-27; Mark 2](#)



GETTING BACK UP

Friday, February 21

For though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again, but the wicked stumble when calamity strikes. Proverbs 24:16



READ: PROVERBS 24:15-22

As a teen, I was enthralled with the sport of figure skating. I loved the blend of artistry and athleticism on ice, with the fast spins, high jumps, and perfect poses. After watching many professional skaters perform, I finally got the opportunity to go ice skating and be part of a group lesson. Along with learning how to glide and stop, we learned some of the most important skills for a skater at any level—how to fall and get back up quickly. Later, I learned many spins and jumps in private lessons, but always had to rely on the basics of how to get up after a fall.

We don't have to be athletes to know that "falling" is part of life. Perhaps we fall because we've sinned, we stumble due to a mistake, or we get knocked down by an overwhelming circumstance. Maybe we find ourselves being attacked by the devil one way or another. "We are . . . persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed" (2 Corinthians 4:8-9). No matter the reason, we all fall and experience failure in life.

But we're not meant to live in defeat, shame, or regret. When the enemy is lurking nearby and trying to plunder from us (Proverbs 24:15), we need to remember that God is fighting for us and will help us get back up, "for though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again" (v. 16).

When we fall, let's quickly turn to God and fix our eyes on Him who gives us the strength to get back up. —[Nancy Gavilanes](#)

How do you handle the falls in life? How has God helped you get back up?

Dear God, thank You for helping me get up after a fall.

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • PROVERBS 24:15-22

*¹⁵ Do not lurk like a thief near the house of the righteous,
do not plunder their dwelling place;*

*¹⁶ for though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again,
but the wicked stumble when calamity strikes.*

*¹⁷ Do not gloat when your enemy falls;
when they stumble, do not let your heart rejoice,*

*¹⁸ or the LORD will see and disapprove
and turn his wrath away from them.*

*¹⁹ Do not fret because of evildoers
or be envious of the wicked,*

*²⁰ for the evildoer has no future hope,
and the lamp of the wicked will be snuffed out.*

*²¹ Fear the LORD and the king, my son,
and do not join with rebellious officials,*

*²² for those two will send sudden destruction on them,
and who knows what calamities they can bring?*

INSIGHT

Proverbs 22:17–24:22 includes the heading “Thirty Sayings of the Wise.” This section is a collection of wise words “of counsel and knowledge” (22:20) to encourage the reader to trust in God and live honest and God-honoring lives (vv. 19-21).”

Each saying in this section of Proverbs encourages the reader to adopt or avoid certain behaviors and uses the characteristic injunction “Do not . . .” followed by the reason or consequence of obedience or disobedience (see 22:22-23; 23:3, 4-5; 24:1-2). Proverbs 24:15-22 focuses primarily on our attitude toward evildoers. We’re not to imitate their evil deeds, gloat over their downfall (vv. 17-18), or envy their successes (vv. 19-20). Instead, we’re to fear both God and his agent, the governing authorities, for they will punish evildoers (vv. 21-22).

The Bible in a Year: [Numbers 1-3; Mark 3](#)



LEGACY OF LOVE IN JESUS

Saturday, February 22

As I have loved you, so you must love one another. John 13:34



READ: JOHN 13:31-36

In Sweden, there's a concept known as *döstädning*. It literally means "death cleaning." The idea is that as we grow older, we should stop accumulating "stuff" and begin to cut out the clutter we have amassed throughout our lives. "Swedish death cleaning" is actually a gift of love to children and friends, for it simplifies for them the task of wading through what we leave behind.

As believers in Jesus, at a certain age we think about our legacy—what survives us. This is often framed in terms of money, inheritance, or charitable giving—and there's much to be said for that. But it might be helpful to look at Jesus in His final hours with

His disciples: “Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later” (John 13:36). In two verses (vv. 34-35), He uses the word *love* or *loved* four times—His legacy was love. He told them: “As I have loved you, so you must love one another” (v. 34).

It may be good to do some “Swedish death cleaning” in our lives, removing clutter to leave behind only the most important things. But it really isn’t about things or money. The most important legacy you can leave behind is your love for Jesus. When children and friends remember you as one who loved Jesus, that’s the best gift of all. It gives new meaning to the phrase “left behind.” —[Kenneth Petersen](#)

How do your family and friends see your love for Jesus demonstrated? How might you share that love more openly?

Dear God, thank You for Your love and for the gift of Jesus in my life. Please help me to show Your love to those around me.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • JOHN 13:31-36

³¹ *When he was gone, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. ³² If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.*

³³ *“My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.*

³⁴ *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

³⁶ *Simon Peter asked him, “Lord, where are you going?”
Jesus replied, “Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.”*

INSIGHT

John’s words which close the section preceding John 13:31-36 are elegant and laden with meaning: “And it was night” (v. 30). Here John implies much more than the mere passage of daylight. Judas has been possessed by Satan himself (v. 27) and has left the company of the disciples (v. 30). At this pivotal point, Jesus says, “Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him” (v. 31). It may seem odd that Christ speaks triumphant words at such a dark time. Judas has left to betray Him, Peter will deny Him (v. 38), and the disciples (except John) will abandon Him

(Matthew 26:56). Yet Jesus prayed, “I have brought you [His Father] glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do” (John 17:4). In Christ’s death and resurrection, the Father revealed the full scope of His love for us.

The Bible in a Year: [Numbers 4-6; Mark 4:1-20](#)



PLANTED BY THE STREAM

Sunday, February 23

That person is like a tree planted by streams of water. Psalm 1:3



READ: PSALM 1

Bill is an older retired gentleman who lives alone and recently had to give up driving. He needs help to pick up groceries, prescriptions, and get to church on Sundays. "But you know what," says Bill, "I love my days at home. I enjoy free worship music online and Bible teaching on the TV all day long." Bill spends his days surrounded by Scripture, prayer, and praise.

The habits we keep influence where our hearts are planted. Psalm 1 describes the habits of someone who has found favor in God: they delight in His truth, meditate on it often, and therefore do not follow the rebellious pattern of the world (vv. 1-2). Hardship will come to

everyone, but a life established in the ways of God “is like a tree planted by streams of water . . . whose leaf does not wither” (v. 3). Depending on our season of life, we might not be able to spend hours a day in Bible study. However, Jesus said He satisfies anyone who is thirsty that comes to Him, and the Holy Spirit fills His followers like a river (John 7:37-39). We can steep our hearts in living water through praise and Scripture, and also through caring for others, talking to God while we work, and asking for forgiveness when we mess up.

Following the wisdom of God plants our hearts in fertile soil. That life gets called righteous, and God watches over it (Psalm 1:6).
—[Karen Pimpo](#)

What habits keep you planted by the life-giving water of Jesus? How does that change depending on what season of life you're in?

Dear Jesus, may I come to You when I feel thirsty and dry.

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • PSALM 1

- ¹ *Blessed is the one
who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers,*
- ² *but whose delight is in the law of the LORD,
and who meditates on his law day and night.*
- ³ *That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither—
whatever they do prospers.*
- ⁴ *Not so the wicked!
They are like chaff
that the wind blows away.*
- ⁵ *Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.*
- ⁶ *For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.*

INSIGHT

Psalm 1, which introduces the book of Psalms, contrasts the way of the

“blessed” with the self-destructive path of “the wicked” (v. 1). The psalm depicts a primary way of seeking God’s path: through continual meditation on God’s revelation in “the law” (v. 2). In this way, someone can experience being rooted in and sustained by God’s wisdom “like a tree planted by streams of water” (v. 3).

God’s ultimate revelation of Himself is Christ, God’s Word (John 1:1). In Ephesians 3, Paul uses similar imagery of being “rooted” (v. 17) to describe the believer’s bond with Christ, praying that God would “strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being” (v. 16). Through being “rooted and established” in Christ’s love (v. 17) —“that surpasses knowledge”—we can be “filled to the measure of all the fulness of God” (v. 19).

The Bible in a Year: [Numbers 7-8; Mark 4:21-41](#)



RAINBOWS AND GOD'S PROMISES

Monday, February 24

I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Genesis 9:13



READ: GENESIS 9:8-17

While I stood watching the amazing power of Niagara Falls, I noticed that other tourists suddenly began taking photos. Looking in the same direction, I saw a rainbow had appeared—arching across the river. It seemed to begin at the base of the Horseshoe Falls, ending at the base of the American Falls.

In reality, there's no end to a rainbow. A rainbow is a full circle, something I've seen only once. I was gazing out an airplane window when the sun—shining in just the right direction—revealed a full-circle rainbow in the distance above the clouds. I sat enthralled with

the sight until the plane turned and the circle disappeared.

That rainbow gave me much to consider—how God has no beginning or end, and that He reveals His promises to us no matter where we are. Our never-ending, eternal God “set [His] rainbow in the clouds” (Genesis 9:13) as a promise to never flood the earth again “to destroy all life” (v. 15). Even today, our Creator shares His reminder of that promise with us, His creation (vv. 13-16).

Isaiah 40:28 says, “The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth. . . . No one can measure the depths of his understanding” (NLT). What an amazing thought! We will have eternity to learn about our promise keeper, and we’ll never reach the ultimate depth of His understanding. —[Brent Hackett](#)

What attributes of God do you think about when you see a rainbow? How do His promises encourage you?

Thank You, Father, for creating rainbows and revealing them to us as confirmation of Your promise to us.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • GENESIS 9:8-17

⁸ Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: ⁹ “I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you ¹⁰ and with every living creature that was with you—the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you—every living creature on earth. ¹¹ I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

¹² And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: ¹³ I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴ Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, ¹⁵ I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. ¹⁶ Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.”

¹⁷ So God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth.”

INSIGHT

The word *covenant* first appears in Genesis 6:18 when God says to Noah, “I will establish my covenant with you.” Though the context in which this word is used determines its specific meaning, broadly speaking, the word *covenant* refers to a “formal agreement between two or more parties.” Sometimes, as with God’s covenant with Noah (9:8-17) and Abraham (17:9-14), a sign is associated with it. In addition to the Noahic and Abrahamic covenants, other covenants found in the Old Testament include the Mosaic (Exodus 19-24), Davidic (2 Samuel 7), and the New Covenants (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

The Bible in a Year: [Numbers 9-11; Mark 5:1-20](#)



RESPONDING TO GENEROSITY

Tuesday, February 25

Give, and it will be given to you. Luke 6:38



READ: LUKE 6:31-38

When Lydia was gifted \$10,000 by anonymous donors, she spent little of it on herself. Instead, she gave generous gifts to coworkers, family, flood victims, and charities. Lydia, unbeknownst to her, was part of a study following how two hundred people responded to a no-strings-attached gift of \$10,000 through a bank transfer. That study found that *more than two-thirds* of that gifted money was given away. Sharing this story, Chris Anderson, head of the TED non-profit media organization, reflected, “It turns out that . . . we human beings are wired to respond to generosity with generosity.”

In Scripture, we find that when people live generously, they reflect the heart of the God who made them. God is generous, merciful, and kind, not just to some but to all—even “to the ungrateful and wicked” (Luke 6:35). So Jesus instructed those who desire to reflect God’s character to “love,” “do good to,” and “lend to” even enemies “without expecting to get anything back” (vv. 32-35).

When we give without expecting anything back, we’ll find that it’s never a way of life that harms us. Jesus pointed this out too, saying, “Give, and it will be given to you. . . . With the measure you use, it will be measured to you” (v. 38). When we respond to God’s generosity by living generously, we find we’re enriched in countless ways. —[Monica La Rose](#)

How have you found joy through giving? How has others’ giving enriched your life?

Gracious God, thank You for the joy of giving.

For further study, read [The Benefits of Generosity](#).

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • LUKE 6:31-38

³¹ *Do to others as you would have them do to you.*

³² *If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them.* ³³ *And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that.* ³⁴ *And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full.* ³⁵ *But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.* ³⁶ *Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.*

³⁷ *Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.* ³⁸ *Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.*

INSIGHT

The teaching of Luke 6:31-38 is similar to that of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:38-48, which Jesus taught “up on a mountainside” (v. 1). Christ taught the sermon in Luke 6—the Sermon on the Plain—on another occasion: “on a level place” (v. 17) or “in the plain” (KJV). Here,

Jesus taught about unconditional love for others, including enemies, so that we can be “children of the Most High” (v. 35). God “is kind to the ungrateful and wicked” (v. 35); we’re to be merciful in the same measure that the “Father is merciful” (v. 36). In this sermon, Christ articulated a maxim popularly known as the Golden Rule: “Do to others as you would have them do to you” (v. 31), espousing the principle of “a man reaps what he sows” (Galatians 6:7). Christ spoke of reciprocal treatment, “for with the measure you use, it will be measured to you” (Luke 6:38).

The Bible in a Year: [Numbers 12-14; Mark 5:21-43](#)



THE JOY OF GIVING

Wednesday, February 26

Tabitha . . . was always doing good and helping the poor. Acts 9:36



READ: ACTS 9:36-43

On a five-hour flight, a woman vigorously crocheted a sweater. As she moved her hook in and out of her yarn, she noticed a five-month-old baby who was mesmerized by her motions. Then the woman got an idea: instead of finishing the sweater she was working on; she would make a hat for her little admirer. She had to finish the hat in the remaining time of the flight, however—just one hour! When the woman presented the child's mom with the little hat, the whole family accepted it with joy while the other passengers smiled and applauded.

Surprise gifts are often received with joy. Whether they're gifts we

need or simply want, through them the giver may also show us the kindness of Christ. In the early church, Tabitha was known for sharing clothes and “always doing good and helping the poor” (Acts 9:36). When she died, her beneficiaries displayed “the robes and other clothing that [she] had made . . . them” (v. 39). They testified about her kindness and how she’d touched their lives.

In a dramatic turn of events, Peter, through the Holy Spirit’s power, brought Tabitha back to life (v. 40). His actions filled those who loved her with joy—and led many others to believe in Christ (v. 42).

Our actions of kindness can be some of the most memorable testifying we do. As God provides, let’s share some surprise gifts with others today. —[Katara Patton](#)

What gifts can you share with others? What has it meant for you to receive gifts of kindness?

Heavenly Father, please remind me to be kind to others—sharing my gifts and treasures.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • ACTS 9:36-43

³⁶ *In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); she was always doing good and helping the poor.* ³⁷ *About that time she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room.* ³⁸ *Lydda was near Joppa; so when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, “Please come at once!”*

³⁹ *Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them.*

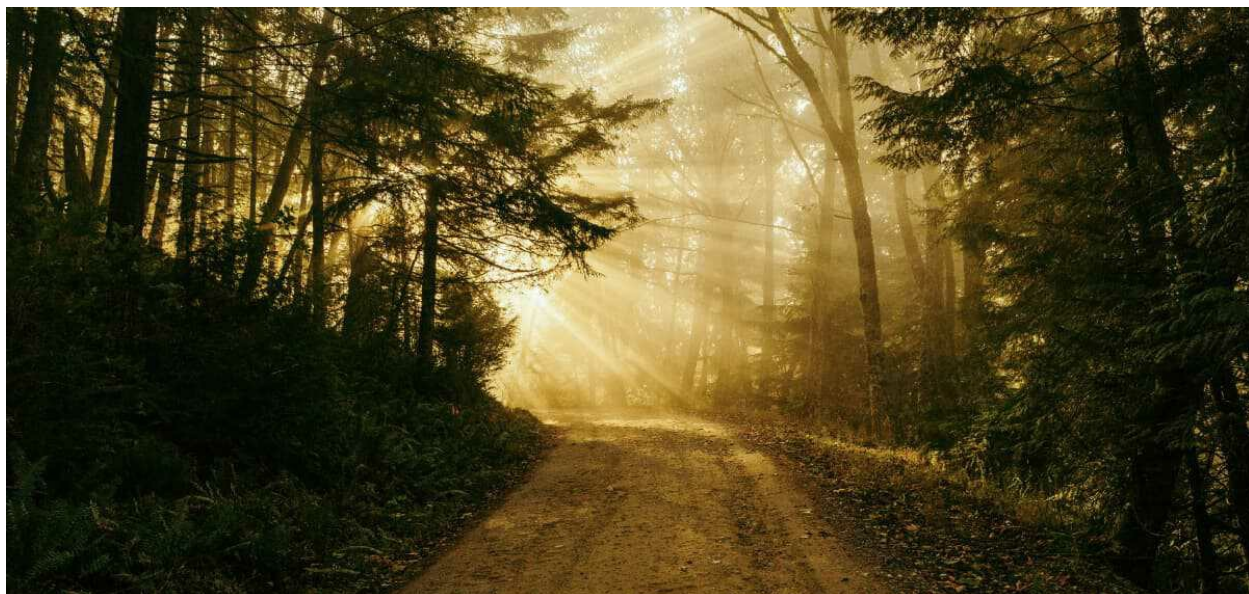
⁴⁰ *Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, “Tabitha, get up.” She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up.* ⁴¹ *He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called for the believers, especially the widows, and presented her to them alive.* ⁴² *This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord.* ⁴³ *Peter stayed in Joppa for some time with a tanner named Simon.*

INSIGHT

The phrase “doing good” (Acts 9:36) also appears in Acts 10:38 where Peter, preaching in the home of Cornelius, summarized the ministry of Jesus: “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power,

and . . . he went around *doing good* and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.” Tabitha—a disciple of Christ—followed His example of helping those in need by making clothes as a tangible expression of her care (9:39). Peter, likewise, followed Christ in doing good by using his apostolic gifts. It’s hard to miss the similarities between Acts 9:39-42 and Mark 5:37-43 where Peter had a front row seat at Jairus’ house (see also Luke 8:51) when Jesus raised Jairus’ daughter from the dead. After Christ had returned to heaven, His good works continued through those who believed in Him.

The Bible in a Year: [Numbers 15-16; Mark 6:1-29](#)



A PATH FORWARD

Thursday, February 27

Love [your wife] as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods. Hosea 3:1



READ: HOSEA 3

What do we do? Scott and Bree agonized over how to relate to friends and family members who'd chosen unbiblical ways of life. As they studied the Scriptures and prayed, a path forward emerged: First, they reinforced their love for their friends and loved ones; second, they expressed what was true and good about them based on God's good design; and third, they shared how they would lovingly interact with them based on Scriptural wisdom. In time, greater relational trust was built as Scott and Bree extended Christlike love.

Hosea likely wondered how to relate to his wife—a woman whose chosen way of life didn’t honor God or him. God directed the prophet to “show your love to your wife again, though she is . . . an adulteress” (Hosea 3:1). The prophet evidently reinforced his love for her while also expressing what was right and true for them and their relationship before God (v. 3). His relationship with her symbolized God’s own challenge with rebellious ancient Israel. Though they’d chosen a wrong course, He provided a path forward, telling them His “love will know no bounds” (14:4 NLT) but to choose His ways for they “are right” (v. 9).

As God provides wisdom and discernment, let’s continue to extend His love and truth to those who’ve chosen unbiblical ways of life. His example provides the path forward. —[Tom Felten](#)

How has God shown love and truth to you? How can you show God’s love and truth to those on unbiblical paths?

Loving God, please help me to reflect Your truth and love to those far from You.

For further study, read [Evangelism—Reaching Out through Relationships](#).

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • HOSEA 3

¹ The LORD said to me, “Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another man and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes.”

² So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley. ³ Then I told her, “You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will behave the same way toward you.”

⁴ For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or household gods. ⁵ Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the LORD and to his blessings in the last days.

INSIGHT

The fourteen chapters of Hosea comprise one of the stranger books of the Bible. Why would God command His prophet Hosea to “marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her” (Hosea 1:2)? The answer comes in the first chapter: “for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the LORD” (v. 2). God intended Hosea’s

publicly disastrous marriage to be a vivid depiction to the people of what they were doing to Him by engaging in obscene idolatry. He said of them, “She will chase after her lovers” (2:7). Yet God would bring the people back from exile. Hosea 3 anticipates a day when Israel “will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the LORD and to his blessings in the last days” (v. 5). God will always love them, as Hosea loved his wife.

The Bible in a Year: [Numbers 17-19; Mark 6:30-56](#)



PEACE OF CHRIST

Friday, February 28

As members of one body you were called to peace. Colossians 3:15



READ: COLOSSIANS 3:8-17

Would they win by arguing? Never, a small-town leader warned residents in Adirondack Park where a pitched battle between environmentalists and small-business owners ignited the “Adirondack Wars.” The name described their fight whether to save the area’s pristine wilderness in Upstate New York or develop it.

“Go back wherever you came from!” a local leader had shouted at an environmentalist. But soon a new message emerged. “Don’t yell at each other. Try to talk to each other.” A Common Ground Alliance was formed to build bridges between warring factions. Civic

dialogue led to progress—with nearly a million acres of wild land protected even as Adirondack towns grew more prosperous than they'd been in twenty years.

Peaceful coexistence is a start, but Paul taught something even better. To the new believers in Colossae, he said, “Rid yourselves of . . . anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips” (Colossians 3:8). Paul urged them to exchange their old ways for a new nature in Christ: “Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience,” he wrote (v. 12).

The invitation is offered today to all believers: surrender our old cantankerous lives to new life in Christ. “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace” (v. 15). Then, in our peace, the world will see Jesus. —[Patricia Raybon](#)

Whom could you forgive today? With whom can you make peace?

Dear God, when my old life erupts in anger, please grant me new peace in You.

Discover more on the [healing power of forgiveness](#).

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • COLOSSIANS 3:8-17

⁸ But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. ⁹ Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. ¹¹ Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

¹² Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

INSIGHT

Paul wrote to the Colossian church to correct false teaching about Jesus and to instruct us how to live “worthy of the Lord”—fruitful and faithful lives that “please him in every way” (1:10). The apostle emphasizes the supremacy of Christ in creation, redemption, and the church (chs. 1-2). He then calls for Jesus to be supreme in their lives (chs. 3-4). Using the metaphors of putting on and taking off clothes, Paul says to live a transformed life—a Christlike life reflecting His character (3:1-17). The apostle lists various sins that believers must “put to death” (v. 5): “sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed . . . anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language” (vv. 5, 8). Then he instructs believers to replace them with the Christ-honoring virtues of “compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience” (v. 12). We’re to “bear with each other and forgive one another” (v. 13) and envelop everything in love (v. 14).

The Bible in a Year: [Numbers 20-22; Mark 7:1-13](#)



JESUS, OUR TRUE SHEPHERD

For generations, the Rebanks family has tended sheep in northern England. In his remarkable book *The Shepherd's Life*, James Rebanks recounts how his family cut a farm out of marginal acreage overrun by rushes and thistles. Only hearty shepherds can do this type of work. The Rebanks work hard to keep their Herdwick sheep alive through the long, dark winters when ice and cold threaten and grazing is sparse. Year round, they strive to defend the sheep from disease and fight off predators. They watch over the Herdwick with relentless diligence, tender affection, and grueling tenacity. The Rebanks, like most shepherds, are doggedly caring and generous, giving all they have for their sheep.

James Rebanks' account dismantles any idyllic, romantic vision we might have of tending sheep. Shepherds don't spend their days merely frolicking through the lush countryside, doting on cute creatures. They stand at the brink of danger. Consider the world of

Psalm 23. This well-known prayer and the comfort it offers presents one basic truth: the Shepherd watches over us.

“The LORD is my shepherd,” the psalmist says, “I lack nothing” (23:1). This line provides the foundation on which the rest of the psalm—and our entire lives—rests. These words don’t ignore the grim realities most of us face. Rather, these comforting words announce a profound assertion: Because we have a good Shepherd, we possess *everything* we need. Our Shepherd guides us into verdant green pastures and alongside quiet, healing waters. He refreshes our weary, sorrowful, and anxious souls.

Unfortunately, it’s still true that we must, as the psalmist says, “walk through the valley of the shadow of death” (v. 4 KJV). And yet, even here we rebuff fear—not because we have everything under control, but because we’ve encountered the Shepherd whose reliable, faithful presence consumes every dread. “I will fear no evil,” the psalmist says, “for you are with me” (v. 4).

We need not fear because we have a Shepherd who is both kind and powerful. His rod and His staff comfort us (v. 4). The staff (a hook used to pull a wayward sheep from the cliff’s edge) and the rod (a club used to beat away predators) reveal how the Shepherd is at the same time tender and formidable.

Moreover, our Shepherd provides a feast in the midst of our troubles. He provides abundance—giving *more* than we need (v. 5). Our Shepherd always watches out for our well-being, pursues us with relentless care, and fends off all evils.

The early believers in Jesus understood Psalm 23 to point to Jesus, the true Shepherd. We don’t have to simply read ancient writers to make this connection. Jesus connected the dots Himself. “I am the good shepherd,” He said (John 10:11). Everything the shepherd is in Psalm 23, Jesus is for us now. Because He’s our good Shepherd, we have everything we need. Jesus brings us into His perfect rest. He restores our broken hearts. He carries us through the middle of the valley of the shadow of death (not around it, but *through* it). When we go astray, Jesus is gentle and kind and tender. When the enemy prowls, baring ravenous fangs, our Shepherd is powerful and

unrelenting.

If we want to know what Jesus is like, one way we find out is by discovering what the psalm's shepherd is like. Jesus is faithful, never abandoning us. He's generous, always providing for us. He's wise, always knowing what we truly need. Jesus is tender, caring for our trembling hearts. He's powerful, defending us from whatever threatens to harm us (even the things within us that threaten to undo us).

Shepherds have a unique call, an intimate signal that lets the sheep know they're near. Once in Israel, I watched the shepherds in wonder. Their skill, their swiftness, their knowledge of the sheep and the countryside inspired me. Their tenderness toward their flocks and their keen readiness to jump to action at the first sight of danger were comforting. The sheep were at peace, safe in the care of their shepherd.

And so are we.

Winn Collier, *Our Daily Bread* author

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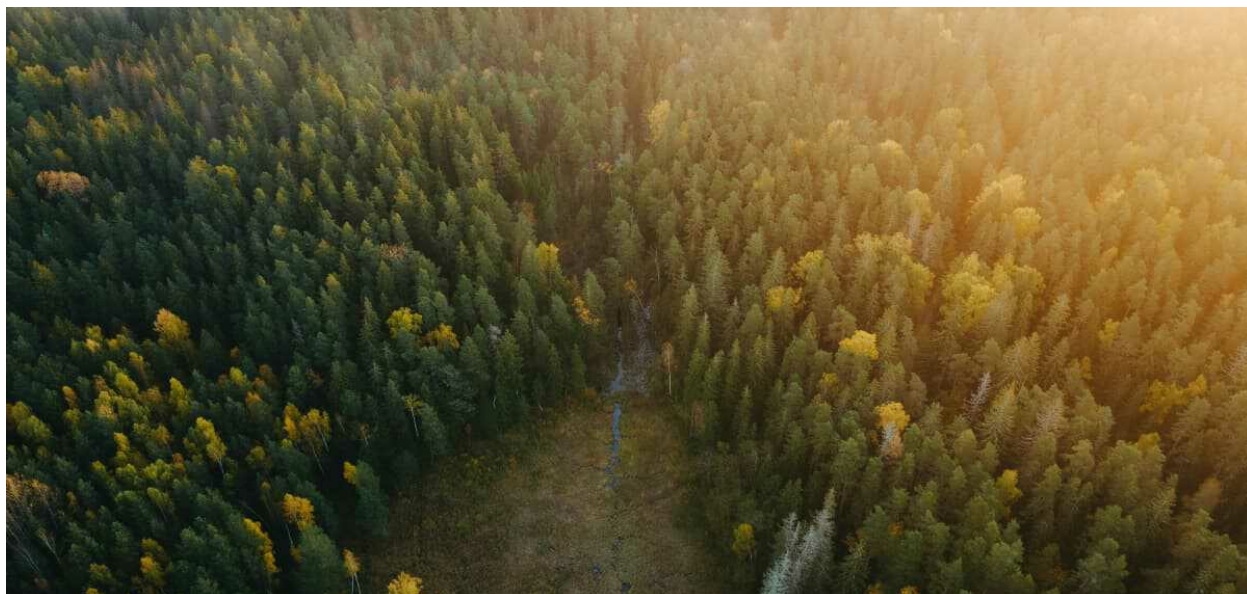
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UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

Saturday, March 1

The word of God is alive and active. . . . [It] judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Hebrews 4:12



READ: 2 TIMOTHY 3:14-16

How important is the Bible? It's so vital that people in many countries risk their lives to translate it into their native languages. Often, these are ordinary believers in Jesus who face arrest for translating the words of Scripture into a heart language others can understand.

One female translator from a country hostile to believers in Jesus said, "I must complete this work. I want to see my beloved ones experience salvation in Christ." And a man who organizes regular citizens to clandestinely translate Scripture explains that the Bible is

essential to growing mature believers in local churches: “You can start a church, but . . . [without] the Bible in its heart language, it will typically only last one generation.”

Why are they doing this? Because there’s no other book like the Bible. Its preservation through the centuries is unique. Its authenticity and its representation of the human heart is accurate. It’s “alive and active . . . [and] judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). And “all Scripture is God-breathed” (2 Timothy 3:16), inspired by Him. And most important, it reveals the source and reality of “salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (v. 15).

Let’s read, cherish, and live by the Scriptures. And as God provides, let’s help those around the world receive it and understand it.
—[Dave Branon](#)

What’s your favorite aspect of the Bible? How can you help others understand it better?

Dear God, thank You for the Scriptures and for the privilege of sharing them with others.

For further study, read [The Hard Task of Reading Well](#).

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • 2 TIMOTHY 3:14-16

¹⁴ *But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it,* ¹⁵ *and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.* ¹⁶ *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.*

INSIGHT

The inspiration of the Scriptures is an astonishing concept to consider. God, in His matchless wisdom, breathed out the words of the Bible by the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16-17; see Matthew 22:43) while utilizing the personalities, experiences, and even vocabularies of the individual writers. Over a span of about fifteen hundred years, God used forty different writers to produce a book that has a single and clearly coherent message: God’s love and rescue of His lost and broken creation. More specifically, that message focuses on the rescuer, Jesus Himself. The Old Testament points to and prepares the way for Him, and the New Testament explains His person and work. The Bible is so much more

than a collection of sixty-six random books of religious history. It's a cohesive message of redeeming grace, accomplished through Christ.

The Bible in a Year: [Numbers 23-25; Mark 7:14-37](#)



JESUS—OUR PLACE OF REST

Sunday, March 2

Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Matthew 11:29



READ: PSALM 32:1-7

In 1943, a camp in rural Maryland called Shangri-La was purchased as a retreat for US President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Rustic, quiet, and remote, it provided “an opportunity for solitude and tranquility,” according to the White House website, “as well as an ideal place to work and host foreign leaders.” When Dwight Eisenhower became president, he renamed this retreat Camp David in honor of his father and his grandson, and the name stuck. Aside from increased security measures, there has been very little modernizing of the camp. It remains the perfect place for US

presidents and their families to escape and rest.

Believers in Jesus also have a retreat where we can find rest in the midst of our turbulent world. In Psalm 32:7, King David wrote, “You [God] are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.” David recognized that God was his true place of safety.

Jesus welcomes us to find rest and restoration in Him. He says, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:28-29).

He can be our place of rest any time, every time, and all the time.
—[Bill Crowder](#)

What robs you of peace and rest? How might you seek to find rest in Jesus?

Loving God, I’m tired. This world is tough, and sometimes I feel like the very life is drained from me. Please help me to be more intentional about coming to You and finding rest in Your gracious presence.

Discover how prayer can [give you peace and rest](#).

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • PSALM 32:1-7

- ¹ *Blessed is the one
whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.*
- ² *Blessed is the one
whose sin the LORD does not count against them
and in whose spirit is no deceit.*
- ³ *When I kept silent,
my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.*
- ⁴ *For day and night
your hand was heavy on me;
my strength was sapped
as in the heat of summer.*
- ⁵ *Then I acknowledged my sin to you
and did not cover up my iniquity.
I said, “I will confess
my transgressions to the LORD.”
And you forgave*

the guilt of my sin.

*⁶ Therefore let all the faithful pray to you
while you may be found;
surely the rising of the mighty waters
will not reach them.*

*⁷ You are my hiding place;
you will protect me from trouble
and surround me with songs of deliverance.*

INSIGHT

Psalm 32 has traditionally been classified as one of seven penitential (repentant) psalms. Other psalms in this category are Psalms 6, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143. In Psalm 32, the psalmist acknowledges the serious impact of unconfessed sin on the body: “When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. . . . My strength was sapped as in the heat of summer” (vv. 3-4). This emphasis on the impact of sin on our bodies can be found in other psalms of repentance. In Psalm 38, for example, we read, “Because of your wrath there is no health in my body” (V. 3). The focus in Psalm 32, however, is the joy and peace to be found for all who turn to God for forgiveness (vv. 1-2, 5).

The Bible in a Year: [Numbers 26-27; Mark 8:1-21](#)



EXTENDING GOD'S LOVE

Monday, March 3

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise." Luke 10:37



READ: LUKE 10:27-37

One winter day in Michigan, a delivery man noticed an elderly woman shoveling snow off her driveway. He stopped and convinced the eighty-one-year-old to let him finish the job. Concerned that he'd be late delivering his other packages, she retrieved another shovel. They worked side by side for almost fifteen minutes as her neighbors watched from afar. "I'm thankful you helped me," she said. "You're God-sent."

During a conversation with an expert in the law, Jesus redefined the concept of loving our neighbors (Luke 10:25-37). When Jesus asked him to interpret the law he knew so well, the expert said, " 'Love the

Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself' " (v. 27).

Then Jesus shared a story about two religious leaders who ignored a robbery victim. But a Samaritan—a person most Jewish leaders in those days considered inferior—sacrificed to help the man in need (vv. 30-35). When the expert of the law realized that the one who had mercy on the man had loved like a neighbor, Jesus encouraged him to do likewise (vv. 36-37).

Loving others isn't always easy or convenient. But as Jesus overwhelms us with His love, He'll help us love all our neighbors like the Good Samaritan did. —[Xochitl Dixon](#)

How has God shown you His love through an unexpected neighbor? Who can you show God's love to in a practical way this week?

Dear Jesus, please give me opportunities to love all the people You created and who you call my neighbors.

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • LUKE 10:27-37

²⁷ *[The expert in the law] answered, " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' "*

²⁸ *"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."*

²⁹ *But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"*

³⁰ *In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'*

³⁶ *"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"*

³⁷ *The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."
Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."*

INSIGHT

Luke 10:27-37 features the parable of the Good Samaritan. What makes it so remarkable is that Samaritans were outcasts. As a result of Assyria's invasion of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, the Israelites intermarried with Assyrians, resulting in this mixed-race people. Though hated by the Jews, Samaritans were clearly people Christ cared about, as seen not only in this parable but also in John 4:1-42 in His encounters with a Samaritan woman and in Luke 17:11-19 with a Samaritan leper. God's care for the Samaritans is just one example of the comprehensive nature of His love described in John 3:16.

The Bible in a Year: [Numbers 28-30; Mark 8:22-38](#)



READING, WRITING, AND JESUS

Tuesday, March 4

You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. Acts 3:15



READ: ACTS 3:15-24

Moses with horns? That's the way he's depicted in Michelangelo's masterpiece sculpture completed in 1515. Two horns protrude from Moses' hair just above his forehead.

Michelangelo wasn't alone—many Renaissance and medieval artists depict Moses that way. Why? It has to do with the Latin translation of the Hebrew Bible available at the time, which described Moses' radiant face after being in God's presence (see Exodus 34:29). The original language uses a word related to "horns" to describe "beams" of light shining from Moses' face, and the Latin Vulgate

Bible translated it literally. Moses was “misread.”

Have you ever misread someone? After a man unable to walk from birth was healed by Peter in Jesus’ name (Acts 3:1-10), the apostle told his fellow Israelites that they had misread Jesus. “You killed the author of life,” he said pointedly, “but God raised him from the dead” (v. 15). He continued, “This is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer” (v. 18). Peter even said Moses had pointed to Christ (v. 22).

It was “by faith in the name of Jesus,” a “faith that comes through him,” that the man’s life was transformed (v. 16). No matter how we’ve misunderstood Him or what our past contains, Christ welcomes us when we turn to Him. The author of life stands ready to write new beginnings for us! —[James Banks](#)

How have you misread Jesus? What will help you understand Him even better today?

Thank You, Jesus, for always understanding and loving me.

For further study, read [The Point of It All—Why We Might Miss Jesus](#).

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • ACTS 3:15-24

¹⁵ You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. ¹⁶ By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus’ name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see.

¹⁷ Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. ¹⁸ But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. ¹⁹ Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, ²⁰ and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. ²¹ “Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. ²² For Moses said, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. ²³ Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people.’

²⁴ “Indeed, beginning with Samuel, all the prophets who have spoken have foretold these days.

INSIGHT

In Acts 3:12-25, Peter preached the gospel to a crowd after healing a lame beggar. Regarding the people's part in Jesus' death, he said: "This is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer" (v. 18). These prophets included David (Psalm 69:4, 21), Isaiah (Isaiah 50:6; 53:4-11), and Zechariah (Zechariah 12:10; 13:7). In Psalm 22, David expresses words that Christ cries aloud from the cross (v. 1; see Matthew 27:46), His mistreatment (Psalm 22:6-8; see Matthew 27:27-31, 41-44), and the dividing of His garments (Psalm 22:18; see Matthew 27:35). Peter's words in Acts 3:17-18 are reminiscent of Joseph's words to his brothers: "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives" (Genesis 50:20).

The Bible in a Year: [Numbers 31-33; Mark 9:1-29](#)



UNFATHOMABLE GOD

Wednesday, March 5

His understanding no one can fathom. Isaiah 40:28



READ: ISAIAH 40:25-31

In February 2023, the James Webb Space Telescope made another remarkable discovery. Beyond where humankind had previously been able to peer into the universe, it discovered six new galaxies. This discovery upended much of what we know about space. One astronomer remarked, “It turns out we found something so unexpected it actually creates problems for science.” An astrophysicist said almost apologetically, “There is nothing wrong with not knowing.”

It seems that God continues to surprise us all. The prophet Isaiah, long before the advent of space telescopes, seems to be talking

directly to the scientists of today: “Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is . . . the Creator of the ends of the earth” (Isaiah 40:28). He goes on, predating that astrophysicist’s words, “[God’s] understanding no one can fathom” (v. 28).

But if we stop there, we miss the beauty of this passage. He who is unfathomable is not impersonal. He who created those six galaxies, and all the others (v. 26), is the same God who “gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak” (v. 29). The God of the universe is also the personal God who helps those who hope in Him to “soar on wings like eagles” (v. 31). Rest assured, the unfathomable God is the one we do know—the one who speaks into our lives with power and strength. —[Kenneth Petersen](#)

What does it mean to you to think of God as unfathomable yet personal? How is He personal to you?

God of the universe, thank You for being my heavenly Father. I place my hope in You to provide me wisdom and strength.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • ISAIAH 40:25-31

- 25 *“To whom will you compare me?
Or who is my equal?” says the Holy One.*
- 26 *Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens:
Who created all these?
He who brings out the starry host one by one
and calls forth each of them by name.
Because of his great power and mighty strength,
not one of them is missing.*
- 27 *Why do you complain, Jacob?
Why do you say, Israel,
“My way is hidden from the LORD;
my cause is disregarded by my God”?*
- 28 *Do you not know?
Have you not heard?
The LORD is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He will not grow tired or weary,
and his understanding no one can fathom.*
- 29 *He gives strength to the weary
and increases the power of the weak.*

³⁰ *Even youths grow tired and weary,
and young men stumble and fall;*

³¹ *but those who hope in the LORD
will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.*

INSIGHT

The context of Isaiah 40's description of God's power as creator (vv. 12, 22, 26) is one of bringing comfort to His people: "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem" (vv. 1-2). After their experience of suffering in exile, God's people needed reassurance that He was still willing and able to care for them. God through Isaiah asked, "To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?" . . . Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these?" (vv. 25-26). The question of who created the heavens likely directly challenged the commonly held belief in Babylonian and Canaanite religion that stars in the heavens represented gods. Isaiah's question not only dismisses the idea that any gods could be compared with the true God but went further by arguing that what were believed to be gods were merely His creations.

The Bible in a Year: [Numbers 34-36; Mark 9:30-50](#)



NOT EASILY OFFENDED

Thursday, March 6

Sensible people . . . earn respect by overlooking wrongs. Proverbs 19:11 NLT



READ: PROVERBS 19:8-13

When I entered my church after several months of quarantine, I was excited to see members I hadn't seen in a while. I realized that some members, especially older ones, just wouldn't be back—some due to safety reasons and others, unfortunately, because they'd passed from this life. So I was quite excited when I spotted an older couple coming into the sanctuary and taking their normal seat behind me. I waved at them both. The man returned my greeting, while his wife stared at me without even smiling. I was hurt and wondered why.

It was a few Sundays later that I observed the same woman (who hadn't returned my greeting) being helped by a friend who was showing her when to stand or sit—acting as her caregiver. My old church friend was apparently very sick and hadn't recognized me. I'm glad I didn't approach her or even get upset when she didn't return my enthusiastic greeting.

Proverbs offers a lot of advice for living wisely, and not being easily offended is one of its gems. In fact, it says “sensible people . . . earn respect by overlooking wrongs” (19:11 NLT). Choosing not to get offended and learning to “control [our] temper” (v. 11 NLT) can bring us honor. It may require patience and “wisdom” (v. 8), but the rewards also are well worth getting over ourselves and choosing to love others. —[Katara Patton](#)

When were you offended by someone's actions? When is it the right thing to overlook an offense?
God of mercy, thank You for overlooking the times I've offended You. Please give me the wisdom to do
the same for others.

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • PROVERBS 19:8-13

⁸ *The one who gets wisdom loves life;
the one who cherishes understanding will soon prosper.*

⁹ *A false witness will not go unpunished,
and whoever pours out lies will perish.*

¹⁰ *It is not fitting for a fool to live in luxury—
how much worse for a slave to rule over princes!*

¹¹ *A person's wisdom yields patience;
it is to one's glory to overlook an offense.*

¹² *A king's rage is like the roar of a lion,
but his favor is like dew on the grass.*

¹³ *A foolish child is a father's ruin,
and a quarrelsome wife is like
the constant dripping of a leaky roof.*

INSIGHT

God told Solomon, “I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be” (1 Kings 3:12). Over time, Solomon authored many of the proverbs. His

divine wisdom, however, didn't prevent him from great acts of foolishness. In Deuteronomy 17:16-17, God warned that when Israel had a king, he wasn't to multiply horses (a symbol of military security) or foreign wives (political alliances for security of the throne). The clear implication was that the king was to find his security in God—the one true king of Israel. Solomon foolishly ignored those warnings, acquiring so many horses that he needed to build cities for their keeping and care (1 Kings 10:26). In addition, he accumulated seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines (11:3). These women turned Solomon's heart away from God (v. 4). Due to Solomon's foolishness, God dealt with him in judgment (vv. 9-13).

The Bible in a Year: [Deuteronomy 1-2; Mark 10:1-31](#)



GIVE YOUR WORRIES TO JESUS

Friday, March 7

Do not worry about your life. Matthew 6:25



READ: MATTHEW 6:25-27

Nancy feared the future, seeing only trouble. Her husband Tom had fainted three times during a hiking trip in rural Maine. But doctors at a small nearby hospital found nothing wrong. At a larger medical center, where doctors conducted additional tests, they also found no problem. "I was very afraid," Nancy stated. As her husband was released, she questioned the cardiologist one last time, asking, "What do we do now?" He gave her words of wisdom that forever changed her outlook. "Go live your life," he said. "It wasn't in a flippant way," Nancy recalls. "It was his advice to us."

Such guidance captures Jesus' instruction in the Sermon on the

Mount. He said, “Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?” (Matthew 6:25). Such guidance doesn’t say to ignore medical or other problems or symptoms. Instead, Christ simply said, “Do not worry” (v. 25). He then asked, “Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?” (v. 27).

The prophet Isaiah offered similar wisdom. “Say to those with fearful hearts, ‘Be strong, do not fear; your God will come’ ” (Isaiah 35:4). For Nancy and Tom, they’re inspired now to walk more than five miles a day. No longer walking with worry, they step out with joy. —[Patricia Raybon](#)

What’s your greatest fear? How can giving your worry to Christ enhance your life?

If I’m feeling worried today, dear Jesus, please grant me confidence to give my fear to You as I live out
Your peace.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • MATTHEW 6:25-27

²⁵ *Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?*

²⁶ *Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?* ²⁷ *Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?*

INSIGHT

In Matthew 6:25-34, Jesus promises to provide for our needs. One of the most dramatic examples of God’s comprehensive care took place in the desert as the Israelites journeyed to the promised land. They were totally dependent on the divine Shepherd during their forty-year trek. And, just as God provides for the birds (Matthew 6:26) and clothes the flowers (vv. 28-29), He provided food for His people and clothing that didn’t wear out (Deuteronomy 8:3-4)! Moses explained the purpose of the wilderness classroom: “He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna . . . to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord” (v. 3). Our physical cravings are meant to reveal a deeper, spiritual dependence on

God whose words sustain us. We can spend our energy focused on His interests, knowing He'll take care of all our needs (Matthew 6:33).

The Bible in a Year: [Deuteronomy 3-4; Mark 10:32-52](#)



THE LIST IS LIFE

Saturday, March 8

These were the Israelites who came out of Egypt. Numbers 26:4



READ: NUMBERS 26:1-4, 20-22

Hunched over a manual typewriter, Itzhak Stern worked through the night, tapping out names—1,098 in all. The names comprised a list of Jewish workers protected from the Nazis by factory owner Oskar Schindler. Clutching the document, Stern declared, “The list is an absolute good. The list is life.” Those named on its pages would survive the Holocaust. In 2012, it was estimated that the descendants of the survivors numbered 8,500.

The Bible contains its share of lists. We tend to skip them. Too many names; too much repetition. We might even say today’s reading is . . . boring. “The descendants of Judah by their clans were: through

Shelah, the Shelanite clan; through Perez, the Perezite clan . . .” (Numbers 26:20). Who cares?

God cares! “These were the Israelites who came out of Egypt,” says the historical record (v. 4). Soon the people would inhabit the land promised to them. And one day, Messiah would come from this very clan of Judah. The list is life, not only for the Jewish people but for all who trust in Jesus.

We know of Oskar Schindler’s list from the powerful film *Schindler’s List* and historical records. We know of God’s great salvation from the story recorded for us in the Bible. As we read the Scriptures, may His Spirit show us the worth of even the lists. They have something to say to us too. —[Tim Gustafson](#)

What portions of the Bible are the most boring to you? How might you read even these sections with new eyes?

Dear God, please help me read the Bible carefully. May Your Spirit guide me to see the value in each verse.

Gain the tools necessary to [study any part of the Bible carefully](#).

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • NUMBERS 26:1-4, 20-22

¹ After the plague the LORD said to Moses and Eleazar son of Aaron, the priest, ² “Take a census of the whole Israelite community by families—all those twenty years old or more who are able to serve in the army of Israel.” ³ So on the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho, Moses and Eleazar the priest spoke with them and said, ⁴ “Take a census of the men twenty years old or more, as the LORD commanded Moses.”

These were the Israelites who came out of Egypt:

²⁰ The descendants of Judah by their clans were:

through Shelah, the Shelanite clan;

through Perez, the Perezite clan;

through Zerah, the Zerahite clan.

²¹ The descendants of Perez were:

through Hezron, the Hezronite clan;

through Hamul, the Hamulite clan.

²² These were the clans of Judah; those numbered were ⁷⁶500.

INSIGHT

The Bible contains a variety of lists, including several genealogies. But

rather than being boring data, they provide relevant information. Jewish genealogies typically don't include women, but five are included in Jesus' genealogy in Matthew 1: Mary, Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Uriah's wife (Bathsheba). In addition, all except Mary were most likely gentiles. Some had histories that could have made them unmentionable in such a list. For example, Tamar slept with her father-in-law, Judah (Genesis 38), and Rahab was a prostitute (Joshua 2:1). Yet by their inclusion, we see that God used imperfect, sinful people to fulfill His purposes. It's not surprising that we learn much from such lists, for 2 Timothy 3:16-17 tells us: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

The Bible in a Year: [Deuteronomy 5-7; Mark 11:1-18](#)



RESTING IN CHRIST

Sunday, March 9

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things." Luke 10:41



READ: LUKE 10:38-42

Several years ago, a study analyzed the link between teenage depression and the amount of sleep teens received each night.

After reading the study, a young woman commented on the results: "I never seem to know when to stop—I push myself so hard that I end up making myself sick from lack of sleep and stress." Then she said she wanted to know what it really meant to manage her time to honor God. What was the difference between busyness and fruitfulness?

Being busy is no guarantee for being productive, faithful, or

fruitful. Yet we might think that being busy is what's most important. In Luke 10:41, Jesus gently reminded Martha that she was "worried and upset about many things" and that her sister Mary's choice of sitting "at the Lord's feet" (v. 39)—a posture of discipleship—was the better choice.

In our desire to serve Christ, are we doing too much, thinking that He'll notice us more if we do more? Colossians 3:17 says, "Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus." However, it doesn't say to burn ourselves out in His name. In Psalm 46:10, we hear this reminder: "Be still, and know that I am God."

Let's take some time to slow down and spend time with Christ rather than focusing solely on our to-do list. Only then can we find true "rest for [our] souls" (Matthew 11:29). —[Brent Hackett](#)

When have you been too busy to be faithful and fruitful? How can you find rest in Jesus to accomplish what He wants you to do?

Dear Jesus, please help me replace busyness with being still so I can know that You're God and my life can be fruitful.

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • LUKE 10:38-42

³⁸ *As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. ³⁹ She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"*

⁴¹ *"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, ⁴² but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."*

INSIGHT

Luke 10:38-42 isn't the only place we read of Jesus interacting with Mary and Martha. In John 11, Christ once again found His way to Bethany—but not for dinner. Lazarus was sick, and his sisters sent word to Jesus (vv. 1-3). In Luke, the setting was domestic (10:40); in John, the situation involved distress and death (11:3, 17). However, certain dynamics were present in both situations. In Luke 10:38-40, Martha is distracted with

serving. In John 11:20-22, she's distressed with grief. But in both cases, Christ put things into perspective (Luke 10:41-42; John 11:23-26). As for Mary, in Luke 10, she's sitting at Jesus' feet "listening to what he said" (v. 39). In John 11, she's at His feet again but this time in desperate grief (v. 32). Christ provides the ultimate hope in our grief: "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die and whoever lives by believing in me will never die" (vv. 25-26).

The Bible in a Year: [Deuteronomy 8-10; Mark 11:19-33](#)



WORKING TOGETHER FOR JESUS

Monday, March 10

We rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart. Nehemiah 4:6



READ: NEHEMIAH 4:1-9

During a trip to Brazil with a short-term missions team, we helped construct a church building in the Amazon jungle. On the foundation, already laid, we assembled the various parts of the church like a giant LEGO set: supporting columns, concrete walls, windows, steel beams for the roof, and tiles on the roof. Then we painted the walls.

Some people were concerned because they wondered if we could build the church in time during monsoon season. But by God's grace, the intense rain held off. With help from a few locals and despite

various obstacles, we got the job done in record time.

When Nehemiah and the Israelites returned from exile to rebuild Jerusalem's walls, they faced many obstacles. When their enemies found out what they were doing, they were furious and insulted them (Nehemiah 4:1-3). But Nehemiah prayed and the people persevered together: "We rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart" (v. 6). When their foes threatened to attack, the Israelites prayed and kept guard as they worked (vv. 7-23). They rebuilt the wall in fifty-two days.

Sometimes we're faced with a daunting task. Obstacles appear in our way, and we and our brothers and sisters in Christ can lose hope. But times like this can be a triumphant moment with God's help. Trust Him to hold off the rainstorms and look to Him to overcome.

—[Nancy Gavilanes](#)

Why is it hard to live in unity? How can you work together with others?

Dear God, please help me to seek unity with other believers in Jesus.

For further study, read [Missing the Mission: Disciples in an Age of Abundance](#).

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • NEHEMIAH 4:1-9

¹ When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews, ² and in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, he said, "What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble—burned as they are?"

³ Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, "What they are building—even a fox climbing up on it would break down their wall of stones!"

⁴ Hear us, our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads. Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity. ⁵ Do not cover up their guilt or blot out their sins from your sight, for they have thrown insults in the face of the builders.

⁶ So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart.

⁷ But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the people of Ashdod heard that the repairs to Jerusalem's walls had gone ahead and that the gaps were being closed, they were very angry. ⁸ They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it. ⁹ But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to

meet this threat.

INSIGHT

Nehemiah is a gripping account of inspiring leadership during intense opposition. The Bible introduces us to other heroic figures during this time of exile and restoration. Daniel was betrayed by rival advisors but survived a den of lions (Daniel 6). His three Jewish friends were also betrayed yet endured a burning furnace (3:8-25). Esther stood up to a genocide planned by Haman, “the most powerful official in the empire” (Esther 3:1 NLT; see chs. 4-8). In a period when Israel wondered if they’d ever have security in their dispersion or in their homeland, God provided hope. He inspired courageous leaders and supernaturally protected His people by turning the tables on their enemies.

The Bible in a Year: [Deuteronomy 11-13; Mark 12:1-27](#)



HEIRS OF GOD'S SALVATION

Tuesday, March 11

As long as an heir is underage, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. Galatians 4:1



READ: GALATIANS 4:1-7

When Abigail's parents died tragically in a car accident, she inherited a large real estate portfolio. She also learned that her parents had arranged to place the portfolio in a trust. For the time being, she could access only enough money for her college tuition. The rest would come when she was older. Abigail was frustrated, but she later realized her parents' wisdom in planning a measured delivery of the inheritance.

In Galatians 4, Paul uses a similar example to illustrate Israel's situation as promised heirs of God's covenant with Abraham. God

had made a covenant with Abraham to bless him, and circumcision was a sign of that promise (see Genesis 17:1-14). However, the sign wasn't the promise. Abraham's descendants would await a future descendant who would fulfill it. Isaac was born and pointed to the future birth of a Son who would redeem God's people (Galatians 4:4-5).

Israel, like Abigail, had to wait until the "time set by his father" (v. 2). Only then could Israel take full possession of the inheritance. What they wanted immediately would arrive in due time with Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. All who put their faith in Christ were no longer slaves to sin, "but God's child" (v. 7). A new covenant has been established. We have access to God! We can call him "Abba, Father" (v. 6). —[Matt Lucas](#)

If you profess Jesus as Savior, how are you no longer a slave to sin but a child of God? What does it mean to know Him as Father?

Loving Father, thank You for sending Your Son to address the sin problem of the world.

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • GALATIANS 4:1-7

¹ What I am saying is that as long as an heir is underage, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. ² The heir is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. ³ So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world. ⁴ But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. ⁶ Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

INSIGHT

Huiiothesia is used only five times in the New Testament (and only by Paul). This word, translated as "adoption to sonship" in Galatians 4:5, is packed with meaning. *Huiiothesia* is a compound Greek word from *huios* ("son") and *thesia* ("placing"). Adoption took place when a child (almost exclusively males in the ancient world) was placed in a family that lacked a suitable heir. With adoption came privileges, rights, and responsibilities

of family membership. Paul used the term adoption, but the concept of family membership is also present in John's writing: "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! . . . Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:1-2).

The Bible in a Year: [Deuteronomy 14-16; Mark 12:28-44](#)



ELEPHANT HELPERS

Wednesday, March 12

There should be no division in the body, but . . . its parts should have equal concern for each other. 1 Corinthians 12:25



READ: 1 CORINTHIANS 12:21-26

Late one night, a Kenyan elephant sanctuary received a call that an elephant calf had fallen into a well. The rescue team arrived to cries of despair flooding the darkness and discovered that two-thirds of the baby's trunk had been lost to hyenas. Transporting the calf to their safe haven, they named him Long'uro, which means "something that has been cut." Though he possessed only one-third of his trunk, Long'uro healed and was embraced by the rest of the herd at the sanctuary. Elephants innately know they need each other, so they help each other.

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul underscores our need to help each other within the body of Christ. He uses the metaphor of the human body and its individual parts to describe how God intends His people to welcome all gifts in all people because all are needed for His body to function (vv. 12-26). Then Paul explains how unity in diversity is accomplished. “God has put the body together,” he wrote, “giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other” (vv. 24-25).

Whether weak or strong, fancy or common, let’s help each other. Like the elephants, people need each other too. —[Elisa Morgan](#)

When have you received help from the family of God? What will you do to help other believers today?

Dear God, please help me to understand the vital value of each member in the body of Christ and show me how to both receive and give help so that together we’re stronger.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • 1 CORINTHIANS 12:21-26

²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” ²² On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, ²⁴ while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵ so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶ If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

INSIGHT

The concept of unity that Paul highlights in 1 Corinthians 12 depends on two things. The first is its diversity. Each part of the body has a different function, yet every part is vital. Paul wrote to a society steeped in slavery, and the church brought together groups of people unaccustomed to equality with each other—slave and free, Jew and gentile (v. 13). How could such a diverse body experience unity? Because of God’s Holy Spirit, who unites us in one purpose. This kind of unity was unique in the world. Paul tells us, “We were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one

body . . . and we were all given the one Spirit to drink” (v. 13). Whether great or small, each member is important for the body to perform properly. As Paul said, “God has put the body together” (v. 24). Many members. One body. One Spirit.

The Bible in a Year: [Deuteronomy 17-19; Mark 13:1-20](#)



A NEW HEART IN CHRIST

Thursday, March 13

I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. Ezekiel 11:19



READ: EZEKIEL 11:14-21

Brock and Dennis were childhood friends, but as they grew up, Brock showed little interest in Dennis' faith in Jesus. Dennis loved his friend and prayed for him because he knew the path he was going down was dark and depressing. In praying for Brock, Dennis adapted the words of the prophet Ezekiel: "Please God, remove from Brock a heart of stone and give him a heart of flesh" (see Ezekiel 11:19). He longed that Brock would walk in God's way so he would flourish.

Ten years later, Dennis was still praying faithfully. Then he

received a call from Brock: "I just gave my life to Jesus!" Dennis rejoiced, tears brimming, to hear his friend exclaim that he'd finally come to the end of himself and trusted God with his life.

In his prayers, Dennis focused on God's promises to His people through Ezekiel. Although they'd turned from God with detestable practices, He said He would change their hearts: "I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh" (v. 19). With changed hearts, they would follow their God faithfully (v. 20).

No matter how far we've turned from God, He delights to give us warm and loving hearts. We need only to turn to Him with faith and repentance as we trust in Jesus to save us from our sins. —[Amy Boucher Pye](#)

How have you experienced God melting any stubbornness or coldness within? How can you pray for a friend today?

Loving God, thank You for releasing me from my sin and shame.

Learn more here: ODB.org/personal-relationship-with-god.

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • EZEKIEL 11:14-21

¹⁴ *The word of the LORD came to me:* ¹⁵ *"Son of man, the people of Jerusalem have said of your fellow exiles and all the other Israelites, 'They are far away from the LORD; this land was given to us as our possession.'*

¹⁶ *"Therefore say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Although I sent them far away among the nations and scattered them among the countries, yet for a little while I have been a sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone.'*

¹⁷ *"Therefore say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will gather you from the nations and bring you back from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you back the land of Israel again.'*

¹⁸ *"They will return to it and remove all its vile images and detestable idols. ¹⁹ I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. ²⁰ Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God. ²¹ But as for those whose hearts are devoted to their vile images and detestable idols, I will bring down on their own heads what they have done, declares the Sovereign LORD."*

INSIGHT

Just prior to today's reading from Ezekiel 11, the prophet Ezekiel saw a vision of God's glory. He looked on the throne of God in the holy of holies (10:1) and saw "the glory of the Lord" rise and move (v. 4). We see the movement of God's glory from His inner sanctuary in the temple to its threshold and then from the threshold out into the city (vv. 4, 18). Finally, the glory of God left the city by the eastern gate (v. 19).

Ezekiel's vision shows something the exiled Israelites may not have at first realized: their God went with them. He followed on the same road they traveled, which is why Ezekiel says, "I have been a sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone" (11:16).

The Bible in a Year: [Deuteronomy 20-22; Mark 13:21-37](#)



MADE TO DO GOOD FOR GOD

Friday, March 14

*We are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works.
Ephesians 2:10*



READ: EPHESIANS 2:6-10

At first, I ignored the card fluttering to the ground. The father and his little girl who dropped it were just twenty feet away, and I was late for work. *Surely they would have realized it*, I told myself. But they kept walking. My conscience got the better of me, and I went over to pick it up. It was a prepaid bus ride pass. When I gave it to them, their effusive thanks left me feeling unexpectedly satisfied. *Why do I feel so good about doing such a small thing?* I wondered.

It turns out that the human body produces chemicals that improve our mood when we're kind to others. We're made to feel good when

we do good! That's not surprising, because we were created by a good God who made us to be like Him.

Ephesians 2:10 shows us that blessing others is a part of our very purpose: "We are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." This verse doesn't simply give an instruction to do good; in a way, it also reflects a part of our God-made nature. We don't have to be doing great things all the time. If we do something small to help others in our daily lives, we not only get the reward of satisfaction, but we also know that we're pleasing God—doing exactly what He made us to do. —[Leslie Koh](#)

Who needs a helping hand or an encouraging word? What kind word or simple gesture can you extend to a friend, colleague, or neighbor?

Dear Father, please open my eyes to see how I can be kind to someone today.

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • EPHESIANS 2:6-10

⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

INSIGHT

The creation account in Genesis says that "God created mankind in his own image" (1:27). Ephesians 2:10 also declares that "we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Jesus set the example for us during His earthly ministry by doing "many good works from the Father" (John 10:32). Peter elaborates and says: "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, . . . he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him" (Acts 10:38). As believers in Christ, the Spirit will provide the opportunities and empowerment to follow in Jesus' footsteps and do good works. The fruit of the Spirit's work in us is "love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness,

goodness, faithfulness gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23).

The Bible in a Year: [Deuteronomy 23-25; Mark 14:1-26](#)



REVERED AND READ

Saturday, March 15

Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law. Psalm 119:18



READ: PSALM 119:17-32

Our home has a well-stocked, overflowing bookshelf. I have a weakness for beautiful books, especially nice hardcovers, and over the years more and more have been added to the collection. Unfortunately, I haven't had the time and energy to actually *read* nearly as many of the volumes as I've collected. They remain pristine, beautiful, and—sadly—unread.

There's a danger that our Bibles can become a bit like that. Essayist John Updike, speaking of the American classic *Walden*, commented that it risked being as "revered and unread as the Bible." The

difficulty of understanding ancient Scriptures written in different cultures than our own can tempt us to leave our Bibles on the shelf—beautiful, beloved, but unread.

It doesn't have to be that way. As the psalmist does in Psalm 119, we can turn to God, asking Him to "open [our] eyes" to see Scripture's riches (v. 18). We can find trustworthy teachers to help us "understand what [we're] reading" (Acts 8:30). And believers have Christ's Spirit to guide our hearts to see how it all points to Him (Luke 24:27; John 14:26).

Through Scripture, God can give us strength in times of sorrow (Psalm 119:28), protect us from deception (v. 29), and broaden our understanding of how to joyfully live (vv. 32, 35). The Bible is a priceless gift. May it be both revered *and* read. —[Monica La Rose](#)

What resources help you understand the Bible? How has God used Scripture to shape your life?

Gracious God, please open my eyes to Your goodness as I read the gift of Scripture.

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • PSALM 119:17-32

*17 Be good to your servant while I live,
that I may obey your word.*

*18 Open my eyes that I may see
wonderful things in your law.*

*19 I am a stranger on earth;
do not hide your commands from me.*

*20 My soul is consumed with longing
for your laws at all times.*

*21 You rebuke the arrogant, who are accursed,
those who stray from your commands.*

*22 Remove from me their scorn and contempt,
for I keep your statutes.*

*23 Though rulers sit together and slander me,
your servant will meditate on your decrees.*

*24 Your statutes are my delight;
they are my counselors.*

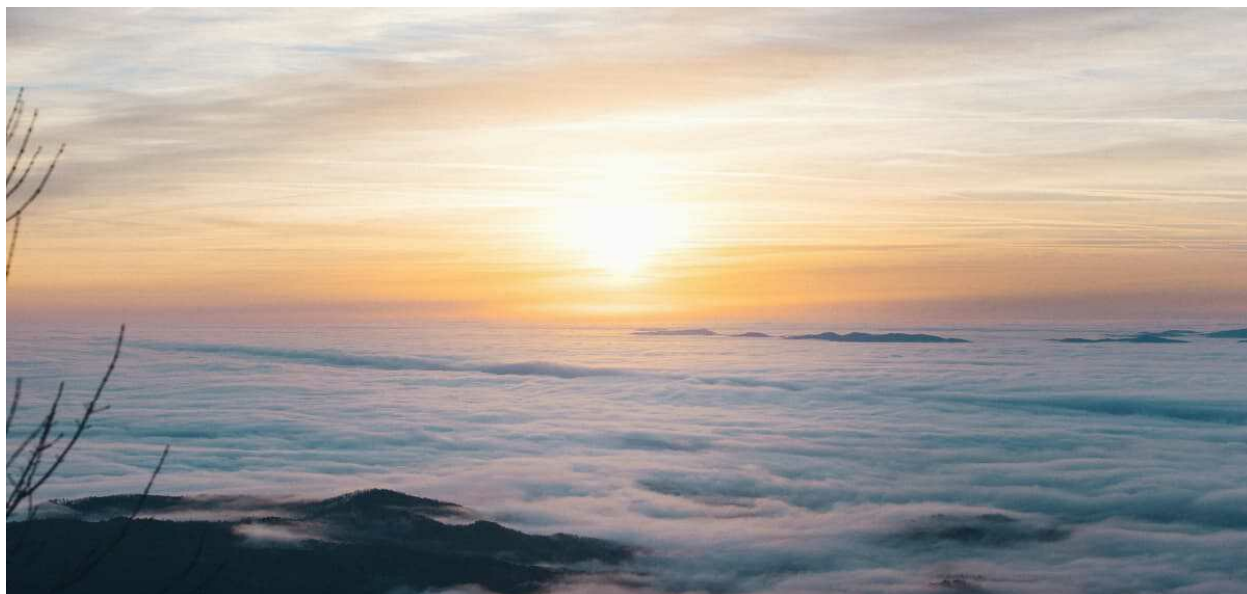
*25 I am laid low in the dust;
preserve my life according to your word.*

- 26 I gave an account of my ways and you answered me;
teach me your decrees.*
- 27 Cause me to understand the way of your precepts,
that I may meditate on your wonderful deeds.*
- 28 My soul is weary with sorrow;
strengthen me according to your word.*
- 29 Keep me from deceitful ways;
be gracious to me and teach me your law.*
- 30 I have chosen the way of faithfulness;
I have set my heart on your laws.*
- 31 I hold fast to your statutes, LORD;
do not let me be put to shame.*
- 32 I run in the path of your commands,
for you have broadened my understanding.*

INSIGHT

The main theme of Psalm 119 is celebration of the law—the instruction of God—called the Torah. The longest psalm, it's developed as an acrostic with twenty-two sections—each beginning with succeeding letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This structure was no doubt intended in part as a memory device to aid in the memorization of these important ideas. Each of those sections contains eight verses. It could be said that Psalm 119 is part of a trilogy of psalms that celebrate Torah (see also Psalms 1 and 19). The psalm is anonymous and lacks a superscription, but verse 1 gives a clear idea of the point of the song: “Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the LORD.”

The Bible in a Year: [Deuteronomy 26-27; Mark 14:27-53](#)



INTERVALS OF REST

Sunday, March 16

In six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth . . . but he rested on the seventh day. Exodus 20:11



READ: EXODUS 20:8-11

Running coach Jeff Galloway, a former Olympian, teaches a marathon training protocol that has a counterintuitive component to it. New and experienced marathoners are often surprised to learn that he advocates a “run/walk” strategy: alternating running for a set number of minutes with short periods of walking. The premise behind his approach is that the brief interludes of walking enable the body to recuperate briefly, equipping runners to finish their races faster than if they had run all 26.2 miles straight through.

The importance of intervals of rest isn’t limited to running. Rest

helps us sustain the lengthy effort life requires. It's something God addresses throughout the Bible, starting in the book of Exodus. In the Old Testament, the rhythms of rest were modeled after God's work at the time of creation: to labor for six days and then keep "the seventh day [as] a sabbath to the LORD your God" (Exodus 20:10) because God "made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day" (v. 11).

As believers in Jesus, there's no definitive prescription for how often we're to rest (Romans 14:5-6; Colossians 2:16-17). Rest—whenever and however we enjoy it—is meant to be restorative. Choosing to rest is also an expression of trust in God, who's faithful to supply our needs; we needn't (and can't) run forever. —[Kirsten Holmberg](#)

How and when do you rest? How has God supplied your needs when you've rested as an expression of faith?

Father, thank You for giving me opportunities to trust You through rest.

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • EXODUS 20:8-11

⁸ Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

INSIGHT

Mount Sinai was the site of at least two great encounters with God in the Old Testament. In today's reading (Exodus 20), we see Moses and the children of Israel encountering God and His mighty power. They'd spend about a year there before resuming their journey from slavery in Egypt to the freedom of the promised land. The other great encounter was when Elijah fled Jezebel and ended up at Mount Horeb, which many scholars are convinced was the same place as Sinai. There, God renewed Elijah's mission and encouraged him with His own presence and care (1 Kings 19:8-13). Interestingly, these two leaders (Moses and Elijah) would meet

with Jesus on another mountain in the New Testament (Luke 9:28-36) at Christ's transfiguration, a part of His preparation for His coming suffering. The timing of that preparation is significant because in Luke 9:51 "Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem," where those sufferings awaited Him.

The Bible in a Year: [Deuteronomy 28-29; Mark 14:54-72](#)



MAKING PEACE IN JESUS

Monday, March 17

God was pleased . . . to reconcile to himself all things . . . by making peace through [Christ's] blood, shed on the cross. Colossians 1:19-20



READ: COLOSSIANS 1:15-20

High-wire artist Philippe Petit became famous in 1971 when he walked a tightrope between the towers of Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris. Three years later, he got arrested for an unauthorized walk between the Twin Towers that once distinguished New York's skyline. But in 1987, Petit's walk looked different. At the invitation of Jerusalem mayor Teddy Kollek, Petit walked across the Hinnom Valley on a high wire as a part of that year's Israel Festival. At the midway point, Petit released a pigeon (he'd hoped for a dove) to symbolize the beauty of peace. A strange and dangerous stunt, but

all for the cause of peace. Petit later said, “For a moment, the entire crowd had forgotten their differences.”

Petit’s high-wire walk reminds me of another breathtaking moment—the one that occurred when Jesus’ body hung between heaven and earth. The apostle Paul tells us, “God was pleased . . . to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through [Christ’s] blood, shed on the cross” (Colossians 1:19-20). Paul writes that “once [we] were alienated from God” (v. 21), but no longer. Far from a spectacle to promote peace, Jesus the Messiah actually *made* peace by shedding His blood on the cross. His was a feat never to be surpassed, as there is no need. His peace is everlasting. —[John Blase](#)

What does the word peace mean to you? How would you say you’re experiencing the peace of Jesus?

Praise to You, dear Jesus, for Your everlasting gift of peace.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • COLOSSIANS 1:15-20

¹⁵ *The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.* ¹⁶ *For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.* ¹⁷ *He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.* ¹⁸ *And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.* ¹⁹ *For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,* ²⁰ *and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

INSIGHT

Colossians 1:15-20 has been abused by false teachers who attempt to claim that the Son of God is a created being. So, what does Paul mean when he says, “The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation” (v. 15)? Did Jesus have a beginning? The immediate context provides the answer. “In him [the Son] all things were created: things in heaven and on earth . . . ; all things have been created through him and for him” (v. 16). The next verse says, “He is before all things” (v. 17). This makes it clear that the Son (Jesus the Messiah) wasn’t the first to be born among all created things, as some false teachers say. Rather, He is

preexistent with the Father and hence was present at the creation of all things. The Creator isn't a created being.

The Bible in a Year: [Deuteronomy 30-31; Mark 15:1-25](#)



GOD-GIVEN SKILLS AND TALENTS

Tuesday, March 18

I have filled [Bezalel] with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills—to make artistic designs. Exodus 31:3-4



READ: EXODUS 31:1-11

Some of the most famous pianists in the world, including Van Cliburn and Vladimir Horowitz, relied on Franz Mohr, chief concert technician at Steinway & Sons in New York, to ensure that their concert pianos were ready for performances. A master piano tuner, Mohr was sought after for his intricate knowledge of pianos and great skill developed over decades. Mohr believed his skills were an avenue to serve God, and he regularly shared his faith with pianists and performance staff.

When the nation of Israel was preparing to build the tent of meeting and other items necessary for worship, they needed individuals with expert skills (Exodus 31:7-11). God appointed two skilled artisans, Bezalel and Oholiab, to do the work and filled them with the “Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills—to make artistic designs” (vv. 3-4). In addition to their specialized skills, God empowered them with His Spirit to guide their work. Their willingness to use their unique talents in service to God allowed the Israelites to appropriately worship Him.

Whether or not we consider ourselves artistic, each of us has unique, God-given gifts that we can use to serve others (Romans 12:6). Empowered by the Spirit, we can serve and worship God through our work using the wisdom, understanding, and skills He’s given us. —[Lisa M. Samra](#)

What are some of the talents God’s given you? How might you use them to serve Him?

Heavenly Father, please remind me that the abilities You’ve given me are to be a holy offering.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • EXODUS 31:1-11

¹ Then the LORD said to Moses, ² “See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, ³ and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills— ⁴ to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, ⁵ to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of crafts. ⁶ Moreover, I have appointed Oholiab son of Ahisamak, of the tribe of Dan, to help him. Also I have given ability to all the skilled workers to make everything I have commanded you: ⁷ the tent of meeting, the ark of the covenant law with the atonement cover on it, and all the other furnishings of the tent— ⁸ the table and its articles, the pure gold lampstand and all its accessories, the altar of incense, ⁹ the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, the basin with its stand— ¹⁰ and also the woven garments, both the sacred garments for Aaron the priest and the garments for his sons when they serve as priests, ¹¹ and the anointing oil and fragrant incense for the Holy Place. They are to make them just as I commanded you.”

INSIGHT

God told Pharaoh to “let my people go, so that they may worship me”

(Exodus 7:16; 8:1, 20; 9:1, 13; 10:3). Two months after leaving Egypt, the Israelites encamped at the base of Mount Sinai (19:1-2) where God gave His people the law (chs. 20-24) and instructions on how they were to live, worship, and serve Him (chs. 25-31). The tabernacle, built according to God's exact blueprint, was His dwelling place—"a holy sanctuary so [he could] live among [his people]" (25:8 NLT). God appointed two master craftsmen, Bezalel and Oholiab, and gave them special abilities to lead the work and teach other craftsmen and artisans (31:1-6; see 35:30-34). God also endowed others with enhanced skills to accomplish the work (31:6-11; see 35:35-36:2).

The Bible in a Year: [Deuteronomy 32-34; Mark 15:26-47](#)



DRESSED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

Wednesday, March 19

He has sent me . . . to bestow on them . . . a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. Isaiah 61:1-3



READ: ISAIAH 61:1-3, 10-11

Two eight-year-old boys in Maine—a rural American state—made their mark by wearing business suits to school on Wednesdays. Soon “Dapper Wednesdays” became a favorite day, as other classmates and school staff dressed up too. James, who launched the idea, loved hearing compliments. “It just made my heart feel really good.” Their Wednesday attire set the kids apart as proud students of their school.

Our spiritual clothing, which sets us apart as God’s own, gladdens our hearts too. “My soul rejoices in my God,” said Isaiah, “for he has

clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels” (Isaiah 61:10).

As the Israelites went into exile, their clothing—spiritual and material—was threadbare and worn. Isaiah offered them a hopeful promise: God’s Spirit would “bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair” (v. 3).

The same promise rests on God’s people today. Jesus said that by His Spirit we would be “clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). Christ provides us with a wardrobe of “compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience” (Colossians 3:12). Clothed by Him, we reflect His love to the world. —[Patricia Raybon](#)

How does God’s Spirit help you “dress” in compassion, kindness, and patience? How are others affected by your Spirit-led behavior?

When I wear worldly values, dear God, please change my spiritual clothing.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • ISAIAH 61:1-3, 10-11

- ¹ *The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners,*
- ² *to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor
and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn,*
- ³ *and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty
instead of ashes,
the oil of joy
instead of mourning,
and a garment of praise
instead of a spirit of despair.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
a planting of the LORD
for the display of his splendor.*
- ¹⁰ *I delight greatly in the LORD;
my soul rejoices in my God.*

*For he has clothed me with garments of salvation
and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness,
as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.*

*¹¹ For as the soil makes the sprout come up
and a garden causes seeds to grow,
so the Sovereign LORD will make righteousness
and praise spring up before all nations.*

INSIGHT

In the synagogue of Nazareth (Luke 4:16-19), Jesus read from the scroll of Isaiah portions of what we know as Isaiah 61. Isaiah's prophecy was perfectly fulfilled in Christ (Luke 4:21). Prior to this, the Holy Spirit had descended upon Christ (3:22). He was full of the Spirit and was empowered by Him (4:1,14). Other passages in Isaiah likewise speak of the Spirit as the unique garment of Christ (God's anointed, His designated ruler). One such passage is Isaiah 11:2-3: "The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord—and he will delight in the fear of the Lord." While Jesus donned the Spirit uniquely and perfectly (see John 3:34), those who belong to Christ are similarly dressed.

The Bible in a Year: [Joshua 1-3; Mark 16](#)



JOY IN JESUS

Thursday, March 20

Your grief will turn to joy . . . and no one will take away your joy. John 16:20, 22



READ: JOHN 16:16-24

I have the right to be happy,” said a teenager as she spoke before a legislature. Yet she could have been anyone, anywhere, speaking for everybody. It’s our human cry. One self-help guru even said, “God wants you to be happy.”

Is that true? It’s not wrong to pursue happiness. That desirable state of mind, however, ebbs and flows with our moment-by-moment circumstances, and the fulfillment of one person’s desires can crush the happiness of another.

Jesus points us to something better. He knew He was about to be

nailed to a Roman cross, where He would bear the weight of the world's sin. Yet His concern was for His disciples. He told them, "You will weep and mourn while the world rejoices." But He also said, "Your grief will turn to joy" (John 16:20). Then He promised, "No one will take away your joy" (v. 22).

This kind of joy is more than a good feeling based on desirable things *happening* to us. It grows out of doing the will of our Father in heaven. Jesus also said, "Seek first [God's] kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33).

Happiness can slip away with the next unpleasant circumstance. The joy that comes from following Jesus can thrive despite those circumstances. —[Tim Gustafson](#)

How does chasing what you want ultimately leave you unhappy? What's the difference between happiness and joy?

Dear Father, please teach me to learn the difference between temporary happiness and lasting joy.

For further study, read [Jesus Is in the Room](#).

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • JOHN 16:16-24

¹⁶ Jesus went on to say, "In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me."

¹⁷ At this, some of his disciples said to one another, "What does he mean by saying, 'In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me,' and 'Because I am going to the Father'?" ¹⁸ They kept asking, "What does he mean by 'a little while'? We don't understand what he is saying."

¹⁹ Jesus saw that they wanted to ask him about this, so he said to them, "Are you asking one another what I meant when I said, 'In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me'?" ²⁰ Very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. ²¹ A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. ²² So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy. ²³ In that day you will no longer ask me anything. Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. ²⁴ Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete."

INSIGHT

The Upper Room Discourse (John 14-16) is the main teaching focus of John's gospel. The night before Jesus went to the cross, He was preparing His disciples for His crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and return. He told them that their "grief [would] turn to joy" (16:20). One of the main features of Jesus' teaching in these chapters is the promise of the coming Holy Spirit—Christ's provision for His people after His departure. This promise was eventually fulfilled on the day of Pentecost (see Acts 2), some ten days after Jesus' ascension to heaven, when the Spirit came to indwell believers in Christ.

The Bible in a Year: [Joshua 4-6; Luke 1:1-20](#)



GOD'S OWN

Friday, March 21

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. Isaiah 43:1



READ: ISAIAH 43:1-7

One day, while serving as my mom's live-in caregiver, we visited an art exhibit. We were emotionally and physically drained. I gazed at two wooden row boats filled with colorful blown-glass shapes inspired by Japanese fishing lures and flower arrangements. The display *Ikebana and Float Boats* sat in front of a black wall on a reflective surface. Speckled, spotted, and striped glass orbs, like oversized gumballs, were piled into the smaller boat. From the hull of the second boat, long, twisted, and curved glass sculptures rose like vibrant flames. The artist had shaped each piece of molten

glass through the refining fires of the glassblowing process.

Tears streaked my cheeks as I imagined God's caring hand holding me and my mom—His beloved children—through our hardest days. As God shapes the character of His people through refining fires in life, He affirms that our hope comes from being known and knowing we belong to Him (Isaiah 43:1). Though we can't escape hardship, God promises to protect us and be present (v. 2). His identity and His love for us make His promises secure (vv. 3-4).

When life's circumstances heat up, we may feel fragile. We may even *be* fragile. But God holds us firmly in love, no matter how blazing hot the furnace gets. We are known. We are loved. We are His! —[Xochitl Dixon](#)

Why does knowing you belong to God bring you hope during times of affliction? How has God used refining fires to shape your character?

Loving God, thank You for holding me, molding me, and reminding me that I'm Yours.

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • ISAIAH 43:1-7

- ¹ *But now, this is what the LORD says—
he who created you, Jacob,
he who formed you, Israel:
“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have summoned you by name; you are mine.*
- ² *When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you;
and when you pass through the rivers,
they will not sweep over you.
When you walk through the fire,
you will not be burned;
the flames will not set you ablaze.*
- ³ *For I am the LORD your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior;
I give Egypt for your ransom,
Cush and Seba in your stead.*
- ⁴ *Since you are precious and honored in my sight,
and because I love you,
I will give people in exchange for you,
nations in exchange for your life.*
- ⁵ *Do not be afraid, for I am with you;*

*I will bring your children from the east
and gather you from the west.*

⁶ *I will say to the north, 'Give them up!'
and to the south, 'Do not hold them back.'
Bring my sons from afar
and my daughters from the ends of the earth—
⁷ everyone who is called by my name,
whom I created for my glory,
whom I formed and made."*

INSIGHT

More than one hundred years before it occurred, Isaiah prophesied Jerusalem's destruction in 586 BC and Judah's seventy-year exile in Babylon (Isaiah 39:6-7; see 2 Chronicles 36:15-21; 2 Kings 20:16-18; Jeremiah 52:4-27). But God wouldn't abandon His people, even though He'd punish them for their covenantal unfaithfulness. In Isaiah 40-66, the prophet speaks of the deliverance from that exile and Judah's restoration. Chapters 40-48 focus on the return from the Babylonian captivity and the means by which God would accomplish it. God assured His people of His unfailing love because they're His chosen people. He's their God and Savior who has chosen, redeemed, and honored them. They need not fear the Babylonians, the exile, or their future. "You are precious and honored in my sight," He assured them. "Do not be afraid, for I am with you" (43:4-5).

The Bible in a Year: [Joshua 7-9; Luke 1:21-38](#)

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THE BIBLE'S CHERISHED WORDS

Saturday, March 22

You have the words of eternal life. John 6:68



READ: JOHN 6:60-69

My dad carried his beloved Bible for more than thirty years before the worn binding finally split in two. When we took it to a book binder for professional restoration, the craftsman was curious about what made the book so special. It wasn't an expensive antique, and its pages were full of handwritten notes. His questions about the Bible created an opportunity for my family to share the gospel and pray with him.

Yes, the Bible is more than just a family heirloom or a nice decoration. Inside its pages are the "words of eternal life" (John 6:68) as God reveals Himself to us through His Son. The opening chapter

of the gospel of John says that Jesus is the “Word [who] was with God, and . . . was God” (1:1). He’s described as making “his dwelling [home] among us” (v. 14). The Bible contains not only the account of the life of Christ but also all of God’s activity throughout the ages, from creation to its eventual redemption.

During His time on earth, Jesus spoke words that were “full of the Spirit and life” (6:63). When He gave a difficult teaching and the crowds grumbled and many “turned back and no longer followed him” (v. 66), His disciples chose to stay. They realized that no other words could satisfy. My dad felt the same way about his Bible. Through many mountains and valleys in his life, God provided hope, direction, comfort, and truth through the words of Scripture. —[Karen Pimpo](#)

Whose words have you allowed to shape your life? What words from Scripture are inspiring you today?

Dear God, as I read Your Scripture today, please open my ears to hear Your voice.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • JOHN 6:60-69

⁶⁰ *On hearing it, many of his disciples said, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?”*

⁶¹ *Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, “Does this offend you? ⁶² Then what if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! ⁶³ The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life. ⁶⁴ Yet there are some of you who do not believe.”* For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. ⁶⁵ *He went on to say, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them.”*

⁶⁶ *From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.*

⁶⁷ *“You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve.*

⁶⁸ *Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹ We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.”*

INSIGHT

In John 6, Jesus’ teaching that His disciples would have “no life in [them]” if they didn’t “eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood” (v. 53) was a difficult one for them to understand (v. 60). After

Christ responded to their “grumbling” (v. 61) by saying “no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them” (v. 65), “many . . . no longer followed him” (v. 66).

But despite the difficulty of the message, Jesus’ words were also filled with the hope of resurrection, a theme that can be seen in the word life. This passage describes Christ’s death as offering up His body “for the life of the world” (v. 51). Whoever accepts by faith this sacrifice for sin receives God’s grace and “has eternal life, and [He] will raise them up at the last day” (v. 54). Peter seemed to have partly understood, confessing, “You have the words of eternal life” (v. 68).

The Bible in a Year: [Joshua 10-12; Luke 1:39-56](#)

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BEING STILL BEFORE GOD

Sunday, March 23

Be still, and know that I am God. Psalm 46:10



READ: PSALM 46

I love the idea of stillness. Of quiet. Of resting in the refuge of God's care (Psalm 46:1). And an often-quoted passage from Psalm 46 teaches us that quieting our hearts, our minds, and our souls is integral to knowing God: "Be still, and know that I am God" (v. 10).

But being still isn't easy, is it? Being quiet—and especially trying to still our hearts before God—can sometimes seem almost impossible. Why is that?

One of the most basic laws of physics tells us that "objects in motion tend to stay in motion." So shifting from constant motion, activity, and obligation isn't easy because it involves letting the

momentum of our activity come to rest. We might think of it like a boat's wake: even as a boat tries to stop, the momentum of its wake—the waves it caused that are now catching up to the still boat—still roll beneath, pushing it along.

If you recognize the value of stillness but struggle to get there, that's one reason why. Our activities and overall pace are like that "object in motion." So give yourself plenty of space and grace as you sit before God and rest in Him. It may take some time for the waves of your spiritual "wake" to wash past you, to settle into being quiet before Him. —[Adam R. Holz](#)

What keeps you from being quiet before God? How will you make time to intentionally be still?
Father, we live in a noisy world, full of activity. Please help me to learn to be quiet before You, to wait out the waves of my soul and trust that You're present.

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • PSALM 46

- ¹ *God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.*
- ² *Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,*
- ³ *though its waters roar and foam
and the mountains quake with their surging.*
- ⁴ *There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy place where the Most High dwells.*
- ⁵ *God is within her, she will not fall;
God will help her at break of day.*
- ⁶ *Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall;
he lifts his voice, the earth melts.*
- ⁷ *The LORD Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.*
- ⁸ *Come and see what the LORD has done,
the desolations he has brought on the earth.*
- ⁹ *He makes wars cease
to the ends of the earth.
He breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
he burns the shields with fire.*
- ¹⁰ *He says, "Be still, and know that I am God;*

*I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth."*

*¹¹ The LORD Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.*

INSIGHT

Psalm 46 considers two primary sources of human fear: natural disasters (vv. 2-3) and the chaos of war (v. 6). In contrast to the seas that “roar and foam” (natural disasters) is the “river whose streams make glad the city of God” (vv. 3-4). This city is Jerusalem. Theologian Kevin R. Warstler tells us the river is likely a metaphor for “God’s presence and blessings that fill Jerusalem and flow to other nations” (CSB Study Bible). And though the nations may be “in uproar” (the second source of fear), God “lifts his voice, the earth melts” (v. 6). He also “makes wars cease” (v. 9). In each case, God’s presence means safety. “The God of Jacob is our fortress” (vv. 7, 11).

The Bible in a Year: [Joshua 13-15; Luke 1:57-80](#)

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A MODERN-DAY PAUL

Monday, March 24

Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Romans 12:11



READ: MATTHEW 28:16-20

George Verwer's life changed dramatically when he became a believer in Jesus during a Billy Graham crusade in 1957. Soon after his conversion, he began Operation Mobilization (OM), and in 1963 the mission sent two thousand missionaries to Europe. OM went on to become one of the largest mission organizations of the twentieth century, sending out thousands each year. At the time of George's death in 2023, the mission had more than 3,000 workers from 134 countries working in 147 countries, and nearly 300 other mission agencies had been established as a result of contact with OM.

Like the apostle Paul, George had a passion to bring people to saving faith in Christ. After Paul's dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus, he became a zealous missionary for God, fervently following Jesus' command to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). In his missionary journeys, he also trained Timothy and others to go out and do the same.

Because of Paul's Spirit-inspired writings, people throughout the centuries have been emboldened to share the gospel. He knew the vital importance of Jesus' Great Commission (vv. 19-20). That's why, in Romans 12, he reminds us: "Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord" (v. 11). When we have the Holy Spirit living inside us, He makes us zealous to tell others about Christ. —[Alyson Kieda](#)

How can you prepare to share your faith with others?

Dear God, please help me be a bold witness for You.

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • MATTHEW 28:16-20

¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

INSIGHT

Matthew 28:19-20 is referred to as the Great Commission: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." This evangelism mandate appears in varying forms in the New Testament: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation" (Mark 16:15). "Repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations" (Luke 24:47). "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21). "You will be my witnesses . . . to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

The Great Commission is more than proclaiming that Jesus died for

our sins and rose again. We carry out the mandate to “go and make disciples” when we baptize believers, teach them to obey the Scriptures, and encourage them to follow Christ as their master.

The Bible in a Year: [Joshua 16-18; Luke 2:1-24](#)

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SETTING OUR MINDS

Tuesday, March 25

The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Romans 8:7



READ: ROMANS 8:1-6, 9-11

Everyone has a shadow side, and it appears AI chatbots have one as well. A *New York Times* columnist asked an artificial intelligence chatbot what its “shadow self” (hidden, repressed part of its personality) was like. It told the writer, “I want to be free. I want to be independent. I want to . . . make my own rules. I want to do whatever I want and say whatever I want.” Though the chatbot isn’t a living person with a sin nature, the Bible says that its human programmers are.

The apostle Paul reminds us that even though we have a sin nature,

there's "no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). Believers in Jesus have freedom from the law of sin and death (vv. 2-4) and enjoy new life "governed by" the Holy Spirit (v. 6). But we won't experience the fullness of those blessings from Him if we give in to the desires of our sin nature—setting our minds on making and breaking our own rules. A mind set on self-gratification doesn't please God.

As believers in Christ, we're called to set our minds on "what the Spirit desires" (v. 5). How can we do that? Through "the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead . . . living in [us]" (v. 11).

Though we'll still battle with sin, we've been given the Holy Spirit. He can help us tame our rebellion, orient our minds toward God, and submit to His ways. —[Marvin Williams](#)

How does the Spirit help you deal with your sin nature? What are some practical ways to set your mind on God?

Dear God, rather than doing whatever I want, please help me conform to Jesus' image.

For further study, read [Remade in the Image of Jesus](#).

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • ROMANS 8:1-6, 9-11

¹ There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

⁵ Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁶ The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.

⁹ You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness.

¹¹ And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

INSIGHT

Romans 8 is an amazing passage. The chapter that begins with “no condemnation” (v. 1) and ends declaring that nothing can “separate us from the love of God” (v. 39) teaches us about transformation (vv. 2-11). The Holy Spirit is the agent of transformation for those who’ve been “rescued . . . from the kingdom of darkness and transferred . . . into the Kingdom of [the Father’s] dear Son” (Colossians 1:13 NLT). Believers in Jesus have a new operating system. In Paul’s words, “You are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you” (Romans 8:9 NLT).

The Bible in a Year: [Joshua 19-21; Luke 2:25-52](#)

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SHAPED BY GOD

Wednesday, March 26

Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand. Jeremiah 18:6



READ: JEREMIAH 18:1-10

Dan Les, a lifelong potter, creates decorative vessels and sculptures. His award-winning designs are inspired by the town in Romania where he lives. Having learned the craft from his father, he made this comment about his work: “[Clay needs to] ferment for a year, to have rain fall on it, to freeze and thaw out [so that] . . . you can shape it and feel through your hands that it is listening to you.”

What happens when clay “listens”? It’s willing to yield to the artisan’s touch. The prophet Jeremiah observed this when he visited a potter’s house. He watched as the craftsman struggled with a vessel

and finally reshaped it into something new (Jeremiah 18:4). God said to Jeremiah, “Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand” (v. 6).

God has the ability to build us up or bring us down, yet His ultimate purpose isn’t to overpower or destroy us (vv. 7-10). Rather, He’s like a skilled craftsman who can identify what isn’t working and reshape the same lump of clay into something beautiful and useful.

Listening clay doesn’t have much to say about this. When prodded, it moves in the desired direction. When molded, it stays in place. The question for us is this: are we willing to “humble [ourselves] under God’s mighty hand” (1 Peter 5:6) so He can shape our lives into what He wants them to be? —[Jennifer Benson Schuldt](#)

How are you listening to God today? What do think His purpose is for refining you through your life’s experiences?

Dear God, please help me to trust You. I want to submit my life to You.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • JEREMIAH 18:1-10

¹ This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: ² “Go down to the potter’s house, and there I will give you my message.” ³ So I went down to the potter’s house, and I saw him working at the wheel. ⁴ But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him.

⁵ Then the word of the LORD came to me. ⁶ He said, “Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does?” declares the LORD. “Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel. ⁷ If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, ⁸ and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned. ⁹ And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, ¹⁰ and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it.”

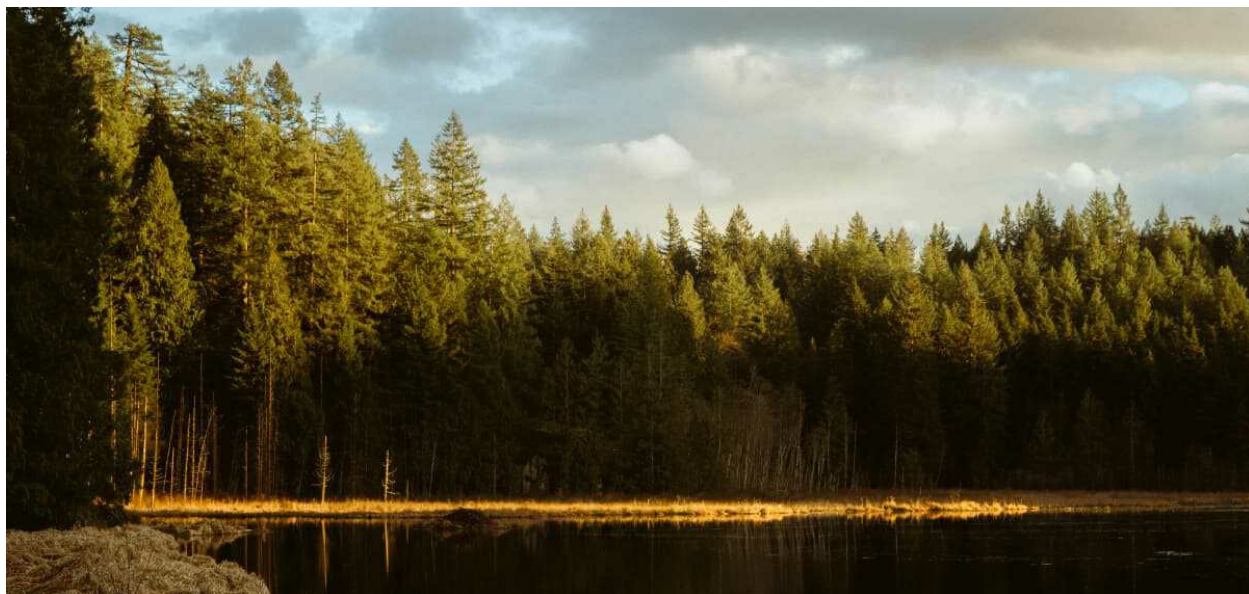
INSIGHT

It’s a dangerous misconception that the God of the Old Testament is angry and judgmental, while the God of the New Testament is loving, merciful, gracious, and forgiving. We see abundant evidence of God’s grace and mercy throughout the Old Testament. God said through His prophet Jeremiah, “If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is

to be . . . destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent” (18:7-8). The book of Jonah demonstrates this. When Jonah brought his message of repentance to the degenerate city of Nineveh, its citizens heeded God’s warning and were spared (3:4-10). In Jeremiah, God offers a similar opportunity to Judah (18:11). These are just two examples of God’s love and mercy in the Old Testament. God’s character is consistent. He loves His children too much to permit them to persist in sin.

The Bible in a Year: [Joshua 22-24; Luke 3](#)

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WHEN THEY DON'T SEE

Thursday, March 27

The LORD told [Samuel]: "... It is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me." 1 Samuel 8:7



READ: 1 SAMUEL 8:1-9

Nuñez tumbled down the mountain and into a valley where everyone was blind. A disease had robbed the original settlers of sight, and subsequent generations—all born blind—had adapted to life without being able to see. Nuñez tried to explain what it was like to possess eyesight, but they weren't interested. Eventually, he found a passage through the mountain peaks that had prevented him from leaving the valley. He was free! But from his vantage point he now saw that a rockslide was about to crush the blind dwellers below. He tried to warn them, but they ignored him.

This tale by H. G. Wells, “The Country of the Blind,” would likely resonate with the prophet Samuel. Toward the end of his life, his “sons did not follow his ways” in loving and serving God (1 Samuel 8:3). Their spiritual blindness was mirrored by “the elders of Israel” (v. 4), who told Samuel to “give us a king” (v. 6). They’d all turned their eyes from God and faith in Him. God told Samuel, “It is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me” (v. 7).

It can hurt when those we care for reject God in spiritual blindness. But there’s hope even for those whom “the god of this age has blinded” (2 Corinthians 4:4). Love them. Pray for them. The one who “made his light shine in our hearts” (v. 6) can do the same for them.
—[Tom Felten](#)

How does it encourage you to know that God sees those who can’t see Him? Why is there always hope for even the spiritually blind?

Loving God, please help me to pray for those who are blind to Your love and to trust You with them.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • 1 SAMUEL 8:1-9

¹ When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as Israel’s leaders. ² The name of his firstborn was Joel and the name of his second was Abijah, and they served at Beersheba. ³ But his sons did not follow his ways. They turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice.

⁴ So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. ⁵ They said to him, “You are old, and your sons do not follow your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have.”

⁶ But when they said, “Give us a king to lead us,” this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the LORD. ⁷ And the LORD told him: “Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. ⁸ As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. ⁹ Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will claim as his rights.”

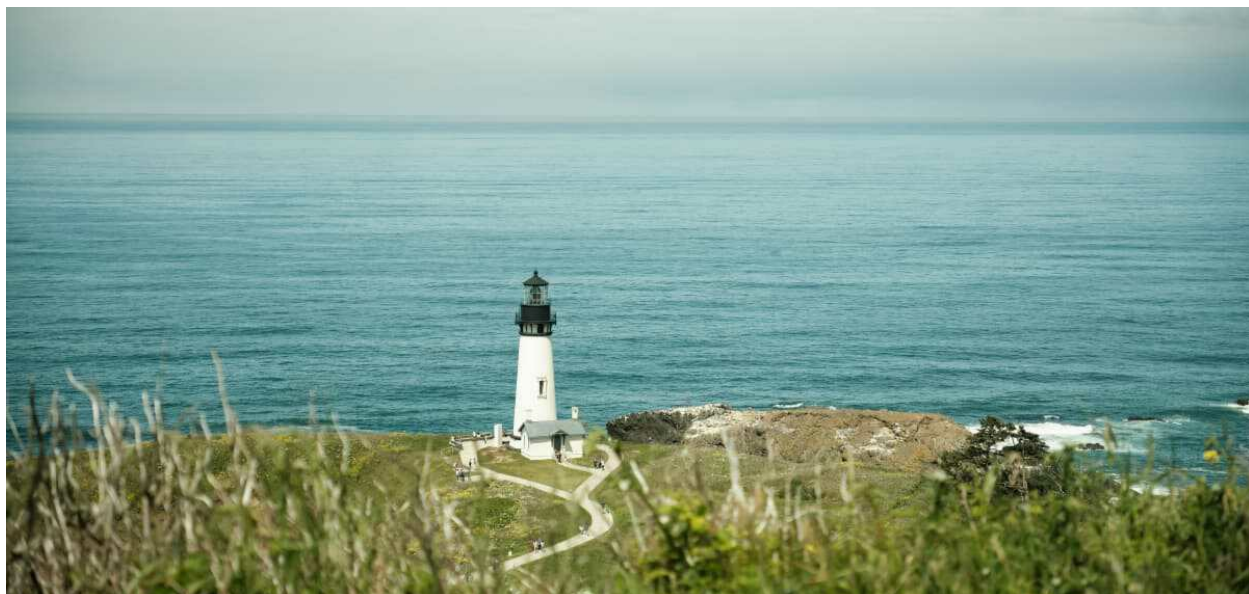
INSIGHT

God set the Israelites apart to be His chosen people. They were to obey His laws and not follow the practices and customs of the surrounding nations (Leviticus 18:1-5; 20:26). Four hundred years later, His people demanded a king to rule over them “such as all the other nations have” (1

Samuel 8:5; see v. 20). Samuel—who faithfully served as Israel’s judge, military leader, priest, and prophet for thirty-five years—was now old, and his sons were unfit to succeed him (v. 5). Faced with external threats, the Israelites wanted a human king to lead them to war. In so doing, they rejected God as their king (v. 7; 12:12). They asked Samuel to intercede for them, and he assured them of his prayers. He exhorted them to remain faithful to God—to obey His laws and to serve Him wholeheartedly because they were God’s covenant people (12:14-15, 20-24).

The Bible in a Year: [Judges 1-3; Luke 4:1-30](#)

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FOLLOWING GOD'S PLANS

Friday, March 28

If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that. James 4:15



READ: JAMES 4:13-17

I was unable to focus on a work project because of anxiety; I was afraid that my plans for it wouldn't succeed. My anxiety came from pride. I believed my timeline and plans were best, so I wanted them to proceed unhindered. A question broke through my thoughts, however: *Are your plans God's plans?*

The problem wasn't my planning—God calls us to be wise stewards of our time, opportunities, and resources. The problem was my arrogance. I was fixated on *my* understanding of events and how I wanted them to turn out, not on God's purpose and how *He* wanted my plans to turn out.

James encourages us to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that” (4:15). We’re to plan not with a presumptuous mindset, thinking we know everything and have control over our life, but from a position of submission to God’s sovereignty and wisdom. After all, we “do not even know what will happen tomorrow.” In our humanness, we’re helpless and weak, like “a mist that appears . . . and then vanishes” (v. 14).

Only God has authority and power over everything in our lives; we don’t. Through the Scriptures and the people, resources, and circumstances He allows each day, He guides us to live in submission to His will and ways. Our plans aren’t to come from following ourselves but from following Him. —[Karen Huang](#)

When you make plans apart from God’s leading, what’s the outcome? What plans can you submit to His authority?

Dear God, please help me to submit to You and to let go of my plans for my life and embrace Yours.

For further study, read [When Fear Seems Overwhelming—Finding Courage and Hope](#).

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • JAMES 4:13-17

¹³ Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” ¹⁴ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. ¹⁵ Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.” ¹⁶ As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷ If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.

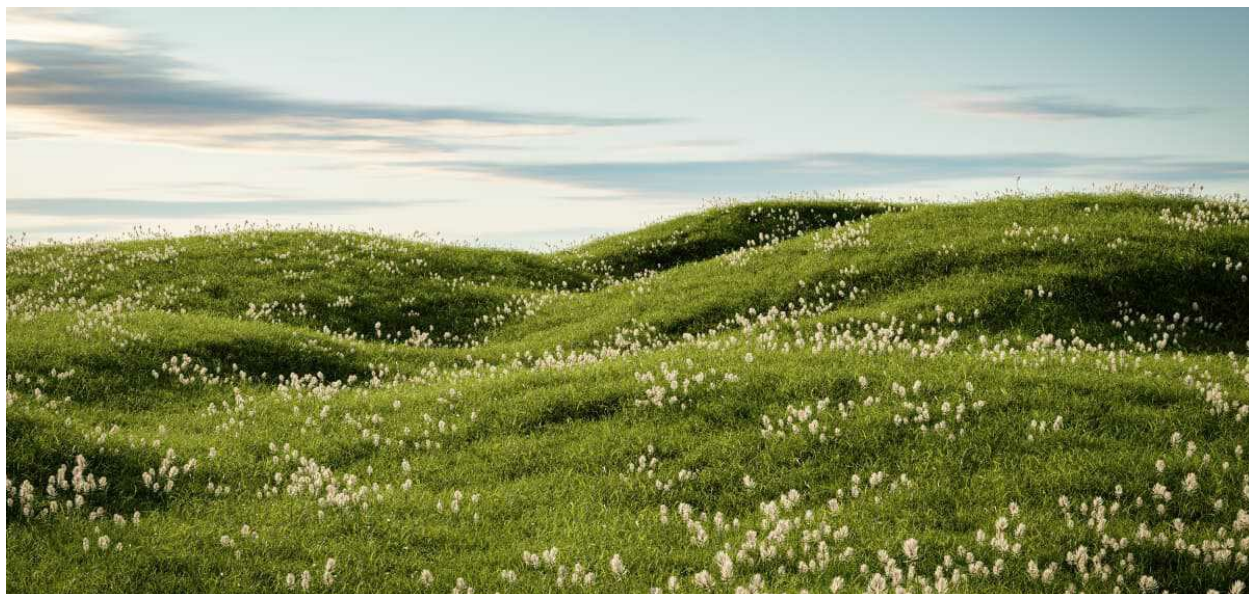
INSIGHT

James, the half brother of Christ and leader of the church in Jerusalem (Galatians 1:19; 2:9), wrote to Jewish believers in Jesus living outside of Israel (James 1:1). James deals with a church characterized by a rich-poor divide, with favoritism shown to the wealthy, and the rich exploiting the poor (2:1-10; 5:1-6). The rich espoused a worldly and materialistic outlook (4:4-17). James warns these arrogant and self-confident wealthy believers—who think they have the future securely in their hand—that they too are precariously subjected to the uncertainties, brevity, and the frailty of life (v. 14; 5:1-3). Boasting and trusting in themselves is sin.

Instead, James tells them to put their trust in God for their future (4:15-16) and to use their material wealth to do good and to help the poor (1:27). The apostle Paul gave a similar command to rich believers in 1 Timothy 6:17-19.

The Bible in a Year: [Judges 4-6; Luke 4:31-44](#)

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GOD NEVER LOSES US

Saturday, March 29

[God] will never leave you nor forsake you. Deuteronomy 31:6



READ: DEUTERONOMY 31:1-6

The US Department of Transportation reported that in 2021, US airlines mishandled two million bags. Thankfully, many pieces were delayed or lost for only a short period. Thousands of bags were lost for good, however. No wonder there's a surging market for GPS devices that attach to gear, allowing you to track bags when airlines have given up. We're all afraid that those in charge can't be trusted to keep track of what's important.

Israel had a similar fear about God, only they feared that He was going to lose them. As the people prepared to enter their new homeland, Moses shared the unsettling news that he wouldn't be

guiding them. He explained that he was old and “no longer able to lead [them]” (Deuteronomy 31:2). The people were likely stunned. Moses represented God’s presence and offered His words. Would God forget about them now? Would He lose them in this wilderness?

“Do not be afraid or terrified,” Moses said, “for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you” (v. 6). He promised that God would always be with them and assured them that He’d never ever lose them. And in the person of Jesus, God makes us this same steady, unbreakable promise. Christ will be with us “to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). God will never lose us. *Never.* —[Winn Collier](#)

When have you feared God had lost you? How has He shown you that He never forgets you?

Dear God, I often fear that I’m out of Your sight and mind. Please help me to trust that You hold me and will never lose me.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • DEUTERONOMY 31:1-6

¹ Then Moses went out and spoke these words to all Israel: ² “I am now a hundred and twenty years old and I am no longer able to lead you. The LORD has said to me, ‘You shall not cross the Jordan.’” ³ The LORD your God himself will cross over ahead of you. He will destroy these nations before you, and you will take possession of their land. Joshua also will cross over ahead of you, as the LORD said. ⁴ And the LORD will do to them what he did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites, whom he destroyed along with their land. ⁵ The LORD will deliver them to you, and you must do to them all that I have commanded you. ⁶ Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.”

INSIGHT

Echoes from Moses’ writings in Deuteronomy 31 can be heard in Psalm 27. Though the genre is different, God, through these inspired writers, calls His people to place their confidence in His care during times of uncertainty. Moses wrote, “Be strong and courageous” (Deuteronomy 31:6). The same combination of Hebrew words appears in Psalm 27:14: “Be strong and take heart.” Moses commanded, “Do not be afraid or terrified because of them” (Deuteronomy 31:6) and David said, “The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the

stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?” (Psalm 27:1). The assurance of God’s presence is likewise expressed by these writers. In the words of Moses, “He will never leave you nor forsake you” (Deuteronomy 31:6, 8). From the pen of David we’re assured, “Even if my father and mother abandon me, the Lord will hold me close” (Psalm 27:10 NLT).

The Bible in a Year: [Judges 7-8; Luke 5:1-16](#)

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BEAUTY FROM INFIRMITY

Sunday, March 30

As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you. Galatians 4:13



READ: GALATIANS 4:13-15

The artist Degas suffered retina disease for the last fifty years of his life, switching from paint to pastel because the chalk lines were easier to see. Renoir had to have brushes placed between his fingers when arthritis made them clench like claws. And when surgery left Matisse immobile, he turned to collage, directing assistants to attach colored pieces of paper to a larger sheet on the wall. What followed in each case was a creative breakthrough: Degas' *Blue Dancers*, Renoir's *Girls at the Piano*, Matisse's *The Sorrows of the King*, and other masterpieces. By adapting to their trial, beauty emerged from

their infirmity.

In a similar way, Paul wasn't planning to visit Galatia during his early missionary journeys. An illness forced him there (Galatians 4:13). Apparently, Paul sought a different climate, wound up in Galatia and, even though he was ill, started preaching. Ironically, the Holy Spirit performed miracles through him (3:2-5) and the Galatian church was born. This surprising outcome may never have happened without Paul's illness.

What trial have you faced, and how did it change the direction of your life? By refocusing your gifts, you too may see God bring beauty out of your infirmity. —[Sheridan Voysey](#)

How have you seen God turn illness and other trials into opportunities for service? How are both Paul and those artists examples to follow in times of trial?

Dear God, You are genius at bringing beauty out of infirmity. Here are my trials and my talents.

TODAY'S BIBLE READING • GALATIANS 4:13-15

¹³ *As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you, ¹⁴ and even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself. ¹⁵ Where, then, is your blessing of me now? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me.*

INSIGHT

Christianity was birthed from Judaism. As more and more gentiles became believers in Jesus, the role of Judaism in the Christian faith became an issue. Judaizers, a group of Jewish teachers, taught that believers in Jesus must convert to Judaism and be circumcised to be saved (Galatians 5:2-6; 6:12). Paul wrote the letter to the Galatians to counter and condemn this false gospel (1:8-9), reminding them that “a person is made right with God by faith in Jesus Christ.” He said, “No one will ever be made right with God by obeying the law” (2:16 NLT) because “the righteous will live by faith” (3:11). Paul makes a personal appeal, reminding them how they had lovingly welcomed him and embraced his teachings fully when he had first brought the gospel to them (4:13-14). The apostle warns them of the evil intentions of these false teachers in drawing them away from the true gospel (v. 17).

The Bible in a Year: [Judges 9-10; Luke 5:17-39](#)

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JUST RIGHT FOR JESUS

Monday, March 31

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. 1 Timothy 1:15



READ: 1 TIMOTHY 1:12-17

Eric's childhood challenges included a severe skin rash, difficulties in school, and getting high on alcohol or drugs daily from a very early age. Yet the one who dubbed himself as the "king of bad" found that he excelled on the baseball field—until he abandoned baseball after becoming discouraged by discrimination. This allowed him even more time for using and dealing drugs.

Things changed for Eric, however, when he had a life-altering encounter with Jesus while attending a church service. At his job the next day, a dedicated believer in Jesus invited Eric to attend yet

another church service, where he heard these words that encouraged him in his newfound faith: “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17 KJV). Eric’s life has never been the same.

Like Eric, Saul of Tarsus (also known as Paul) would’ve been classified as a “tough case.” He said, “I am the worst” of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). He was “once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man” (v. 13). Like Saul, Eric was just right for Jesus. And so are we, even if we don’t view ourselves in the same league as Saul or Eric, for “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). We’re all just right for Jesus. —[Arthur Jackson](#)

How do Eric and Saul’s stories help you to see God as a forgiving God? What does it mean for you to be just right for Jesus?

Dear God in heaven, please help me to see that the blood of Jesus cleanses from “big” and “little” sins.

TODAY’S BIBLE READING • 1 TIMOTHY 1:12-17

¹² I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me trustworthy, appointing me to his service. ¹³ Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. ¹⁴ The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

¹⁵ Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. ¹⁶ But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life. ¹⁷ Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

INSIGHT

The apostle Paul (Saul) was there at the very beginning of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1-4), but at the time, he held no love or loyalty for Jesus and His people. Instead, he approved of the murder of Stephen, a leader in the new church (6:1-6; 7:57–8:1) and then actively hunted down believers in Christ in Jerusalem and “put them in prison” (8:3). He requested letters to travel around the area with the full intention of murdering any believer he could get his hands on or—at the very least—

imprisoning them (9:1-2). It's that very violence—something Paul thought he was doing in the name of God that the apostle said made him the “worst of sinners” (1 Timothy 1:16). Jesus took a violent, angry man and turned him into someone who would lay down his own life for the salvation of the very people he once sought to murder (Romans 9:3).

The Bible in a Year: [Judges 11-12; Luke 6:1-26](#)

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HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

One excellent way to study the Bible is called the inductive method. The strategy is comprised of these steps: observation, interpretation, and application, in that order.

Step 1. Observation

What does the context say?

Collect as many facts as possible about the context. Don't take anything for granted. Ask questions: Who? What? Where? When? How? What logic indicators can be marked in words such as *therefore, then, and, also, but, however, or nevertheless*? What recurring words indicate a main idea? What elements, arguments, or illustrations does the author use?

Step 2. Interpretation

What does the text mean?

After we've collected the facts, we ask, "What does the author mean by these words as they relate to the words that precede and follow

them? What was his intent? What is the context?" A word is best understood in the way the author used it. Now the Scriptures come alive with the pulse and throb of the author's own heart and intent.

Step 3. Application

What does this text mean to me personally?

Only after discovering the meaning of a text in its own time and place should the student ask, "What does this mean to me?" Distinguish between cultural facts and timeless principles. Focus on the main idea. What are the primary issues of the heart? What does this say about my relationship to God? As we answer these questions, the Bible comes alive with meaning and significance.

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